

## CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

August 31, 2023

### Message from the Manager:

The biggest mentor in my life was my Father. My Dad came from humble beginnings being the son of a sharecropper in Geneva County, Alabama. While he graduated from high school, he had to drop out of college so he could work full time to make ends meet. He ultimately got a job at what was at the time Fort Rucker where he worked for over 40 years on helicopters. I can say we never had to worry about having a roof over our heads, clothes, or food – both of my parents were hard workers and excellent providers. My Dad's wisdom was only exceeded by his humility. He was the humblest person I have ever known. He had simple ways of sharing wisdom with me that continue to guide me to this day. I recently shared one of my Dad's lessons with a dear friend and it meant so much to them that it has been on my heart to share with you. This lesson I'll title "If Life Gives You Lemons Take an Orange."

After graduating high school, I lived at home with my parents and completed my freshmen year of college at a local junior college. I am and have always been an avid hunter. One of my best friends, who was working a couple jobs to make ends meet, had an unexpected day off and stopped by my house in the predawn hours to see if I could slip away for a hunt. My Dad was up very early every day due to his work schedule. Not knowing my friend was coming that morning I was fast asleep, but my Dad came and woke me up. I remember him saying "I know you didn't have plans to hunt today but John is here, and he does not get many chances to go, so hop on up and take him." I begrudgingly got up and shook the sleep off as best I could and began to dress and gather my hunting gear. As I was carrying my gear out to my truck, I passed my Dad having his morning coffee in the kitchen. Growing up not far from the Florida line my parents often stopped and bought fresh fruits and produce. As I walked by my Dad, he asked me "hey, you want to take some of these fresh oranges with you to eat later." I was tired and probably a bit irritated that my friend had not called me the night before and I declined my Dad's offer and headed on out to the truck. I let my attention slip and backing out of the driveway I managed to back into my Dad's truck. Very frustrated now, I get out with my flashlight and discover I have left a nice big crease in the front fender. With hat in hand I go back to the kitchen where my Dad is still enjoying his coffee and I say, "Dad, I was not paying attention and backed into your truck and your front quarter panel is damaged, I'm sorry." My Dad without hesitation responded, "you sure you won't take some of these oranges, they are really fresh." I protested that maybe he was not hearing me. It was then my Dad taught his lesson. "Son, my truck can be fixed, I am not worried about that. What you are doing this morning is for your friend. Go enjoy the hunt and don't think another thing about it... and take some oranges."

I have always wondered what my reaction would have been if the shoe was on the other foot. My Dad's footprints are giant to me and I'm not sure I would have shown his grace or much less used it to teach a lesson. You see, trucks can indeed be fixed (in the case of my Dad he drove that truck for 200,000 miles and never had it fixed) and relationships are simply worth more than possessions. It was a powerful lesson for me as a young man and one that has stuck with me. Relationships are important. Everything else – possessions, hobbies, wants, politics, etc. – is secondary. Those of us

employed by the City are public servants first and foremost. We are in the people business which is built on relationships. We provide a diverse set of public services – Library, Parks, Police, Fire, Streets, Drainage Wastewater, Water, Planning, Building Inspection, Human Resources, Finance, Courts and Code Enforcement. While the services we provide are wide ranging they all have one commonality – they are all about serving people and serving them well. As such, making and maintaining relationships is of the utmost importance. The best of us can lose focus of that in dealing with the issues that we face daily. I hope when life hands you lemons you'll remember the story of the oranges. A story that for me resets my mindset on the importance of relationships. Thank you all for joining me in this journey of service and take an orange!

