

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

July 31, 2024

Message from the Manager:

I've had it! I have stayed quiet long enough! It's my neighbors! It's time for the world to know! My neighbors..... are GREAT! I have the best neighbors. We look after each other and jump in and lend a hand if one is needed. I enjoy the moments where we get to visit, often standing in the yard with a lawn tool nearby. I've gotten to know my neighbors well enough to say they are outstanding people! While there are exceptions no doubt, I bet many of you hold similar feelings about the people that live around you. I see the comradery that is shared in neighborhoods during events such as National Night Out. For the most part, neighbors genuinely like each other and enjoy spending time together.

I felt the need to share about my neighbors after witnessing so many bad examples of interactions that are promoted by our media and yes, our own social media. In my position, I also get to see examples of major conflicts between neighbors. Often, we get swept up in the wave and begin to see the world through a negative lens. We forget that the examples we have of others who live around us often counter those negative examples. For me, my neighbors are a lighthouse illuminating how to live together – no matter how different we may be.

While differences do not divide us, we are very different. The example that the political environment in our Country today tells us that if we hold a difference of opinion we should be at conflict. Guess what, from the occasional political signs I see, my neighbors hold different political views! We also come from many different backgrounds. We represent a variety of cultures. We have many things that the world tells us should be dividing lines between us.

I am so thankful for my neighbors for being an example to me of caring for each other. We place our relationship with each other above that which would divide us. I want their families to prosper, and their wish is the same for mine. Most of you have the exact same goodwill with your neighbors. I truly believe that this is the rule rather than some outlier. The world is full of good people doing good things. The negative messages amplified around us sometimes pull away our vision from all the good. When you find yourself disappointed in the world, remember the great people that live right around you.

Another example of good people in our world is you! Thank you for being people who care for others and are committed to serving to make our community all it can be. Thank you for making our workplace a place that I genuinely enjoy getting up every day and coming to. Thank you for all you do for others! Thank you for the example you are for me! So, when our world says otherwise, remember the great examples we have right around us daily that counter that noise. We live in the greatest Nation and are surrounded by great people!

David

“The happiest people I know are people who don't even think about being happy. They just think about being good neighbors, good people. And then happiness sort of sneaks in the back window while they are busy doing good.” – Harold S. Kushner

“The good neighbor looks beyond the external accidents and discerns those inner qualities that make all men human and, therefore, brothers.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

General Updates:

New Hires:

Welcome to all our new hires:

Daniel Regan hired for the position of Firefighter/Paramedic on July 9th.

Erica Lozano hired for the position of Healthy Homes Youth Specialist on July 15th.

Rebekah Scottini hired for the position of Telecommunicator on July 15th.

Franklin Conlee hired for the position of Firefighter/Paramedic on July 29th.

Promotions:

Congratulations to all those promoted:

Bianca Alexander promoted to the position of Water Safety Instructor on June 22nd.

Amy Pafford promoted to the position of Water Safety Instructor on June 22nd.

Kiarrah Carlise promoted to the position of Human Resources Specialist on July 6th.

Mark Hyde promoted to the position of Assistant City Manager on July 6th.

Yvonne Spell promoted to the position of Planning Administrator on July 6th.

Michael Beard promoted to the position of Building Official/Administrator on July 6th.

Shiloh Wester promoted to Pet Adoption Center Administrator on July 6th.

Jazmyne Lee promoted to the position of Records Clerk on July 13th.

Cabrina Chase promoted to the position of Records Clerk on July 20th.

Darlene Prechtel promoted to the position of Juvenile Case Manager/Teen Court Coordinator on July 22nd.

Awards/Accomplishments:

Michael Beard earned Master Code Professional Designation.

City Engineer: We were excited to announce that effective July 6th, Kristina Ramirez assumed duties as the City's first ever City Engineer! With a large slate of capital projects ongoing and upcoming, Kristina is stepping into a much-needed role to assist the City in navigating the complexities of these projects.

July's Kudos Award Winners: Congratulations to Mayor Michael Blomquist, Assistant City Manager Mark Hyde and Activities Center Sara Gibbs for being our July Kudos Award Winners! Wow, what great work you all do and we have many, many more kudos winners coming up!

Lunch and Learn – Diabetes Management: HR and Seton Medical Center are offering a free lunch and learn for employees on Diabetes Management. The lunch and learn will be on August 6 at 11:30 a.m. at the Activities Center. Please email HR@harkerheights.gov to reserve your seat.

Wind in Your Sails: The June Challenge was called Wind in Your Sails and it's a burnout prevention challenge. It was six weeks of doing at least 30 minutes "me time." Simply doing things you enjoy doing! Winners were Lorissa Byse for first place gift basket and Sharronda Caston-Hill for second place Chuys Queso!

