

# **Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia and Digital Archive for Madison County, Illinois**

## **Lisa Peck Oral History Interview**

Kelli West, Interviewer

Highland, Illinois

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**Kelli West (KW):** Alright this is Kelli West interviewing Lisa Peck in Highland Illinois. Uh, interview over the Madison County oral history project. So Lisa tell me about your career path.

**Lisa Peck (LP):** Um, well I got my bachelors in political science and a minor in history and there's not a whole lot you can do with that besides uh continue your education. So I decided to enroll in the public administrations program at SIU. I had liked the government and budget related questions- or um classes that I'd had in undergrad so I decided to enter that program and I was accepted. At the same time I got an internship at Madison County Community Development. And so I started there as an intern and worked as an intern for about a year. So about half way through the program they successfully participated in a grant application for the neighborhood stabilization program. We were rewarded 2.6 million dollars and they put me, eventually, as administrator over that program and about that time they created a position for me and offered me a full time job. So I worked there for several years. And I had economic development responsibilities for the county that I shared with a gentleman named John Harsoff who's recently passed away. And that neighborhood stabilization program.

**KW:** So where did you go to school at?

**LP:** SIU for both undergrad and grad school.

**KW:** And you got your bachelors in political science?

**LP:** Correct.

**KW:** And then you moved on to public administration?

**LP:** Yes.

**KW:** What caused you to pursue your masters?

**LP:** Um, just that there wasn't any real career path with readily available with just a bachelors and political science, or at least I didn't see one. Um, and I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do by, you know, I knew I did enjoy the local government courses but, you know, I didn't- I was still trying to figure out exactly what I wanted my career to be and through that process, through the masters in public administration that kind of honed in on local government and that's what I've been doing ever since.

**KW:** And you got that grant opportunity while you were pursuing your masters? Or- when did that come out?

**LP:** Yes the, uh, we wrote the neighborhood stabilization program grant while I was interning still. And then it took quite a bit of time to actually get the award. And then they offered me the full time position. I- there was somebody else who was administering it at first but she had too many job duties so they created the position and I had that. And then the economic development and I really enjoyed the economic development part of my job.

**KW:** Why did you enjoy that part?

**LP:** Because at the time on my block, um, or you know within a couple of blocks of where I lived almost every house had been touched by the economic downturn and almost every family had somebody who had been laid off. And the main focus when you boil it all down of economic development is creating jobs and increasing the tax base for the government in order to provide better services. So feeling like I was part of the solution, or at least helping, by trying to attract those jobs, it was- I found that to be gratifying.

**KW:** What, what city did you live in during this project?

**LP:** Collinsville.

**KW:** Collinsville?

**LP:** Yeah.

**KW:** And did you live in Collinsville while you were getting your masters?

**LP:** Yeah.

**KW:** So.

**LP:** And my undergrad actually.

**KW:** And your undergrad?

**LP:** Yeah.

**KW:** What did you expect to do after you got your masters degree? I mean did you have a career planned out, like exactly what you wanted to do?

**LP:** Uh, no. I've never been an exact planner and I don't follow prescript-ed outcomes very well, I don't follow recipes well. just kind of take it as it comes and look for opportunity and I was very fortunate at Madison County that gentleman that I worked for, his name was Walter Hunter, when I started there as an intern he said "well let's let you try a few things and see what you're good at and what you like" and that's an almost unheard of opportunity and I will be forever grateful to him for that. That allowed me to really, you know, delve into the economic development role. So.

**KW:** So with that position at Madison County as a community developer-

**LP:** The position's- was called planner.

**KW:** Planner?

**LP:** Uh huh- there all sorts of odd, not necessarily descriptive job titles there. But yeah, after the internship I was hired on as a planner.

**KW:** So what did that job entail exactly?

**LP:** Um, well there was the neighborhood stabilization program which we went in and worked with non-profit developers and communities, several of them throughout Madison County, to provide housing and it was not a low income housing project actually, the income guide lines for this proj- program went up to a hundred and twenty percent of the area median income, so up to twenty percent more than what the median income of the area is. and uh, there was one housing project that was done for low income individuals and that was a rental project, where some folks who needed some assistance, with- struggling with issues, some of them substance abuse, some of them mental illness were able to have some housing and those services were provided to them. And then we built several new homes and a couple of the communities. And then sold those, in one community it was the first new construction permit that had been pulled in fifty years. And then we renovated houses in another community. It took some that were in very bad disrepair and were able to fix them up and have people living back in them again. So that was gratifying. And then with the economic development part of it, no day is ever the same in economic development. Sometimes you meet with developers who have a project. At the county level you're meeting with communities and seeing what assistance that you can provide to them to help them attract business to their community. And we had several programs that could be utilized, low interest loan program. We worked closely with Madison County employment and training, with representatives from the department of commerce and economic opportunity with the state, and the folks in the community. So we had some moderate successes considering the economic climate at the time.

