

City Business

by Michael Leamons

Fire Marshall Sam Maserang has lifted the ban on outdoor burning within the City of Hico. Citizens wanting to burn limbs, leaves and untreated lumber (there are very strict limits regarding what may be burned) need to come by City Hall, apply for a permit and read the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) guidelines governing outdoor burns.

This week, formal notification was received from TCEQ that the City (due to our phosphorus compliance) has fulfilled the requirements of the Agreed Order effective since 2008 regarding the City's Wastewater Operations.

At last night's Meeting, the Council adopted a new Animal Control Ordinance. The primary differences between the new Ordinance and the one it replaced are:

1. Rather than prohibiting a person from having more than 3 dogs, the new Ordinance defines a kennel as, "Any lot, enclosure, premises, structure or the building, except a veterinary clinic, whereon or wherein 4 (four) or more dogs over the age of 6 months or 7 (seven) or more cats over the age of 6 months are kept or maintained for any purpose whatsoever within the city." Anyone wishing to operate a kennel must secure a permit. Kennels may not be operated within 100' of a neighboring structure where people, eat, dwell, or sleep.
2. The area requirement for keeping large livestock in the city for large animals (horses, cows, ect.) has been increased from ½ acre to 1 acre per animal unit (a cow/calf pair are one unit).
3. Cruelty to animals is prohibited. Cruelly treated is defined as, "Includes tortured, seriously overworked, unreasonably abandoned, unreasonably deprived of necessary food, care, or shelter, cruelly confined, or caused to fight with another animal." State Law provides a process for seizing cruelly treated animals.
4. Henceforth, anyone harboring an animal assumes ownership of that animal. Harboring is defined as, "The act of keeping and caring for an animal or providing a premises to which the animal returns for food, shelter or care for a period of 10 days or more."
5. The City's Animal Control Officer was designated as the Local Rabies Control Authority (LRCA). Any potential exposure to rabies, human or animal, needs to be reported to the LRCA. Animals considered to be at high risk for carrying rabies include skunks, bats, foxes, coyotes and raccoons. Anytime a human is bitten by a dog, cat or domestic ferret, the matter needs to be reported to the LRCA so the proper testing and quarantine measures can be initiated.

The new Ordinance, like the old Ordinance, addresses State Laws regarding rabies vaccinations, dangerous dogs and unlawful dog restraints. All dogs and cats four months of age or older must have an up-to-date rabies vaccination. Both Ordinances require animals be confined or restrained and that they not be allowed to run at large. The Animal Control Officer is authorized to impound any animals found running at large. The custodian of any such animal shall be required to pay impoundment and boarding fees.

The Council also adopted a set of written rules and procedures to govern agenda setting and Council meetings. Miscellaneous budget amendments were adopted including the appropriation of some of the remaining Pete Jenkin's Bequest to purchase an additional 3 acres of riverfront property between City Park and Highway 281. Recently, in response to the new Economic Development Plan crafted with the help of

the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX), the City applied for a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Trails Grant. If the grant is approved, an additional mile of trail will be added to Pete's Path with part of it passing through the proposed acquisition.

The Auditor's report for fiscal year 2010/2011 was received and approved. A bid submitted by Mike Epley for 512 Star (confiscated for back taxes), was approved. A Municipal Election for "Two Aldermen and a Mayor" was ordered for May 12, 2012. The matter of concerns about speeding on 9th Street was tabled pending a traffic study by the Sheriff's Office. The Council appointed Christi Black, Cathey Rider, Frank Hengels, Chuck Irwin and Kenny Giesner to an Advisory Board to assist with reviewing and revising the Zoning Ordinance.

May God bless the City of Hico.