



## Mayor's Message – September 2020 (pre Labor Day Celebrations...be safe – have fun!

It's not often that we are **happy to say goodbye to "summer at the Bay"**, but this has been a season of challenges. With endless 100<sup>o</sup>+ days (wearing masks), cancelled events, loss of loved ones, and quarantined days indoors (though the air conditioning is nice!), and a fire that tore through a fully prepared community in the City of Horseshoe Bay, **we are ready to welcome a Fall season ahead**. It will have its own challenges, but as we have begun to find a rhythm – the gradual relaxation of heat and tipping our toes into safe ways to reconnect – we can begin to enjoy the blessings of our community again and look ahead with confidence.

### CoVid Update

Yes...**CoVid is a part of our reality for the foreseeable future**. And while we continue to have positive tests, those contracting the virus seem to be healing more quickly. Thankfully, we do not have the increased deaths some communities are sadly experiencing. As of today, local tracking of cases indicates **there is only one case (male/age 40-49) under quarantine in HSB**.

You will be hearing of **several upcoming events, some of 100 or more** at Quail Point, Escondido, Resort. These are being held cooperatively after seeking approval (as required by Governor's orders) with detailed safety protocols. In this way, we can continue celebrating new marriages, anniversaries, special events, and memorializing the lives of those who pass on.

As Autumn emerges though, so comes **flu season**. **Our local pharmacy is receiving vaccine** ...and you are encouraged to get those shots (along with pneumonia, shingles if you haven't already). We have become pin cushions of sorts for sure – but hopefully to our benefit. Ideally, we will see a CoVid shot in the near future (if we haven't all contracted and healed by then!)

### Community Shout Outs

Well, shout out indeed to the Trails community members (and staunch "firewise" advocate Helen Smith). The accidental spark from a dragging truck chain blazed through 400 acres without loss of lives or homes (except, sadly, one in Blue Lake). Chief Batla said this miraculous containment was due in no small part to the proactive preparation of the Trails community using 'firewise' practices to keep underbrush cleared, firebreaks, and debris free focus throughout. We are encouraging all areas throughout our city to put these preventative practices in place...and have a "go" plan for emergencies (Trails neighbors had less than 10 minutes to grab and go!). \*See: <file:///C:/Users/cclin/Downloads/785531.pdf> from National Firewise.

The enormous **fire was mitigated fully due to YOUR prepared first responders** – and a host of area fire departments (mostly volunteer teams leaving their communities and regular jobs/families on our behalf). On a 106<sup>o</sup> day, wearing full weight gear, these men/women

stepped into over **120° hard work** for hours.....getting in front of the fire to set boundaries that stopped it in its track and protected spread into other communities.

Full gratitude for the volunteers was saluted by the Trails with individual written notes. A grateful team is working to gather donations (with a generous donor matching up to \$25,000) to **provide the Volunteer Fire Departments from the Highland Lakes with support**. With CoVid, fund-raising efforts are limited and as with all volunteer programs – they are in need of support for equipment/gear. Those interested in helping – see donation options at bottom of this message. Special thanks to the generosity of time, talent, and treasure by Dick Nelson and Jan Burrows for helping us show our gratitude. **The next need for the volunteers could be your area one day – help them be prepared!**

We are especially grateful for our own **Officer Lin Thorp's recovery** who, like other police officers, dove into helping haul equipment to back up the fire team only to suffer what appeared to be a heat stroke. Thankfully (in its own way) the intervention revealed a hidden blockage that was full heart attack bound...and Lin was immediately taken in for open heart surgery. His service blessed us while also catching a potential life threat for him.

### **City Updates**

Your council has proudly **put forward a budget without tax rate increase (remains at .27)** that meets the needs for your desired first rate services and the priorities you identified in long-range planning. With over 80% of funds focused on staff related support, it honors all staff with competitive salaries/ benefits, and ensures each department is equipped to serve. Always a financial impact, the staff insurance was negotiated down from an anticipated 12% increase to 5%....without declining medical services. This budget further provides for replacement of aged vehicles, large scale equipment needs, and maintaining current training.

When the fire occurred last month - the fire, police, public works and utility/water departments were all hands on deck to provide immediate and direct action. But behind the scenes were also staff preparing for evacuation site if needed, aerial mapping, communication to engage and inform, and coordination for food/water/relief for the over 100 city and volunteer teams. We are so pleased the budget supports all city staff to maximize all services.

The budget further provides an **additional 1 mile of ribbon paved road** and three years of seal coating, upgraded technology equipment/licensure, staff support to meet governance and general operations needs such as fees, maintenance contracts, and compliance requirements for unfunded government mandates. Taking advantage of our AA+ bond rating (the highest of any comparative city) and our low debt ratio allows us an approximate 1.75% interest rate loan rather than drawing funds from investments or adding to our tax rate ...and will meet all needs in a fiscally sound approach. This allows us to distribute the cost of the new/coated roads over time so that those who will benefit from the roads in future years will share the responsibility for payment rather than all the cost coming fully from current taxpayers. We are also pleased to finally have **an action plan under development (Phase I) that may provide dependable**

**internet** to much of eastern HSBay West and Summit Rock that has gone without service. This plan provides a backbone that will allow for expanded service quality to Horseshoe Bay Proper (Phase II) and other areas within the City. Still in discussion – but hopeful!

