

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

February 28, 2022

Message from the Manager:

You may have heard the old phrase “there is nothing new under the sun.” As we are painfully aware of, just this past week, Russian forces invaded Ukraine. I found it interesting that in this very month, back in 1989, Russia withdrew from Afghanistan after a loss of over 15,000 soldiers, and many failures in their support of the then Afghan government. Also, this very month in 1943 German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel defeated the U.S. at Kasserine Pass in North Africa. For the inexperienced U.S., this was our first major battle of World War II in Europe. These are just a very few of the major historical moments involving war that have occurred in just the month of February alone. 2022, 1989 and 1943 – indeed there is nothing new under the sun.

You and I provide service to our citizens in many ways. Sure, we provide the basics that are indicated in our job descriptions. We arrest law breakers, fight fires, care for the ill, fix potholes, keep water flowing, wastewater filtered, parks clean, codes enforced just to name a very few of our daily actions. What we do beyond our job descriptions is equally profound. We provide hope!

I started my message with Russia invading Ukraine. I know from discussions with my own kids that this is a stressful time as they for the first time witness the potential for war in the world. For example, I remember exactly where I was when the President's voice cut in on the radio to tell the U.S. of the start of Desert Storm. Hearing that shook me deeply just as the news today is impacting the world. I also have seen numerous social media posts from service members and their families that show the emotion and stress world events are placing on them. Harker Heights is almost 50 percent military or military affiliated in our citizenry! When you add in the stresses of uncertainty in the world, a pandemic, and things such as severe winter storms, stress hits new levels. We feel the stress in our own households and in our community.

Just as with major events such as the world wars before, conflicts in Afghanistan, Desert Storm, Covid, Russia's invasion of Ukraine or Winter Storm Uri – these too shall pass! You and I have witnessed many tragic and difficult events. We have the experience to help those around us navigate uncertain times. We provide hope! A light on a hill that both guides and comforts. Sure, our jobs are to provide the core services we provide, but in how we carry our duties out we help provide comfort to all around us.

I've witnessed the many ways you all do this. You listen. You want to know what the issue is well enough that you can effect positive change. You empathize. You feel the emotion of those you assist, and you show concern for their wellbeing. You act. You provide answers or actions that benefit those you serve. You encourage. Knowing those you serve have stresses beyond the issue you may be addressing, you provide a kindness and a steady courage that gives them hope. In listening, empathizing, acting, and encouraging you not only accomplish your daily duties you show a heart for service for others. The heart of a servant. In doing so, you help comfort and heal others far beyond the important basic functions you provide.

I am proud to serve alongside you all in this journey of service. May we always find the ways to renew ourselves so that we can continue to be the rock that our community needs during times of uncertainty. That rock of hope that remains unchanged through time – nothing new under the sun. Thank you all for your service!

David

"You have to accept whatever comes and the only important thing is that you meet it with courage and with the best that you have to give." - Eleanor Roosevelt

"America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand." – Harry S. Truman

*"May you grow up to be righteous
May you grow up to be true
May you always know the truth
And see the light surrounding you
May you always be courageous
Stand upright and be strong
May you stay forever young"* – Forever Young song by Bob Dylan

General Updates:

Johnny (Drew) Reams Retires: Detective Johnny (Drew) Reams retired from the Harker Heights Police Department on February 25 with 21 years of service to the City of Harker Heights. Drew was such a humble and courageous leader. He will be missed, and we wish him all the best in his retirement!

Congratulations to Recent Promotions:

David McCoy was promoted to Senior Equipment Operator on February 19.

Welcome to Our New Hires:

Alexandra Gloria hired on February 1st for the position of Police Officer Trainee
Logan Green hired on February 7th for the position of Firefighter/EMT
Corey David hired on February 7th for the position of Firefighter/EMT
Fabian Brooks hired on February 9th for the position of Maintenance Technician
Pablo Virgen hired on February 9th for the position of Police Officer Trainee
Matthew Enos hired on February 9th for the position of Police Officer Trainee
Jalon Johnson hired on February 9th for the position of Police Officer Trainee

Citizens Police Academy: The PD is accepting applications for the 2022 Spring Citizen's Police Academy.

