

Council Comments.....

Good Morning Horseshoe Bay

I sometimes think perhaps I should poll the audience and determine if the “cocktail hour” or “sunrise” version of these epistles are preferable. I can’t imagine why that should matter – just very, very idle curiosity.

Yesterday began early with a Council workshop to address a Streets Upgrade Plan and the City’s 2010 Budget. As you might expect, the streets discussion drew more citizen interest and input. Five months ago, the city assumed ownership and responsibility for 122 miles of road from the Horseshoe Bay POA. At a June workshop, it was determined that the Fairways Subdivision (encompassing Slickrock holes 2 through 8) would be the initial area for street improvement. This is a rather homogeneous, mature and well built out neighborhood.

Willis Engineering, represented by Tony Plumlee, was hired to study what to do, how to do it and what it would cost. The city’s goal in this effort is to establish standards for all streets in Horseshoe Bay that are durable, economical to maintain, attractive and add value to your property.

In the Fairways, the streets, in spite of being 37 years old and of poor original quality, are not terrible, but they’re not good either. As usual, my version of this story will not bore you with the details. The streets are cracked, flaked and intruded upon and only going to get worse. Tony recommends a 22 or 24 foot wide street with 18 inch ribbon curbs included on each side. In addition to their curb appeal (looks), the curbs are critical to reducing future maintenance costs.

Tony recommended as the “how to” that the use of a “Bomag” road grader (looks like a very big roto-tiller) to break up existing streets and mother nature down below to 8 inches would form a base to then be topped with 1 ½ - 2 inches hot asphalt. This would do the trick. The five miles of streets in the Fairways would cost about \$1,475,000. Is that a lot of money? You bet! But – Property values in the Bay are as high as any in this state and just like our state of the art utilities (water and wastewater facilities), our streets need to represent our community.

So how do we pay for it? Assessment or Ad Valorem? The mayor spent the next 1½ hours proposing and explaining our initial plan. Ad Valorem taxes are unattractive for a couple of very good reasons.

1. The folks who don’t live in the Horseshoe Bay POA have paid or will pay for their own streets. Many of these already meet the proposed standards.
2. Lots with homes will pay the vast majority of the cost – vacant lots will be pay very little, based on assessed value.

The math supports an assessment.

Due to corner lots, pie shaped lots, big lots, little lots, cul-de-sac lots, much discussion will continue on the basis for the assessment. Texas law suggests linear footage on the upgraded street. Current estimates for the Fairways is \$36.23 per linear foot of street frontage. The average Fairways lot owner would pay \$3070. A 5 year payment plan would be available. Several exceptions to the basic assessment calculation were discussed by Mayor Bob. For example, corner lot owners would only be assessed for the front side, not the side side (only way I know to describe) of their lots. Two things to – please – remember, 1 - there is lots more information available and it will be communicated. And, 2 - this is a work in progress. We've never done it before. City-wide meetings, neighborhood meetings, Beacon articles and workshops will be conducted in the next several months.

After the street discussion concluded, about 25 people left. It was either lunch time or they weren't interested in our budget discussion. Probably a wise decision. We did create a new Capital Budget line item for Parks and Recreation in the amount of \$50,000. Many good ideas are floating the Bay for park improvements to entertain kiddos and grand-kiddos – and us more mature folks, too. Also the plan is to remove about 200 deer from the Bay this year. We adjourned the workshop at 12:15, went home for lunch, read the mail, took a nap and then returned to City Hall.

And – Reverend Johnny prayed and we pledged. Mayor Bob then presented service anniversary awards to Rob Parsley – 5 years, Gary Wilkes – 5 years, and Bob Tuttle – 10 years. These are some of the folks who keep the water running in the Bay. Their 20 years of collective service make life in the Bay better each day.

The Council then approved a final resolution of the Horseshoe Bay/Granite Shoals ETJ's. Cordial negotiations resulted in the Wilderness Cover (as they desired) remaining in our ETJ.

Allied Waste (garbage guys) proposed a 3% reduction in our rates for next year, but since we had given them a 10% increase last year (primarily diesel prices), we are going to seek a larger reduction.

An agreement has been reached with the builder and financier of the five unfinished (in disarray) houses on Sunray. For the time being, we have removed our demolition order. The builder agrees to complete these houses within 150 days (4 houses) or 180 days (1 house). If not completed, we will then consider other options, including demolition.

On the same demolition note, the Council approved a demolition order for October 1 on the Hacienda Townhouses destroyed by fire in April. Continuing, the Council approved the removal of 3 mobile homes in Horseshoe Bay South. On a fourth mobile home, the owner was given until October 1 to bring the structure up to occupancy standards. If not completed, the structure will be removed.

For the third year, the Council approved a contribution to the good folks of the Friends of the Marble Falls Library. On a similar request from the Highland Lakes Family Crisis Center, much discussion was held to determine if this "organization accomplished a public purpose appropriate for cities to provide". This is the litmus test for organizations requesting a contribution from our city. The \$5,000 request was approved following a statement by Chief Lane that "he didn't know what his department would do without these folks". He stated that the Crisis Center folks were invaluable when his officers are called to deal with family crisis issues. Many cities provide such services thorough their law enforcement organizations. Enough said – passed 5 – 0.

OK – this is entirely too long, so let's do bullets.

Verizon still intends to offer improved network services beginning in September.

AT&T has withdrawn their 3G tower application – more to come, hopefully.

Currently, Mayor Bob and Alderlady Claudia will run for re-election in November.

One candidate, Cynthia Clinesmith, has announced for the one open seat.

There will also be a ¼% dedicated street maintenance sales tax election on the ballot. Citizens Dunn, Lowery and Younker have been asked to review the issue and give a report to the Council.

My friend, Jodi, will surely give you all the details on the Stage 3 mandatory water restriction brought on by the current drought. This is an extremely serious issue and I know the good folks of Horseshoe Bay will join all our Highland Lakes neighbors in this conservation effort. Pray for rain!!!!

Lots of other good stuff – a sign variance – Building Code change – Building Permit change – Replats – Rezones – were discussed, scheduled or approved. A No Smoking in Public Places ordinance was passed 5 – 0.

Your new Planning and Zoning Commission, Chairman Norm Long, Vice Chair Jerry Gray and Sharon Hull Botello met for the first time yesterday and made several recommendations which were all approved.

WOW – my hand is so tired (Yes – I don't type, my lovely bride Becky is at the keyboard as we speak). Sun's up, time to move on. Someday, we will resolve all the "Streets Issue" and these articles will be much shorter. But until then – streets are a work in progress.

Have a great day

Your Scribe -
Jeff Robinson