

Council Comments.....

Good Holiday Morning to the Bay –

It's sort of cold, dark and yucky this morning, but since that is an infrequent occurrence, we won't complain.

After prayer with Reverend Johnny and the pledges with Mayor Bob, we began a relative short, but informative Council meeting.

The first item up for discussion was one I had requested to be on the agenda. The status of improvements in the availability of reliable high speed internet in the Bay and our surrounding area is often a hot topic on the wine and cheese circuit. Following our first discussions of this issue nine months ago, a committee composed of Alderman Babcock, Jim Browning, Neal Younker, Tom Schmersahl, Craig Haydon and yours truly was formed to see if we could "encourage" a telephone (Verizon) or cable (Time-Warner/Northland) to serve all, both current and future, Horseshoe Bay residents with a wireline high-speed service. Wireline, as opposed to wireless is generally faster, more reliable and higher capacity. To date Northland Cable has indicated no desire to expand (to West) or improve their service and Time-Warner has vanished from the scene. Verizon, our current telecom provider, was always our best opportunity. Legislation passed in Texas in 1995 obligated the two largest telephone companies in Texas, GTE (today's Verizon) and SBC (today's at&t) to provide the same advanced telecom services in rural Texas as they provided in the big cities. While it appears at&t met their obligations, Verizon for the past 13 years has ignored their obligations – just our luck. Schools are denied the benefits of distance learning, hospital telemedicine and you and I just don't get the same services as our city cousins. Our City committee has met with all the aforementioned providers at least once and also with our good neighbor, Senator Troy Fraser and his staff. To date while Verizon has been unresponsive, the Senator has indicated a willingness to support us with the Texas Public Utility Commission and possibly legislation in the upcoming session. While, up to now, my glass has been 60% full on solving the Verizon issue, the glass appears to be emptying. Verizon, a Fortune Top 25 company, with deep pockets and lots of lobbyist will likely hang their hat on our wireless internet providers as an excuse for ignoring our requests. The bottom line is the suits on the east coast had much rather spend their capital dollars elsewhere.

Which leads me to part two, this was an extended discussion. Our primary wireless providers Zeecon and ERF continue to do a good job of improving their capabilities. Since they are likely our best alternatives, it is important the City do what it can to enable them to provide new and improved technologies. Along that line ERF is prepared to bring WiMAX technology to the Bay in 2009. A taller antenna is required and at&t has agreed to foot the bill for a new cell tower (for 3G cell service) that would accommodate the ERF application. Only problem is the Resort and HSB POA would like to relocate the current ERF antennae and our City

emergency services antenna to a new location. They are currently on Thataway Street. Who did name these streets? And more importantly what were the beverages involved. So anyway, the Council has asked Eric Winter, City Development Services Manager to work with the representative of the Resort, the POA and ERF to get on with finding a new antenna/tower location. Since the new antenna will be 25 feet taller than the existing structures, you may not want it in your backyard. The Council will have hearings to discuss possible high ground locations.

Okay – so that’s too much info, but I’m tired of roads and the Information Super Highway is more fun.

Dale Rodman then educated the Council on Dumpster/Porta Potty issues he has documented throughout the Bay. While there seems to be ongoing construction site violations of City rules on these items, abandoned construction sites seem the more prevalent culprit. Numerous dumpsters are overflowing or uncovered and potties unattended. Several of the sites appear to be foreclosed properties. Dale provided photos and locations which Development Services Manager Eric Winter will investigate and make recommendations. Dale was also concerned about a recent brush fire in West in the Desert Rose/Feldspar area. The drought conditions and uncleared lots make our current situation extremely critical. Dale asked for more info on the recent fire and Fire Chief Fiero agreed to provide. By the way the recent lot clearing by the POA in West is much appreciated for its aesthetics, but more importantly it helps to reduce the fire hazard. Good job POA! The Council really also appreciates Dale taking the time and effort to document and report on these issues. All citizens are encouraged to provide information if they have similar concerns.

And now for the asphalt roads. The Council has given to the Resort, the POA and the Declarant what we hope are final contracts that they can approve. Numerous changes requested by all parties have been incorporated into these documents. Approval (signing) of the contracts is the final step in transferring the roads to the City and creating a subsequent maintenance and upgrade plan.

George Byrnes reported that the Charter Commission has completed their proposed City Charter for citizen input. It is available on the City website and in hard copy at City Hall. Lots of hours by our fellow citizens went into this effort and their product is both comprehensive and flexible for future governance. Thanks again to the folks who worked on this Charter.

The Council then approved an increase in the 2009 City Employee Merit Increase Budget from \$133,000 to \$155,000. The City values our outstanding workforce, and in order to both reward and retain them, feels our salary structure should be competitive with our neighboring communities.

Claudia moved we adjourn, Steve seconded – we’re out of there.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
Jeff Robinson