

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

February 29, 2024

Message from the Manager:

Texas weather is well... Texas weather. Just this week, in February mind you, we have witnessed lows in the upper 30's and some record setting highs in the 90's! My message this month is centered on Spring and the renewal that surrounds us. Texas weather said the proverbial, "hold my beer." Let's hope for a bit of Spring like weather before we go into the dog days of Summer!

Back to renewal. How are you coming along with your resolutions for 2024? Still slugging away? Stopped altogether? If you are like me, you may be somewhere in-between. I have done well on some and others I have had to reset. Spring puts on a show of renewal all around us. Like Spring, we too can renew! We can reset resolutions or even create new ones. No matter where you are on your journey, I hope you will take some time to reflect on where you are and use this Spring as a reminder to renew your commitment to the things you want to achieve.

What holds us back from achieving all we want to achieve? Fear of failure? Lack of planning? Uncommitted? Time? Opportunity? The list of hindrances can go on and on. What we see as obstructions are often just excuses for inaction. Most of you have heard me repeat the quote of Henry Ford, "*Whether you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right.*" In the context of renewal, simply put, if we want to achieve something in our lives no obstruction will stop us. It has never been a matter of facing hardships. Hardships are a fact of life, often outside our control, and we will face many throughout our lifetime. The real issue for each of us is what we control – our attitude. You've heard me say before that one of the most liberating moments in life is when you fully understand only you control your attitude! Hellen Keller said it well, "*When we complain of having to do the same thing over and over, let us remember that God does not send new trees, strange flowers and different grasses every year. When the spring winds blow, they blow in the same way. In the same places the same dear blossoms lift up the same sweet faces, yet they never weary us. When it rains, it rains as it always has. Even so would the same tasks which fill our daily lives put on new meanings if we wrought them in the spirit of renewal from within--a spirit of growth and beauty.*"

Let's all learn from Hellen Keller and bring a "spirit of renewal from within – a spirit of growth and beauty" into our lives. What is it you want to achieve? There is no limit to what you can achieve. I am pulling for each of you! I want your lives to have purpose and meaning. I want you to achieve all in life you desire because I know if you possess that spirit of renewal, it will also transform how we serve our citizens. I am blessed to work in an organization with such great examples of renewal that provide encouragement to me! Thank you all for all you do in service to our citizens. What is it you want to achieve? Get started today!

David

"I can hardly wait for tomorrow; it means a new life for me each and every day." —**Stanley Kunitz**

*"... If you wake up and don't want to smile
If it takes just a little while*

*Open your eyes and look at the day
You'll see things in a different way*

... Don't stop thinking about tomorrow

Don't stop, it'll soon be here

It'll be better than before

Yesterday's gone, yesterday's gone" – lyrics from the song Don't Stop by Fleetwood Mac

General Updates:

Employee Appreciation Breakfast: Your leadership team is super excited to honor your service through serving you breakfast this coming Friday, March 1, at the Activities Center. We will be serving breakfast from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. that morning so please swing by, bring your appetite, and come be appreciated!

New Hires:

Welcome to all our new hires:

Ethan McClellan was hired for the position of Firefighter/EMT on February 12th

Zaem Siddiqui was hired for the position of Wastewater Maintenance Technician on February 20th

Nathaniel Trimble was hired for the position of Water Maintenance Technician II on February 20th

Johnathan Vanwinkle was hired for the position of Wastewater Maintenance Technician on February 23rd

Rokeema Collins was hired for the position of Streets Light Equipment Operator on February 26th

Cabrina Chase hired for the position of Telecommunicator on February 27th.

Promotions:

Congratulations to all those promoted:

James Williams was promoted to Juvenile Case Manager/Teen Court Coordinator on February 3rd

Leslie Stevens was promoted to Chief Plant Operator on February 17th

Patrick Wilson was promoted to Utility Specialist on February 17th

Maurice Henderson was promoted to Mechanic on February 17th

Dale Reeves was promoted to Heavy Equipment Operator Trainee on February 17th

Norris Lockett was promoted to Light Equipment Operator on February 17th

Awards:

The City received a couple of awards in February. The City was acknowledged with the **2024 We Hire Vets Award**. The City has been awarded this for multiple years and it demonstrates the City's commitment to hiring veterans. The City also received the **Library Achievement of Excellence Award**. Our Library never slows down in programming and serving citizens!

February Kudos Award Winners: Congratulations to PD's Crystal Thomas and Finance's Kelsey Coffman for being our February Kudos Award Winners! Many more kudos to come!

January Challenge – 30 Miles/30 Day Winners: Congratulations to Team 12 which was comprised of Mayor Blomquist, Aaron Dunnam, and lead by Team Captain Yesmarie Burgos-Figueroa for taking first place in the challenge and winning blue tooth speakers. The second-place team was led by Captain Alex McCoy and included Rene Fernandez and Ursula Paddie. Their team won free queso from Chuys.

