

## Our City

I am not sure how it started, but I will take the responsibility as it is my job to properly communicate with City personnel and you as citizens. The rumor mill has been rampant that the City used moneys designated for our volunteer fire department to help offset the deficit we find ourselves in with the golf course annually. Before I dispel that rumor I will tell you too that none of the golf deficit has been the fault of Superintendent Cody Moldenhauer; in fact (knock on wood) Moldenhauer has the course on pace to have the best revenue year to date in my tenure with the City. It is hard to predict the weather a year in advance as we budget, but to a degree, it is the weather that determines how much golf is actually played. To his credit Moldenhauer has done a great job despite the cool, windy, and wet spring and has solid ideas as to how to further decrease the income deficit in golf.

Yes, a few years ago money was used at the end of the fiscal year from the Police budget to help offset the short fall in golf, but at no time has money ever been taken from the Fire Department for that or any other purpose. As a result of the rumor a few citizens have requested past budget information from Clerk Robyn Herndon. I will tell you what they will find: City coffers unlike those of other local taxing districts get no additional income from windmills, solar farms or other tax boons, we depend on local property, sales, and liquor taxes to fund everything we do except water, waste water, and garbage collections. For whatever reason the taxes we actually receive (revenue) have never been equal to the amounts projected by the State. Thus, if a department budgets \$1000 for operations and maintenance and the actual tax revenues after the last significant payment to the City from the State in July only totals \$850 the budget is automatically short. It is easy to see how you could believe if you budget an amount that you could spend that amount, but for the City that is not always the case.

The rumor was that the City used \$20,000 from the Fire Department to help pay for golf. Not true. The year in question City revenues came in significantly less than the State projection. The money was simply not there to spend for any of the departments. If you notice such things you may wonder why any new equipment the City purchases seems to show up at the end of our fiscal year, after July, it is because then the Superintendents actually know what they have to spend beyond their regular operations and maintenance. Your City superintendents are very good at scrimping and saving for nine months of the year.

As we work through this budgeting season for fiscal year 2019, we find ourselves short again, as we face increases in insurance and more costs passed to us by other vendors. I have asked that each department cut three percent from their budgets so that we can plan to pay for the continuing added and passed on expenses. I mentioned previously the potential annexation of the land to the northeast and southwest of the City, fair warning we are moving ahead with those plans. We have no choice. The annexation is expected to cost the City about \$18,000 over the next 18 months, but by 2021 should increase revenues by about \$60,000 annually. As costs continue to increase for everything I am not sure how far that projected added revenue will go, but it will go further than what we have now in meeting the needs of City residents.

The \$18,000 is one-time money received from the building permits for the new Intermediate School and hospital renovation. From those same funds we also plan to purchase in cooperation with the Rural Fire Department eight new self-contained breathing apparatuses for our volunteer firemen, make double lease payments on four new police and one new administration vehicles and lastly we hope to be able to purchase new accounting software to replace the DOS based system we are currently using. Again, these are one-time funds and not reoccurring and will not affect your taxes beyond what you have already voted for. Thank you.

Lastly, Police Chief Wilkinson and I will be meeting on June 11th with Magistrate Judge Paul Laggis, County Prosecutor Anson Call and the head of County probation to brainstorm ideas on how to better curb juvenile misbehavior and crime, it is on the verge of out of control. School is out. For our part I will tell you again that the curfew will be strictly enforced, between the graffiti, property damage, and stolen cars there are few options available to us.

Council President Dan Hammond will be filling in for me here writing the columns for the weeks of June 11 and 25 as I will be working with FFA members and at a teacher training.

Until next time...