**The General Fund budget** further provides some modest cost support for special interests in the Nature Park/Martin Park/Pickle Ball Court, MF Library, area Workforce Development training, quality of lake treatment - and the Boogie at the Bay and Fourth of July Celebrations partnerships with the Resort, POA, and HSB Business Alliance (**2021 Fireworks – yes!**).

The Council was able to reduce Utility Fund/water and sewer cost increase from the anticipated 12% to 9%,(8% in '22, 5% in '23, then aiming at a 0%) increase within 3 years when we will have met the essential level of reserve fund (depleted with earlier cost needs). Even with the new \$6 million dollar wastewater treatment upgrade (after 30 years of use – and now ready for the next 30 years), significant infrastructure upgrades to drinking water security, water quality technology innovation, and more efficient meter management...their actual costs for service have remained significantly low – 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest compared to surrounding cities. **The average impact of water usage** increase (10,000 gallon usage) will **be about \$5 a month** per household.

The final approval for the 20-21 budget will be at the September City Council meeting.

We will be **meeting with the Property Owner Association presidents in September** to review matters specific to the varied communities. If you have ideas, concerns, or questions – please be sure to let your representative know.....and **THANK THEM**. Their willingness to serve as a conduit for communications (such as this monthly update and emergency notices) helps us with the very real challenge of staying in touch in HSB. (Thanks to the Beacon/Highlander as well!)

### **In other news**

In this election season, we are **proud to recognize Elsie Thurman** as the one new candidate – taking on the challenge of service to you. She **will join Kent Graham and Elaine Waddill**, both of whom work countless hours weekly on your behalf (scouring the budget for efficiency OR exploring all potential options for improved internet capacity, respectively). We are partially in denial (but also understanding and appreciative of the decision) that **Jerry Gray will be retiring** after 6 years of service. Jerry, as I have said, has been the calm, reflective spirit interjecting clear thinking to ensure we have examined all costs and necessity of decisions being made on taxpayers' behalf. **He will be missed** – but we feel certain he will remain a resource as needed.



Hint..  
Jerry

The city building, a hold over from multiple decades of MUD (Municipal Utility District) use before the 2005 City incorporation, has reached capacity even as our city population and needs have doubled/tripled in some ways. The coming year will begin examining how best to proceed with needed city facilities that provide for the best use of space for operations, collaboration between departments, and citizen service.

The planned 11-acre Nature Park “conceptual master plan” is completed and is on the city website for your perusal. The Board for the park is moving forward, with kick start funding

from the city to support their outreach for grants (Texas Parks and Wildlife, LCRA, etc.) and partners/donors. It promises to be a highlight for our community usage as hiking, dog walking, nature exploration – with honey-bee havens, birdwatching blinds, butterfly paths, native plantings, and more. This should also be a great daytrip for grandkids and guests ....and will attract new residents with similar desires for appreciation of Hill Country preservation and enjoyment. And what a great place to sit and enjoy the sunset or take in the full canopy of stars due to our Dark Skies initiative. Photo ops will abound!

**Finally (really!) –**

It is easy to be dismayed with current events – but we can all take pride and comfort in the good news that really is our fortunate daily life in this small community. With our local businesses open, our social groups finding new ways to connect, the Resort fully partnering, while our houses of worship use new technology to ‘keep the faith’ .....we are headed for a more positive season ahead – with potential cooler days and greater community activity.

As one Trails neighbor said – just a day after fire literally was at their doorstep, *American Pride and community spirit are alive and well in Horseshoe Bay.* Blessed indeed....



Cynthia Clinesmith, Mayor

City Website - [www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov](http://www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov)



for CoVid19 details/county and state actions

**\*To THANK and support the VFDs, you can donate in several ways. All funds will go to the VFDs**

- For credit card donations, go to [crctx.org](http://crctx.org), scroll down; be sure to put ‘fires’ in credit card comment area
- Drop off a check (made payable to Community Resource Centers of Texas, with “Trails/Blue Lake fire” in the memo line) to the Horseshoe Bay City Hall at 1 Community Drive.
- Mail checks to the Community Resource Center at 1016 Broadway in Marble Falls or dropped off at the temporary offices at 300 Avenue N in Marble Falls.
- Call the Burnet County Community Resource Center at 830-693-0700 for further information.

<u>Burnet County</u>	<u>Llano County</u>	<u>Other Fire Services</u>	<u>Other Non-Fire Support</u>
Marble Falls Fire Rescue	Kingsland VFD	Round Mtn VFD	Marble Falls Area EMS
Marbles Falls VFD	Sandy Harbor VFD	Johnson City VFD	Burnet County PCT 4
Spicewood VFD	Sunrise Beach VFD	Texas Forest Service	Burnet County Sheriff
Burnet VFD	Granite Shoals VFD	Balcones NWR	Llano County Sheriff
East Lake Buchanan VFD	Buchanan VFD		Llano County EmerMgmt
Bertram VFD	Llano VFD		Llano County Judge
Cassie VFD	Cottonwood Shores VFD		MFalls Communications
City of Burnet FD			Horseshoe Bay PD
Hoover Valley VFD			Horseshoe Bay Utilities
			Horseshoe Bay Public Works
			Horseshoe Bay City Staff

Over 100 Highland Lakes heroes joining forces to support the community! THANKS!

**Note: Full Press Release for donation support to VFDs attached**