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### Introduction

On behalf of the Harker Heights Fire Department, I am honored to present our Strategic Plan for 2024 – 2029. This plan is a living document and our pledge to continue providing high-quality emergency services for all our residents and guests.

This five-year plan represents our commitment to good stewardship of the department resources provided by the residents of Harker Heights. Additionally, it serves as a blueprint designed to guide our efforts in ensuring public safety, emergency response excellence, collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, and community resilience over the next five years. This plan outlines our key objectives, innovative approaches, and collaborative initiatives as we continue to serve and protect our community with dedication and commitment.

Our fire department's dedicated members are central to this strategic plan's success. Their expertise, bravery, and tireless commitment have been instrumental in every aspect of the architecture of this plan. As we move forward, I recognize that our firefighters and support staff are the backbone of our organization and the embodiment of our shared value system. This dynamic group is made up of public service professionals with a diverse group of ethnicities, generations, backgrounds, and years of service. Each of these dedicated professionals represent a key to our shared success in emergency service delivery.

Contained within this strategic plan is a compelling preview of the achievements that await our department. It is critical to remember that we exist to serve those in need. We are here for "them," and their needs will always be before those of our own. Let us remain steadfast in knowing that the word "service" is the most important component of "Fire and Emergency Services". To succeed, this understanding must be engrained in our roles as public safety professionals. The Harker Heights Fire Department has the sole monopoly of emergency services for our community – there is no 9-1-2 for them to call for another service. We are their only option, and it is our duty to provide the best service every time – no exceptions. It is our pledge to live up to this responsibility entrusted to us. Without them, we do not exist. Therefore, our best is our only plan; they deserve nothing less. This plan serves as our architecture for our best.

Respectively Submitted, Shannon Stephens Fire Chief

"Success is the result of perfection, hard work, learning from failure, loyalty, and persistence."
-General Colin Powell

### HHFD ORGANIZATIONAL PROGRESS

- ★ 1961 Harker Heights Volunteer Fire Department established.
- ★ 1985 Andy Adam named as Fire Chief.
- ★ 1985 Central Firehouse constructed at 401 Indian Trail. First career firefighter hired.
- **★** 1990 Leon Charpentier named as Emergency Services Director.
- ★ 1992 Fire Department combined with the local ambulance service to provide Emergency

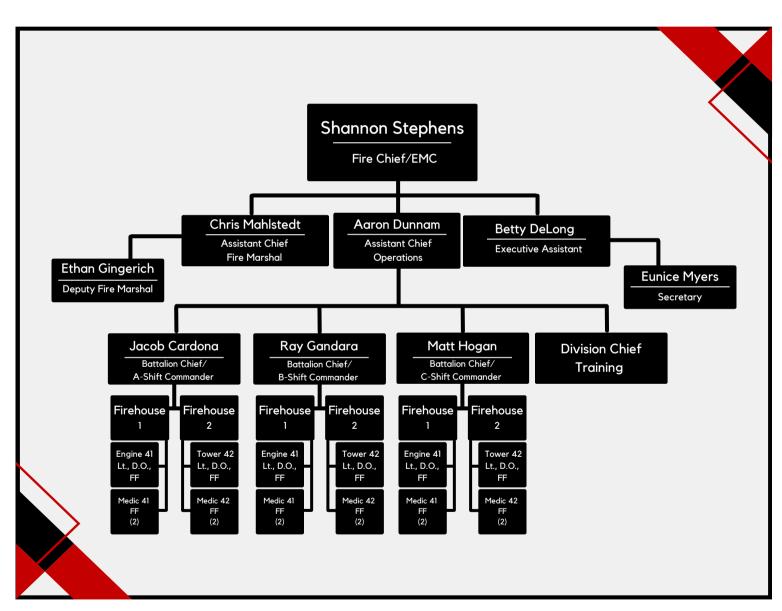
  Medical Services.

  DRIMER
- ★ 1999 Harker Heights Fire Department was recognized as the Texas EMS Provider of the Year by
  the Texas Department of State Health Services.
- ★ 2000 Firehouse #2 was constructed at 2307 Stillhouse Lake Road.
- ★ 2005 The first aerial apparatus was placed into service.
- ★ 2006 Jack Collier named as Fire Chief.
- **★ 2007 Department transitions to 100% career-staffed.**
- ★ 2016 Paul Sims named as Fire Chief.
- ★ 2018 Central Firehouse remodel completed.
- ★ 2018 First three Battalion Chiefs were promoted as daily shift commanders.
- ★ 2019 Gold Plus level recognition for the American Heart Association's Mission: Life Line.
- ★ 2020 Firehouse #2 remodel completed.
- ★ 2023 Shannon Stephens named as Fire Chief.
- ★ 2023 The first aerial platform was placed into service.

"Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning." -Benjamin Franklin

### ORGANIZATIONAL CHART





"What it takes to do a job will not be learned from management courses. It is principally a matter of experience, the proper attitude, and common sense — none of which can be taught in a classroom...

Human experience shows that people, not organizations or management systems, get things done."

-Admiral Hyman G. Rickover

### ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES



Initiated by the Fire Chief in August of 2023 as part of a comprehensive effort to assess the department, a Climate Study explored the heart and soul of the Harker Heights Fire Department. Through a simple yet deeply revealing question, "What does being a Firefighter mean to you?" we garnered responses that resound with passion and dedication, showcasing the exceptional caliber of individuals who embody the essence of our department. These insights vividly embody the unwavering commitment and exceptional character defined by our team, underscoring our organizational values in a manner that surpasses any value statement we could create.

- "Servant leadership. Having the opportunity to place other's needs above my own and serve them in their time of need has been and will continue to be a core tenant for me."
- "Being a firefighter means showing up each day to serve. Helping people on their worst day..."
- "Being a part of something greater than yourself. To work as an effective team to establish one common goal."
- "Helping the community in their time of need."
- "An individual who risks their life for others, someone who is part of a brotherhood of individuals who would do anything to make sure that everyone goes home at the end of a shift."
- "Means you get to make an impact on people's lives every day no matter how big or small; you did
  something that matters. You constantly learn, train, and adapt which makes this the best job in the world,
  not to mention you build great relationships. Being a firefighter means you show love, compassion,
  bravery, dedication, and professionalism."
- "Being a firefighter is a selfless service that I am proud to provide to my neighbors. This is having a willingness with passion to step up and help others when they are vulnerable."
- "Being a firefighter is about serving a higher purpose than yourself; it's about being a part of something greater than yourself. It's not a job; it's an opportunity to make an impactful change on your community and your co-workers."
- "Serving the citizens in a unique way. Being prepared to help them on their worst day. Whether it's by saving a life or a few precious memories left over after their disaster, or just being there to give them a shoulder to cry on."
- "Being a firefighter is the ability to selflessly serve others in their greatest time of need. Knowing that when you show up people expect your best every time and without fault. Bad customer service in our industry can be the difference between life and death."
- "Providing services and our skills to persons in their worst time of need. Helping those that reach out to us and using the best of our skills and abilities to resolve whatever issue they reached out to us for."
- "Helping people on their worst day and making a positive impact. Always raising the bar."
- "We all get into this field because of a calling we have felt deep inside of us to serve our fellow man and woman. The love we have for people is far greater than anything else. We are there for them in their worst time of need."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Fewer things will impact a team's morale than a leader who does not recognize their accomplishments and hard work." -General Harold "Hal" Moore

### HARKER HEIGHTS FIRE DEPARTMENT





Fire Response Census Tracts
Harker Heights - 02/28/24

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Population 34,377

Square Miles Protected 15.6

Per Capita Costs \$153.00

> ISO Rating Class-3

Total Staff Uniformed - 44 Civilian - 2

Daily Shift Staffing 13

Number of Stations 2

Fire Department Incident Responses in 2023

Fire **2519** 

EMS 3749

Total 6268

Historical Incident Responses				
Year	Fire	EMS	Total	
2022	2788	4361	7149	
2023	2519	3749	6268	

"What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality"

-Plutarch

### ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS STANDARDS

### **OPERATIONS**

- Serve the public.
- · Be the solution solve problems.
- · Invest in your continual improvement.
- Live our core values.

### COMPANY/BATTALION LEADERSHIP

- Serve the public.
- · Be the solution bring order to chaos.
- Invest in the continual improvement of you and your people.
- Live and protect our core values.
- . Be and ensure the good stewardship of our City and Fire.

### ADMINISTRATION

- · Serve the public.
- · Be the solution mentor others to be the same.
- Invest in your continual improvement, find the resources for others to do the same.
- · Live, protect, and embody our core values.
- Be, ensure, and teach others how to be good stewards of our City and Department resources.

### **FIRE CHIEF**

- Serve the public be accountable for the department doing the same.
- . Be the solution for the Community, City, and Department.
- Invest in the continual development of the Community, City, Department, and Yourself.
- · Champion our core values at every opportunity.
- Safeguard the proper stewardship of our City and Department resources.
- Lead at every opportunity.

