

City Business
November 8th Meeting
by Michael Leamons

The regular monthly City Council Meeting will be held Monday, November 8th at City Hall. The agenda may change prior to its being posted on Friday afternoon, but currently the following items are scheduled to be discussed and possibly acted upon:

1. KSA Engineers will be presenting the specifics of a USDA Rural Development grant/loan application for upgrading some of the City's water and wastewater mains. This is one of the measures being pursued to address the City's infrastructure needs. The percentage of grant funding and the interest rate of the low-interest-rate loan will not be known until the project is approved. It is a tedious process and approval probably won't be secured until early 2012.

The City was advised to pursue a large project because after approval has been obtained it is easy to reduce the scope of a project, but it is virtually impossible to expand one. The grant portion could be as much as 75%, though usually it doesn't exceed 50%. KSA is expected to submit plans for a 3 to 4 million dollar project. The City's debt load and utility rates, the project's contributions to improving community health and safety and area income levels are all factored in determining the grant percentage.

The hard decisions will have to be made when the Council discovers what percentage of the project will be funded by grant. Although the loan payments can be spread out over as much as 40 years, a viable strategy will have to be devised to provide for those payments. If a 75% grant is not secured, it is likely the project will be scaled back significantly.

2. The creation of a Hico Beautification Committee will be considered. In other cities, such committees organize city-wide clean ups, oversee beautification projects, round up volunteers, pursue park grants and improvement projects...etc.

3. An area resident asked the City to consider adopting a resolution opposing an alternate routing for a high voltage transmission line through southern Bosque County near Hico, Iredell, Meridian and Clifton. It is feared the line will have a negative impact on area property values, scenic viewsheds and tourism. The preferred route would take the line well away from the Hico area, but political pressure is being brought to bear to shift it to the alternate route. The line will conduct electricity from the wind turbine fields in West Texas to the State's more populated mid-section.

4. Terms of the Combined Law Enforcement Contract with the City of Hamilton and Hamilton County will be reviewed. Beginning in January, the Law Enforcement Committee, comprised of representatives of the contracting parties, is expected to begin a review of the contract.

5. Terms of the inter-local agreement between Hico ISD and the City regarding the baseball and softball fields will be reviewed. The agreement was entered into in 2000 and though it provides for an annual renewal, it appears the matter hasn't been revisited since 2000. HISD, the Baseball Association and the City of Hico all have interests in the ball fields. The City will consider the best course to pursue to address the interests and define the responsibilities of all who are involved. A call may be made for representatives of the three entities to form a joint committee to consider the matters at hand.

6. Proposals for upgrading the Hico website will be considered. The Hico Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is scheduled to consider the matter on Wednesday, November 3rd. The proposals being considered would upgrade the site to encompass everything web related pertaining to the EDC, City and Chamber of Commerce. The new site would include areas devoted to a community calendar, news and announcements, citizen comments, ordinances, area businesses and on-line payments of City bills. The website is an essential portal to the community.

7. Traffic control in the vicinity of the Poplar Court Subdivision will be considered. Currently, not all of that area's intersections are governed by stop signs.

As always, the public is encouraged to participate in the decision making process. The most effective strategy is to visit with your elected representatives prior to the meeting. Additionally, citizens are always welcome to participate in the public comment portion of the Council meeting.

May God bless the City of Hico.