

Citizens Academy Graduates Another Class of Super Citizens

Local governments are where the rubber meets the road. The task of providing a safe environment and essential services to a community is not always inherently clear and may be easily taken for granted.

Perhaps you wonder if you receive good value for your taxes and fees paid to the City, or what is involved in providing safe drinking water for your home 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Are you curious about what it takes to have top rate police and fire departments respond to emergencies? Do you know how your Mayor and City Council are elected and how they plan for the future of the City? These functions happen every day so we can live our busy lives comfortably.

In 2016, Horseshoe Bay leaders initiated a program to promote understanding of the City with a goal of creating long-term partnerships for shared community expectations and actions. The City's Citizens' Academy educates citizens through direct contact with City staff and elected officials, site visits, and hands-on activities. In remembrance of long-time resident Dottie Anderson, a spring 2019 graduate, the academy was renamed the *Dottie Anderson Citizens Academy*.

"This is a wonderful program dedicated to informing our citizens about the daily tasks required to run a city of Horseshoe Bay's high caliber," said City Manager Jeff Koska. "Not only do we provide information, we gain information from the students. We also fill many of our City Council and Committee seats with graduates who want to make a positive impact by serving the community."

The 17th academy recently ended, and a graduation ceremony was held on December 11. The City congratulates the following Horseshoe Bay residents and Fall 2025 Citizens Academy graduates: John Bellamy, David DeLeon, Angela Ezell, Malcolm Frazer, Adrian James, John James, Barry Oakes, Melissa Oakes, Howard Rough, Michael Saba, Paul Thornhill, Samantha Vermillion, and Scott Vermillion.

"The Citizens Academy is a must do for all Horseshoe Bay residents. You learn about the many incredible services our City provides us," says John Bellamy, a member of the 17th Academy class. "Finally, you realize we have the best City staff in the world."

Graduate Samantha Vermillion says, "This was an incredible experience to better understand the functioning of our city and its various departments. I am so impressed by the extraordinary professionals who make our city work. They are experts who care deeply about our city and about each other. It was a delight to meet them, ask them questions, and hear from them the why behind what they do."

During the ceremony, each student is presented with a certificate signed by the Mayor and a jacket or vest with the City logo. Mayor Jeff Jones, a Citizens Academy graduate, said he received a wealth of information and understanding of the inner workings of the city during his class about three years ago.

"Upon entering citizens academy, my thoughts of city government were basically like turning on a light in a dark room," says Mayor Jones, an academy graduate. "We don't think about it, and we just flip a switch and assume it's going to work. However, upon learning about all the different aspects of the City, it became evident that it's very complex, not simple. There are so many moving parts to City operation, including human interactions, capital expenditure needs, and budget requirements. The

progression from classroom to city hall meant putting that knowledge to work, all the while depending on the professional men and women who work for our City. As I have transitioned from council to mayor, I have drawn many times on the valuable lessons learned in Citizens Academy and have made lasting friendships along the way.”

To date, 220 residents have participated in the academy, gaining knowledge while fostering a sense of community. The 18th Academy will begin in February and run for nine class sessions. Each Thursday from 2 to 4 p.m., a different subject about local government will be covered by the City's various departments. Classes will cover a range of topics including City Council and Elections, Open Government, Fire, Police, Utilities, Finance, Code Enforcement, Development Services, and Municipal Court. The final session is a graduation ceremony.

If you want to learn more about the Citizens Academy, please contact Cindee Sharp, Communications Director, at csharp@horseshoe-bay-tx.gov or visit www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov/citizensacademy. A brief application, available on the City's website, must be completed to be considered for the academy. Applicants must be a City of Horseshoe Bay resident, with preference given to full-time residents. Emphasis is given to creating a diverse class from as many neighborhoods as possible within Horseshoe Bay.



Congratulations to the City of Horseshoe Bay 17th Class of Citizens Academy Graduates. Pictured are, left to right, Paul Thornhill, Scott Vermillion, Samantha Vermillion, Michael Saba, Malcolm “Kip” Frazer, Barry Oakes, John Bellamy, Melissa Oakes, John James, Adrian James, Howard Rough, Angela Ezell, and David DeLeon.