

City Business
This and That
by Michael Leamons

The Regular Monthly City Council Meeting will be Monday, December 13th at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall. Although subject to change, as of this writing the following agenda items are scheduled to be considered:

A Hico Historic Preservation Proposal regarding the donation of the Blue Family Log Cabin to the City, a request by Air Evac to offer voluntary, paid memberships to City water customers (members have no out-of-pocket expenses when using Air Evac services for life or limb threatening emergencies wherever Air Evac services are available), a proposal for amending the City's Holiday Schedule (observance of 3 existing holidays would be eliminated to allow staff to take off Good Friday, the day after Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve), a recommendation by the City Auditor that the City adopt an Investment Policy and a Debt Management Policy, amendments to the Atmos Energy Franchise Agreement, amendments to the General Fund and Utility Fund Budgets, authorization to open a "payroll" bank account, ratification of recent EDC expenditures and a resolution denying a Texas New Mexico Power (TNMP) proposed rate increase.

A week ago, solar panels were installed on the roof of City Hall. When the sun is shining, the panels generate about 3,000 watts of electricity per hour. (The approximately 2,300 1/8th watt LED Christmas lights recently installed along many of the downtown building tops use about 300 watts of electricity per hour.) A grant paid for 100% of the purchase and installation costs of the solar panels. Additionally, the installation qualifies the City for \$7,000 in energy efficiency rebates from TNMP.

The City continues to have difficulty coming into compliance with the maximum phosphorus levels mandated for the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP) discharges. During the summer it was reported how a regimen of biological treatments appeared to be on track to bring the system into compliance. Ultimately, however, that approach proved unsuccessful. The WTP in Clifton is identical to Hico's and its phosphorus levels are in compliance. Recently, our WTP operator travelled to Clifton and took notes on their operation. The chemicals used by Clifton have been purchased and are now being used in our plant. The jury is still out regarding the effectiveness of this new approach.

A better long-term solution for the City's phosphorus problems has recently come into view. The Texas Water Development Board has a program for addressing TCEQ violations. Because of area income levels, under the program Hico would qualify for 100% loan forgiveness. A plan to irrigate park and pasture land with the WTP discharges is being considered. Such a plan would eliminate the need to discharge into the Bosque River system and having to comply with phosphorus level regulations. Thus, the City wouldn't have to worry about being fined for non-compliance, wouldn't have to purchase expensive treatment chemicals and could put the water to productive use. To qualify for funding, the City will have to successfully work its way through the process: a plan will have to be prepared, cost estimates generated, applications filled out and reviewed; and finalists selected.

May God bless the City of Hico.