



An All-America City

January 2, 2018

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

I first would like to thank you for your leadership and support during my time as City Manager.

Over the last three decades, I have had the privilege of serving the citizens of Tallahassee as the Auditor, Assistant City Manager, and City Manager. Each position came with its set of challenges and rewards. When my family moved here in 1988, we had no ties to Tallahassee. It was just my wife, my two daughters and me. Since then we have made so many friends and our Tallahassee roots now grow deep. As you know, I love my colleagues and consider them a part of my family. Some of my fondest memories were made playing on the City's softball team. There have been many challenges over the years, but my colleagues have always been there to make sure we accomplish our goals.

When you appointed me as City Manager, you told me that the budget process and the City's financial stability had to be improved. We were facing rising operating costs and flat revenue growth. We worked hard to improve the transparency of the budget process and to manage operating expenses while increasing the number of police officers and adding investment in critical infrastructure. In order to accomplish these goals, we eliminated ten senior management positions and right-sized the entire organization. This was a difficult task, but it was necessary to insure the continued success of the City. As you know, this accomplishment took dedication and commitment from all staff, and it is something I am extremely proud of.

Recently, we were challenged by Hurricanes Hermine and Irma. During these trying times, we saw the best of City employees. It was not just our outstanding Police and Electric workers, but staff from every department worked together to make sure our city was back to normal as soon as possible. Employees worked to make sure our neighbors were safe. The Community Beautification and Waste Management department in partnership with the Underground Utility department worked tirelessly for two weeks straight to make sure our roads were clear and all the debris was cleaned up. The community demonstrated its teamwork and resilience, and we were back to normal before we knew it. The work, however, didn't end there. After restoring Tallahassee, our electric and underground crews traveled throughout Florida helping other communities get back to normal. Still today, our electric crews are assisting in the Virgin Islands. We should all be proud of these dedicated men and women.

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City Manager

LEWIS E. SHELLEY
City Attorney

JAMES G. COOKE, IV
City Treasurer/Clerk

T. BERT FLETCHER
City Auditor

More than anything, I have stressed that teamwork is essential to success. This is evident in the collaboration between the Police Department and the Parks and Recreation Department to work with our neighborhoods and to create the TEMPO program. Efforts like this will help meet the challenge of crime in our community; as will the collaboration between the law enforcement agencies throughout Leon County through the Public Safety Collective. The City has provided the leadership to pull this broad group together for the first time, and for this, I could not be more pleased.

With so much still to do, it is with mixed emotions that I am writing to notify you of my decision to retire, effective January 3, 2018. There is so much good momentum to address the issues facing us today. Issues like public safety, investing in infrastructure to keep up with our growing community, our energy future, and community engagement. I am excited to think about the future. However, as I shared with each of you in October, I will not allow myself to be a distraction to the great work of the City. It is clear the current circumstances have become a distraction, and I regret that more than anything. However, we must move on.

In my time with the City, I am proud to have been a part of many great accomplishments, like: the City's first Solar Farm, the first Advanced Wastewater treatment plant in North Florida, the 2012 designation as the #1 Public Utility in America, Neighborhood REACH, the construction of Purdom Unit 8, the upgrade of Hopkins Unit 2 (recognized as one of the top six plants in the world in 2010), and the first two time SOAR recipient for Natural Gas Utilities (recognizing system excellence by the American Public Gas Association), just to name a few. More important than individual accomplishments or events, however, is the transformation of our organization to provide best of breed customer service and function in a strategic fashion in all areas.

As I retire, the City is in outstanding fiscal health. The utilities have been rated AA by the major credit rating agencies, and the general fund reserve is fully restored after falling to a critically low balance in the last few years. The FY 2018 capital plan is \$177 million, which is \$33 million more than FY 2017. Yet, the millage rate was lowered by \$1 million and the \$2 million business tax was eliminated. The workforce has been streamlined and is more productive than ever. When compared with other cities around Florida, Tallahassee's municipal cost of services is one of the lowest while also providing outstanding customer service. Finally, crime stats are trending downward, and the economy is one of the strongest in the Country according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

I realize that the public is more divided than ever and each important decision you make will be met with challenge. As you face these decisions, please know that you have an extremely professional staff that has embraced the principles of strategic teamwork and customer service and

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will continue to serve you and the community well. It has been my privilege to work with each one of them.

I will forever appreciate the many community members that have invested their time and energy in me personally. Their counsel has made me a better person and a humble leader. I am not perfect, but I am a much better man because of their support. Please know that you will always have my support. I wish you all the best and I am looking forward to the next chapter in Tallahassee's history.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ricardo Fernandez', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Ricardo Fernandez
City Manager