

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

October 31, 2023

Message from the Manager:

*“Well, the one on the right was on the left
And the one in the middle was on the right
And the one on the left was in the middle”*

– From the song: “The One on the Right is on the Left” by Johnny Cash, 1966

“The One on the Right is on the Left” by Johnny Cash tells the story of a band that played folk songs together, but held very different, and strong, political views. Ultimately, in the song, they come to blows in front of a dismayed crowd. I’ve always gotten a chuckle out of that song from Johnny Cash. Released in 1966, and done with a fair bit of humor, there is a truth within it that rings just as loudly today. We all too often seek out the things that divide us. Evidence of this is all around us. Need an example, just take a tour of any social media platform. Look at the things discussed and the tone in which they are discussed. Beyond the home front, there are wars and conflicts that the media reminds us of every news cycle. From local issues to those international, we can find ourselves despairing and wondering just how we can do anything of consequence in an oft too fractured world. I would like to share two simple, but transforming, actions that we control that can counter the divisiveness we witness around us. Those two actions are peacemaking and serving.

Popular culture glorifies many actions through the movies, songs, podcasts, books and games we play. One that is hardly ever showcased or discussed is that of being a peacemaker. We tend to think of peacemaking in world conflict scenarios. The type of peacemaking I am discussing is not that, but rather defined by helping others, like our co-workers, citizens, friends, neighbors, and family, find peace in their lives. I am convinced that peacemakers are a key missing piece of the puzzle to the civility issues we see. There is no glory or glamor about peacemaking. Peacemaking is not about shining the light on ourselves. It’s about getting outside the “world revolves around me” headspace and focusing on helping others remedy the conflicts they face. Peacemakers are contented by knowing they did something that brought stability and resolution to others. Imagine the exponential impacts peacemakers could have on our world! I challenge you and I to resolve to focus less on ourselves and more on the strife others face and to go beyond that to provide peace in those situations in which it is in our power to do so.

The second action, and closely associated with peacemaking, is one that we as public servants should grasp easily and that is serving others. It is literally in our job description! One of the interesting facts of life I have noticed is that those that are the most likely to be divisive in our communities are those that serve the least. Look at those you see involved in your civic clubs, churches, volunteers for sports teams or City Boards and Commissions, just to name a few. These individuals give much of themselves in service to their communities to make their communities all they can be and better than they found it. These community leaders are not divisive voices, there is something about serving others that both benefits our communities and provides peace to our own souls. There is no mystery that there is great joy found in service. I am thankful to be in an organization that prides

itself on serving others and to live in a community where so many give of themselves in service to others!

Two simple actions – peacemaking and serving others. They are in the grasp of each of us. Will we choose to act? These simple things performed by enough of us can fundamentally transform our world. I recently had a councilmember share with me a powerful lesson that we have an unknown, but fixed, number of years of life left to live. How will we live during that time? Let’s all live it to the fullest as peacemakers and servants and thereby bless others and in doing so our own lives!

David

*“There is a long hair
That doesn't like the short hair
For being such a rich one
That will not help the poor one
Different strokes for different folks
And so on and so on, scooby-doo-by-doo-by
We got to live together” – “Everyday People” Song by Sly and The Family Stone*

“Blessed are the peacemakers, and one sure way of peacemaking is to let the fire of contention alone. Neither fan it, nor stir it, nor add fuel to it, but let it go out by itself. Begin your ministry with one blind eye and one deaf ear.” – Charles Spurgeon

General Updates:

New Hires:

Welcome to all our new hires:

Jessica McCoy was hired for the position of Animal Services Officer on October 10th
Michael Moreno was hired for the position of Water Maintenance Technician on October 16th
Madison Covington was hired for the position of Telecommunicator on October 18th
Nathan Menjares was hired for the position of Parks Light Equipment Operator on October 31st

Promotions:

Congratulations to all those promoted:

Aaron Dunnam promoted to Assistant Fire Chief – Operations on October 14th
John Fussell promoted to Driver/Pump Operator on October 14th

Accomplishments:

The City of was recognized at the Texas Municipal League (TML) Annual Conference as one of three finalists for a 2023 Municipal Excellence Award in communication programs for cities over 25,000 in population. The recognition was for the volunteer concierge service at City Hall.

October Kudos Award Winners: Congratulations to our October Kudos Award Winners: HR's Wilson Riley, Public Works' Chuck Adams, Code Enforcement's Calvin Fleming, and Building Security Officer Clyde Hicks. It has been a busy month celebrating employee's accomplishments due to the fine team members we have! Those honored make me proud and are very deserving. There are many more kudos to come for team members all through our organization!

November Team Challenge: The November challenge is once again a team effort and it revolves around weightlifting! The event begins on November 6 and teams have been assigned. Good luck to all!

Blue Santa Collecting New Bikes: The Community Services Division is collecting new children's bicycles for our Blue Santa program until December 10th.

Tree Lighting Ceremony: The annual Tree Lighting Ceremony will be held on Thursday, November 30th at City Hall. The Tree Lighting Ceremony is a favorite of mine! Come get your good cheer on as we head into the month of December and Christmas with family and friends!

