

City Business by Michael Leamons

Last week, Building Official Alan Carlton, while still in his probationary period, turned in his badge and keys. Before the search for a replacement Building Official begins, the City Council will be conducting a workshop on October 20th at 5:30 p.m. to look into all the aspects of the job as it is now configured. Currently, the position comes with the duties of Inspector (Building, Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing), Code Compliance Officer (helping citizens comply with ordinances addressing junk, weeds, dilapidated structures, etc...), Zoning Enforcement, and Animal Control.

It's not easy finding someone who has all the licenses required to perform all of the above duties, especially for the salary the City of Hico is able to pay. Could some of the duties be divided up? Would it be more effective to contract out building inspections services? Or, regarding work by the building trades, would it simply be sufficient for the City to ensure work is being performed by properly licensed and insured professionals?

One of the City's water department employees has expressed a willingness to take on the duties of Animal Control Officer in addition to his current duties. Would that be a good fit? What is the best strategy for obtaining Code Compliance?

What are the Council's priorities regarding the various duties now assigned to a full time Building/Code Compliance/Animal Control Official? All of these questions and more will be addressed at the workshop. Should you like to participate in the discussion, contact your elected representative or plan to attend the workshop.

Recently, the City experienced difficulties with its emergency siren. Fire Department personnel test the siren during their regular meetings. During a September test, the fuse link on the transformer pole was blown. Initially, it was thought there was a problem with the siren motor.

While on the phone with a factory representative, City staff tested various components and it was determined a siren malfunction probably didn't cause the fuse to blow. Fire Department personnel again tested the siren and everything worked fine. They admitted that the time the fuse link blew, the Fire Hall A/C was going full blast and all of their equipment was up and running. Texas New Mexico Power has been consulted to determine if perhaps the transformer and fuse link serving the Fire Hall aren't properly sized for the loads being served.

While the siren was under scrutiny, Building Official Carlton raised some concerns regarding its safety. One of his concerns, a loose chain in the inverter cabinet, was removed. Additionally, City staff installed locks on the inverter and battery cabinets to prevent unauthorized access. Other concerns regarding the configuration of the battery cabinet were forwarded to Storm Sirens, Inc., the company which sold and installed the siren in 2004.

In a letter dated October 4th, Frederick Engelbrecht, President of Storm Sirens Inc., replied, "I have sold and/or installed approximately 300 Sentry model 16V1T-B Sirens in the last 10 years. I know of no accidents or safety incidents relating to any of these sirens...Weekly, I see storm warning sirens which have been in service for 30 or 40 years. Barring an act of God and given reasonable maintenance, I see no reason why the Sentry Model 16V1T-B that the City purchased in 2004 should not be fully operational in 2030 and beyond."

Mr. Engelbrecht indicated he had forwarded Building Official Carlton's concerns to the manufacture, Sentry Siren, Inc.
May God bless the City of Hico.