

City Business

by Michael Leamons, City Administrator

This column is being provided to keep you abreast of “city business”. In our system of government, sovereignty resides not in a king, nor in elected officials, nor in a bureaucracy, but in you, the citizens. I and the rest of the City staff are here to serve you. Should you have questions or concerns, please let us know. My door is always open.

Currently, we are involved in several special projects. In the past, the Wastewater Plant violated some of the TCEQ standards. Rather than pay a fine, the City elected to do what TCEQ refers to as a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP). The City chose to provide wastewater service to seven addresses within the City limits which previously had not been served, at an expense of about \$42,000. The construction portion of that project has been completed and the City is awaiting final TCEQ acceptance.

Another project, Safe Routes to School, is nearing completion. The sidewalk work you’ve noticed around town is all being done at no cost to the City, courtesy of a grant administered by TxDOT. After the construction portion is completed, the contractor will be laying sod in the areas adjacent to the sidewalks which were disturbed during construction.

As you are probably well aware, of late we’ve been having water problems. We’ve experienced some breaks in the old downtown area water lines which have resulted in pressure losses within the lower parts of town. Because of the hilly terrain, the City’s water system is composed of two pressure planes. In the past, there was only one pressure plane which resulted in high water pressure in the lower elevations and low water pressure in the higher elevations. The two plane system, completed in 2007, was designed to somewhat equalize pressures throughout the system by means of combination pressure-reducing, pressure-sustaining valves.

Responding to the recent pressure problems, the City brought in a contractor to examine the valves. Some only required adjustment, but it was discovered two of the valves need to be rebuilt. The contractor blames the early failure of the valves on their being the wrong size. Proposals for rebuilding and/or resizing the valves have been submitted to KSA Engineering for review.

In previous discussions, KSA (who wasn’t involved in designing the two pressure plane system) has indicated for optimal performance elevated storage needs to be provided for the lower pressure plane. KSA recently completed a study of the City’s water distribution system and will be reporting their findings at a special called meeting of the City Council at 5:30 p.m. on July 1st. It is not yet known if that meeting will be held in the new Council Chambers or at an alternate location. A notice as to time and place will be posted at City Hall at least 72 hours before the meeting. If you are interested in the mechanics of the City’s water system, please plan to attend.

To chip away at the problems posed by the system’s antiquated water pipes, the City is in the process of applying for a \$275,000 2011/2012 Texas Community Development Block Grant targeted to replace water lines in much of the area south of Highway 6 and east of Highway 281. For the current grant cycle, the City is being awarded \$250,000 for a wastewater project. Initially, the money was scheduled to be used to upgrade a lift station on the east side of town, just north of Highway 6. Now, the Council is working to amend that grant. Under the amended proposal the lift station

would be eliminated and a new gravity flow line would be installed across Highway 6 and down to the Wastewater Plant.

On another front, the City is preparing for a silent auction. An old police car, several old pickups, some old John Deere residential lawn mowers, an old bridge, along with numerous other items, no longer of use to the City, will be on the auction block. It is anticipated the auction will be conducted during either the second or third week in July. More information will be forthcoming.

May God bless the City of Hico.