

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

August 31, 2022

Message from the Manager:

"The only constant in life is change." – Greek Philosopher Heraclitus

What a wonderful promotion ceremony for our Police Department leadership this past Friday! Our PD is undergoing a massive leadership change as individuals in PD begin to take on their new roles. What a blessing it is to have such a professional and service-oriented staff that can jump in and fill these new roles! Director of Police Services Mike Gentry gave a masterful ceremony for our new promotees. Mike Gentry has been a mentor and friend to me from my earliest days here in Heights back in 2004. His teaching skills are prized across the State and since he retired as our Chief of Police that is exactly what he has done – teach across the State.

In Mike's presentation on Friday he talked about the new weight that comes from promoting. Promotions are the door through which we can serve even more people. With that responsibility comes an added weight. It's a weight that you can't fully imagine until you are in that chair. One of the profound things that struck me in Mike's words on Friday is that it is up to us to "find the joy in carrying that weight." He is right, while the weight is greater, there is great joy in service! A quote that I have before shared from the Poet Rabindranath Tagore states, "I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

Mentorship and leadership come from all areas of our organization. Mentorship of Mike Gentry to me began in 2004 when he was Chief of Police and I was a City Planner. We didn't have the same rank or work in the same department, but he still invested in me. I know stories like this of Mike's actions are numerous – many of you share a similar story. Mike has always gotten it – joy and service are intertwined. Just like his example we all can be mentors and leaders no matter where we are in organization. Thank you Mike!

Each of us carries our own weight of responsibilities. Be it here at our occupation, at home, or elsewhere - we all feel the weight. A purposeful mindset is needed to find the joy in what we do. The joy is there – it is found through service. Our Vision as a City is all about serving and serving well. It is a Vision that should also bring great joy to us all as we better the lives of those we serve. I am proud to shoulder the weight alongside a team of individuals that find their joy in service!

David

"Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on Earth." – Muhammad Ali

"Joy can only be real if people look upon their life as a service and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness." – Leo Tolstoy

General Updates:

Congrats to our Recently Promoted:

Rene (Ray) Gandara promoted to Fire Battalion Chief on August 6th
Kylee Sharp Gonzalez promoted to Part Time Library Clerk on August 20th

Betiale Hawkins promoted to Chief of Police on August 27th
Sonja Clay promoted to Deputy Chief of Police on August 27th
Benjamin Duiker promoted to Police Commander on August 27th
Michael O'Hala promoted to Police Sergeant on August 27th
Destinee Barton promoted to Victim/Witness Coordinator on August 27th

Welcome to Our New Hires:

Victoria Ellis hired for the position of Part Time Pet Adoption Center Receptionist on August 5th
Lacey Moore hired for the position of Firefighter/EMT on August 8th
Tyrik Alderson hired for the position of Part Time Recreation Aide on August 10th
Wilson Owens hired for the position of Code Enforcement Officer on August 23rd

National Feel the Love: National Feel the Love Day is September 7. We will be celebrating that day by honoring our team with snow cones, chair massages, etc. at City Hall from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. We look forward to visiting with all our team that day as we celebrate all you do!

Budget: We are in the review and approval phases of our 2022/2023 City budget. Final approval of the tax rate will occur on September 13. The proposed tax rate is .58, a reduction from the approved rate of .6519 for 2021/2022. Even with the tax rate reduction, the budget will raise more property taxes than last year's budget by \$578,541 or 4.2%. \$180,556 of that amount is from new properties added to the tax roll. In my review of the tax increase it appears that those with homestead exemptions will not only see a reduction in City taxes but a reduction in overall taxes as well. Obviously, that cannot be true of all properties as property taxes have increased. Once the budget is approved, we will provide a more thorough update to you all on cost of living adjustments, and other new items provided in the budget.

Citizen Survey: The City contracted with Texas State to perform a citizen satisfaction survey. Texas State does these types of surveys for several cities across Texas. The results of the survey can be found here: https://harkerheights.gov/images/PDF/Harker_Heights_Citizen_Survey_2022.pdf. Overall, the survey revealed very favorable perceptions of our services. We also learned some areas that we will need to continue our focus for improvement in. Please take the time to review the results of the survey.