**KW:** Do you think that was- an economic development for low income was really needed in Madison County? Was that a big problem?

**LP:** The, [coughs] pardon me, the housing portion, [coughs], typically in Madison County community development is geared towards low income individuals and they have many other housing programs also. And that is a big issue, and it is an issue in Madison County. If you're spending more than thirty percent on your rent or your mortgage payment, that's percentage that you don't really want to exceed. And there are many people who are spending more than that. So yes, I do think that there in- in a society such as ours we're always going to have people who are more successful than others, and it's kind of what you do to help those that aren't quite as successful and what opportunities you can provide to them that really say something about your society, in my opinion.

**KW:** And do you believe your work as a planner helped benefit who weren't as in good favo- fav- fav- in good favor with the odds?

**LP:** I do think that it did. You know, it's- I think the entire Madison County community development department helped. And I think it helped people. I truly think they did. And I think I was a part of that. And I think that I was able to contribute and we did, we were successful in bringing some jobs to some communities and assisting in some companies expansions were they hired additional people. And that,

that was gratifying, I mean there were certainly a fair amount of days that I could go home at the end of the day and say yeah, yeah that was a good day's work. so, um, and I think that I think that there's a misconception in certainly I think there are people in government who don't really care but there's also a service mentality I saw in a lot of individuals who work in government throughout my career and I'd like to think I'm one of those were it really is trying to figuring out how you can help, how you can give back, how you can make something work and you know, how you can make your little corner of the world a better place, and whatever method is available to you at that time.

**KW:** Well after you worked as a development planner at Madison County you started working in Highland?

**LP:** Well I went over to University City briefly for a year over there. Um, the commute, still living over in Madison County, and making that commute was not fun at all. And I was working a lot of late hours so I found out about the job in Highland and I applied for it. And I interviewed and they offered me the job.

**KW:** And what- what job was that exactly?

**LP:** Oh the first job- well when I started there as a the marketing and economic development coordinator

**KW:** What does that job entail exactly?

**LP:** I was supposed to promit- promote the city and then some of the same economic development responsibilities of trying to attract business and retain business. I still technically hold that title but since then, a year after I started there, I was promoted to community development director. And then I took on additional responsibilities and then a year after that I was promoted to assistant city manager. So I still have all three titles and I still work at all three jobs. But the community development we've been fortunate and able to implement some programs that other communities are not- don't have the resources to do. we had home buyer program that I created that provided down payment and closing cost assistance to individuals within a targeted geographic area in order to help them buy a home because one of the biggest problems for young people is coming up with that down payment, they would end up paying the same amount for the monthly house payment as they do for their rent and a lot of times, but with student loans and starting off in their careers and everything else it's hard to come up with that down payment amount and the closing cost amount. And the difference was with our program, 'cause there are many programs like that, but with our program there were no income limitations. So it was more about stabilizing a certain geographic area, which included the historic part of town. We had seen a lot of the smaller single family homes turning into rentals and that was skewing the percentage from a healthy one to an unhealthy percentage of rental. so by putting this program in place we were able to turn thirty homes, keep them from becoming rentals, and indecently we also saw neighbors after, you know, someone would move in they would start sprucing up the house the neighbors would start sprucing up their house too. So we've got blocks that are looking better. We also found that the home prices have increased dramatically in part because individuals who are selling their homes could ask for a higher asking price because this program wasn't available anywhere else and they could get closer to their asking price, because again the program wasn't available anywhere else. And it was a down payment that's the true barrier. So we had individuals move into Highland from many other communities, even over from St. Louis, so that was- that was very gratifying. I'd go to the closing and there were an awful lot of the individuals, the majority of them by far

were people in their early to mid-twenties - probably mid-twenties, and a fair amount of them were single and they were buying homes and they were so excited. That was just really nice to see.

