



Mayor's Message – September 2023



So very proud of the citizenship of our community in using firewise practices to keep us safe from accidental fire sparks. (Hard to ignore the urgency with the trillion alerts, I know, but worth it!) September is still in the 'danger zone' so don't let up....won't be long until we will all see the temperature break and fall weather arrive. Thank you for hanging in there with us all!

City News

- Come learn about your city and **hear the annual "State of our City" report at the Town Hall meeting (Sept 13th, 3 pm at the HSBay Yacht Club)**. Following a half hour update on your city, stations for every department will be set up for you to mingle, to ask questions, meet staff, and broaden your understanding of how your tax dollars are spent to maintain the standards you expect. There will be visual displays of the Transportation Plans, the City Center, and technology stations to sign up for city alerts and peruse the city website (with help!). **And cookies!**
- We received our final tax value which allows us **to meet the emerging urgent needs** of infrastructure upgrades, drainage study, road installation, and fire station expansion**AND reduce the tax rate by a (wee) bit to 0.267**. We have all been impacted by increased tax values – but this year it has provided funding for these emerging urgent needs arising from age and growth. We know tax values will level off and it is important to take advantage of additional funds to address critical needs when we can. As the big projects get addressed through strategic finance management, the trend in reducing tax rate bodes well...but it can never be zero! Especially if we want to maintain the high expectations of our community. New developments on Hwy 71 will offset future needs through robust 'impact fees', added valuations, and sales taxes - **to ensure cost sharing by future users to pay for long-term infrastructure projects**.

Hopefully, **legislation reform for homestead exemptions (increasing from \$40K to \$100K)** will provide relief from our **largest taxes - schools at a rate of .972**. Propositions will be on the November ballot for your vote to increase these exemptions (details to come).

- The **'emerging urgent needs' are part of the 5-year capital improvement planning** essential to upgrades for the city. Recommendations from an external utility audit conducted last year to identify immediate needs in operations/equipment of the water system have already been completed. We celebrated a year free of pressure drops as staff was able to detect and respond to leaks in the aging main line to avoid water loss to homes. The funds this year will allow for the replacement of this decades old water line with the **installation of a \$1.5 million parallel pipeline from the central water tower to Summitt Rock tower**. This will provide a stabilizing flow for fluctuating demand levels (largely in West and eventually Hwy 71) that put pressure on the current weakened smaller line. A municipal bond will be issued at a favorable rate due to our AA+ credit rating that allows for future residents who will benefit from the upgrades to share responsibility for the costs over time. **The cost for all immediate needs is included in the budget proposal of 0.267**.

The funding will also **complete the West Fire Station upgrades**. Part of this project will **provide for respectful living quarters for firefighters and a new squad truck housing**. Since we were in need of new brush trucks, the cost was leveraged to meet two purposes. Ordered in 2021, the dual function brush truck/medical response vehicle (squad) is outfitted to serve non-fire related emergency calls at a lower cost, while saving wear and tear on the larger fire trucks (extending their life). Every time an emergency call is made, both an EMS ambulance and fire truck (as required) are dispatched...though 80%+ of calls are non-fire related. Both fire trucks and squads are staffed with certified EMTs/paramedics to partner with ESD ambulance service.

The expansion will not include an additional ambulance bay. The city does not own/operate ambulance services. As the most cost-efficient approach, in 2005 Horseshoe Bay joined in a collaborative Emergency Service District/ESD with Marble Falls and multiple surrounding communities. This is funded by a .015 ESD tax of residents in all of these areas and allows for cost sharing for 24/7 ambulance on-site service. It also allows for faster response times and close training/coordination with our fire department teams.

The city of HSBay rents space to the ESD to house an ambulance and three EMT staffed shifts at City Hall (24/7 service). The ESD Board has resident representatives from both Burnet and Llano counties. They hold monthly meetings with the ESD Director, county commissioners and county/local Emergency Service Coordinators (our Fire Chief). Currently, ambulance calls on the annual report average less than 3 a day for the entire city (and surrounding service areas of Sandy Harbor, Deerhaven, Oakridge, and Blue Lake). This reflects some uptick in volume with the nursing home, Brixton, but remains well within service parameters. **Anytime the HSBay based ambulance is dispatched, Marble Falls immediately sends another ambulance to Horseshoe Bay as back-up** should another need arise. It is rare that 2 ambulances would be needed at the same time, but the precaution allows for coverage if the other ambulance is transporting a patient to a hospital.

The city discussed future needs for ambulance services as we looked at the cost of the West Fire Station expansion. Funding would have been needed from the ESD for an additional bay, ambulance, and living quarters. This space could sit empty for several years since the ESD indicates that we would likely need to average 90+ per month – anticipated to be in about 4-5 years. The need for **additional services** (a ½+ million-dollar ambulance, plus payroll for 3 shifts of 2 EMTs, plus housing/equipment, plus paying for the facility) would have to be determined by the ESD budget planning, using data triggers of response time and incident rates. This cost would be/will eventually be paid for through the ESD tax rate and not city property taxes. To date all emergency needs are well met and our near 20 years of collaboration is working well for us financially and in safety for residents.