David

*"Can't never could."* – **Huey R. Mitchell**

*"You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help other people get what they want."* — **Zig Ziglar**

## **General Updates:**

### **New Hires:**

Welcome to all our new hires:

Kimberly West hired for the position of Part Time Recreation Aide on August 15<sup>th</sup>  
William Mahlstedt hired for the position of Fire Marshal – Deputy Chief on August 28<sup>th</sup>  
Zyjuan Reaves hired for the position of Water Service Worker on August 30<sup>th</sup>

### **Promotions:**

Congratulations to all those promoted:

Aaliyah Smith promoted to the position of Deputy Court Clerk on August 5<sup>th</sup>  
Duston Wilson promoted to the position of Crew Leader on August 5<sup>th</sup>

### **Accomplishments:**

Andrea Contreras obtains Level II Clerk Certification  
April Edwards obtain Level I Clerk Certification  
Calvin Fleming received the Code Officer of the Year from the Building Officials Association of Texas  
Michael Beard was elected President of the Building Officials Association of Texas

**Open Enrollment:** All City employees need to complete their open enrollment for City benefits before the close of businesses tomorrow, September 1. Online and in-person options are available. Contact HR with any questions.

**Stretch Challenge:** Don't forget to submit your log for the August stretch challenge! I found this one to be challenging and a much-needed reminder to stretch!

**Sleep Challenge:** Next up in September is a sleep challenge! It will be a six-week challenge and more information will be coming from HR.

**August Kudos Award Winners:** Congratulations to our August Kudos Award Winners: IT's Gary Bates, IT's Lorissa Byse, HR's Melonie Matthewson, and PD's Jay Leach. These fine employees' work was noted and acknowledged by others. We are so proud of them and how they represent the organization. They are role models for us all. Many more Kudos Awards to come throughout the organization!

**Farmers Market:** The Harker Heights Farmers Market is open until October! The Market is held in the City Hall parking lot. Come out and get fresh vegetables and other interesting and unique crafts!

**National Night Out:** This year's National Night Out will be on Tuesday, October 3. This is the 40th year celebration of National Night Out across the Country. The event brings law enforcement and neighborhoods together in a festive meet and greet with lots of food!

**Cuts with Cops:** Healthy Homes hosted a Cuts with Cops event on August 6 and provided 37 KISD students with back-to-school haircuts/styles. Such a great program to help our kiddos transition back to school! We thank all our barbers/hairdressers for the time they donated to cut the kids hair.

**Remembrance Ceremony/Freedom Walk:** Killeen High School will be hosting a 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony/Freedom Walk on September 11 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Joint honor guard from HHPD and HHFD will be participating in the event.

**Fall 2023 Citizen's Police Academy:** PD's Community Services is currently accepting applications for the upcoming Fall 2023 Citizen's Police Academy that is set to begin October 10.

**Open Sew at the Library:** Open Sew at the Library is Saturday, September 9 from 2 to 4 p.m. Try your hand at machine sewing! Bring your own machine or use ours.

**Grand Day:** Grand Day at the Recreation Center will be on Saturday, September 9 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Celebrate National Grandparents Day at the Recreation Center!

### **Spotlight on Service:**

**FD Gets the Treats:** Former Mayor Ed Mullen stopped by the Fire Station with a dozen buntlets to thank the crew for doing a great job. Another citizen brought in Black Rifle Coffee in appreciation for the crews that transported him to the hospital. He mentioned that the crew was very professional, and he was glad that our guys were the ones that helped him.

**Officer Howayeck Gives Smiles:** Parks Director Jeff Achee wrote of his thanks for PD's Officer Massoud Howayeck. Jeff wrote, "I'm writing you to give a big kudos to Officer Howayeck, who I believe is a newer employee for you. When I was walking through the Farmers Market on Saturday with my two-year-old son, Luca, he went out of his way to talk to him. He got down on his level, gave him a big high-five, asked his name, and gave him a Junior Officer sticker. I assume he had no idea that I was also a City of Harker Heights staffer because I was in plain clothes. This put a huge

smile on Luca's face, and I want to make sure that he gets the kudos he deserves for going above and beyond for his community."

