

July 8, 2009

Mayor Romero and City Council Members:

It is with a mix of sadness and excitement that I provide notice of my plan to move on to a new phase in my life at the end of 2009 – nine years after becoming city manager; 20 years after joining the City; nearly 35 years after beginning my public service career. My work life, however, started even longer ago. I was 14 years old when my father died and I therefore had to pick up many home and farm tasks. Consequently, I lived at home and worked throughout my college life. My public service career began immediately thereafter and I have luckily not had an employment break over these many years. It has been “pedal to the metal” for as long as I can remember – and it’s been great.

But there has been a downside to my approach to work: My other life experiences have been very limited and always deferred: travel, hobbies and unhurried family time. Some might do this job with more so-called “work-life balance,” but that is not my nature. I can only do it one way: *all the way*. And with today’s technology and expectations, the job is only growing more demanding. The time has come for different pace and new personal and professional experiences; not retirement, but a new life phase.

In reading about life transition, a prevailing theme has been that the most caring way to leave one “life chapter” for another is to do so “in a way that honors those remaining.” I strongly believe that handing the baton to a new city manager in January 2010 is the best way for me to care for, and honor, an organization that that has given me so much.

A painful budget process is over, and our two-year budget is balanced; union contracts are settled until 2011; a healthy organizational culture remains intact; and an election is 16 months away. *This Council* can choose the next city manager in a careful, deliberate way; the new manager can take over well ahead of the next Financial Plan, contract negotiations and the election. This will allow him/her a chance to get oriented and bring a fresh perspective to the organization – rather than being thrust onto an already speeding freight train of political change, negotiations and budget deadlines.

By providing notice now, the Council can select a new city manager in time for him/her to begin work in January, and I will work with you to launch the process ASAP. However, if some added time is needed, I will assist until a new city manager is hired.

Serving as our community’s city manager has fulfilled every hope that I ever had for a city management career, and my 20 years with the City has been the highlight of my professional life. Unlike so many other places, SLO still truly works. But this cannot be taken for granted; it takes constant vigilance and leadership to promote “good government” and civility, within the community and the organization. I have given my best in support of these values, and hope that I have made a positive difference.

I thank you for your great trust and support. It has been a profound honor to serve you, our fine City employees and this wonderful community.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be the name 'Ken', written in a cursive style.