

Our City

Between the two meetings it took nearly seven hours but at 7:00 pm. Last Wednesday the City's superintendents and council completed their review of our standard operating procedures with regard to how we do business. You would think that Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) would be - you know standard? But, I have found at least if it's not written down and shared with everyone SOP can be far from standard or consistent. As I have said over the past few weeks, the seven hours spent reviewing our SOP was intended to make us as a city more efficient and consistent. Some of the new operating policies you will never see or care about; but others you will and I think you will be pleased with the change.

It will take a while to get set up but I suspect that by the New Year you will be able to pay your bill and/or organized recreation fees with a debit or credit card. There was lengthy discussion about whether to allow for payments that could be phoned in, but it was decided that all payments at least for now would need to be made in person at City Hall. There is one day each month that water services are turned off for delinquent payments; our city staff is not equipped to handle 20-25 payment phone calls between 4:30 and 5:00, which is when most delinquent payments are made prior to shutoff. So, for now all debit or credit card payments will need to be made in person. I would remind you though that if in-person payments are difficult to manage, online payments can be set up through your bank. My daughter brought me out of the dark ages about a year ago; it is convenient for sure.

During the recessed council meeting that followed the procedures meeting last Wednesday, the City superintendents gave their quarterly reports that are intended to bring the City Council members and public up to date on what has happened and is going to happen in each department for the month prior and two months following the report. Superintendent Dahlke was approached by the engineering firm of Harper Levitt with three possible street grants about a month ago. After working out some details, Dahlke and Kyle Jones of Harper Levitt brought nearly \$1.4 million of grant possibilities to the Council. By this time next month we will have applied for a one million dollar grant to resurface Fort Hall from Harrison to the Highway 39 bypass. Within that same grant, if awarded, we will widen Fort Hall at its intersection with the bypass to include a turn lane making it safer. A \$250,000 grant is being sought to build a pedestrian underpass, under Highway 39, at Hillcrest. And, an additional \$100,000 grant could be used to fix the storm drain problem that exists on Roosevelt coming off Hospital Hill and down by the south City Park. I look forward to some good news in the months to come as we hear back from the grant committee.

Questions were raised by the Council as the Water and Waste Water Superintendent Pete Cortez gave his report stating that a few pumps and blowers have had to be replaced or repaired. In most cases it is simple wear and tear as the equipment runs constantly, and has for four years. But, when you are talking thousands of dollars for repair and tens of thousands for replacement you would expect your City Council to ask questions.

Finally, thank you to Saint John's church for allowing our City youth basketball programs to use your basketball court. Without this facility our winter programs would not exist. I mention this because you may keep it in mind if a public recreation center or additional school gym is

ever a possibility; you wouldn't think that 50 by 100 feet of floor space would make such a difference in the lives of so many but it most certainly does. Thank you again Saint John's.

Until next week...