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**NEWSLETTER / NEWS RELEASE
From the Office of the Mayor**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MAYOR SCHNEIDER VETOES EARLY RETIREMENT BILL 9326

To the Florissant City Council, the Citizens of Florissant and the dedicated employees of our city,

Bill # 9326, referred to as the Retirement Incentive Opportunity Bill was passed as Ordinance #8366 and I am compelled to VETO it because it will seriously jeopardize this administration's ability to provide services to our residents. If this veto is overridden I will be obligated to report all disruptions of Florissant Municipal services caused by this ordinance to the Florissant public through the usual communication methods.

I have been in office approaching seven years and this is my third veto. I feel that the veto action should be used very sparingly and only when the Mayor feels that the City Council has made a grave error. My first veto was upheld. My second veto was made when I thought a bill was unlawful and a review of the action by the Missouri Attorney General's office validated my position. Both were in my first year in office so it has been over 6 years since I have been compelled to use this power.

The stated goals of Ordinance #8366, an ordinance authorizing a one-time retirement incentive opportunity for qualified employees, are articulated as:

- "...the success of this program will require (a) reduction in (the) total full-time workforce."
- "...all non-essential positions vacated by retirement will be eliminated."
- "...to be fiscally responsible and reduce the number of full-time positions..."

I am open to an intelligent discussion of a prudent early retirement incentive program. However, with any such program, there must be a well thought out rationale behind any offer and clearly stated goals to support such a program. In this case, the stated goals can be condensed into one thought, to create a "*reduction in the size of the work force*" regardless of the consequences.

I believe that there are more important goals and much better ways to achieve the goal of Bill 9326. A random, arbitrary and untargeted offer to which you have no idea what employees, in what departments, at what pay level, will respond seems to be lacking in the basic concept of taking responsibility for your actions as a member of the legislative body of this city. A reasoned, researched and studied position and corresponding action is far more preferable to relying on the luck of the draw which could take years to recover from.

Given the stated goal to reduce the size of the workforce, it would be much more sensible to conduct a thoughtful and in-depth review of all city services and programs and then, based on that review, logically and judiciously determine where it would be most appropriate to reduce personnel in tandem with services.

It is my firm belief that a reduction in personnel in the manner proposed in Bill 9326 will definitely have a negative impact on the delivery of quality services to our residents. Having a rational discussion on what services are necessary and at what cost can then transition into a logical discussion of what services are absolutely necessary and those that may no longer be necessary. It is in this manner that a reduction in personnel, if that remains the goal after such a review, can best be accomplished.

The way this offer is structured, all positions must remain vacant for at least four months and only those positions deemed “essential” by the Mayor may be filled at the end of the four month period. This may work in some departments and for some positions in the field but for many positions with unique job responsibilities, education, knowledge and training requirements, this will certainly not work.

To address this onerous four month delay in hiring an essential replacement there is a provision in Bill 9326 for the City Council to waive the four month delay requirement for a particular position by adopting a specific Resolution to do so. Such activities on the part of the City Council are considered a deliberate attempt at an administrative action rather than legislative and such a breach of the separation of powers should be beyond the purview of the City Council and shunned by the electorate.

As the duly elected Mayor and Chief Executive Officer of this City I must protest! This is as an overreach on the part of the City Council departing from the legislative responsibilities you were elected to do and invading the administrative duties that the voters gave to my office. The Council has approved funding for certain positions as articulated through the budget process and that must remain the extent of their interaction.

In addition, there is a provision for the Mayor to assign an existing employee to assume the duties of a vacated position for a temporary salary increase of 10%. This makes an assumption, which is not necessarily true, that there would be an existing employee with the education, training, skills, and ability to assume the duties of another position while maintaining the duties and responsibilities of their present position. Absent that, the position would remain vacant for at least four months and there would be no opportunity for training or the exchange of information between the existing employee and the eventual replacement at any point in time or at any level of interchange.

The employees being targeted by this proposal are the ones generally at an age and experience level that would have the most institutional knowledge, experience and training. With a mandatory minimum four month break in service, this invaluable, essential yet intangible asset would be lost. I understand that all employees will eventually leave, but under this program the possibility to pass along multiple careers worth of knowledge, wisdom and experience gained at our previous expense is lost forever!

I foresee a very difficult and extended transition period to get the compromised work force up to speed and this will almost certainly compromise service and our basic operations. The result will have a very negative effect on our ability to serve the citizens we represent especially in 2018. The Council will be held accountable by the electorate for any and all collateral damage this action causes to our ability to provide the services our citizens have come to expect from their City of Florissant.

Given the fiscal restraints facing the city as dictated by Council actions during the recent budget process, I understand where it is in the financial interest of the city to reduce expenses and to accomplish that goal a reduction in the work force could play a part. However, any such discussion of a reduction in the work force should be done very carefully as it will impact both the services the city offers and the morale of the remaining employees affected by any such staff reduction who continue to attempt to deliver services to our residents.

To leave such an action to blind chance seems reckless and an abdication of the Council responsibility to provide the best services to our residents that our resources allow. In the most serious manner I urge the Council to reconsider Bill 9326 and to instead endeavor to work with the Administration to craft a more reasoned approach to achieve staff reductions.

Based on the thoughts herein outlined, I herewith veto Ordinance #8366.

Thomas P. Schneider
Mayor