February Challenge: Our February Challenge was Random Acts of Kindness. Thank you to all who participated in this challenge! A winner will be drawn from those that participated on March 5.

March Wellness Challenge: Get out your jogging shoes because March's challenge is a Couch to 2K! The prize for this challenge will be a wireless charger. The challenge starts March 4 and runs through the 29th. Information on the challenge has been emailed out but if you need more information see HR.

HH-N-GO: The HH-N-GO bingo style challenge began on January 2. A new letter/number is pulled each week and there are specific things to do for that letter/number if you have it on your card. There is a game card for employees and one for citizens. The game helps us to get to know our organization better and for our citizens it helps them get to know the City better. You can still get a card and play so contact HR if you want to play!

Henry Nash and John Leivan Place Second in TRAPS Event: Park's Henry Nash and John Leivan placed second in the Central Region Rodeo for the Texas Recreation and Parks Society event. Great job Henry and John!

Library Offers Spring Break Programs: The Library is offering a full slate of activities for Spring Break, March 9 to 16. For more information visit the Library.

Old Glories vs. City Staff: The Old Glories Granny Basketball team has challenged the Harker Heights' City Staff to a game of basketball. This will be a benefit game with all items collected going to the Homeless Awareness Response Program (HARP). Admission to the game is a non-perishable food item or new package of socks or underwear. The game will be March 9 at 1 p.m. in the Recreation Center.

Family Hike at Mother Neff State Park: The Family Hike at Mother Neff State Park will be on March 16 from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. This program is in partnership with Texas Parks and Wildlife.

Spotlight on Service:

Ursula Paddie is Appreciated: Finance Director Ayesha Lealiiee wrote to show her appreciation of Admin's Ursula Paddie. Ursula did some research for some documents for Finance. Ayesha wrote, "I thank you for looking through the old documents twice without complaint to appease those who regulate this data...You are appreciated!"

HR Presents Great Opportunity: PD's Desiraye Torres wrote to HR to thank them for the lunch and learn program on financial success.

Yvonne Spell Thanked: One of the City's Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBOA) members wrote to thank Planning's Yvonne Spell for "all your hard work for putting this document (ZBOA packet) together."

Betty DeLong Takes Initiative: Fire Chief Stephens wrote to share his appreciation for FD's Betty DeLong. Chief Stephens wrote, "Betty DeLong has demonstrated outstanding leadership in spearheading the implementation of regional Fire Department Executive Assistants collaboration meetings. These meetings are designed to discuss current topics and to share administrative best practices, which will significantly enhance our collective performance and effectiveness. Betty's initiative and concern to raise the collective performance bar of all her regional colleagues is a testament to her commitment to public service and leadership."

Melonie Matthewson Supports: HR's Melonie Matthewson received praise from the AYADD Outreach Center for her participation in their senior job fair. AYADD Outreach Center wrote, "We would like to take this time to express our sincere appreciation for your participation and support at the Senior Job Fair this past Saturday."

Kiarrah Carlisle Informs: HR Director Clay wrote to thank Parks' Kiarrah Carlisle for the February Newsletter she put together. Ms. Clay wrote, "It was very informative and extremely well written, and I appreciate you sharing it with all of us. Congratulations on a job well done!"

Tom Holubec Impresses: Deputy Police Chief Sonja Clay wrote to thank Park's Tom Holubec. Deputy Chief Clay wrote, "I am reaching out to you to brag about Tom. This is his first solo week at the PD, and he is doing a phenomenal job. The break room sparkles and smells amazing, and the internal windows in the Chief's conference room and Stephanie's office are streak-free. Tom is always respectful of our workspaces and asks for permission to clean certain areas to ensure he is not interfering in our day-to-day operations. When he does his thing, he is like a Ninja, we don't hear or see him but recognize the positive changes throughout the building. We appreciate and enjoy having him here. Thank you!"

Eclipse Committee Not to be Eclipsed: Library Director Lisa Youngblood received a compliment for the work of the City's Eclipse Committee. This compliment came from someone who actually lives in Waco and complimented the City on all the information that the City was putting out concerning the eclipse.

Chief Stephens Entertains: Library Director Lisa Youngblood shared her appreciation for Fire Chief Stephens assistance with a presentation. Lisa wrote, "Chief Stephens is a talented speaker who entertains while engendering trust! I appreciate him finding time to represent our City so well!"

Chief Stephens and Library Director Lisa Youngblood Crush It: ACM Jerry Bark wrote to thank Chief Stephens and Library Director Lisa Youngblood for their presentation to the Rotary. Jerry wrote, "I heard that y'all Crushed It! Thank you for always putting our best foot forward."

Chelsea Jennings Praised: A citizen wrote to show their appreciation for Finance's Chelsea Jennings. The citizen stated, "You have been a pleasure to work with. Moving is stressful, and you have really helped relieve some of that for me today."

Ursula Paddie and Sara Clark Give Attention to Detail: Mayor Blomquist wrote to give his praise for Admin's Ursula Paddie and Sara Clark for their assistance with an event. The Mayor wrote, "Please give my official kudos to both Ursula and Sara for their outstanding support in setting up such a professional and successful meeting event for the Quarterly Mayors Meeting with LTG Sean Bernabe, Fort Cavazos Commanding General, hosted here at Harker Heights City Hall! Their dedication and meticulous attentiveness to detail to making this event perfect reflect great credit upon both Ursula and Sara in their service to our City. A job well done!"

Lisa Youngblood is Enthusiastic: Library Director Lisa Youngblood recently gave a webinar on the coming eclipse event. Someone wrote to thank Lisa and stated "Thanks so much for sharing your GLOBE Eclipse programs and plans in today's webinar! I loved hearing about everything you're doing in Harker Heights and with so many different local partners. Your enthusiasm is contagious - well done!"

Sonja Clay, Randy Stefek, Roxanne Harrill, Bambi Basinger, Brianna Daniel and Justin Smith Get it Done: Planning Director Kristina Ramirez thanked PD's Sonja Clay, Randy Stefek, Roxanne Harrill, Bambi Basinger, Brianna Daniel, and Justin Smith for assisting Planning with an enforcement issue. Kristina wrote, "The professionalism displayed by your staff during questioning at the hearing speaks volumes towards the ability and skill set of the members of our Police Department. We would not have been able to present such a solid case without their solid record keeping, input and testimony. Please share my sincere gratitude with them all."

Latasha Canton Recognized: Animal Services Latasha Canton got some kudos from a citizen she assisted. The citizen called Pet Adoption Center Manager Shiloh Wester and Shiloh shared, "I wanted to let you know that today I received a call from a resident who had called for assistance with her neighbor's dogs that had gotten out and were causing some conflict. The resident called back to specifically let me know that ASO Latasha Canton resolved the issue with the neighbor and the dogs, and she was professional and kind, and the resident felt much better about the situation. It's a great feeling when we get positive feedback and knowing that our Animal Services Officers are being recognized by the residents they serve."

Melonie Matthewson's Timely Service: HR's Melonie Matthewson recently assisted an applicant for a position with the City. The applicant took the time to write to thank Melonie for her "timely response" to their questions.

FD Gets Sweets: A citizen brought in cookies to say thank you to FD for everything they do. Another citizen stopped by and brought bundtins for the fire crews for helping her many times with a family member.

Pet Adoption Staff Show Compassion: Court's Melissa Duenas wrote to thank Pet Adoption Staff for their compassion during the unfortunate event of having to put down her beloved 16-year-old pup Lex. Melissa stated that "Rose and staff were so very understanding and accommodating in the process...Please shower the staff with gratitude and let them know how much I truly appreciate all they have done for us and Lex during this difficult time."

HR Feels the Love: Citizen Tina Capito shared her appreciation on social media for the City's February Random Acts of Kindness challenge. Ms. Capito stated "I love this" on the City's post.

PD Honored: The 3d Cavalry Regiment shared on social media their honor at getting to recognize the great City of Harker Heights' Police Officers at the Harker Heights Chamber's Annual Gala.

Chief Hawkins Makes Heights' Special: Harker Heights Chamber's Gina Pence gave a special shout out to Chief Hawkins for spending time visiting with a young girl at the recent Chamber Gala. Gina stated that the "Chief made an impact on this little girl's life last night that she will treasure forever!"

Gary Bates Goes Above and Beyond: HR Director Clay wrote to share her appreciation for IT Director Gary Bates. Gary helped set up an online event. He not only made sure everything worked correctly he also kept an eye out for the attendees and made sure they had access to the meeting. This was above and beyond the task at hand. Director Clay stated, "Gary is always willing and eager to assist everyone and is an invaluable asset to all of us at the City."

Court Clerks Are Wonderful: Court Administrator Cat Hoffman shared that a defendant approached her directly at the Court's counter to compliment the clerks on their excellent handling of his citation. Cat stated, "I can vouch for their excellence and patience in dealing with the defendants. They are all so wonderful to work with."

Yvonne Spell, Mark Hyde, Todd Maxon and Chuck Adams Receive Thanks: A developer wrote to share their gratitude for Planning's Yvonne Spell and Public Works' Mark Hyde, Todd Maxon and Chuck Adams. The developer stated the team, "has been so helpful. Thank you all."

Pet Adoption Center Displays Regional Teamwork: The Pet Adoption Center received a shoutout from a pet advocacy group on social media. The group praised the Pet Adoption Center for actively promoting available pets at other shelters. This shows the great passion that our Center has for helping fur babies find their forever homes.