

Times-Register

Westlake town manager gets award

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WESTLAKE -- Tom Brymer, Westlake's town manager and academy superintendent, recently was awarded Public Administrator of the Year by the North Texas Chapter of the American Society of Public Administrators.

The award was announced in February at the Master of Public Administration Alumni-Student Conference at the University of North Texas.

Ted Benavides, President of the NTASPA and former Dallas city manager, presented Brymer with the prestigious award during a luncheon with more than 270 fellow MPA alumni, staff and students in attendance.

Brymer began as Westlake's town manager in April 2008.

Benavides said nine department directors who work for Brymer recommend him for the award.

"That stood out," Benavides said. "For a boss to have that many people nominate him, that's pretty special."

Benavides said decisions Brymer has made as town manager have not been easy, such as recommending a property tax to one of the few Texas towns without one.

The 16-cent property tax rate, which went into effect October 2010, was approved in a 3-2 vote after hours of debate and discussion during a council meeting that lasted until 1:30 a.m.

"When Tom came on board to Westlake, the town didn't have a property tax," Benavides said. "He knew that was a liability and went about the process to educate the community and council for the need to change that ... For him to do that, it took some courage."

Benavides said the selection committee also took note of Brymer's leadership of the state's only municipally-owned charter school.

"Town manager is plenty of work," he said. "Tom is also the superintendent of the school."

The UNT-MPA program, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, is currently ranked No. 9 in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. Brymer graduated from the MPA program in 1976 and has completed more than 37 years in municipal public service.

During Brymer's career, he has worked in many municipalities including city manager of College Station, Lockhart and Gilmer and as assistant city manager of Olathe, Kansas.

Laura Wheat, mayor of Westlake, said she was honored to have been invited to attend the event at UNT.

"The respect for, and admiration of, Brymer by his peers was almost palpable," Wheat said. "Tom has had such an amazing career in public service, and this award served as a wonderful reminder to me that the Town of Westlake is so very lucky to have him."

Several of the town's staff members also feel lucky to have Brymer as their boss and town leader.

Facilities, parks and recreation director Troy Meyer said he is grateful Brymer stresses the importance of team-work and appreciates his desire to focus down the road and plan for Westlake's future.

"With long-term forecasting and planning in areas like finance, infrastructure, facilities and services ... (Brymer) is always making sure we will maintain the unique character, landscape and success of Westlake and Westlake Academy," Meyer said.

Amanda DeGan, assistant to the town manager and municipal court administrator, said having Brymer as a leader is beneficial for all.

"The entire town benefits by having a town manager who can balance the responsibility of both the town and the school for the betterment of our residents, students and staff," DeGan said.

Ginger Awtry, director of communications and community affairs for Westlake, said she is glad her boss provides the staff with training needed to be successful.

"I appreciate Tom's belief and efforts to provide staff with opportunities for professional growth and leadership development so that we continue to cultivate both a professional and personal sense of ownership and commitment to make a difference," Awtry said. "(This) provides the best service possible for each and every stakeholder in the Westlake community."

Brymer said he was very surprised and honored to get the award.

"Peer recognition is some of the highest recognition one can receive which makes this even more special, especially when I know there are many gifted public administrators that are equally deserving of this recognition," he said.

Brymer said what keeps him going is the ability to make small, but hopefully lasting, positive differences in the communities he has served.

"The ability to make an impact on a community that leaves things better than I found them gives me the motivation to make difficult decisions that come with this job," Brymer said.

Brymer said even though his job, like other professions, has difficult situations and moments, in the end it's extremely rewarding. He wants to encourage young people to seriously consider public administration, especially city management, as a career.

"Good local government is essential for our country's continued success as a representative democracy as it is the level of government closest to the people and impacts more people's lives daily than any other," Brymer said. "We need our best and brightest young people to go into this field so local government can provide citizens with a great quality of life."

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Submitted photo

From right to left Ted Benavides of the American Society of Public Administrators with Westlake Town Manager Tom Brymer.

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