

# The New Faces of City Council

## Part II : Bill Richardson

By Brit Macias



Bill Richardson, San Angelo's newly elected SMD 1 City Council member, sat down with CRN to share some of his viewpoints and a bit about why he chose to run for a seat on City Council.

Richardson is a Canadian native with a diverse history working for the Alberta government. He worked as a cartographic technologist, mapping and compiling graphics for reports, though during his time there, Richardson attended a technical institute taking such courses as Municipal Drafting and Design as well as Typographical Drafting.

Richardson explains to CRN that in Municipal Drafting, he was required to draw up a small subdivision and plan out drainage, calculate runoffs, plan sidewalks, etc. He also learned how to design a canal, design and build a dam, and build a highway.

These courses not only assisted him in his profession—though Richardson says he took the courses for personal interest—the knowledge he gained there also helps his insight into road and water infrastructure here in San Angelo, the land Richardson now calls home.

After a shift in political power in Alberta, Richardson was given the option to either be relocated to a smaller community or take a severance package. Richardson chose the severance, and at the time, Shannon Hospital was in Canada recruiting nurses. Richardson's wife decided to take a job at Shannon and the two chose to move to San Angelo, Texas to try it out for a couple of years. "Now we've been here 21 years," Richardson laughs. They officially became U.S. Citizens in 2005.

So what brings a Canadian to a West Texas City Council seat? "I felt I had something to contribute and I had the time. My son (a music major at ASU) grew up here, along with his friends... I thought I could make a contribution, to make something better, in the city for them. They want to stay here and raise their families here," Richardson tells CRN.

While campaigning, Richardson spent time going door-to-door in his district, speaking to his constituents about their concerns and asking for their vote. “You’re the only one that’s come around to our door,” was the overwhelming response, Richardson says. “People came out and voted when before they felt they had no representation.”

Of his time going door-to-door, Richardson tells CRN, “I knocked on every door, and more in Bentwood... I didn’t just rely on those that voted last time. It was enjoyable, I had a lot of fun. It was enjoyable talking to people. Some people invited me in to sit down for a little bit, others came out on their front doorstep to talk to me and it was a lot of fun. I enjoyed it. I got to see parts of San Angelo I’ve never seen before.”

CRN asked Richardson what those in his district were most concerned about. “The most brought up topic was the trash ...People are not satisfied with the present trash contract. They want to go back to having the same capacity they had before the contract.”

That capacity he refers to is the former 60 lbs in each can. If any extra cans were needed, citizens could simply buy another and put it out. Now, households are charged \$5 a month for an extra can. “If you’ve got a family, a husband and wife and two or three kids, you really need a second trash can and I don’t think families should be penalized. For some people \$5 is nothing, but for some it’s a lot of money,” Richardson states.

Borrowing money is one of Richardson’s own concerns. “One of the things I was concerned about is the growing debt,” he states. Richardson does, however, find the water concerns valid and in need of addressing in some way, without the borrowing of millions. His opinion? “What has to be done right now is (to) look at the infrastructure and the water treatment plant has to be modernized.”

As far as borrowing, there are some areas Richardson does see citizens wanting the City to borrow funds to accomplish a task, such as a refurbished office for the police department. “I think that will be supported (by the voters) because the people know what the police officers have to go to every morning. And as I’ve said before, if you want a happy employee, you’ve got to give them a decent place to go to work.”

Richardson voiced his excitement over a particular tool he used during his career in Alberta—the GIS System—that will soon be implemented in our own city. “This will make the city run a lot more efficiently because ...if they have a leak somewhere, or a problem somewhere, they’ll be able to call up the information on what is actually there under the street instantly, once this is all in place.”

Richardson also shared some of his thoughts on the Council's role in the city. "The City has to do an overall better job of communicating with the voters, the public, and taking their concerns into consideration. It seems like a lot of people feel alienated...They (the City Council) are there to represent the people... People don't want to hear somebody from the city government or the City Council say 'if they want our services, they're gonna' have to pay for it,' because they're already paying for it."

There you have it; another look at another new face on San Angelo City Council.

Until Next Time...

***Brit Macias***

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