



Patience and flexibility -- those are the two words best describing the needs of Springfield according to newly appointed Mayor Sean VanGordon. In a wide-ranging conversation with Springfield City Club on March 18, Mayor VanGordon pointed to successes in the recent past, but added that the City has suffered a bad recession in 2020, facing at least a \$1 million budget gap in the coming year. Although he said recently approved

federal aid will help, the City still is not sure how much it will get and, beyond that, faces a long term structural gap between revenues and spending.

In the short term, he pointed to the need to support existing businesses as they attempt to recover. He added that even though the city issued more residential building permits in 2020 than in any time while he has been on Council, and will probably exceed that this year, there remains a broad housing gap == simply not enough housing and not at the right price points.

He did have excitement for the recent announcement of proposals to construct sports facilities in the Glenwood Riverfront area. The Council received a briefing on March 15 (see the report [HERE](#)) and the Springfield Economic Development Agency will have an opportunity to review all three proposals at its April 12 meeting. He said it was too early to tell if more than one of the proposals could be combined to produce a multi-purpose facility.

On the soon to be released report on police practices (released after he spoke) the Mayor said he expected to ask a Council subcommittee to form to develop a roadmap to respond to the conclusions. He noted it would take time to respond to the issues raised. While some things, like giving a person who files a complaint a receipt number so the complaint can be tracked, are simple, most others will take slow steady progress. He asked the community to remain patient as the roadmap was developed and implemented. He still believes it may be wise to appoint a blue-ribbon committee to study solutions but said needs to be revisited in the fall.

Likewise, he asked for patience as the City continued to develop and implement initiatives to improve diversity, equity and inclusion and help minority populations feel connected. He pointed to the CityLink system as one step forward but said there needs to be more work done. Values are easy to have, he said, but we must work on what needs to be done to make people feel they are a part of this community.

In response to a question about how the City finally managed to get a workable project for development of Marcola Meadows, he again pointed to the need for patience and flexibility. The original proposal was developed in an era focused on big box stores. The development environment has now changed, and it was important for both the Council and City staff to remain flexible and work through issues one by one to create a different approach that now will break ground.

One of the first things he wants to do is take a new look at the City's goals. He pointed out that now the Council is fully in place for the first time in some time –in fact, he has not yet had in person meetings with the new Councilors.

He did point to one good thing that has come out of the pandemic. Because the City had to move much of its business online, residents have had more opportunities to see how government is working and to comment. He believes that the transparency that was created needs to be maintained in the future so that the public can participate more in governing without having to come to City Hall to attend meetings.