

Council Comments...

Good Evening Horseshoe Bay

Your City Council met early and often this week – Monday morning, bright and early, we began a five hour discussion of the next fiscal year budget. Remember the rule as we progress – any references to “fixin’ the streets” and how we pay for it is “a work in progress.” Since it’s been a month since you got your last admonishment, you might have forgotten. By the way, I’ll let you know when hard decisions are imminent. More Streets Workshops will be held in the coming months.

Here we go – the budget. The initial 2010 budget for streets upgrade (not recurring maintenance) is \$2 million. This will get us started on our upgrade of perhaps up to 40 miles of streets. Sources for the \$2 mil are a \$1.5 m assessment on folks whose streets are being upgraded, \$250,000 from the Resort and \$250,000 from ad valorem taxes. More to come.

Development Services has assumed no growth this year over last in new residential and commercial construction. As you will notice, these budget items will be addressed with a minimum of detail. Five hours of detail would bore you and give me writer’s cramp. As our community grew this year; tickets, warning tickets, arrests, etc. are all up 20 – 40%. Chief Lane asked for an additional investigator. Also the Chief would like to keep the Police Department Office open weekends, not rely on Llano County Dispatch and have a trained full-time back-up dispatcher. So an additional dispatcher is necessary. All agreed these were good ideas. An increased use of part-time firefighters this year, along with several operational considerations resulted in the Council’s support of three full-time firefighters to replace the part-time folks.

Folks, if you listened to our budget discussion, you would quickly ascertain that “Public Safety” trumps all other issues. Streets, water, wastewater are all important and will be the best the city can provide – but – Chief Lane and Chief Fiero’s folks look out for us 24/7, so – enough said.

Since our servers (computers) are old and out-of-date, we’ll judiciously select new hardware and software. Our City Secretary Teresa Moore realizing that City Hall is overrun with paper, researched, priced and recommended “laserfiche.” You can’t catch, clean or eat it, but it will efficiently allow us to destroy or archive lots of old paper documents for not much money. Documents will be available through secure computer software.

On to the Utility Budget. Jeff Koska led us through an hour discussion of water and (yuk) wastewater. So here’s the two biggies. For the second year in a row, the utility operations will not require ad valorem subsidization. Also, most importantly, Jeff will purchase a larger pump for the affluent pond. This will result in more water to irrigate Ram and Apple. A major move to alleviate our recent “stinky” problem.

Bottom line – a few adds to the city headcount – some key capital expenditures – increased property valuations (remember “County Assessor”) will result in the City again creating a revenue surplus at our current tax rate of \$.35 per \$100 valuation. A new tax rate was proposed and will be revealed at the conclusion of this epistle (don’t look ahead).

Okay – now it’s Tuesday. Reverend Pete prayed – we pledged – here we go. Celebrated Chief Lane’s 10 year service anniversary. Bill – congrats and thanks for all you do.

Two areas in Burnet County asked our city for our concurrence on the inclusion in two emergency service districts of portions of our ETJ. Both requests were denied on a 5 – 0 vote. Our neighbors in Wilderness Cove opposed one proposition and neither seemed to be appropriate at this time.

More on the “stinky” problem – 500 pounds of chlorine and an increase in irrigation at Ram and Apple seem to have improved the smell index.

The new AT&T tower construction will be discussed in August. Yours truly did report that the FAA has given us the green light. The tower will have no impact on air traffic safety. More to come.

An Annexation Service Plan for six small areas in our ETJ and virtually surrounded by the City was approved 5 – 0.

The Mayor was authorized to complete a development agreement for a veterinary clinic within our ETJ (near Highway 71). Construction will be to Horseshoe Bay standards and have no exterior kennels. The Mayor and Councilmen Bird and Spence will prepare a proposal on streets to be chip-sealed this year. This is “street maintenance.” Streets to be upgraded soon will not be chip-sealed.

Brief discussions were held concerning an ordinance prohibiting smoking in public places and a ¼% sales tax dedicated to street maintenance. Sales tax dollars collected to date have allowed visitors to our city to help maintain a high level of city services. Calling of a November 3 election on this issue will be considered at the August 25 council meeting. Speaking of the November 3 election – Mayor Bob and Councilwoman Claudia indicated they enjoy our little monthly get togethers so much, they will seek re-election. Councilman Bird, after serving two terms, will return to a life of leisure. Seriously, each of these folks has served our community well during incorporation, zoning, home rule, streets and a myriad of fun topics.

I look forward to another year with Bob and Claudia and wish John “Happy Trails.” Filing for November’s election will begin on August 3 and end on September 2.

Finally a new city ad valorem tax rate for 2010 was proposed. The rate - \$.33 per \$100 valuation is a reduction from last year’s \$.35 rate. This rate will generate approximately the same amount of tax revenue as the previous year. New construction and increased valuations will result in an increase of about \$142m in

tax revenue for the coming year. As of January 1, 2009, taxable value of property in the City of Horseshoe Bay is \$1,586 million. That's a billion and a half folks!

On that happy note, Claudia moved to adjourn and we all re-entered the 100 degree plus furnace we know as "Summer in the Bay." Not a complaint, just an observation. All in all, a productive two days. Remember – more to come on the "streets upgrade" – until August, Stay Cool.

Your Scribe -
Jeff Robinson