**KW:** With having this influx of young people come into Highland because of this program did it make a big impact?

**LP:** It's making an impact. It- the program lasted for about a year before we ran out of funding. It was still funded from the city, and so it's only been about a year and a half since the program's inception and yeah, I think it is bringing some new life and some new vitality. Highland has always been a vibrant community and it's always had a certain entrepreneurial spirit to it, which is what makes it able to embrace ideas such as this, that you know, others would be like 'oh no we can't do that. We can't do anything that no one else has done'. It's that mindset of being forward thinking that uh, you know, I think is part of this success of Highland and certainly what has drawn me to the community.

**KW:** Do you think Highland is almost setting an example for other places in Madison County to help?

**LP:** Yes. There are so many ways that Highland's out in the forefront of things. And others, not even just in Madison County, but other communities who like to emulate what Highlands done. Highland has true fiber to the premises gigabit service. It's the first and might still be the only gigabit city in Illinois that provides gigabit service to both individuals and businesses. And that's something that the St. Louis area's been trying to get for a many years. Google fiber just skipped over them again not too long ago. And there are pockets of places over in St. Louis that have it. For an entire community and a community of ten thousand people, in a somewhat rural setting, to have had the foresight and forward thinking um, you know, ability to see that this was something that was going to be important, is, again, pretty impressive.

**KW:** Do you think with the new innovations that Highlands has its kind of breaking this uh misconception of it being like, being like a rural small town, uh city where it does have advancements now?

**LP:** We're trying like heck. Um, we've started some coding classes in the high school. We have a middle school robotics club, high school tech club, and our- have participated in the project Lead the Way curriculum which is STEM caricature for several years but with the addition with the coding classes that a skill set that's definitely need. And it's a path to a good career without necessarily having to go to college and having to incur that cost. So I think that Highland is kind of leading in kind of that tech sector. We've worked towards giving some data center incentive legislation that ended up havin- dying in committee, didn't have anything to do with Highland or with data center incentive legislation, but more with the overall political climate. But we hope to reintroduce that in the future. And the NGA, when they were looking at locating over by Scott Air-force Base and the location up in North County, said that one of the reasons why they didn't come to Illinois is because they could not find a skilled work force over in Illinois. So we've been working very hard at the local level, because that's all we can control, to make it impossible to say that statement ever again in the future. So that's kind of the goal. We do have some tech companies in Highland and we hope to be adding to those. And addressing workforce development needs, kind of on our own on the local level.

**KW:** Oh. Has there been resistance from locals with this advancing technology aspect of Highland?

**LP:** Not with the technology aspect, everyone seems to kind of get that. There's a certain amount of people in Highland, as there are everywhere, who like things exactly the way they are and they don't want them to change. But in reality everything changes, if it doesn't change it dies. So the goal is to kind of steer and guide what that change is going to look like and by, you know, working towards attracting high comp- high tech companies and um, you know, meeting those work force development needs then we don't have the kind of smoke stack industry or the retail industry that we're reliant on for jobs here, as we all know we're in the service sector economy now, that those jobs don't pay well. And in order to raise a family you need some other, other avenues for employment.

**KW:** When you come into Highland it's kind of the typical small town Illinois, uh, little village. With this, are you guys changing the the atmosphere of Highland with just these programs or is it something more?

**LP:** I think there are changes in the atmosphere, I think there are changes in the ambiance in the community, there's a certain vibrancy if, you know, if Highland has one of those communities that has a square and a downtown area. And it's vibrant, it's- there's not a bunch of open store fronts and vacancies on- on that. Highland also has huge participation in civic organizations, the Chamber's very strong here- the Chamber of Commerce, they have a, well they have a festival every May, every weekend from May to October basically. They have have a Halloween Parade, not Halloween, I'm sorry, a Christmas parade that draws several thousand people.

**KW:** Highland people or from other communities?

**LP:** From other communities

**KW:** Oh wow.

**LP:** There's a lot of people from Highland that turn out but people from other communities come too. They have a lot of floats, a lot of parades don't have a lot floats anymore. But the- it's a pretty big deal. Um, and then we've had several new construction, single family home permits pulled this year. More than we have in the past few years. So I think that points to attracting new folks. We've had several expansions of businesses and new businesses in the past couple of years. All economic indicators point to health for Highland.