"Leadership is of the spirit, compounded of personality and vision: its practice is an art. Management is of the mind, more a matter of accurate calculation, of statistics, of methods, timetables, and routine; its practice is a science. Managers are necessary, leaders are essential."

-Sir Bill Slim

### MISSION STATEMENT

A clear and concise mission statement is essential as it is a guiding beacon, easily recalled in critical moments. Its simplicity empowers our personnel to act precisely, aligning their actions with the department's core reason for existence and purpose. In the emergency setting, a straightforward mission statement reduces confusion by ensuring quick decision-making and effective execution. Our mission statement maintains relevance by staying actionable and uncluttered, reminding us of our fundamental purpose – service to the public.

### Harker Herevious: Fire Station

"The Harker Heights Fire Department will provide, with care and concern, the highest quality Fire/Rescue/EMS care and service to all persons for whom the City of Harker Heights is responsible."

Mission Statement Effective March 1, 2024:

"Our mission is to serve the public by providing excellent fire, emergency medical, and life safety services."

"The truth is that you always know the right thing to do. The tough part is doing it."
-Norman Schwarzkopf

# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES IDENTIFIED

Forged through a comprehensive internal evaluation, a thorough assessment of potential liabilities, and a profound understanding of our community's distinct risk landscape, these projects stand as a testament to our collective commitment of enhancing public service and community life safety. The success of these endeavors will not only underscore the vision of our leadership but will also illuminate the tireless efforts of each member of our fire department. Outlining these strategic projects allows our organization to remain focused on the future, but flexible and attentive to present needs. Importantly, this initiative signifies our dedication to an ongoing, iterative process – far from a one-and-done strategy. Through this plan, we are positioned to fortify our department's impact and ensure the wellbeing of those we serve.

- 1. Updated Policies and Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs).
- 2. Wildland Urban Interface Abatement with Texas Forestry Service.
- 3. Fire, Rescue, & Emergency Medical Professional Development.
- 4. Light Squad Company.
- **5. All-Hazard Department Preparedness.**
- 6. Firefighter Cancer Reduction.
- 7. Collaboration Liaison.
- 8. Fire Engine Redesign.
- 9. Fiscal Optimization.
- 10. Zero-Assumptions Leadership.



"Greatness is not where we stand, but in what direction we are moving..."

-Oliver Wendell Holmes



Initiative 1 - Updated Policies and Stand Operating Guidelines (SOGs)

Policies, procedures, and SOGs are the guiding principles and processes for all actions, communications, and activities within the department.

- Accountable Leader Fire Chief Shannon Stephens
- Work Team Training Chief & All Three (3) Battalion Chiefs
- Timeline Initiated July 2023 Completion June 2024
- Strategic Goals
  - Identify and correct areas of professional liability.
  - Create an end-to-end process for updating policy/SOGs that is streamlined, modernized, and improves delivery of emergency services.
  - Permit operational and professional procedures that are easy to implement with flawless execution.
- Barriers to Success
  - Work team divided amongst all three operational battalions communication delays.
  - o Complexity as a component of legal professional obligations.

"All failure is failure to adapt, all success is successful adaptation."
— Max McKeown



Initiative 2 - Wildland Urban Interface Abatement with Texas Forestry Service

- Accountable Leader Fire Marshal Chris Mahlstedt
- Work Team Assistant Chief of Operations and Deputy Fire Marshal
- Timeline Initiate April 2024 Completion April 2026
- Strategic Goals
  - Fuel Reduction The project aims to strategically thin and remove excess vegetation and dead materials in designated areas, reducing the amount of potential fuel for wildfires. This decreases the intensity and speed of fires and the possibility of area conflagration.
  - Defensible Space Creation Creating defensible spaces around occupancies by clearing vegetation and creating firebreaks. This helps establish a safe zone where firefighters can effectively defend properties and prevent flames from reaching our citizens' homes.
  - Community Education and Preparedness Educate residents about wildfire risks in suburban interface areas. Promotion of fire-safe landscaping practices, emergency planning, and evacuation procedures. Certify Harker Heights in leading community wildland fire and urban interface programs – Ready, Set, Go (IAFC) & Firewise USA (NFPA).
- Barriers to Success
  - Lack of community interest or support.
  - Heavy wildland fire season(s) shifting regional assets to attack and response programs.