There is space at the West Fire Station for an expansion should future needs be determined, and the ESD for all of Pct#1 would pay for the cost of new facility space (through a lease agreement) as well as the cost of equipment and staff. The ESD may, however, opt to have any new facility located on Hwy 71 to better respond to future development along that area w/access to HSBay through Golden Nugget. The airport, the

new SilverRock development (where an assisted living may eventually increase volume), and utility space on Hwy 71@Summitt Rock are potential locations. The city will continue to monitor the annual ESD reports in the 5-year review plan should the ESD indicate a need for future city involvement in their spatial needs.

- The municipal bond funding will also allow for 1.5 miles of qualifying new roads. **Road development/maintenance/entryways is always confusing.** Every POA in Horseshoe Bay determines if they want to contract with the city to develop/maintain their roads. Currently some (ex: Applehead Island, Summitt Rock, Escondido, Bay Country, Peninsula, Trails, et al) maintain their own roads through their POA dues. Other POAs contract to turn their roads over to the city and pay a proportional fee out of their resident POA dues to cover the costs. HSBay POA contracted to turn their roads over to the city, though they do not pay for the full cost. At least 50% of their road costs are paid with city taxpayer dollars. But - since many of the main thoroughfares of HSB POA (Bay West Blvd, Horseshoe Bay Blvd, etc.) service all citizens' access to amenities, some cost sharing is appropriate.

All POA entrances are developed/maintained by each POA or the resort. Each POA determines the size, styling, cost of their entrances to reflect their unique community (The Trails, Bay Country, Summitt Rock, Escondido, HSB POA communities, Pecan Creek, Matern, Hills, et al) and pays for this out of their POA fees. The city cannot use funds paid by all taxpayers to supplement the costs of one POA.

- We are kickstarting our former regional meetings as **a Highland Lakes Leadership Coalition/ HLLC, a collaboration of all area mayors/commissioners/judges.** We stopped these focused meetings during CoVid, but renewed the important shared efforts with area leaders at the Granite Shoals City Hall last month. Mayors from all surrounding areas joined discussions on water access/quality maintenance, legislative actions aimed at reducing local control, traffic growth, and emergency services. As varied as the cities are, the commonalities are large and **leveraging the voices** of these leaders benefits us all on regional matters.

Horseshoe Bay will host the October HLLC meeting which will invite county judges, commissioners and Emergency Operations Coordinators to join the conversation. All will bring deepened knowledge gained at the annual Texas Municipal League/TML Conference and will focus on relevant topics impacting operations for our cities. Future meetings will invite representatives from industry partners (LCRA, TxDot, PEC, Parks and Wildlife, state officials) to focus on specific areas of concern on which they have impact.

One key topic for many of us in the HLLC is the **traffic impact of development along the Hwy 71 and Hwy 281 corridors.** Advocating for an action plan for turn lanes, widened roads, and traffic management through alternative road paths is essential. The city has been working for 3 years with TxDot toward solutions off Hwy 2147 (near Cottonwood Shores) to ward off potential impacts from a Wirtz Dam bridge - and we see plans finally moving forward. **That same advocacy will be a focus** (shared by other area cities/ communities) for Hwy 71 as new entrances emerge around new development.

Construction and delivery truck traffic and increased corridor retail traffic on a 60+ mph road **demands clear action plans for safety to be funded at the state level.**

Proud Note: HSBay will be recognized at the state TML Conference this year as **a Platinum Level Scenic City (the highest)** due to its focus on hill country natural preservation efforts.

- Reports often arrive at the city seeking compliance assistance (landscaping/yard art concerns, debris, violations of architectural controls) which **the city cannot – by state law – address.** Concerns during construction do fall under worksite management and should continue to be reported to the city. Once occupied, new homeowners are required to adhere to the covenants of each POA's ACC. **Each POA has the right to require compliance,** and continued ignoring of their covenants can be referred by the POAs to Pct1 JP Marquis Cantu for citation. The city police and code enforcement officers will continue 24-hour patrols and will address violations of city ordinances (building/remodels, parking, noise, trash can storage, oak wilt, safety matters, criminal behavior, emergency needs, etc.). When in doubt, always feel free to call the city **non-emergency police line - 803.598.2633.** **Pick up a magnet for quick reference of key contacts at the Town Hall meeting!**

Before we know it, it will be Labor Day weekend...our last hurrah of big boat/visitors/traffic challenges for the summer. In the interim, use fire safety, water conservation, and personal hydration. The city website has updated **the “things to do” in Horseshoe Bay page** with wonderful local contacts to help everyone find some cool indoor social time – while continuing to enjoy early/late in the day outdoor pleasures. Every day is a fully lived day here in HSB – even in triple digit weather! **Hope to see you at the Town Hall (Sept 13)!**

CC Cynthia Clinesmith, Mayor
City Website - www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov