

# CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

August 29, 2025

## Message from the Manager:

### Choices

For those of us that work in public service, serving others is where we find our joy. Working in public service, just like all walks of life, has its trying days. I recently was encouraging staff that the day was “*going to be a great one.*” My mind was fully centered on just manifesting the day to be great! I am always so thankful for mentors that serve all through our organization. On this day it was HR’s Angie Sabino who didn’t bat an eye as she said, “*yes sir, because it’s a choice.*” It was clear Angie had made her choice, and it was indeed going to be a great day. Wow, what a great reminder – we get a choice!

Perhaps one of the most profound foundational leadership principles is that attitude is a choice. External things can’t steal your joy unless you choose to be unhappy. What an empowering leadership principle! How many Eeyore’s do you know? For our younger employees, Eeyore is a donkey character in the Winne-the-Pooh book and tv series. Eeyore was always moping around and making statements like, “*If it is a good morning, which I doubt.*” He even lost his tail once! Don’t take my word for it – read on it! Eeyore chose to let whatever issues he faced determine his attitude. He chose to be miserable. We feel sad for Eeyore and laugh at some of the conundrums he found himself in, but how many people do we encounter that choose to be like Eeyore? Sadly, they missed the leadership lesson – they have a choice.

What will you choose? There are very few perfect moments in life. We all struggle, and we all fall short of something we desired. Sometimes those things may be well outside our control. What is in our control fully is our attitude. Difficulties define our attitude only if we allow them to. So, what choice will you make? If you can’t choose to be happy when things are difficult, you may find that happiness escapes you even on the best of days. When we choose to have a positive attitude, the day is won before it even starts. I’m thankful for mentors like Angie Sabino who are joyful no matter the day or the circumstances it brings. Choose wisely!

David

*“It never hurts to keep looking for sunshine.” – Winnie-the-Pooh*

*“Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it.” - Charles R. Swindoll*

**General Updates:**

**Open Enrollment:** Mandatory open enrollment is occurring right now and will end September 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Retirements:**

PD’s Duarte Fernandes retired on August 1. We wish Duarte all the best in his retirement!

**New Hires:**

Hannah Corbi – Telecommunicator on August 4<sup>th</sup>

Roberto Chavez – Parks Light Equipment Operator on August 4<sup>th</sup>

Tyler Beard – Wastewater Maintenance Technician on August 6<sup>th</sup>

Lance Lane – Parks Light Equipment Operator on August 7<sup>th</sup>

Roberto Diaz Cain – BPAT/CSI and Water Flushing Technician on August 11<sup>th</sup>

Michael Starr – Fire Chief on August 11<sup>th</sup>

Sammantha Baily – Telecommunicator on August 16<sup>th</sup>

Viviana Pedroza – Police Officer Trainee on August 18<sup>th</sup>

Jude Songui – Police Officer Trainee on August 18<sup>th</sup>

**Promotions:**

Ethan Ogas completed field training on August 16<sup>th</sup>

Alexis Fujikawa promoted to Police Officer Trainee on August 30<sup>th</sup>

**August Kudos Award Winners:** Congratulations to Tom Holubec and Crystal Thomas who were our August Kudos Award Winners! Wow, what great work you all do, and we have many, many more kudos winners coming up!

**August Challenge – Gratitude Journal:** The Gratitude Journal Challenge began August 3 and runs to August 30. The challenge is an uplifting journey of gratitude during the month of August.

**First Friday Music Series:** The Friday Night Concert Series returns September 5 with Purple Hull! The event is always in Carl Levin Park at the Amphitheater from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. and food trucks will be present.

**HH-N-GO:** A new HH-N-GO bingo challenge began with the start of 2025! A new letter/number will be 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. Contact HR for your bingo card! I was an early winner last year and I already have **eleven** hits on my bingo card so far this year – can you beat me?? No winners as of the end of August! You can't win if you don't play – join me (but you probably won't beat me)!

**Scavenger Hunt:** No winners for the Scavenger Hunt in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter. For more clues see the City's Facebook page! One citizen wrote in to say what fun the scavenger hunt is and what a great way to get to know the City!

**Clyde and Gene's Crossword Challenge:** This month's Clyde and Gene's Crossword Challenge winners were Julie Helsham, Melissa Chevalier Duenas and Leona Clay.

**Harker Heights Farmers Market:** The Harker Heights Farmers Market is closed for the summer and will reopen again from October 4 to December 6.

**Spotlight on Service:**

**Remedio Duenas is Great:** A citizen wrote to thank Finance’s Remedio Duenas. The citizen stated, *“We wanted to send a note about the prompt, friendly and great customer service we received from Remedios this morning. I called to get service connected, and she was very helpful and kind. Remedios is a great representation of your department.”*

**Mark Hyde Gets the Love:** Citizens on social media recently showed some love for ACM Mark Hyde. The citizens wrote, *“he is a great guy, one of the best,”* to which a subsequent citizen stated *“yes he is.”*

**Nate Nesbit Impresses:** Public Work’s Nate Nesbit received some kudos for his work at the drop site. On social media citizens wrote that Nate *“is great,” “wonderful, great with the kids and so helpful,” “we love Nate,” “awesome and always helpful,”* and *“is the best.”*

