

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

It's the crack of dawn, five Bambi's are crossing the fairway and the clouds seem to be departing the area. Oh well, several days of rain and temps in the 80's; all is well. August has been a pretty good month in the Bay.

Tuesday's Council activities began with a Budget Workshop at nine. Projections for 2009 include revenues exceeding expenses, a lower tax rate and very nice and deserved salary increases for the good employees of the City of Horseshoe Bay. One more workshop will be held on September 4 with the final budget approval set for the September Council meeting on the sixteenth.

Reverend Larry, the music man at the Church at Horseshoe Bay, blessed the proceedings promptly at 3 p.m. The Mayor is very persnickity about starting on time. A couple of comments by council members preceded the official agenda. Alderlady Haydon thanked our City Manager Stan Farmer and Development Manager Eric Winter for their prompt response to her request to get the construction crews at housing worksites throughout our fair city to keep it clean and tidy as they build and renovate. Yours truly then remarked that after lunch with several former workmates at at&t, he had been contacted by another manager with an offer to provide new and improved technology alternative to our broadband service (internet) dilemma in the Bay. To date Verizon, Time Warner and Northland have been conspicuous by their absence with such alternatives. Hopefully either new at&t proposals or pressures in the upcoming legislative session will provide the Bay and Llano ISD with an ON ramp to the "Information Super Highway".

We then had a presentation from the Save Our Scenic Hill Country Environment Group (SOSHillcountry.org) on the prospects for wind turbine alternative energy in our corner of the Hill Country. Each of these turbines generates about 1.5 megawatts of electricity necessitating about 300 of the turbines to match our Ferguson Power Plant's 425 megawatts. That's a lot of windmills and hot air.

Our area ranks 20<sup>th</sup> in the state in availability of this kind of wind and consequently the SOSHCE group would prefer the windmill guys go someplace else. Several cities, such as Fredericksburg and Llano are in agreement with this position. More disturbing may be the transmission facilities that may pass through our county. They are "Big" and ugly. Obviously more to come on this issue in the future.

Another of our thoughtful citizens also had a conservation suggestion concerning H<sub>2</sub>O. He is suggesting rainwater collection and storage as an aid to water conservation. These are hot topics, along with "Green" solutions these days. As a matter of fact, and I digress, City Manager Stan made a presentation at the Budget Workshop on potential energy saving and energy alternatives for our City Government Operations. More to come.

The Blue Lakes POA has asked for a temporary release from our City's ETJ jurisdiction to modify their deed restrictions. The City will monitor these revisions.

The next two items on the agenda were the plans for the conversion of our City to Home-Rule Status and the ongoing dialog on streets. These two items quickly morphed in to one.

Conversion to a Home-Rule Status will provide our citizens with the opportunity to approve (a vote next May) a Charter for governance and the City with opportunity to protect its ETJ and better manager its growth.

Immediate plans were approved to appoint a committee of 15 with several alternates to compose the Home-Rule Charter for the City of Horseshoe Bay. If the Charter can be completed by year's end, communicated and explained early next year, then a vote can be held in May. The mayor and each Alderperson will nominate four folks for this important task.

While the conversion will not greatly impact our city government, it will allow for term limits, recall and I & R elections, involuntary annexations and most important, other alternatives to our street improvement dilemma.

Under home rule, the city may assess lot owners on a street by street basis the cost of upgrading their street to the level (ribbon curbs, sacrificial shoulders, etc.) that they desire. Please keep in mind, this is only one possibility with much, much, much more discussion of detail before anything is even proposed. And as my writing style dictates, this is an abridged description. In addition to discussion, we still have the home-rule conversion to tackle and approve. I certainly can't speak for the council or our citizens, but suffice it to say that a large number of folks want better roads and city ownership. We're making progress and we can get there if we all work together. A "streets" workshop will be held at City Hall on September 4 at 2 p.m.

Home-Rule Status is enjoyed by about 320 of the state's 1,250 municipalities. I view it as a maturing issue. Our City has become an efficient, well managed, easy to get along with entity that cares first and foremost about the safety and well-being of its citizens. We have issues that can't all be solved tomorrow. But, as we most all agreed from the git-go, we have the talent and the time and the perseverance to make it work.

OK, enough philosophical back-slapping. Claudia moved we adjourn at 5:15 - and we did.

By the time I'm writing another one of these it will be cooler (maybe) and football season will have begun (for sure). That's all good - so see you then.

Your Scribe -

Jeff Robinson