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Mayor's message: Working to save taxpayers money

January 09, 2008 - Rhode Island

With the state of the economy and municipal budgets on many people's minds, my administration continues its efforts to restructure municipal services and personnel duties in order to realize additional savings for our taxpayers.

In that past month, the retirements of several long-time employees have afforded us the opportunity to examine the duties and responsibilities of various positions and make changes when possible and appropriate. All told, several steps we have taken will realize nearly \$300,000 in annual savings in salary and benefit costs.

The recent retirements of a recreation complex supervisor and a youth services director have resulted in changes in the Parks and Recreation and Youth Services divisions. Two parks and recreation employees will assume the duties of the retired complex supervisor. With the retirement of our longtime youth services director, two employees of our human services department have taken on added responsibility and will work with a recreation program coordinator, a newly created position, to develop after-school and other programs.

In our purchasing division, we have eliminated one of two positions left vacant by retirements and gave those duties to an existing employee. In the animal control division, a supervisory position has been eliminated and one officer promoted to a senior position with supervisory duties.

In addition, recently, I announced the city's intention to pursue two less expensive options for crossing guard services. By hiring guards in-house, instead of opting to retain a private company, the city stands to save between \$145,000 and \$339,000 over the next five years.

Other significant annual savings have come about with the implementation of the city's automated trash and recycling collection program, the first phase of which began in 2003. To date, the city has saved in workers' compensation costs, and realized savings of at least \$50,000 per year in tipping fees and overtime costs.

Installation of LED lights in city buildings - a project that began several years ago - saves an estimated \$34,000 a year in electrical and maintenance costs. This spring, we began installing LED lights in our traffic signals, which will save us, conservatively, another \$22,494 annually. These savings will no doubt increase as energy costs continue to rise. Not only have the automated collection system and LED installations saved money, they are helping us to increase recycling rates and decrease pollution and energy costs.

Finally, by having four individuals assume the role of acting department directors, the city has saved, conservatively, \$1.5 million, over the past several years.

As we move forward in 2008, my administration will seek to add to these savings with the implementation of other innovative, cost saving programs and the continued examination of personnel duties.

Scott Avedisian is the mayor of Warwick.

