

City Business by Michael Leamons

When being considered for my present job, I emphasized the importance of the following values:

1. Government should be a servant to the people, not a master.
2. Government should be a good steward of the people's resources.
3. Everyone should be treated equal under the law.

I mention this because it plays into a couple of items under consideration in today's column.

There are three properties which have not been incorporated into the City, but are totally surrounded by the City and benefit from general City services; moreover, two of the three properties receive City utilities. Is it right for some who benefit from City services to leave it up to everyone else to foot the bill? None of us like paying property taxes, but if this is how we've chosen to pay for government services, shouldn't everyone pay their share? According to Texas Local Government Code, the City has the authority to annex these properties. There is one other property of less than one acre which adjoins the City and receives City services; it, too, is eligible for annexation. Should the above four properties be annexed? What do you think?

Another matter warranting attention is the City's street lighting. In the current budget, \$60,000 was allotted for street lighting while only \$50,000 was allotted for paving. (The City of Hamilton, with a population twice that of Hico, spends between \$44,000 and \$50,000 on street lighting.) If you drive around town at night, you will notice the street lighting placement isn't consistent. As one would expect, the downtown business district and the State highways have higher levels of lighting. But, there are other parts of town which have lights at every intersection, additional lights between intersections, and even lights in the alleys, while yet other areas of town have no lighting whatsoever. Some of the street lights seem to be nothing more than security lights for the benefit of private residences, businesses or organizations. In some locations, trees have grown up under the lights so that very little light reaches the ground. Surely, most of you would agree a better job needs to be done of managing the City's street lights---of course with the caveat, "As long as the one on my street is left alone." Wouldn't it be best to adopt a street lighting policy, and then, "let the chips fall where they may," rather than continuing the current haphazard, "squeaky wheel" approach? What do you think?

As matters of "good stewardship" and treating everyone "equal under the law," it seems the above concerns, at a minimum, deserve consideration; consequently, they have been included on the agenda for the July 1st called City Council Meeting.

In last week's column, it was mentioned an "old bridge" would be included in the upcoming silent auction. As it turns out, the "old bridge" is a historic pony truss bridge, once located on First Street. After discovering this, I met with County Commissioner John Bonner, who is familiar with the history of the bridge, to consider what could be done with it. Currently, the bridge sits next to Utility Street. It would not be suitable for vehicular traffic, but with a little bit of welding and the installation of a deck, it could be used for pedestrian traffic. In any event, it needs a better home. One location along the trail beside the Bosque River is being considered. Should you have any other ideas of a home for the bridge, please let me or a member of the Council know.

May God bless the City of Hico.