**KW:** Was it on a decline before you guys had these programs or was it kind of just steady?

**LP:** There was a decline, it's, uh, part of that was due to the economy and part of its due to being in the state of Illinois, it's very difficult to attract people. And industry to Illinois, with its fiscal issues, and at the moment political issues with the disagreements between the parties at the moment. But it's certainly, things have picked up in the in the last couple of years. There's been a significant amount of investment back into the community in both residential and businesses just by- I get the monthly permit totals and that has the construction projects within the community and, you know, it's the last couple years have been very good, very healthy. Sales tax revenues are up, all indicators of economic health are strong. And our last audit was just presented a few weeks ago and they did point that out. So that's definitely positive. And I don't know that a whole lot of other communities in the state or in Madison County would be in such a strong position.

**KW:** What makes you think that Highland's so unique in their position with that? Is it a combination of the residential and financial backing? Or-

**LP:** It's the combination of their willingness to embrace new programs and new ideas. Um, getting the word out, which I've taken very seriously over the past couple of years about the great things that are going on in this community. And the- it's a nice community, the school districts good. Two most important things in a community are the perception of safety and the perception of the school district. And we are both safe and have good school districts here. We have people who are willing to support local businesses, we have individuals who are willing to start new businesses. We have program through the city that's an entrepreneurship program where we will set people up with mentors, if they're wanting to start a new business and help them to become successful. Just, again, that's another way- another thing that Highland does that, not aware of any other community, that has a program such as that. And you know, it's kind of Highland out there at the forefront yet again.

**KW:** You mentioned the- the impact of Illinois political at the local level. Has kind of the mishaps with Illinois' political system trickled down to really profoundly affect Highland?

**LP:** Highland and every other community in Illinois. Um, you know, (sighs) when you're the punch line on the late night talk shows, which Illinois was, starting even back several years ago that's not a good thing. When your pension debt is the second or third worst in the nation and that's constantly, that message is constantly out there that's not a good thing. When the state does not have any money and does not have a budget and that's out there that's not a good thing. And then you've got states all around that are competing and even if they're not, you know, in that much better shape, or they're taxes aren't that much lower, or they don't have that much more going on, they're doing a better job of promoting themselves than Illinois is at the moment. So yes, um, to get manufacturing to come to Illinois. There's some reassuring that's definitely happening with manufacturing but it's going to Southern states. It's, it is not coming to Illinois for the most part anywhere south of the Chicago area. And that's only because of the assets that are available in the Chicago area. But it's really kind of sad and it definitely is- is detrimental. School funding based on property taxes have- that has two effects, it makes property taxes for- in the state of Illinois very high and it leaves the schools poorly funded. Both of those are not things that attract folks to your state.

**KW:** So with that kind of looming over, you know, local government jobs do you feel like that's a motivating factor for Highland to, kind of, make the community better?

**LP:** Yes, and Highland's always had- they refer to it as Highland the island. [laughs] You know, Highland is very conservative fiscally. And so they're not so reliant on state money or grant money as a lot of other communities might be. So they're able to withstand economic pressures better than most. Now at some point, you know, even Highland will feel those pressures and has, at various times. But yeah Highland is proud of its island status.

**KW:** Can you tell me a little bit more about that- that Highland Island. I've never heard that

**LP:** Uh, they're very proud of the fact that they're not out there reliant on everyone else. When I worked at Madison County Highland did not get grant money very often. Now Highland did not have a

demographic that suited most grants which are based on income and poverty. But (cough in background) they also, you know, were very proud to, uh, be responsible fiscally and financially. And not be reliant they- people in Highland do not like to be told what to do and they do not like to have to rely on anyone else. It's part of that entrepreneurial mind set I believe.

**KW:** So the people of Highland kind of pride themselves on being, uh, fairly independent?

**LP:** Very much so.

**KW:** Hm. What have been some- or what has been the most enjoyable project you've worked on in Highland?

**LP:** Hmm. I'm not sure. I definitely enjoyed that, you know, that home buyer program. Creating that and implanting it and seeing that through. We had business plan competition to profile the Gigabit. We had a 3D printer company who won that and came and setup shop in Highland. Um, that was very very stressful, we had 50,000 dollars in prizes and I'd never put on a business plan competition but we partnered with a small business development center at SIUE and Patrick McCain was very helpful. He was the executive director at the time. And he was very helpful with that project. We have a neighbors helping neighbors helping program that we've increased our focus on code enforcement, particularly in the older area of town. And for those individuals who aren't, who are elderly or disabled and not able to keep their property in up to code, there's a program to help assist with that. The problem is we haven't had a whole lot of utilization because of that same prideful mentality that, you know, that keeps them the folks here independent. So I can't, I don't know that I can just pick one. There's probably thirty or forty more things that aren't popping into my head at the moment. But every day is different, every day I, you know, go into work and I- the time passes very quickly. I enjoy what I'm doing. I feel like I work very hard and I try to be creative. But I enjoy it and I have the sense that I'm contributing here and so that's gratifying.

