

City Business
February 15th Agenda
by Michael Leamons

Once again, it's time for the monthly, Regular City Council Meeting. Because of Valentine's Day, the meeting has been postponed until Tuesday, February 15th at 5:30 p.m. The agenda may change between now and Friday, but following is a breakdown of the anticipated agenda items:

1. David Todd of EHT Engineering will be reporting on his pursuit of a Texas Water Development Board low interest rate loan for the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant. Based upon local income statistics, should the project be approved, the City might qualify for 100% loan forgiveness. The project under consideration would allow the City to use the treated wastewater, now being discharged into the Bosque River System, for irrigation of park and pasture land. This would provide a relatively inexpensive source of water for the Utility Street Ball Field Complex and would relieve the City from having to comply with the very stringent phosphorus limits required of discharges into the Bosque River System, saving the City the cost of expensive phosphorus removing chemicals.

2. An ordinance modifying the application for service process and the terms of service for the City's Water and Wastewater Utilities will be considered. Because of the bad economy, the City is experiencing an increase in the number of customers who are leaving without paying their final bill. After consulting with the Texas Municipal League and an area bill collection agency, the City is considering changes which will protect the utility's financial interests (which translates into protecting the interests of those customers who pay their bills). Higher deposits may be required of account holders who have had service cut off for non-payment during the past two years. Additionally, collection costs may be shifted from the utility to those from whom payment is being sought.

3. A new junked vehicle ordinance which will make enforcement easier is being considered.

4. An existing ordinance which requires that trash be kept in cans is being reviewed. The City has received a complaint about the mess created by those setting out trash bags which are being torn up by dogs. Enforcement of the trash can requirement is expected to generate complaints, so staff would like to make sure the Council supports the requirement before going into enforcement mode.

5. A revised agreement with Hico ISD regarding the Utility Street Ball Field Complex is being considered. The agreement redefines maintenance and operations responsibilities and provides for a sharing of the facilities which would allow the Baseball Association to move its games and practice sessions from the Elm Street Fields to the Utility Street Fields. Combining operations would simplify maintenance, reduce operational costs and concentrate the benefits of facility improvement funds.

6. The acquisition of a right-of-way between Highway 6 and Iredale Road across from Poplar Street is being considered. The right-of-way is necessary to link the new grant funded wastewater line on Highway 6 and to the new Poplar Court Subdivision. While pursuing the right-of-way, staff recognized that without much additional expense enough right-of-way could be acquired to allow Poplar Street to be extended to Highway 6.

7. Various relatively small amendments to the budget are being considered to accommodate changing operational needs. It is proposed the costs be offset by recognizing unexpected revenue realized from a sales tax adjustment.

8. An election is to be called for May 14th to elect three aldermen and to vote on a proposition for the legal sale of alcoholic beverages for off-premises consumption only. The vote on the proposition was triggered by the submission of a citizen petition.

9. The Council will consider joining the Texas Cooperative Purchasing Network to secure vendor discounts. There aren't any membership costs.

10. The Council will consider applying for a no-annual-fee Rewards Credit Card. The City's current Credit Card doesn't provide rewards and requires an annual fee.

11. The Council will consider ratifying the EDC's budget and cleaning up some old business from 2005 relating to a bond requirement in the EDC bylaws.

12. A policy to regulate City Park reservations and use will be considered. A key provision is to require refundable deposits from entities reserving all, or portions, of the park to ensure the grounds and equipment are left in at least as good of a condition as they were in prior to use by the entity. Currently, at the taxpayers' expense, the City often has to do repairs and pick up trash following events.

13. A request by Jars of Clay to use Peppermint Park for a public function on March 26th will be considered.

14. If time permits, the Council will continue the process of drafting Mission and Vision Statements as well as a list of goals to guide the City.

Should you wish to weigh in on any of the above agenda items, please call your elected representatives and/or make plans to attend the meeting.

May God bless the City of Hico.