HH-N-GO: The HH-N-GO bingo style challenge began on January 2. A new letter/number is 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. You can still get a card and play so contact HR if you want to play! We had our first two winners in HH-N-GO! From the City, Detective Yesmarie Burgo Figueroa was our first winner! Our second winner was citizen/volunteer Marcellena Gardner! The winners received tickets to Beauty and the Beast donated by Mayor Blomquist.

July Word Search Winners: The mental health word search winners were Melissa Wolfe, Catharina Hoffman, Julie Helsham, Melissa Chavalier Duenas, Zully Reyes, Leona Clay and David Mitchell. Winners received tickets to Beauty and the Beast donated by Mayor Blomquist.

August Challenge – Better Beverage: The Better Beverage Challenge will encourage us all to swap soda and other unhealthy liquids for healthier alternatives to cut down on sugar, boost water intake and improve overall well-being. For more information contact HR today – the challenge starts August 3 and runs to August 30.

Learn Guitar Basics: August 6 from 2 to 3 p.m. bring your guitar to the Library and learn fundamental skills. The class is offered through instructors from Music and Arts of Harker Heights. Space is limited so call 254-953-5491 to register.

Move and Groove Dance Party: Wednesday, August 7 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. put on your dancing shoes and get ready to move with cool tunes at the Library. Library teen volunteers will teach attendees some of the latest moves!

Local Author Fair: Come support local authors of all ages and genres on Saturday, August 17 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Library!

Athletics Registration: Parks' Basketball Registration opens September 2. Ability Soccer's registration is open now.

Farmers Market: The Harker Heights' Farmers Market has hit its summer break. Look for more exciting Farmers Market action when the Market resumes on October 5!

Spotlight on Service:

Officer Crystal Thomas Takes Initiative: Police Sgt. John Howell wrote of his appreciation for Officer Crystal Thomas. Sgt. Howell wrote, *"I would like to commend officer Thomas for taking initiative upon learning an academy would be held in October of 2024 and contacting potential candidates. Officer Thomas made the quick decision, and took it upon herself, while her supervisor was out for class, and started contacting potential candidates from lists from attending job fairs and utilizing the HHPD recruiting email. Officer Thomas contacted 50 people expressing interest to*

work for the City of Harker Heights and serving as police officers. Officer Thomas sets herself apart by displaying a strong work ethic and being a true team player.”

PD’s Sara Brockman, Michael O’Hala, Lonnie Clark, Dustin Weaver, Richard Hatfield, Massoud Howayeck and Bambi Basinger Render Aid: The City of Temple Police Chief Shawn Reynolds wrote to thank the efforts of Lt. Sara Brockman, Sgt. Michael O’Hala, Sgt. Lonnie Clark, Officer Dustin Weaver, Officer Richard Hatfield, Officer Massoud Howayeck and Officer Bambi Basinger. These Harker Heights’ PD members responded to assist the City of Temple after they received significant damage from two tornados. Chief Reynolds wrote, *“The City of Temple and Temple Police Department are grateful for their willingness to respond and assist in our time of need. The partnership and desire to serve others is what makes our profession truly remarkable. It is in keeping with the highest level of government service.”*

Parks’ Henry Nash and Billy Stevens Get a Shout Out: HR Director Leona Clay wrote of her appreciation for Park’s Henry Nash and Billy Stevens. Leona wrote, *“I wanted to give a huge shout out to Henry and Billy for the outstanding job they did with finishing Melonie’s new office. Their hard work transformed the outcome of that office. They are true professionals in their field and were a pleasure to be around. Please pass on my appreciation for a job well done!”*

HR Provides Wonderful Service: Library’s Heather Heilman wrote to express her appreciation to HR for the Lunch and Learn programs. Heather stated, *“I don’t know who is in charge of coordinating the lunch and learn programs that we have, but I truly believe this is a wonderful service that is offered to the employees of the city.”*

Parks’ Henry Nash and Billy Stevens are Awesome: HR’s Melonie Matthewson wrote to thank Park’s Henry Nash and Billy Stevens for work done on her new office. Melonie wrote, *“just wanted to make sure you know how much Billy and Henry are appreciated. They came in and worked wonders in my new office. I cannot say how much it means to me, and how AWESOME your guys are!!!”*

FD’s Rene Fernandez, Mike Licavoli, Charles Maines, Jeremy Albright, and Logan Green and PD Chief Hawkins, Stephanie Hall, Officers Valdez and Huff are Outstanding: Courts’ Records Clerk Darlene Prechtel wrote to thank the FD and PD for their assistance after an accident. Darlene wrote, *“I just wanted to mention outstanding service I received today by the fire department and police department. I was on my way to take my son to an appointment around 11am today and was involved in an accident on Knights Way. All of the responders from both departments did a remarkable job ensuring me and, especially, my little boy were okay. Although it was a minor accident, I was flustered and worried about the wellbeing of my son, but they put us at ease and interacted with him to keep him calm. They even spoke to him about his dinosaurs! I just wanted to*

say how much I appreciate them and all they do. They reminded me again of why I love to live here and work for the City of Harker Heights. We truly have an impeccable team!"

