

City Business by Michael Leamons

Good news! When the contractor disassembled the pressure relief/pressure sustaining valve on the main line feeding into the lower areas of town, it was discovered no new parts were required. The valve had ceased functioning properly because a big handful of rocks had washed into it. Evidently when the line was originally laid, the offending rocks, inadvertently, had been pushed into it. Once the rocks were removed, the valve began functioning as it should. It was adjusted to deliver the proper pressure; then, a fire hydrant was opened up in the downtown area to test the system. Pressures dropped a little, but nothing like they had on previous occasions.

More good news! Discharges (technically known as effluents) from the City's new wastewater treatment plant have been failing to meet levels permitted by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Last year, additional treatment equipment was added to remedy this short-coming. Phosphorus levels decreased, but compliance remained elusive. Recently, some new products were introduced to the system. The first week they were applied, levels dropped to the lowest yet seen at the plant, coming within a whisker of the permitted level. It was expected a month would be required to see the full benefits of the new treatment, so we are well on our way toward compliance.

Phosphorus levels in wastewater plant discharges have been a concern for some time. "In the mid 1960s, many of the nation's rivers and lakes were rapidly turning green and choking with aquatic plant growth. A primary reason for these deleterious (*harmful*) changes in water quality was the high levels of phosphorus, one of several major plant nutrients, found in domestic and municipal sewage effluents. **The principal source of effluent phosphorus was from phosphates used in laundry detergents.**" (*Historical Perspective of the Phosphate Detergent Conflict*, by Chris Knud-Hansen)

Due to the above cited environmental concerns, U.S. laundry detergent manufacturers eliminated phosphates from their products in 1994. In recent years it has been common to see laundry detergents manufactured in Mexico on grocery store shelves. Many of these detergents still contain phosphates. Some are sold locally. If you want to help both the environment and the City in its effort to reduce the amount of phosphorus being discharged into the Bosque River system, make sure phosphate is not listed as an ingredient in your laundry detergent.

As mentioned in a previous column, the City will be conducting a silent auction to dispose of property no longer needed in its operations. An ad describing the auction, scheduled for the week of July 19th, is being run in this paper. The items up for auction will be available for viewing during regular business hours July 19th thru the 21st and until noon on the 22nd. Bid forms, with instructions, will be available at City Hall beginning this Friday. Sealed bids will be opened at City Hall at 2:00 p.m. on July 22nd.

Should you have any questions, comments or concerns regarding City business, please feel free to stop by my office. If you would prefer to relate the above mentioned matters in written form, drop them off at City Hall, mail them to P.O. Box 533, Hico, TX 76457 or forward them via e-mail to leamons@embarqmail.com.

May God bless the City of Hico.