



# Mayor's Monthly Message

Mayor Elsie Thurman - March 2024

By Mayor Elsie Thurman

**First**, I have a warning for residents. Please lock your cars if you leave them outside at night. Horseshoe Bay and neighboring cities have been hit by thieves who steal from unlocked vehicles. I have no doubt these thieves will be apprehended, but all you must do to avoid being a victim is lock your car.

**Second**.... now don't shoot the messenger.... I am going to talk about water conservation. You have likely seen the news that the LCRA has revamped its Water Plan for our area. Horseshoe Bay submitted comments before the decision, and we recommended things like reduction targets instead of one day per week of watering. We pointed out that our community has done a great deal towards conservation that our neighboring communities have not done. We have installed water smart meters city-wide and have stayed with Stage 2 compliance of 2-day-a-week watering for over 6 years. We have a water conservation expert on our staff who helps residents plan ways to save on outdoor watering.

However, LCRA felt it was necessary to take a very drastic step, and everyone who draws water from the Lower Colorado River will be required to follow Stage 3 compliance as of May 1. LCRA will potentially be offering rebates above the \$600 per household amount to help upgrade irrigation systems and convert turf to more drought-tolerant landscaping. As those details evolve, the City will inform our citizens, but in the meantime, please visit the LCRA website for the most accurate rebate information: <https://www.lcra.org/water/watersmart/rebates/>.

For Horseshoe Bay residents, the new requirement means we will be limited to watering lawns only once a week. As of date but subject to change pending council discussion, if your address is odd, your potential day to water will be Saturday, and if it is even, your potential day to water is Sunday. There will be a lot of questions about these restrictions, so let me try and answer some of them here.

- The new schedule takes effect on May 1
- The rules only apply to sprayer-style irrigation
- Drip irrigation is not included – but I encourage you to limit this to twice a week.
- Hand watering is allowed anytime.
- Our current understanding is there is no exemption for newly installed landscaping
- Landscaping requirements are an element of the requirements from each Architectural Control Committee – remember each of our 11 Property Owner Associations has their own ACC. The City is asking each POA to revise their Landscaping Requirements to REMOVE provisions calling for curb to foundation landscaping and to INCLUDE more drought tolerant plans and plantings.
- Restrictions apply to waterfront properties that draw directly from the lake.



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I suspect the first thing that crosses many minds will be that the city needs to stop issuing new building permits or approving new developments. Sadly, nothing in the new rules offers the city any legal means to do that. I agree that this makes no sense. To use WATER to control growth, we must present data to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and they must agree. TCEQ will require documentation from the City that sets out a remediation plan. Generally, that would involve some significant addition to infrastructure to provide additional capacity. Only then could we stop issuing building permits and approving new developments. The data for HSB shows that our current infrastructure is adequate for the next ten years.

We are caught in the middle. One agency (LCRA) tells us we must drastically reduce water use, and another agency (TCEQ) tells us, "You are fine," and growth may carry on. This frustrates me and our staff because it puts us at odds with our community, which is not where I want to be. I am seeking advice from our city attorney and if there is some way for HSB to limit growth until this drought passes legally; if there is, we will do it. However, Texas is a property rights state that respects the freedom of all of us to use and enjoy the property we own. We all value that protection. So the conclusion is this – we are all in this together. Let's just resolve ourselves to follow the rules and pray for rain.

*Elsie Thurman*, Mayor

City Website - [www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov](http://www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov)