

City Business by Michael Leamons

What with closing out the old fiscal year on September 30th and finishing up many loose ends in preparation for the October 2nd Open House, the last couple of weeks have been hectic at City Hall. This week, the pace has eased up somewhat, allowing us to get back to business as usual. There are still a few more tasks to be completed (you may have noticed the crew working on re-pointing City Hall's east exterior wall), but the bulk of the renovation has been completed. A plaque inscribed: "A tribute to the generosity of Pete and Polly Jenkins" has been placed on the service counter to honor the Jenkins for having made the renovation and refurnishing of City Hall possible. If you missed out on the Open House, you are welcome to drop in and look at all the changes.

The next regular City Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 12th at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber. Usually the Meeting is conducted on the second Monday of the month, but that date happened to coincide with Columbus Day, a federal, bank and city holiday. Though it may change after this column is submitted, it appears the agenda will consist of discussion and possible action regarding an annexation ordinance, the parking situation along Highway 6, a request from Billy the Kid Museum and a resolution setting up a special utility deposit account along with various and sundry City Hall facility matters. A formal agenda should be posted at City Hall by Friday afternoon. If you want to weigh in on any of the above, contact your elected representatives and/or attend the meeting.

As time and space permit, I want to begin introducing the staff through a segment in this column titled, **Spotlight on the Staff**:

James "Jim" Pitchford is the City's Public Works Supervisor. He is responsible for overseeing daily operations in the Water, Wastewater, Streets and Parks Departments and supervises five employees. Regular hours are from 8 to 5, Monday through Friday, but anytime there's an interruption of City services, be it day or night, weekend or holiday, bitter cold or scorching heat, Pitchford and his crew will be doing what's required to restore service. (And, FYI, because of budgetary constraints, they don't receive overtime pay. As, required by law, they do receive time and a half comp time for every overtime hour worked.)

Pitchford is a native of Missouri. Early in his career, he went to work for a PVC pipe manufacturing plant. Within a few years he was promoted to plant manager, and except for a short period during the 80's when he served as superintendent of a plant in Burleson, Texas, he continued to work at the Missouri plant, eventually accumulating 30 years of service. While working in Texas, Jim married Vikki. Now, they and their kids and grandkids all live in Texas.

Pitchford went to work for the City in October, 2007. It wasn't long until he again found himself in a supervisory role. His management style is greatly appreciated. Coming from the private sector, Pitchford values productivity. Always looking out for the best interests of his men, he is a model of servant leadership. He makes it a policy not to ask his crew to do something he wouldn't do---definitely, he's a hands-on, working supervisor. Additionally, with a commitment to getting things "ship-shape", he has been busy cleaning up and organizing the facilities under his management.

Pitchford describes the job of Public Works Supervisor as “...challenging and interesting...and it keeps my mind working...The biggest challenge is fixing all the infrastructure that has been neglected---streets, storm drains, water lines and wastewater lines.” Currently, attention is being focused on improving the City’s gravel roads and drainage systems.

Jim wants to hear from you, the public, about what needs attention. You are welcome to flag him down and bend his ear. His only request is that you please be patient. When you are covering the demands of four departments, there’s only so much a crew of six can get done each week.

May God bless the City of Hico.