September's Challenge – Sleep: September's challenge was a tough one, but HR's Melonie Matthewson won the competition with a score of 15! Congrats to a well-rested Mel! Second place went to Building Official Michael Beard. Great job by all!

Cybersecurity Word Search: 45 people participated in the cybersecurity word search! Code Enforcement's Alex McCoy was drawn as the winner for the word search! Congrats Alex!

Cybersecurity Crossword: 45 people also participated in the cybersecurity crossword. Park's Alex Beaver was drawn as the winner of the crossword. Congrats Alex!

Halloween Costume Contest: A big thank you to all who participated in today's costume contest. The winner was the Finance Gnomie\$! While I thought the Hulk-a-maniacs fought hard, as wrestlers we are used to a metal chair to the head while the refs head is turned. Or our head being cut open by a foreign object our opponent had hid. Or some liquid or power being sprayed in our eyes blinding us. We are used to adversity and to the Finance Gnomie\$ we say we will be back, and vengeance will be ours brother!

Pumpkin Party and Potluck: Mayor Blomquist introduced us all to a pumpkin carving competition and potluck event on October 26. He also introduced us to his award-winning chili! Winners of the pumpkin carving contest are Andrea Contreras, Lyndsey Amundson, Lorissa Byse and Leona Clay! Congrats to all who entered! The potluck food was marvelous as well. Ramses' doppelgänger made a surprise entry but allowed other's pumpkins to be judged as we all know Ramses is Number One!

Farmers Market: The Harker Heights Farmers Market concluded on Saturday, October 28.

Eclipse Website: We just witnessed the annular eclipse on Saturday, October 14, and we have the total eclipse coming on Monday, April 8, 2024! The City has an excellent website to get us all prepared for the eclipse. The website is: www.harkerheights.gov/eclipse.

Spotlight on Service:

Park's Angel Rodriquez and Nathan Lois Help our Furry Friends: Park's Angel Rodriquez and Nathan Lois were recognized by Pet Adoption Center Manager Shiloh Wester for helping to save a tiny kitten who was wet and covered in ants. The two Park's employees got the kitten to the Pet Adoption Center for immediate care. This is not the first time these team members have helped having stopped and picked up a dog that needed care and got it to the Pet Adoption Center where it was later adopted. Great job Angel and Nathan going above and beyond in service!

Library is Not to be Eclipsed: The Library has received several sincere thank you comments for their education push for the eclipses. Several families indicated they would not have known of the eclipses otherwise.

Library is a Place for Everyone: The Library had parents thank them for their inclusive programs. The children felt like they were part of something and were able to relax and communicate with others due to the efforts of the Library to include all children.

Library Makes an Impression: The Library received a social media post from a parent who has moved away and still greatly appreciates the events the Library offered for their family. Despite having moved to three different cities since they left the area, the Harker Heights' Library stands out for offering so much to their family.

Adam Trujillo and Kailie Gomez are Appreciated: Planning's Yvonne Spell wrote to thank Park's Adam Trujillo and Kailie Gomez for assisting with school aged kids at an environmental outreach event. Yvonne stated, "Their quick and innovative thinking, and assistance with the kids at the actual event, are greatly appreciated and I am very thankful they were able AND willing to assist."

Chelsea Jennings is Great: Finance's Michelle Smart wrote to give a kudos to Finance's Chelsea Jennings. Michelle wrote that Chelsea, "goes above and beyond." She concluded with, "She is a pleasure to work with and I am so glad she is with Team Heights!"

Michael Beard Goes Above and Beyond: Chief Building Official Michael Beard recently came in to do an inspection while on vacation to assist a business that was trying to open on a tight timeline. A citizen noticed Mike's hustle and willingness to go above and beyond and wrote to thank him!

Catharina Hoffman is Creative: HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank Court's Catharina Hoffman for her assistance with kudos events this month. Director Clay wrote, "Your creativity is amazing and made the snacks so much fun!"

Parks is Amazing: Citizen Rick Keagle wrote to say what an outstanding job Parks did on the Harker Heights Dia De Los Muertos event. Mr. Keagle wrote, "People were smiling, kids were dressed up for the occasion and it reminded me why I love living in this town."

City Gets Noticed: Texas House District 55 Representative Hugh Shine wrote a very nice note to the City congratulating us on being recognized at TML for our concierge program!

Julie Helsham Runs it Right: At a recent council meeting an election judge spoke before Council and offered compliments to City Secretary Julie Helsham for how well she runs our municipal elections.

Julie Helsham Impresses: I received a call from a citizen to compliment Julie Helsham's work. He was impressed with Julie's maturity and how she assisted him with an issue. He stated he didn't know who hired her, but we must have good hiring practices! It is not often a citizen takes the time to call to give a compliment. Great job Julie!

Nate Nesbit Takes Care of Citizens: The same citizen that called to compliment Julie also gave a compliment to Public Works' Nate Nesbit. Nate runs our drop site and finds a way every day to leave a positive impact on those he encounters. The citizen stated that Nate works hard and is always taking care of people. He stated that the big thing to him is Nate is always the same day in and day out – in the heat and in the cold – he is so consistent.