

Council Comments.....

Good Evening Folks of the Bay –

Last Wednesday's workshop began promptly at 3 p.m. The first item on the agenda was a discussion of a yet to be completed Street Maintenance Program (not the upgrade version). Responsibility for this plan lies with City Manager Stan and Councilman Phil. A nine page draft was presented which included discussions of a pavement analysis that would result in a rating method resulting in streets given A through F (seems I remember a similar grading system in the distant past). Based on a street's rating, maintenance programs would be developed for each street. Drainage, safety issues, and low water crossings will also be discussed in the draft of the HSB Maintenance Program. Another should be available at the next workshop.

Next item discussed was the list of streets to be chip sealed per the City's interlocal agreement with Burnet County. Streets recommended and approved to be chip sealed included: Mountain Dew (Burnet County portion), Great Western, Crooked Run, Cripple Creek and 32nd Street (all great movie titles) comprising a total of 4.2 miles.

Stan then discussed a dangerous safety concern at Hi Circle South and Clayton Nolan. That would be the ski slope down the concrete embankment into the pond if turning off of Clayton Nolan onto Hi Circle South. A decorative steel and rock guard rail will be built across the entrance to the embankment, thus eliminating the giant slalom in that location.

Plans for the upgrade of HSB Boulevard and Bay West Boulevard were then discussed with primary emphasis on Bay West. At our previous workshop, our contracted street engineer, Tony Plumley, was asked to prepare a proposal for a bridge across the low water crossing on Bay West. He submitted a plan utilizing pre-cast concrete arches and a rock façade that could take up to 120 days to compete at a cost of \$600,000 – discussion followed as to cost, timing and benefit. Many folks have requested such a bridge and the number of stuck 18 wheelers, motorcycle wrecks and other neighborhood complaints have led to a desire to get it done. The fact that contractor costs are probably at a low point and the advisability of completing this project along with the Bay West upgrade leads me to believe that perhaps now is the time.

Elimination of several safety concerns on Bay West was then discussed by Tony and the Council. Removal of a portion of the median at Bay West and Blue Ground would improve line of sight and ease of entering Bay West from Blue Ground. Lowering the level of the decorative rock at Cat Canyon's entry to Bay West was proposed and improvements at the intersection of Bay West, Broken Hills and Fault Line would also provide for greater safety.

A lengthy discussion followed on the Street Upgrade Plan recently approved by the Council. I will attempt a “fair and balanced” discussion of the viewpoints concerning this contentious issue.

The Council had been provided a list of seven questions by a newly formed committee of concerned citizens. While I will not attempt to discuss all seven in detail, I will try to hit the high points. Several questions concerned the use of presently accumulated surplus funds in the City coffers. The Mayor said the following: Since the City did its first full year budget, there has been an overriding concern regarding how much money will be needed for streets. This has led to the decision to be cautious in lowering the tax rate. However, since incorporation, the rate has been lowered from .50 to .33. The City acquired the streets last April, and last summer the Council discussed this issue in detail. The decision was to only lower the rate to .33 but with the expectation that by the summer of 2010 the need for streets will be clearer. The tax rate will surely be an important matter in this summer’s budget workshops that are all open to the public. The accumulated funds will likely be used for various aspects of improving streets, drainage, safety and low water crossings.

In answer to a question concerning the use of voter surveys to determine preferences on major issues, yours truly responded that the Council is elected to make those decisions, regardless of their complexities.

On a question concerning the use of an assessment plan as opposed to an ad valorem tax funded bond issue, my response was that the numbers provided by our municipal bonding experts indicated that such a method would only be economical for those with properties valued at less than \$300,000. The committee felt my number incomplete, since they did not include tax implications, opportunity costs and city growth. In each of those instances the committee was correct. My goal was to include as few variable assumptions as possible. The second point of my response was a belief that Horseshoe Bay residents and businesses residing in areas outside the Horseshoe Bay POA (Pecan Creek, The Peninsula, Escondido, Applehead, Bay Country, The Trails, Applehead Island, etc.) who have already paid for the good streets in front of their houses should not bear the costs to upgrade the HSB POA streets now owned by the City. Many of the folks who are supporting an ad valorem tax plan feel that since the other POA residents use the HSB POA area streets they should share in the cost of the upgrade. There are no absolute rights and wrongs in these discussions – just differences of opinion. As always, when it comes to the streets – more to come!

After the streets discussion concluded, the chambers were strangely empty. The council then discussed the \$7 million plus expenditures necessary to provide water and wastewater to Skywater in the coming decades. These expenditures will be paid by the Skywater developers and secured by the dollars funded by their PID agreement with their property owners and the City. The only immediate expenditure involves the \$1.3 million Skywater Water Tank (not the West water tank) - another big one. The developer will provide funds for the tank following the signing of the

agreement. Hopefully Skywater, Escondido and anyone with property on the market will see brighter days when the weather warms.

Speaking of the weather – snow, again??? Stay warm.

Your Scribe -
Jeff Robinson

P.S. I neglected (forgot) to include the latest Verizon DSL status in last week's Council Comments. Verizon has completed their upgrades and will be aggressively marketing the service. Many folks already have the service and comments to date have been positive. Don't forget to ask about their packaging deals that include telephone, internet (DSL) and DirectTV.