**KW:** With your current position at Highland, I mean, you have three titles basically

**LP:** I was going to say which one [laughter]

**KW:** So I imagined that's pretty strenuous on your work life. I mean that's a heavy workload, right?

**LP:** Uh, yeah it is, don't have a whole lot of other things going on at the moment. And that's one thing that I'm mindful that I am kind of sacrificing at the moment. But even when I'm not at work and I- I do not have a forty hour work week, I never have. But um, even when I'm not at work I spend a lot thinking about work and thinking about these programs and thinking about what can I come up with that would help contribute and make the community stronger. So, yeah, I mean I'm, um, I have a tendency to be a workaholic anyway. Good for employers, maybe not so good for me.

**KW:** I mean do you enjoy being a workaholic though?

**LP:** I don't know if anyone enjoys being a workaholic [laughter]. Um, it just sort of is how it is. And it's easy to find yourself were, I like to have a certain amount of things going on. And I like to have a certain amount of ideas percolating and, you know, but then it seems like all a sudden it can reach that point that were you are like wow. Alright, I gotta take a deep breath and just, you know, focus on one thing for a



little bit. I feel like I do an awful lot of juggling. You know, majorly I'm in a circus. But it just is a part of my personality and I am driven and as long as I feel like I'm contributing then it's worth it. You know, if I feel like I'm spinning my wheels then it gets very frustrating.

**KW:** Do you feel like that workaholic tendencies is pretty common in local government?

**LP:** Hmm. Some. I would say it's the minority. I, there are several other folks in Highland and that other places that I've been and others that I've observed but I would say it is not the majority. But certainly there are workaholics and those are the ones who have that kind of service mentality and who are driven to give back.

**KW:** With being so dedicated to Highland do you feel like it's paying off seeing these programs get- get on their feet and giving health, going back into the community?

**LP:** I do. If I didn't that would be more, almost more, for frustrating than I could take. But that mindset of being able to embrace ideas, being able to go into the City Manager's office and say hey I was thinking about this and, you know, kind of pitch an idea. And have that taken seriously and have you know some credence given to my ideas and latitude to implement them. Um, yeah, I mean I think that that makes it worthwhile. Without that it wouldn't be.

**KW:** Why does that make it worthwhile to you?

**LP:** I don't know. I think that's just a part of- a part of who I am, I think. I volunteered a lot over the course of my life, I've been active in a lot of organizations. And it's just- it just goes back to that feeling like you need to make the world a better place. And you know, that's huge so you break it down, well that's what I do with my projects too. You know, you have this big idea and then you break it down and you say okay what can I do to make my little corner of the world- what can I do to make my block better, what can I do to make my family and my household better then what can I do to make my block better and then what can I do to make my community better and then, you know, what can I do to make the county better? You can't- I haven't figured out how to make the state better. But you know, it's just that kind of mindset and normally I would never talk about any of this, it's just what's kind of in my head and in my heart. But, I'm hoping no one listens to it ever [laughter]. But, um, you know that's- to me that's just part of the deal, you know? You have to contribute, what's the point if you're not.

**KW:** Do you think a lot of people in Highland or in Madison County have that type of mindset?

**LP:** Think a lot of people in Highland do. There are so many service organizations here. And there's a feeling and realization that a lot of folks in Highland have done decently well for themselves. And that they need to give back. There's a lot of rallying around that I've seen in this community. Madison County as a whole, eh, some parts of it are, some parts aren't. Some parts have had civil discourse kind of has broken down.

**KW:** Could you, could you expand on that a little bit where civil discourse has broken down?

**LP:** A little bit [laughter] but I don't think I'll delve into this too deep. But there are communities in Madison County where the political have become so divisive that people are just ruthless from one side of

the isle to the other. And that should not be the case. There's room for differing opinions and there's room for, you know, contrasting ideas but there should be respect involved. And in some areas that respect is gone and, um, it's not, it is not contributing to health of the community at all. It's just creating more issues than those people realize, both in, you know, making divides between neighbors which weaken neighborhoods which in turn will weaken the community. To bad press, which is going to chase away, you know, businesses and residents who might think about coming there if what you're reading is all negative then why would you want to go there? People want to be a part of something that's good and vibrant and healthy. And, you know, if you Google Highland that's what you see.

