

M.C. Council often ends up with 4-2 vote

By JOHN SKIPPER, Globe Gazette Columnist

The six-member configuration of the City Council makes for some unusual vote patterns.

Because of the even number of members, there's never going to be an issue that is decided by one vote, unless of course someone is absent.

So a 4-2 vote is a simple majority. A 3-3 vote is a loss. The mayor can break a tie on issues that don't involve ordinances, resolutions or spending \$10,000 or more. That's happened a couple of times.

What's been interesting in recent years is that the council has often found itself in 4-2 factions.

IN THE 1990s, Max Weaver and Ken Lee often were the two who were at odds with the majority. When Don Nelson came on the council, he and Lee were the "2" in the 4-2. Then it was Nelson and Leonard Foster. Now it is often Nelson and Jeff Marsters.

But this year, there is a new twist. Instead of 4-2, the decision-making is sometimes a 2-2-2 situation, with Nelson and Marsters voting similarly, Weaver and Al Zook often voting the same and the other two council members, Scott Tornquist and John Jaszewski, being less predictable and thus becoming the swing votes.

Tornquist, the engineer by profession, analyzes things to the "nth degree" and has sometimes paused when his name is called on a roll call vote because he's still thinking about it. By contrast, Nelson often has made up his mind in advance and has recited his reasoning from written notes.

At the last council meeting, members decided not to impose a \$50 "administrative fee" on residents when the city had to shovel their walks. The \$50 fee had passed on two readings by votes of 4-2. On the third reading, it lost by a 3-3 vote because Tornquist changed his mind. That is an example of a council member being a swing vote on a 4-2 vote.

This council has taken a lot of heat this year, but one thing's for sure. It is not a "rubber stamp" operation that automatically spends your money.

JASZEWSKI has been lobbied from all sides concerning his vote Tuesday night on the widening of the 19th Street overpass, which is in his ward. Some people don't want more trains or the industrial park that is envisioned there. Others say if it means more jobs, it's OK.

Jaszewski has listened to both sides but thinks his contract with the voters is to "vote his conscience." And he thinks it's best for the city to widen the overpass.

GARY WILFONG, city engineer who has resigned, says he wants to set the record straight.

When the story about his resignation appeared on the Globe Web site, several anonymous readers blogged in with disparaging remarks about the City Council and Interim City Administrator Tom Meyer.

"It's hard to respond to anonymous people when they don't have their facts right," said Wilfong.

He said he's had a great relationship with Meyer and other city officials. He said he resigned to accept a job in Arkansas to be closer to his fiance who lives there.

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