

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Happy New Year Neighbors! Due to the phone service/internet interruptions, the review of last week's council meeting didn't get to the Beacon. To update you fully, below is the summary from January 12th AND January 19th meetings.

On January 12th, YOUR City Council held several posted meetings including a *Public Hearing on Annexation*, a *workshop focused primarily on budget*, and an *update presentation by the Long-Range Planning* committee. Here's the general summary:

Annexation: Multiple landowners shared genuine concerns about the potential impact on their lives and livelihood that an annexation might create. It was inspiring to hear the stories of ranchers who have owned and cared for their land for generations, who have invested in maintaining the quality of the land, and taken precautions to preserve the beauty and sustainability of the Hill Country nature that we all get to enjoy as we travel Hwy 71 to our city entrances. Their queries focused on any limitations to their building, land use (example: hunting) and city restrictions. It became clear that the initial letter forwarded to them did not explain in clear lay terms exactly what the intent of the city was – and what the process involved. City staff followed these heartwarming presentations with some clarifications.

- No land owner with a agricultural exemption who intends to continue to use their land for ranching, hunting, or other agricultural exemption use will be annexed if they sign a declaration (Development Agreement) stating this fact. The declaration does say that if (and when) they do decide to change the purpose of the property from ag-exempt or sell it to someone that will change the use (say to become a cement plant, a strip mall, etc.), then the property is subject to annexation. The Development agreements for the large ranches along Hwy 71 and CR311 would continue in three-year increments automatically renewed for 45 years unless either party provides a six-month notice of termination. In short, those who have chosen to live on these natural home sites because they wanted the rural life amid nature will not have their lifestyle altered or become part of the city if they so declare.
- The intent of the city's action was clarified to say that while the city had to notify the entire area, their goal is to secure the borders along Hwy 71 and entrances to The Trails and The Hills. This part (for those who don't sign the declaration) would be annexed to impose guidelines that prevent development of undesirable businesses, or other actions that could detract from the Horseshoe Bay citizens expected quality of life along the borders of our city.

In hindsight, it became clear that communication continues to be an essential focus for the City. A letter from the city prior to this meeting – sent as good neighbors with clarifications – might have prevented much of the angst these ranchers experienced. Lessons learned...that while the intentions were good and care of neighbors was highly considered –

they have to be informed of this if trust and shared actions on behalf of all are going to take place. Ultimately, the City will consider annexation of a much smaller area of property under review as many ag-exempt landowners will sign the Development Agreements providing a declarations stating intent to remain in this current use.

In the City Workshop, a thorough needs assessment was presented by new fire chief, Joe Morris. He gave detailed status of our fire engine ‘fleet’ with careful attention to safety, response, and fiscal responsibility. He proposed three varied paths for the city to consider at the April budget review. The city Finance Director, Larry Anderson, provided a five-year preview of anticipated large capital cost expenditures for the city to forecast potential costs beyond annual operating expenses. The city does this exercise each year as part of the budget process; however City Manager Stan Farmer wanted the council to be aware of some timing matters with regard to debt and fund balances. This offered details to be examined more closely prior to the budget discussions beginning in April.

The Long-Range Planning committee appeared in full with a presentation by chair, Jim Long. This mapped out the hundreds of hours already devoted to thoroughly examine the ‘state of the union’ of Horseshoe Bay currently. They identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs), condensing those to seven areas of focus for ultimate recommendations to the city. The next step, after having interviewed multiple key stakeholders, is to procure a survey that will be made available to all homeowners so that the voice of all can be included in the final Long-Range Plan/Vision for the City of Horseshoe Bay which will go to the city in the coming year. **Applause, applause** really must go to this committee (Jim Long, John Bird, Forrest Covin, Ted Hess, Sharon Jenkins, Lynnette Morrison, Bud Nichols, Nancy Ritter, Larry Stahl, Michael Thuss, Steven Varga) that is devoting personal time toward true determinations about the quality of life elements of safety, interest areas, environment, and growth management so that the reasons we all moved here can be secured for us and future residents.

At the January 19th regular City Council meeting, discussions continued to address the annexation as a part of a due diligence review. Mayor Jordan reiterated the council’s genuine regret that communication was not initially clear and underscored the fact that there is no intent to change the current use of homeowner property. The annexation is a proactive step to ensure the hill country ambience we all chose remains true to the community desires. Three speakers from potential annexation acknowledged they now understood that they would not be annexed if they signed a declaration indicating they just want to continue to be ranching/hunting/wildlife (under current agricultural exemption status). If they choose to sell the property to someone who will not honor that declaration (i.e., wants to change the use to something commercial or non-ag exempt), then that property would be subject to annexation. The CR311 residents shared a separate concern, noting that unlike RR 2831 (leading to the entrance to The Trails and potential Hills subdivisions), they are not an entrance to any part

of Horseshoe Bay proper. The council agreed to take those properties into a separate consideration at the February meeting.

Overall, the city was looking to simply ensure that all borders/entrances to Horseshoe Bay were protected from action being taken without the citizen consensus around any developments that might be negative to the home values or quality of life desired. Reagan Lambert shared his own recent experience of having a rock crushing plan built near his prior home in what they believed to be a protected, beautiful rural setting. Between dynamiting, truck hauling, dust, and noise...his home value and daily life were reduced within in a year. Horseshoe Bay is committed to preventing such actions.

As always, an update on the departments of the city was provided. Of note, Tim Foran was acknowledged for the completion of the designated scope of roadwork - under budget and on time. If you have never attended a council meeting, it is worth coming once just to be inspired by the exceptional level of leadership and service presented in all aspects of city management (police, fire, finance, utilities, etc.). They will make you proud!

The council also took action to deny the variance for the lighted, 70 sq. ft. sign at the Bible Church of The Lakes. The sign exceeds the current ordinance of maximum of 16 sq. ft. and met with objections from area residents. The council acknowledged the intent of the Church was to communicate positive messages and inform all of service times, and never intended to detract from the neighbors or hill country beauty.

While the new Gynergy Villas At Horseshoe Bay development was on the agenda, it was set aside until the next council meeting February 16, as the Planning and Zoning committee will further review at their next meeting February 2 at 3PM. This next meeting will allow the P&Z to gain more information on the plan as well as hear from neighboring homes regarding any concerns/suggestions.

The City staff/council/committee members continue to look for new ways to ensure good communication flow is available for all. This is YOUR City Council, your community, and your perspective matters. Suggestions are welcome!! In the meantime, be sure you sign up on the City website (<http://www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov>) for the **NOTIFY ME** to get automatic email information. Read your Beacon articles AND postings. Talk to committee members. Encourage your POA leaders to disseminate information. Share with your neighbors. And offer your opinion/suggestions for YOUR city so that we all honor the blessing of our community.

It is ALWAYS a great day to live in Horseshoe Bay.

Cynthia Clinesmith, council member/chief information officer