**Kelsey Coffman is Tremendous:** Finance Director Ayesha Lealiee wrote to thank Finance’s Kelsey Coffman. Ayesha wrote, *“Kelsey Coffman has been a tremendous assistance helping to gather and input data for the FY 2026 Budget Book. She has even taken on the very important yet tedious task of inputting wire payments for the City’s debt payments. I am so grateful for her willingness to add additional tasks to her schedule when she herself is bogged down. Her efforts to assist and learn are truly appreciated.”*

**Gary Bates Assists:** Finance Director Ayesha Lealiee wrote to thank IT Director Gary Bates for his assistance. Ayesha wrote, *“Gary also had an epiphany and wanted to try his hands at budgeting – budget book prepping that is. Maybe he thought his offer of assisting would be turned down, but he also jumped in and helped with putting together draft department pages for the proposed budget. This will have saved me some valuable time that I can use to review numbers and formatting.”*

**Mayor Blomquist Represents:** Chamber President Rebecca Moon wrote to thank Mayor Blomquist. Rebecca wrote, *“I just wanted to send you a quick message and say thank you for attending Vision XXI this morning and being such a vital part of the revised class. Your remarks were perfect, and I meant it when I said that it speaks so highly to everyone that you, and other leaders in our area, continue to show up and contribute to this program. You add so much value, just by being there with us.”*

**Rodney Trantham and Eric Jackson Get Kudos:** A citizen called to give praise for Public Works’ Rodney Trantham and Eric Jackson for assisting with brush pickup. Kudos to both of them.

**Nate Nesbit is Helpful:** A resident came into City Hall to express their gratitude for Mr. Nate at the transfer station. They stated that he is always extremely polite, and incredibly helpful with residents disposing of their items.

**Gary Bates Appreciated:** HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank IT’s Gary Bates. Leona wrote, *“Please know how much I appreciate your assistance today with the live streaming of the PaYS ceremony. We would be lost without your help. Kudos to you!”*

**Chief Hawkins and Honor Guard Goes Above and Beyond:** HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank Police Chief Hawkins and the Honor Guard team for their help with the recent PaYS ceremony. Leona wrote, *“Please know how much I appreciate you and your team for all you did for the PaYS sign on ceremony. The Honor Guard did a fabulous job posting the colors and Amani Mitchell blew me away. She is such an amazing singer and impressed everyone in the room. Your assistance contributed to the ceremony being such a success. Please let everyone know how much I appreciate them.”*

**Officer Alexis Jorgenson Helps Out:** PD Commander Ben Duiker wrote to thank Officer Alexis Jorgenson. Commander Duiker wrote, *“I’d like to extend a well-earned kudos to Officer Jorgenson. She recently re-did our status board and turned from a post-apocalyptic movie prop into a professional looking tool that will help the division.”*

**Julie Helsham, Ursula Paddie, John Leivan and Clyde Hicks are Great:** HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank Julie Helsham, Ursula Paddie, John Leivan and Clyde Hicks. Leona wrote *“I wanted to give a Kudos to Julie Helsham, Ursula Paddie, John Leivan and Clyde Hicks for doing such a great job setting up the chamber for the PaYS Signing Ceremony. Their hard work is greatly appreciated.”*

**Houston Johnson and Lyndsey Amundson Complimented:** HR Director Leona Clay received some praise from the PaYS Program coordinator for Houston Johnson and Lyndsey Amundson. Leona Wrote, *“While on our conference call last week, Frank McNeil complimented Houston Johnson for what he described as the best press release he has ever seen. He also said the banner Lyndsey Amundson created was the best one he’s seen. I wanted to make sure to pass on these wonderful compliments.”*

**Casey Brazzil, Henry Nash and Parks Crew Support:** HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank Park’s Casey Brazzil, Henry Nash and Parks Crew. Leona wrote, *“I’d like to extend a sincere thank you to you and your team for their support with setting up and taking down tables and chairs for the Mandatory Employee Benefits Lunch and Learn. A special thanks to Casey Brazzil, Henry Nash, and everyone else from your department who helped. The teamwork they exhibited was amazing and truly appreciated. Please pass on my appreciation to each of them. Thank you so very much!”*

**Rene Gandara, Charles Brummett and Kayden Palacios Make a Difference:** HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank FD’s Rene Gandara, Charles Brummett and Kayden Palacios. Leona wrote, *“I’d like to extend a sincere thank you to you and your team for their support in adding extra tables and chairs for the Mandatory Employee Benefits Lunch and Learn. A special thanks to Rene Gandara, Charles Brummett, Kaydence Palacios, and anyone else who helped. Their assistance was truly appreciated. We weren’t fully prepared for the large turnout at the first session, and their quick response made a big difference. Thank you so very much!”*

**Chief Hawkins, Deputy Chief Clay, Massoud Howayeck and Parick Mays Help:** HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank Chief Hawkins, Deputy Chief Clay, Massoud Howayeck and Patrick Mays. Leona wrote, *“I’d like to extend a sincere thank you to you and your team for your support in adding extra tables and chairs for the Mandatory Employee Benefits*

*Lunch and Learn. A special thanks to Chief Hawkins, Massoud Howayeck, Patrick Mays, Sonja Clay, and anyone else who helped. Your assistance was truly appreciated. We weren't fully prepared for the large turnout at the first session, and your quick response made a big difference. Thank you so very much!"*

**Jamie Davalos Receives Gratitude:** A citizen called in to thank Public Works' Jamie Davalos. The citizen wanted to thank Jamie for his amazing service and helping him figure out a possible water leak that was making his bill extremely high. He was very grateful for Jamie's help.