**Pet Adoption Center, Shiloh Wester and Volunteer Simone Maynard Are Exceptional:** A citizen wrote to me of their pleasure in dealing with the Pet Adoption Center, Shiloh Wester and Volunteer Simone Maynard. The citizen wrote, "I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my heartfelt appreciation and admiration for the exceptional work being done at the Harker Heights Animal Shelter, and I believe it is essential to acknowledge the outstanding staff and volunteers who contribute to its success...I was delighted to see how well-maintained and clean the entire facility was. The care and love given to the dogs were evident, and I was particularly impressed with the thorough health measures taken, such as spaying/neutering, vaccinations, deworming, and flea prevention. It is heartening to know that the shelter prioritizes the well-being of these animals in every aspect."

**Wilson Riley Puts in the Work:** HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank HR's Wilson Riley for her hard work on submitting for a TML award. Leona stated, "Thank you so much for all that you do and for being a part of the Human Resources team."

**Julie Helsham Leads by Example:** Planning Director Kristina Ramirez witnessed City Secretary Julie Helsham serving a citizen. Kristina wrote, "Just wanted to say thank you for leading by example and doing so with a smile. When we all broke for lunch today, it was very nice of you to help the resident on crutches with the Council Chamber doorway."

**Lisa Youngblood Provides Resources:** HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank Library Director Lisa Youngblood for yoga videos she provided for the stretching challenge. Leona wrote, "Thank you so much for making this available to all employees. I'm definitely going to be using these for this challenge."

**Melonie Matthewson, Lyndsey Amundson, Wilson Riley, Kelsey Coffman, Ursula Paddie, Lorissa Byse and Betty Delong Make is Special:** Chief Stevens wrote to express his thanks for the meet and greet that was held at the FD. He wrote, "Thank you so much for everything you did to facilitate the Meet and Greet with me and my family. Everything was wonderful! They felt so very welcomed and instantly a part of our family. That means the world to me. I am regularly amazed by who we are as an organization. I often share with Amanda how I won the Mega-millions Powerball Lotto to be a part of our City. My family sees that now, too. Thank you for everything in making that happen."

**Chuck Adams, Todd Maxon and Yvonne Spell Give Back:** Planning Director Kristina Ramirez wrote to express her thanks for Public Works' Chuck Adams and Todd Maxon and Planning's Yvonne Spell. They assisted with a student's internship with the City and the student had taken the time to write a very nice letter expressing her thanks. Kristian wrote, "Thank you all for taking time this summer to introduce Serenity to your portions of public works and planning. As you can see from her thank you, you truly impacted her perception of our profession and our city. Thanks again for giving of your time to provide a successful internship."

**Lt. Sprouse, Lt. Brummett, DO Mozek, DO Olson, DO Gutz, FF Regan, FF Hernandez, FF Perez, FF Fleet, FF Ringo, Chief Dunnam, Chief Gandara, Lt. Fernandez, FF Schwindt and FF Larremore Do Incredible Work:** Chief Stevens wrote to express his thanks to his firefighters

who worked the “Open Air Fire” this last weekend. Approximately 30 acres burned during the fire. Chief Stevens stated their work was “incredible” and that their “professional effort kept the fire to the acreage consumed.” Further thanks to these fine firefighters came in from Mayor Blomquist, Councilwoman Wilson and City Manager Mitchell.

**FD’s Aaron Dunnam, Roman Hernandez, Issac Perez, Daniel Regan, and Charlie**

**Brummett Get Them Trained:** First National Bank wrote to a proud Chief Stephens of their gratitude for fire safety and CPR training that was conducted by the FD. They stated, “the training sessions were not only informative but also engaging, providing us with essential life-saving skills and knowledge that we can now carry with us in our personal and professional lives.”

**Officer Valdez Gets in the Game:** PD’s Officer Cesar Valdez was praised on Facebook for his positive interaction with children at the Cinemark theater. The children were throwing a football back & forth in the parking lot and Officer Valdez playfully told the children they had butterfingers. Officer Valdez then got out of his unit and played catch with the children. The citizen stated “they got to see an officer in a positive way! They enjoyed every minute and definitely made their evening”.