Amazing Race: Our September challenge is the Amazing Race! This is a team challenge where collectively in our teams we commit to getting 400 miles of walking in the month of September. We have 16 teams signed up with a total of 96 people! While we knew our HR Director was competitive we didn't know she was such a good smack talker – to all the teams she says “bring it!”

Spotlight on Service:

Burl Lewis Shares His Many Talents: Burl Lewis recently made cosmetic repairs to the dais in the City Council Chambers. Burl made metal plates that hid a void behind the Council's monitors after new monitors were installed. I wrote to Burl to thank him for such amazing work that looks like it was professionally made and installed. Great job Burl!

HR Thanked: HR was recently thanked by Park's Jonathan Hanson for completing all the background checks on coaches so quickly. He said this was the first time they were all complete

prior to practice beginning and he really appreciated it. HR Director Leona Clay added that HR Intern Logan Flatt handled the background checks and did a great job getting them knocked out!

Firefighter Paramedic Rene Fernandez Assists: Killeen's Deputy Fire Chief Douglas Foster wrote to thank Firefighter Paramedic Rene Fernandez for his valuable assistance to a summer youth program at CTC for area youth. The effort was tagged as "Junior Fire Academy." Rene volunteered his own time and resources that were part of the success of the program. The Deputy Chief concluded by saying Rene, "...poured hours and hours of his time into this and deserves respect, appreciation, and recognition."

Finance Appreciated by Citizen: Citizen Rick Keagle wrote to share his thanks for all those responsible for putting together the City's budget. He stated, "no easy task – but the end product looks great."

Kristina Ramirez Admired: A citizen recently sent flowers to Kristina Ramirez to thank her for her recent presentation on a complex plat agenda item. Great job Kristina in helping us navigate complex items!

Public Works Road Crew Gets It Done: A citizen wrote to thank the Public Works Roads crew for their work on Commanche Gap Road and Lakefront Road. The citizen stated, "they did a great job despite the heat."

Drop Site Recognized: A citizen wanted to recognize the Drop Site. He stated they, "always take care of me and assist me with properly placing my items for proper disposal. They work hard over there."

Parks and Athletics Team Praised: Parks Crew Leader Henry Nash wrote to praise Parks staff for their recent work on Summit Soccer Field. The following shows Henry's pride for the Parks team:

"Greetings Jeff. Hope your morning is going well. As you are fully aware, our Parks and Athletic Team have been working diligently as a collective group to ensure that the playing surfaces of our Summit Soccer Fields are safe for residents to use. During these past few weeks, I have been privileged to bear witness of the due diligence these great gentlemen have demonstrated with regards to coming together and completing a given task with an attitude of excellence. When given instructions and directions of what was expected and needed to be done, everyone complied and worked exceptionally well with one another. General Gorge S. Patton once said, "Don't tell people HOW to do things, tell them WHAT to do and let them surprise you with their results." As a reward for their efforts, we celebrated as a team by having lunch together from Chick-Fil-A. As one of the delegated leaders of Parks, I am truly GRATEFUL and THANKFUL to not only be a part of an OUTSTANDING organization, but am also HUMBLED that I am entrusted by my leadership to oversee such an AMAZING group of men. Wanted to take this opportunity to share with my leaders of the amazing group of guys we have in our parks department. Thank you so very much for entrusting us to do what we do for our city and its citizens."

Henry Nash Leads: Several City staff thanked Parks Crew Leader Henry Nash for his positive, servant style of leadership. Through his leadership, Summit Soccer Field playing surfaces have greatly improved!

Fire Department C Shift Makes the Slice: A citizen came by the FD and brought C-Shift some pizza, goodies and bottled water along with a card that read, "Please accept this as a small token of my appreciation for all your hard work."

PD's Lieutenant Raphael Baumgaertel Cares: A citizen wrote the PD to thank the PD and "especially Lieutenant Baumgaertel." Lieutenant Baumgaertel assisted the citizen in locating their missing dog. The citizen apologized to Baumgaertel for asking for help on something so unimportant. To which he responded, "but, it is important to you!" Way to go Lieutenant Baumgaertel in going above and beyond job description in service!