Police Chief Hawkins Does an Amazing Job: TML Risk Pool shared a kudos for Chief Hawkins with HR. HR Director Leona Clay passed on to Chief Hawkins, *"I just had a meeting with our Risk Pool representative, and she commended you on doing an amazing job. She said that she was shocked to see that we do not have any law enforcement claims because she says it's very rare and that it has to be because of the way in which you manage the department. I wanted to pass on this Kudos and to tell you great job!"*

City Thanked by Carter BloodCare Center: The City was thanked by Carter BloodCare team for a recent blood drive held at the City. They wrote, *"The Carter BloodCare team is sincerely grateful for your outstanding support of our mission to save lives by making transfusion possible. Because of your commitment and dedication, neighbors in need will receive the transfusions they urgently require. Thank you so much for stepping up to make a powerful, positive and lifesaving difference in your community."*

IT Department Amazes: Library Director Lisa Youngblood wrote to thank the IT Department. Lisa wrote, *"I just wanted to express my sincere thanks to the IT Department for making quick and creative changes to the Library's website. When the Library wanted to update the site, we had an unusual idea to use cartoon versions of our staff members holding books or e-books. We were amazed at how seamlessly the IT Department integrated these pictures to give our website a modern appeal!"*

Permitting's Sharronda Caston-Hill Helps Out: Building Official/Administrator Michael Beard wrote that a contractor stopped by and brought a thank you card for Sharronda Caston-Hill. The contractor wanted to thank Sharronda for all her work in helping them with the permitting process.

PD Commander Duiker Appreciated: Healthy Homes approached Deputy Chief Sonja Clay and expressed deep appreciation for Commander Duiker's assistance, which significantly resolved a mathematical problem in a grant. Commander Duiker was humble, approachable, and reassuring. Destinee was grateful for his assistance and wanted to brag about his demeanor during this interaction.

Finances' Annette Hamman is Great: A citizen wrote of her thanks for Finance's Annette Hamman. The citizen wrote, *"many thanks to the lady (Annette) I spoke to regarding my lost bill. I was having one of those days. She was so kind and patient. After all settled down I found*

it. Hopefully I don't have many days like yesterday, but thankful for great people who help make it better."

Parks Creates Spaces for Everyone: Citizen Tina Capito wrote on social media of her thanks for Parks. In reference to the All Ability Pool Party, Tina wrote *"This is why I love Harker Heights Parks and Recreation."*

Judge Billy Ray Hall gets the Accolades: A citizen wrote on social media of their appreciation of Judge Billy Ray Hall. The citizen wrote that Judge Hall, *"is an amazing Judge"* and that the Judge is, *"more impactful than many see in their daily dwellings."* The citizen also wrote that Judge Hall is, *"humble, humane, honorable."*

PD Officer Cesar Valdez Serves: A citizen called in to thank PD's Cesar Valdez for the way he handled a traffic stop. The citizen stated Cesar had a great personality and appreciated Cesar's service as an officer.

Building Official/Administrator Michael Beard does Excellent Work: Micheel Beard recently achieved his Master Code Professional Designation. City Manager Mitchell wrote to thank and congratulate Micheel on this achievement saying excellent work!

Mark Hyde's Great Work Recognized: A citizen who was very thankful for Assistant City Manager Mark Hyde's hard work brought Mark a handmade business card holder.

City Secretary Julie Helsham Displays Servant Leadership: City Engineer Kristina Ramirez wrote to thank Julie Helsham for her assistance. Kristina wrote, *"Thank you for taking time out of your day to help me out while I was away from the office. Stopping and helping our consultant engineer to find the contracts in my office instead of asking for him to come back when I returned, truly shows your practice of servant leadership. Your assistance today and every day is greatly appreciated."*

Mayor Blomquist is Generous: Mayor Blomquist provided tickets to Beauty in the Beast as prizes for our most recent employee health challenge. Several employees wrote to thank Mayor Blomquist for his generous donation of tickets to the Beauty and the Beast Play. Everyone had a wonderful time.