Youth Baseball, Softball, and Tee Ball: Registration for these youth sports is open through March 23.

Adult Disc Golf League: Registration is open until March 7.

Makerspace: The grand opening of the Activities Center's Makerspace will be on March 14. This is a collaborative workspace for the public to learn, explore, and find like-minded people. Resources open to the public and staff include specialty craft tools, sewing machines, robotics kits, electric keyboard, learning kits, craft supplies, and more.

Outdoor & Science Expo: The Outdoor and Science Expo is on March 12 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Activities Center. Explore new hobbies with our outdoor vendors and take classes on exciting subjects.

Spring Community Garage Sale: The Spring Community Garage Sale will be on Saturday, March 19 from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. throughout the City!

Spotlight on Service:

Mark Hyde's Actions Receive Acclaim: We recently received an email from a citizen thankful for Public Works Director Mark Hyde. The letter pretty much says it all, so I share it in its entirety here:

“I have intended to send this message for some time –

My wife and I have been residents of Harker Heights for over 40 years. Throughout this time we have witnessed the various ups and downs of our city as well as the expansions throughout. For many years, we have been privileged to have Mr Hyde as part of our city's management team to support the evolution of our city. I wanted to take a moment of your time to let you know how very much we greatly appreciate Mark Hyde and his exceptional staff for all they do every day. As an retired Army Medical Service Corps officer and retired Senior Vice President of a company providing health facilities / campus consultations, I am very familiar with the challenges of orchestrating “public works” for exceptionally complex facilities, campuses, and communities. Whenever I have needed to reach out about a challenge or seek guidance on various infrastructure situations, Mr. Hyde has always been the consummate and most responsive professional I have ever encountered. His phenomenal leadership skills in a very complex environment has resulted in having a highly motivated, talented and exceptionally performing team.

The swift, exceptionally outstanding handling of impacts of recent weather-related events, infrastructure failures, management of numerous highly successful projects reflects the typical accomplishments of this professional. I anticipate that Mr Hyde will receive the highest acclaim --- which he truly deserves. I am very glad to know that we have Mr Hyde “on our team” in Harker Heights.”

We are equally proud to have Mark “one our team” here at the City. While Mark has tremendous knowledge of public works, he is an even greater servant leader. Thank you, Mark, for all you do!

Randy Ray Renders Aid: Deputy Fire Marshal Randy Ray recently helped a citizen safely move their vehicle off the road. The car was broken down near an underpass and he pushed the car off the road to keep the citizen and their vehicle safe.

Staff Thanked by Mayor: Mayor Smith sent thanks to all that assisted with the Annual Mayor's luncheon. The following employees are being recognized for their contribution: Julie Helsham, Catharina Hoffman, Ursula Paddie, Sara Clark, Lorissa Byse, Betiale Hawkins, Angel Carroll and Destinee Barton. The Mayor said they “hit it out of the park” on the event!

Patrick Wilson Receives Gratitude: Public Works' Patrick Wilson was thanked for assisting an elderly citizen with a water leak. Patrick shut the water off and came back and turned it on for the citizen to fill some buckets of water. He also brought the citizen a pack of bottled water! Great example of going above and beyond! The water leak was the primary issue Patrick was called out for, but he saw the human need that was created by that situation and acted with a servant heart.

Sebastian Reyes Appreciated: A citizen gave a comment to the Library staff about their wonderful programs. He specifically mentioned the assistance and customer service of Sebastian Reyes. Great job Sebastian!

Pet Adoption get Kudos: A citizen wrote in to compliment the Pet Adoption Center. The citizen really appreciated the quality of pictures and the description of the animals that the PAC provides online for adoption.

Library is Loved: A parent provided a photo of a young Library patron holding up a heart that listed the Library as one of his loves!