

## **Council Comments.....**

Good morning Horseshoe Bay –

Yesterday's council meeting began as Reverend Johnny prayed and we pledged. Two more years and I just might have the Pledge of Allegiance to Texas mastered.

The meeting then proceeded with a recognition of Jay Bauman, one of Chief Lane's crack detectives, for his 10 years of service. A brief discussion of Broadband (hi-speed internet) availability followed. Verizon has completed their construction activities and has been busily installing their DSL offering throughout "most" of the Bay. As discussed previously technology constraints limit the current offering to about 80% of our City. The folks that have it seem to like it – those that can't get it – not so happy! Our city's broadband committee will meet next week to make plans for further encouragement to Verizon to expand their service to the remainder of our citizens. One potential plan is to have folks who desire the service and are willing to sign up, but can't, to contact the city through e-mail or snail mail with name, address and telephone number. The thought being that if the "fone" folks see a large enough bunch of additional new customers, they will spring for the additional capital bucks to cover expansion to the entire Bay. Craig Haydon, one of our committee members, also announced that his conversations with AT&T indicate they are continuing pre-installation work on installation of a new 3G cellular tower in our community. As usual – more to come.

A lengthy give and take among citizens, pro and con, and the council consumed most of yesterday's two hour meeting. Numerous folks presented well thought out arguments for and against the building of the proposed Bay West Bridge over the low water crossing. The "Bridge over Troubled Water," as described by Dale Rodman, speaking for those opposed, is too expensive and not the real problem. Dale contends that the preliminary price tag of \$600,000 is too high and could be better spent on street upgrades (a noble endeavor) and that the stinky water in the creek is the real problem. Steve Jordan, a Blue Ground resident, outlined recent progress made, at his request, along with city staff to analyze the water and make improvements. The water, while not up to what we desire, is better than thought and needs top quality, up and running aerators to improve the quality. The Mayor strongly re-iterated that city sewer operations had no impact on the current dilemma. According to several bridge supporters – all those cars and trucks splashing through daily contribute mightily to the water quality problem. A number of speakers also recounted trucks, motorcycles and walkers upended crossing the waters. Chief Lane capped off the discussion with a recap of recent incidents, statistics related to police reports and a definition of the crossing as a "dangerous place".

Discussions that followed by the Council would indicate that the safety issue is the overriding concern. All seemed to agree that while the aesthetics of the crossing have had a very positive impact in the past, current conditions called for a new direction. More folks living in West, more traffic, favorable labor and material economics and the timing of street repairs to Bay West Boulevard indicate "now is the time." By a vote of 5 – 0 the council approved a motion to authorize Tony Plumlee, our contract engineer, to proceed with the engineering and the bidding process. Once firm bids are received, evaluated and the winner accepted, the council will approve or not the contractor to proceed with the bridge.

Chief Lane discussed a potential plan to move emergency dispatching responsibilities from the Llano Sheriff's Department to the Marble Falls Police Department. The Llano dispatchers are currently over loaded with more than ten entities for which to dispatch. Meetings with interested

parties are underway. The goal is to provide timely, reliable and economical dispatching to police, fire and EMS personnel. The price tag for in-house dispatching could exceed \$250,000. For that reason a contract solution is preferred.

Updates were then provided on several distressed properties in the Bay that have gone untended during the recent housing slump. These are houses that were under construction, but then abandoned by the builders and foreclosed by the banks. Of the 12 properties discussed, all are progressing toward completion or being repaired to building standards for future sales to new contractors. On that note, a local Bay realtor brought a dilapidated triplex at 1008 Hi Stirrup to the council's attention. Nearby homeowners are embarrassed, concerned about property values and downright unhappy with the shabby condition of this complex. Recent tenants on this property have resulted in numerous complaints to our constabulary. Eric Winter and Mike Light are on the case and will report at next month's council meeting.

An amendment, passed 5 – 0, to our Building and Development Fee Schedule will result in Building Permit Fees being based on square footage instead of a flat fee. The objective is to base fees on the time and effort required by our inspectors instead of a more arbitrary flat fee. Discussions with local builders on this change have been very positive.

Discussion of an amendment to our City Zoning Definitions concerning “Bar” will be deferred until the May council meeting. While the city seeks to maintain a strict policy concerning type and placement of these establishments, the desire is not to be business/development unfriendly to the point of discouraging businesses appropriate to our community's needs and desires from locating in the Bay. More to come on this issue.

After the monthly Skywater update, Claudia moved to adjourn and we were “out of there.” Another beautiful, cool, spring morning. Ain't it grand!

Your Scribe -  
Jeff Robinson