

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

July 30, 2026

Message from the Manager:

This July our great Country celebrated 250 years of Independence! What a time to be alive! We take for granted so much, but we are truly blessed. One of the things I have always loved about public service in Harker Heights is our close affiliation with Fort Hood and the fine men and women who have and continue to serve there. Not only do we support Fort Hood in many ways, but we are also the home for many active and retired service members. What a great honor we have in providing services for them! So many heroes have called Harker Heights their home. The defense of our nation was and is carried upon their shoulders. They are the reason we can celebrate 250 years in any way we choose – our freedom assured.

The active-duty soldiers and veterans we serve had a choice in where to call their home. It is up to you and I to honor that choice by providing the absolute best public services. They have written so many brave chapters in our 250-year history and what a privilege we have to be a part of their stories by our public service. The stories told of your great service to our service members and veterans make me so proud. Parks and Library providing programs that help children adjust to a parent being deployed. Our FD providing life saving care to a service member that allowed them to quickly recover and continue with a full life. PD ensuring that neighborhoods, businesses and parks are safe and welcoming to our service members and veterans. Public Works working in inclement weather to ensure clean water is back on quickly. The list goes on and on, but at the core of it all is the understanding that you and I have that we are making a difference in their lives. I find great joy in that, and I love seeing the joy it brings you!

God bless our Country, our armed services, and those of us who labor in support of them.

David

“Honor to the soldier and sailor everywhere, who bravely bears his country’s cause. Honor, also, to the citizen who cares for his brother in the field and serves, as he best can, the same cause.” – Abraham Lincoln

General Updates

New Hires:

James Edmond hired for the position of Telecommunicator on July 6th

Promotions:

Jonathan Rosado promoted to the position of Wastewater Operator on July 4th

Jade Garcia promoted to the position of Reference Librarian on July 18th

Accomplishments:

Fiona Williams was selected as the Central Texas Police Academy Class President

July Kudos Award Winners: You all do such great work serving our public and each other! Congratulations to Trevor Jorgensen, Ayesha Lealiiee, Lyndsey Amundson, Melonie Matthewson and Randy “Honey Bun” Stefek. Many more to come!

Clyde’s Crossword Challenge: This month’s Clyde’s Crossword Challenge winners were 1st Place – Lyndsey Amundson 2nd Place – Roberto Diaz; and 3rd Place Ashlyn Brooks.

Sudoku Winner: This month’s winner of the Sudoku Challenge was Clyde Hicks!

June Self Care Wellness Challenge: The winners of the Mindful Miles May Wellness Challenge were 1st Place – Cabrina Chase, 2nd Place – Betty Delong, 3rd Place – Roberto Diaz.

HH-N-GO: A new HH-N-GO bingo challenge began with the start of 2026! 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! It's never too late to get a card and play! We congratulate our first winner of the year – Katie Anderson! A citizen won first – will you be next???

Mexican Folklorico Dance Classes: A parent meeting for Mexican Folklorico Dance will be held Monday, August 10, at 6 p.m. Sessions begin Mondays, August 24 to October 5.

Last Day of 2026 Summer Swimming Season: The last day for the Carl Levin pool will be Sunday, August 9th.

Library Programs: Our Library is full of great programs for the entire family to enjoy – make sure you check out the Library's webpage for programs your family may have interest in. Harry Potter's Birthday, escape rooms, dance party, story time, and book club are all coming up!

Cuts with Cops: A program started by ACM Betiale Hawkins, Cuts with Cops, is back on Sunday, August 2 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Activities Center. This program provides free haircuts to kids just in time for the new school year! Other vendors have stepped up and donated other items for the kids such as new clothing! The event is completely booked with as many as 80 plus kids scheduled to get haircuts! Cuts with Cops is an amazing program and speaks to the heart of who we are as an organization!

