

MAYOR'S CORNER

A BLOG BY MAYOR JAMES D. STEWART, JR.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2025



WHEN LEADERS HURT: A LETTER TO IRONDALE

Dear Irondale,

I need to tell you something I've held inside for over a month.

I'm hurting.

You might think that because I'm your mayor, I don't feel pain the way you do. That attacks bounce off me. That lies don't wound.

They do.

WHAT HAPPENED

On June 23rd at 1:30 PM, my opponent introduced himself. He said, "Let's not run a negative campaign."

I looked him in the eye and said, "I've never run a negative campaign in my life. I'm not about to start because you're my opponent." For two months, he broke that promise.

He lied about Harvard. My PhD. How I spend your money. He invented a campaign manager I never had. He questioned my ethics.

Every day, my wife received calls. Friends told her what they heard. What they saw on Facebook. The Guardian posted lies and called it "free speech."

I stayed silent. I let people talk about me like a dog. I chose not to fight back.

But it hurt. Deeply.

WHY I'M WRITING THIS

It took me a month to process this pain. Authentic leadership means working through hurt so I can serve you with my whole heart. This letter is my closure. My healing. My way forward.

Some people become so desperate to win that they'll abandon truth. Campaigns reveal what's truly in a person's heart. Thank God you're smart enough to see through it.

MY PROMISE TO YOU

To the 2,271 who voted for me: I won't waste your vote. I promise. For the next four years, I will lead differently. I'm leading with vulnerability. That means being honest when things hurt—being real about struggles. Being open with my heart—even when it's uncomfortable.

Life isn't always positive. Truth sometimes hurts. But through it all—through every lie, every attack, every painful moment—I still love Irondale. And I always will. Let's move forward together.

With gratitude and hope,

James D. Stewart, Jr.

Mayor, City of Irondale