**Lieutenant Jack Wallace Cares:** Lieutenant Jack Wallace was thanked by a Veteran who is currently an Alabama resident. The Veteran had been struggling with suicidal thoughts and Lieutenant Wallace spent a large amount of time speaking with him on the phone and convinced him to get some help. Lieutenant Wallace also ordered him food to be delivered to his home during their interaction. The Veteran stated, “he had people check up on me around the clock for the next few days and I wouldn’t be here today if it wasn’t for him”.

**Clyde Hicks Sets the Example:** HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank Building Security Officer Clyde Hicks. Director Clay wrote, “I wanted to thank you for your great example of working as a team, by taking the initiative last week setting up the Council dais, after you found out Ursula and Sara were out of the office. Congratulations on a job well done and keep up the good work!”

**Josh Delong, Erica Rossmiller and Adam Trujillo Eclipse All Expectations:** Library Director Lisa Youngblood wrote to thank IT’s Josh Delong, Library’s Erica Rossmiller, and Park’s Adam Trujillo for their assistance building the City’s Eclipse website!

**Ayesha Lealiiee is a Rockstar:** Chief Stevens wrote of his appreciation of Finance Director Ayesha Lealiiee. He stated, “She navigates her activities, illustrating leadership and a commitment to maintaining the highest financial ethical standards.”

**Eric Jackson, Dale Reeves, and Davin Dick do Amazing Work:** A citizen wrote to express his appreciation for Public Works’ Eric Jackson, Dale Reeves, and Davin Dick. He stated, “Your guys were over here this morning and did some amazing work.”

**Kristina Ramirez Provides Good Counsel:** An intern who recently worked with Planning wrote to personally thank Planning Director Kristina Ramirez for being her guide. In a handwritten note, she expressed her gratitude for the guidance and counseling that Kristina provided.

**Officer Pablo Virgen Represents the City Well:** A citizen wrote to acknowledge the excellent work of PD’s Officer Pablo Virgen. The citizen stated that, “Officer Virgen was professional and courteous the entire time. He represented himself and HHPD very well.”

**Alex Beaver Assists:** Parks' Alex Beaver assisted HR's Wilson Riley with some paperwork. Wilson wrote that, "It truly made the process easier for me and I wanted to tell you how much I appreciate it!"

**Henry Nash and Crew Complimented:** A citizen wrote to compliment Parks' Henry Nash and crew for their time and effort in trimming. The citizen wanted to share that, "these men help in a special way to keep our area looking good and safe."

**Eric Alton and Ben Becerril Impress:** Citizen Richard Keagle wrote to give thanks for Public Works' Eric Alton and Ben Becerril. They were working a water line leak on Caribou. He stated that he was "impressed with their attitude and how polite they were." All this during an especially hot time. Mr. Keagle often stops to complement our hard-working employees and we are thankful for him as well!

**Street Department Provides Support:** FD's Driver Operator Stuart Kiefer wrote to share his thanks with Public Works' Street Department for their assistance with the "Open Air Fire." DO Kiefer wrote, "Please pass along my thanks and appreciation to the Streets Department for their assistance on the large brush fire. Their assistance was requested with the backhoe in uncovering hard to reach deep pockets that were smoldering, and they responded immediately after the request was made and were on scene extremely quickly. They were vital in final extinguishment of those hot spots and accessing the smoldering debris we could not otherwise get to in the piles."

**Kelsey Coffman Provides Tremendous Help:** PD's Lawrence Stewart wrote to share his appreciation for Finance's Kelsey Coffman. Lawrence wrote, "I just wanted to write to let you know that Kelsey has been a tremendous help to our department as we close out the budget for this year. ...Kelsey went line by line in our General Fund, something that she did not have to do and do so without being asked. She embodies what teamwork looks like and doing those things to ensure good stewardship."