

City Business

by Michael Leamons

Several items were addressed at Monday's Council Meeting which may be of general interest.

During a segment devoted to preparing Law Enforcement Committee members for a November 15th committee meeting, Chief Deputy Lynn Pearce was asked why a recent call from HISD to the 911 operator had gone unanswered. The matter greatly troubled Chief Deputy Pearce, and while delving into it Tuesday morning, he discovered some of the HISD phones had been programmed to prevent access to 911. It has been reported Superintendent Tarleton will be taking corrective action to make sure 911 calls can be placed from any of HISD's extensions.

Responding to persistent concerns about the recently adopted park policy deposit requirement, the following provision was added: "Local Public, Social or Civic Organizations in good standing are exempt from deposit fees."

During a segment devoted to park and street lighting, the possibility of installing lights along Pete's Path was discussed. The Council was favorably disposed toward installing the lights, but because of the anticipated \$45,000+ price tag, it was decided to pursue grant funding through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Adjustments are scheduled to be made to the City's street lights. Lights not complying with the City's Street Light Policy will be removed (primarily lights located in the middle of the block which tend to serve more as private security lights as opposed to those located at intersections, curves, bridges etc which more directly impact public safety). Some of the lights will be relocated to inadequately lit portions of town. Property owners adjacent to lights scheduled for removal will be given an opportunity to pay a monthly fee to retain the non-conforming street lights. (This option is being offered because Texas New Mexico Power will no longer install security lights for private citizens.)

The Council has been concerned about the growing problem with dogs running loose through town. To reduce handling costs and to allow for better enforcement, it was decided, using in-house and volunteer citizen labor, the City will build a small 4 pen kennel at an estimated material cost of \$5,000. Currently, the City pays to impound dogs at a local, privately operated kennel (a 72 hour holding period is required), then on a space available basis the animals are transported to the Erath County Humane Society Animal Shelter in Stephenville. Currently, if everything works like clockwork, it costs the City a minimum of \$115.00 per animal to handle stray dogs.

At a recent workshop, the Council considered alternate methods of handling code compliance, building inspection and animal control related duties. One of the City's water department employees will be receiving formal training for animal control duties in December. Various members of the staff are going to field matters regarding code compliance. When necessary, alleged code violations will be submitted to the Municipal Court.

The last piece of the puzzle relates to building inspections. With no more construction than Hico currently has, why hire a full time inspector if the service can be contracted out? Currently, the City has access to the services of a retired building

inspector residing outside of Stephenville on an as needed basis. It is also possible a local licensed real estate inspector could take care of some of the City's inspection needs.
May God bless the City of Hico.