

Client: Cobb County Commission Chairman Tim Lee

The following column was written on behalf of Cobb County Commission Chairman Tim Lee in response to opponents' complaints regarding the way Lee handled the very controversial decision by the Atlanta Braves to move from downtown Atlanta to neighboring Cobb County. Some say the way the move was handled illustrated illegal activities by Cobb's government to attract the team.

My liaison with Lee requested that the column explain to readers how difficult it is to govern with all the parameters placed upon public officials (for open meetings, quorums for those meetings, other means of transparency, etc.).

Defying my client's specific request, I instead turned the column into something more palatable for readers because I felt what was being requested would be viewed as, in effect, a license to complain about the very nature of what makes government work for constituents. Striking the right balance was difficult, but this column won Lee many favorable comments from citizens and from other county chairpersons throughout the state.

*Tim Lee column/BrightSide
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Draft One – M. Badgett*

Government Runs Differently, for Better or Worse

Many people lament the fact that government doesn't run like business. It's an easy and often called-for complaint, given what appears to be inefficiency in the public sector.

Actions advance slowly in government, and they require paper or electronic trails that challenge our effectiveness. They also are subject to policies that would stifle even the most creative of companies.

The fact is, for those of us in the public sector to act more like managers in the private sector would be a license to run amok. And while we make decisions that many might not agree with, we don't do so in a managerial vacuum. We don't make them without the constant reminder of the public trust we've been given.

We do have the public to answer to, and the public has never had so many communication outlets for making its approval or disapproval known. That, alone, is humbling.

Like decisions made in any business, the best government decisions focus on progress and future viability. And, as for any business leader, there are key factors for your elected officials to consider when we cast our votes: external competition, meeting demand and supply, and the weight of certain risks. So, in reality, governments are faced with very business-like decisions.

In Cobb County, we have a track record of efficiency and effectiveness – a record many private-sector organizations would envy. We have a sustainable budget with a surplus and a strong rainy-day fund. We have one of the lowest sales-tax rates in the state. And, we have one of the lowest property-tax millage rates in the Atlanta metro area.

The way government operates might mystify or even surprise many, but it's obvious in Cobb County that decision-making reflects a local government committed to maintaining a high quality of life for its 700,000 residents.

We make our decisions to maintain economic viability. We cast our votes to ensure we have competitive products and services. Despite the many obstacles inherent in government decision-making, we still work to best represent you, in a very real sense, our shareholders.