**KW:** Well do you have any one particular memory of your work experience in Highland that's your favorite?

**LP:** Hmm. I don't know. Um, I don't know. I go back to, you know, a couple of those closings with a couple of those families. You know, there was- there were single people certainly but there were a young couple who were buying a house. And they were just so excited and, you know, to see that- the future, you know, that is the future of Highland. You have to be able to attract young people to your community. And, you know, their intent is to stay there raise their family in this community. And it just, I don't know, was very rewarding.

**KW:** It's almost like seeing that stereotypical American Dream being able to come true in Highland.

**LP:** Yeah, it is. It is, but it is also the promise of the next generation because there's a lot of communities where the young, particularly a lot of rural communities, where the young folks are leaving and they don't come back. And that's- that's not healthy for your town, you cannot continue down that path forever [laughs]. So Highland didn't necessarily have that, I mean there were a certain amount of young folks that left and never came back, but a certain amount did come back. But now it's new young folks coming to town, and you know, kind of starting their lives here. And that's- that's the future.

**KW:** Do you think having new young- new young people come in here, not from a different community, helps Highland thrive?

**LP:** I think it does. Um, again there are some Highland folk who disagree with me. But yeah, I mean, having new people, new blood, new ideas is, I think, it's an excellent thing. I think it's very healthy to have different perspectives. So yeah, somebody who came from Germantown, I think we had someone from Germantown, came to the community is going to have a different mindset on things than somebody, then the folks we had that came from Glen Carbon. The people from St. Louis are going to have differing ideas then the people from Troy. And I think that definitely strengthens the community.

**KW:** Well, can you imagine yourself staying in local government for the rest of your career?

**LP:** I think so. I definitely think so. Local government is where you have the most impact on day to day life for people. It's also- you're the one that they're going to get frustrated at first and you're the one who's going to hear about it. But you do have the most- you touch their lives, you know. The roads, the park system, the trash pickup, the ambulance service, the police protection, the- it's just everything. You know, you touch these people's lives on a daily basis.

**KW:** You mentioned that since you are, I mean it's such a close connection with the community and then you're job position. Have you been in line of fire before were citi- citizens have upset with you, or locals have?

**LP:** I've had, um, some individuals who have been displeased with the actions of me or my department. I have code enforcement and building and zoning under me. Those departments don't ever really tell people good news. So it's a daily- I told [laughs] I tell them thank you all the time because no one else does. But it is truly a very thankless job, you're going out and telling people that, you know, there property is not up to code or that there was a problem or their grass is over eight inches high. Or you know sometimes there's failed inspections on a construction project. So yeah, I've- I've been in the line of fire and I've had my staff in the line of fire. And then I've had people who are upset about something totally unrelated to anything that we had done. And a lot of times if you just listen. People want to be heard, they want to know you heard them. They want to know that you understand. Sometimes there's things that I don't have any control over, I can't fix it, I didn't- you know, the city did not break it so we can't fix it. But if you transparent, you tell people, you know, the truth you tell them what you know, you tell them what you can do. You tell them the why. That usually goes- and you listen, that usually goes a long way.

**KW:** Do you think that's the most important part of your job, is being there for local people and being able to listen? Communicate with them

**LP:** Yeah, in one way or the other I think that it pretty much boils down to just that. Um, it's you know listening. I don't set policy, government workers don't set policy we implement it. So we have to know what it is that the citizens want which our direction is supposed to come from the elected officials. But yeah, you have to listen. You have to have your ear to the ground, you have to know what it is that people are looking for.

**KW:** Um, is there anything we didn't talk about that you'd like to add?

**LP:** I don't know, I feel like I've, uh, gone off on several tangents.

**KW:** Nah, it was all super interesting, [laughter] don't worry.

**LP:** And I don't know if there's anything really that I would add. Um, I think if people are interested and feel driven to give back working in local government is one of the ways that you can do that. I mean there's many others, you know, but teaching, non-profits, I mean a myriad of other ways also. But, you know, working in local government certainly I do believe is one of those. And I don't know if there's anything else to add.

**KW:** Alright, well thank you for doing the interview and appreciate all your work in Highland, you know, helping the community thrive again because that helps all of Madison County. So just, uh, thanks again for being part of this interview.

**LP:** You're welcome.