Spotlight on Service:

Battalion Chief Cardona and Firefighters Joseph Byrne and Luke Furness

Thanked: Police Chief Sonja Clay wrote to show her appreciation for Battalion Chief Cardona and Firefighters Joseph Byrne and Luke Furness. Chief Clay stated she had an

interaction with them and they were “*extremely respectful and courteous, and I want to thank them for their professionalism. It was evident that they knew what they were doing, which should be very reassuring for the residents of Harker Heights. Thank you, guys!*”

PD Chief Sonja Clay Steps Up: Finance Director Ayesha Lealiiee wrote to show thanks for PD Chief Sonja Clay. Ayesha wrote, “*Many thanks for her assistance during the Budget Workshop. Members of the audience had trouble viewing my presentation on paper and she passed the message on to me during a quick break. I was able to email her a copy of the presentation in which she had offered to have printed and handed out. Truly going above and beyond and out of the scope of her duties.*”

Amy Atkins Assists: Finance Director Ayesha Lealiiee wrote to thank Parks Director Amy Atkins. Ayesha wrote, “*Thanks to Amy for her assistance in getting Bell County Appraisal District a room for their annual strategic planning meeting. She was able to get them situated in a meeting room that will work perfectly for them.*”

Planning/Code Enforcement Make an Impression: A citizen called to thank Planning/Code Enforcement for the Yard of the Month program. The citizen was amazed at the number of personnel that came out to their house to celebrate their selection as Yard of the Month. They wanted to thank Planning/Code Enforcement for making it such a special moment.

Mark Hyde and Houston Johnson Get it Done: An elderly resident had a toilet replaced in their home and the contractor left the old toilet for the resident to deal with. The resident was dealing with health issues and lives on a fixed income. Mark Hyde and Houston Johnson became aware of the issue, and they took care of the issue for the resident. The resident contacted City Hall to thank Mark and Houston.

Pet Adoption Center Appreciated: A resident wrote to show their appreciation for the Pet Adoption Center and specifically the TNR Program. The citizen wrote, “*I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere appreciation for the incredible work being done through the Harker Heights Pet Adoption Center, particularly its Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program. I have lived in several different places over the years, and I can honestly say that I have never*

encountered a municipal animal program that is as compassionate, professional, and community-focused as the one we have here. It is something that deserves to be recognized and celebrated. From the moment you walk into the Pet Adoption Center, it is obvious that the staff genuinely care about both the animals and the people they serve. The facility is clean, organized, and welcoming, and every interaction I've had has been marked by kindness, professionalism, and a willingness to educate. They don't simply process adoptions or provide services—they build relationships within the community. One of the things that has impressed me most is the center's commitment to community outreach. Whether it is teaching residents about the importance of microchipping, responsible pet ownership, or explaining the purpose of TNR, the staff takes the time to help people understand why these efforts matter. I can personally say that their willingness to educate has broadened my own understanding and appreciation for the important role these programs play in both animal welfare and the community as a whole. What I especially appreciate is that Harker Heights has chosen an approach that balances compassion with common sense. TNR helps stabilize and gradually reduce community cat populations while improving overall health and quality of life. It also reduces the burden on shelters and animal control resources over time. I believe this approach creates a more positive environment for the dedicated professionals who work in animal welfare. It allows them to focus on education, prevention, rehabilitation, and finding homes for animals whenever possible. That spirit of compassion is something that benefits the staff, volunteers, residents, and ultimately the city as a whole. The work being done by the Pet Adoption Center also strengthens the community in ways that may not always be obvious. It creates opportunities for volunteers, provides meaningful employment for dedicated animal welfare professionals, encourages responsible pet ownership, and inspires residents to become involved in making Harker Heights an even better place to live.

I also want to recognize the staff themselves. Their patience, knowledge, and obvious love for animals shine through in every interaction. It is clear that they are not simply doing a job—they are serving the community with dedication and heart. The opportunity to work in a system that prioritizes humane, forward-thinking solutions reflects positively on the city and on the people who have chosen this important profession. That kind of public service deserves recognition. The Pet Adoption Center reflects the very best qualities a community can have: compassion, education, responsibility, and a commitment to finding thoughtful solutions. It is a tremendous asset to Harker Heights, and I hope everyone involved knows how deeply appreciated these efforts truly are. Thank you for investing in programs that improve the lives of animals and people alike. I hope the city will continue to support these initiatives for many years to come.”

John Fox and Nicholas Gilveli Help Out: A resident called to thank Public Work's John Fox and Nicholas Gilveli for their help trimming the trees in front of his home. He was very grateful.

Massoud Howayeck and Corbin Gillman Show Concern: A citizen wrote a letter to thank Sgt. Howayeck and Officer Gillman for checking on his home after discovering his garage door was open. The Officers contacted him at 1:30 in the morning to confirm his well-being and ensure he had not been the victim of a crime. He wrote: *"... We don't thank our Officers enough for what they do, and I wanted to use this opportunity to do just that. It demonstrated a concern for everyone's safety."* We love our officers, and we especially appreciate them in our residential neighborhoods to keep our community safe!

Nicole Loayza and Stephanie O'Brien Make the Day: HR Director Leona Clay wrote to thank Park's Nicole Loayza and Stephanie O'Brien. Leona wrote, *"I wanted to give a huge shoutout to Nicole Loayza and Stephanie O'Brien and the parks and recreation team for giving us the delicious popcorn. You guys made our day!"*

Mark Hyde Works Hard: A citizen called in to thank ACM Mark Hyde for his attention to a matter. She thanked him for working on and taking care of the area and was grateful and happy with the work completed.

Pet Adoption Center is Innovative: A citizen wrote to thank the Pet Adoption Center. The citizen wrote, *"Yesterday a dog showed up at our door with no collar. Per Johnnie Widener suggestion, we went to Harker Heights animal shelter and scanned the microchip with the scanner that is at the front door. The dog had a microchip and we called the microchip companies using the phone numbers provided inside the microchip box until we found the correct company that send a msg to the owner. He called us back right away and came to get his dog. We are pleased with this system and it is very helpful when the shelter is closed."*

City's Life Saving Work: The Carter Blood Care Center wrote to thank the City. The Center wrote, *"Thank you for coordinating the blood drive on 7/6/26. Coordinating blood drives is one of the best ways to ensure local patients have access to the lifesaving blood they need,*

your efforts are greatly appreciated. Harker Heights - Bell County Community Blood Drive Blood Drive By the Numbers: 56 donors registered for your blood drive and 8 were first-time donors. In total, 50 units were collected."

Eunice Myers Steps Up: Planning/Code Enforcement wrote to thank FD's Eunice Myers. Planning/Code wrote, *"The planning and code departments would like to extend a huge thank you to Eunice Myers for assisting us in updating our employee ID cards. She had several other tasks at the FD and was still able to execute them all in a timely manner. She was so helpful and did it all with a smile and grace!"*

Joseph Varley Makes Impression: A citizen wrote to thank PD's Officer Varley. The citizen stated, *"Good day! Officer Varley is an amazing human. He pulled me over this morning on i14 and it was an amazing interaction. I would like to give him a coin from my unit if that is possible to thank him for making my day! If I ever get pulled over and get a ticket again I hope it is officer Varley."*

Parks Makes a Splash: A citizen took to social media to show their appreciation for Parks and specifically the Carl Levin Pool. The citizen wrote: *"I did leave this as a review for the Carl Levin Pool but I really can't stress this enough. I hope this can reach someone in management so they know how amazing their staff is. I can't say enough good things about the lifeguards and staff here. My son has autism, and we're still learning and practicing social rules, so outings can sometimes be challenging. Every single staff member has treated him with incredible patience, kindness, and understanding. What really stands out is that they don't just treat my son this way – they treat every child and family with genuine care and respect. You can tell they truly enjoy what they do, and they interact with the kids like they're their own little brothers and sisters. It's such a warm, welcoming environment. Because of amazing people who work here, this will always be our family's go-to pool. We'll happily continue being pass holders for years to come. Thank you for making every visit such a positive experience!"*

Fabian Brooks and Lesli Owens Go the Extra Mile: Planning Administrator Stephanie Hall wrote to share appreciation for Planning/Code's Fabian Brooks and Lesli Owens. Stephanie wrote: *"I would like to recognize Fabian Brooks and Lesli Owens for going above and beyond during the Planning & Building Department office moves this month. While*

everyone pitched in to make the transition successful, Fabian and Lesli consistently went the extra mile. They took care of not only the major tasks, but also the countless small details like setting up offices, making sure everyone had what they needed, and ensuring the move went as smoothly as possible. Their teamwork, dedication, and willingness to help did not go unnoticed, and I truly appreciate everything they did."

Lesli Owens Shows Initiative: Planning Administrator Stephanie Hall shared her thanks for Planning's Lesli Owens. Stephanie wrote, *"I would like to recognize Lesli Owens for taking the initiative to clean and organize the Planning storage room during our recent office moves. The storage room was in great need of attention, and without being asked, Lesli stepped in to get it organized and functional again. Her initiative, attention to detail, and willingness to take on tasks that benefit the entire team made a noticeable difference and are greatly appreciated."*