"If it's predictable, it's preventable" -Gordon Graham



Initiative 3 - Fire, Rescue, & Emergency Medical Professional Development

- Accountable Leader Training Chief
- Work Team All Three (3) Battalion Chiefs and Dr. Rama Heyratifar Medical Director
- Timeline Initiated July 2023 Completion September 2029
- Strategic Goals
  - Training Calendar Creation of a training calendar based on the weather seasons to
    optimize learning opportunities and leverage favorable weather conditions for outdoor
    training. Required classroom Fire, Rescue, Emergency Medical, and required City of
    Harker Heights professional training will be conducted predominantly during hot and
    cold seasons. The schedule will be designed to ensure at least twenty (20) quality Fire
    and Rescue training content hours for each Firefighter monthly.
  - Fire Fundamental Skill Mastery Design and implementation of a comprehensive training program designed to equip our firefighters with the five (5) critical skills essential to operational success: (1) Forcible Entry, (2) Fire Streams, (3) Ladders, (4) EDC personal protective equipment, self-contained breathing apparatus, & hand tools, and (5) Safety & Survival techniques. A new fundamental training prop will be phased in each year over the five years of this plan to concrete our professional development for years well past this Strategic Plan.
  - First Five-Minute Drills Structured and focused walkthrough training exercise that simulates the critical initial moments of potential HHFD fire incidents. Each drill is tailored to a potential threat or operational challenge within Harker Heights occupancy types. The "First Five-Minute Drill" helps firefighters develop situational awareness, teamwork, and effective communication in high-stress situations. By rehearsing these critical steps in a controlled setting, participants enhance their ability to respond confidently and efficiently during real-life emergencies, contributing to safer and more effective operations.
  - Continual Emergency Medical Enhancement Support and enhance the current partnership with our Medical Director to ensure HHFD emergency medical training remains at the forefront of evolving medical trends and threats. Through regular collaborative meetings, responsive medical protocol procedures, and scenario-based training, we will enhance our emergency medical capabilities, adapt to emerging health challenges, and provide the highest level of patient care during emergency response.

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure." -General Colin Powell



### Initiative 4 - Squad Company

- Accountable Leader Fire Chief Shannon Stephens
- Work Team Executive Assistant Betty DeLong
- Timeline October 2024 Completion September 2027
- Strategic Goals
  - Increase department versatility and enhance emergency response capabilities by placing a specialized light squad company in service. The company will be staffed with two (2) firefighters in a current wildland apparatus modified to carry additional emergency medical equipment. The program will address four (4) critical needs:
    - Reduction of Mutual Aid Ambulance Dependence Current call volume demands Killeen Fire Department usage on 10% of emergency medical incidents. Squad Company personnel will cross-staff reserve ambulances to address these percentages of mutual aid dependence.
    - Prolong Life Expectancy of Tower/Ladder Squad company will respond to lower priority service calls in place of the Tower/Ladder to preserve service life and reduce expensive maintenance requirements of this apparatus type.
    - Provide 5th Core Fire Incident Function Every working fire event requires five (5) core functions excluding Incident Command, which is addressed by the Battalion Chief. 1) Search (victim search and rescue), 2) Fire Attack, 3) Initial Rapid Intervention (IRIT), 4) Ventilation, and 5) Back-Up (additional fire attack crew in the event of mechanical failure or high fire involvement). Currently, HHFD cannot address all five (5) core functions without the assistance of a Killeen suppression company. The Squad Company will permit our units to handle our very basic single-family residential action plan without the dependance of a mutual aid department.
    - Provision of Permanent Wildland/Brush Response Squad company will utilize the current in-service HHFD Brush Apparatus and will be capable as a quick-attack unit capable of quick response to brush fire incidents without requiring a fire apparatus out-of-service as everyday practice. Two brush fire events in 2023 were dispatched as structure fires resulting in the all units responding with structural apparatus. Arrival without appropriate brush fire apparatus lead to significant fire progression until resources returned to quarters to change apparatus. Additionally, the Squad Company will permit more structural fire apparatus available for structure triage and protection during brush fire responses encroaching on community neighborhoods.

"Innovation is key. Only those who have the agility to change with the market and innovate quickly will survive." -Robert T. Kiyosaki



### Initiative 5 - All-Hazard Department Preparedness

- Accountable Leader Assistant Chief Aaron Dunnam
- Work Team Training Chief
- Timeline October 2024 Completion September 2029
- Strategic Goals
  - Ensure all three (3) Operations Battalions are ready Physically, Mentally,
     Procedurally, and Mechanically on each shift.
  - NFPA 1710 Observation
    - Develop, train, and implement expectations of fire and emergency medical turnout times. Review incident reports and compile department performance to maintain 90% efficiency with NFPA 1710.
    - Liaise with Bell County Communications to ensure NFPA 1221 alarm processing compliance.
    - Utilize data analytics tools to optimize resource deployment and operational efficiency.
    - Explore technology solutions for real-time incident tracking and resource allocation.
  - Wildland Operation Preparedness Enhance Wildland Fire expertise by providing specialized training in the region's vegetation and terrain challenges.
- Barriers to Success
  - Resources constraints and regional topography will impose critical response time challenges to full NFPA 1710 compliance.
  - Interagency coordination, competitive resource allocation, and communication challenges between fire departments, forestry agencies, and other stakeholders will potentially hinder collaboration for large-scale wildfire events.

"Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility."
-G.M. Trevelyan



### Initiative 6 - Firefighter Cancer Reduction

- Accountable Leader Fire Chief Shannon Stephens
- Work Team Assistant Chief of Operations, Training Chief, and Executive Assistant Betty DeLong
- Timeline October 2024 Completion September 2029
- Strategic Goals
  - Comply with Texas Administrative Code §435.31 Firefighter Cancer Support Network Cancer Awareness Training Program.
  - Identify and enact appropriate policies and practices based on the Texas
     Commission on Fire Protection Health and Wellness Committee, required state
     and federal laws, and industry best practices for firefighter occupational cancer
     reduction.
  - Acquire 2nd set of Structural Firefighting Turnout gear for each firefighter.
    - Minimizes contamination risk by allowing firefighters to change into clean gear after exposure to "Age of Plastics" fire scene contaminates, reducing the risk of cancer-causing agents being absorbed through prolonged contact.
  - Implementation of Post-Incident "Hot Wash" protocol to reduce prolonged exposures while operating at emergency incident scenes and reduce contamination of fire apparatus while returning to quarters for decontamination.
- Barriers to Success
  - Storage & Maintenance Adequate storage space preventing Ultraviolet (UV) light exposure could pose a logistical challenge.

"True prevention is not waiting for bad things to happen, it's prevention things from happening in the first place." -Don McPherson



### Initiative 7 - Collaboration Liaison

- Accountable Leader Fire Marshal Chris Mahlstedt
- Work Team City of Harker Heights Department Directors and Community Partners
- Timeline October 2024 Completion September 2029
- Strategic Goals
  - Promotion of the understanding that the Harker Heights Fire Department is a community-based agency dedicated to serving the public's needs by being a problem-solving organization at every level.
  - Facilitate interdepartmental communication by bridging specific trades and expertise through effective communication and information sharing related to fire department operations, fire safety, and life safety codes and ordinances.
  - Actively engage with community stakeholders, including businesses, residents, and advocacy groups, to promote the City of Harker Heights and Harker Heights Fire Department goals, missions, and values.
- Barriers to Success
  - Conflicts of interest between partners dedicated to their specific cause and adamantly opposed to collaboration and fact-based communication and education.

"Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." -Henry Ford



### Initiative 8 - Fire Engine Redesign

- Accountable Leader Assistant Chief Aaron Dunnam
- Work Team All Three (3) Battalion Chiefs and Burl Lewis
- Timeline October 2025 Completion September 2027
- Strategic Goals
  - Conduct thorough research on successful engine designs and technologies employed by other fire departments, analyzing their cost-effective strategies and lessons learned to optimize functionality and value for the Harker Heights Fire Department.
  - Design the engine layout to ensure efficient access to hose, equipment, and controls, promoting quick deployment during emergencies.
  - Incorporate quality materials and construction techniques to ensure the fire engine's longevity and resistance to wear and tear from the demanding nature of fire service operations.
  - Research and design apparatus utilizing readily available replacement components through common large/commercial vehicle vendors while minimizing manufacturer proprietary-specific components known to increase cost-of-ownership and have increased supply chain-related unavailability.
- Barriers to Success
  - Fire department personnel might hesitate to adopt new design elements or technologies due to a preference for familiar equipment, which could slow the implementation process.
  - Depending on the chosen design elements and technology providers, there could be limitations in vendor availability.

"Strive for perfection in everything you do. Take the best that exists and make it better.

When it does not exist, design it." -Sir Henry Royce



### Initiative 9 - Fiscal Optimization

- Accountable Leader Fire Chief Shannon Stephens
- Work Team Executive Assistant Betty DeLong and Finance Director Ayesha Lealijee
- Timeline July 2023 Completion September 2029
- Strategic Goals
  - Enhance fiscal responsibility by evaluating current practices and implementing the most responsible policies to ensure transparent, ethical, efficient, and appropriate financial management.
  - Optimize cost control strategies by aggressively seeking and implementing cost control mechanisms to reduce unnecessary expenditures and produce cost savings.
  - Facilitate Collaborative Cost-Saving Projects by partnering with regional departments to leverage bargaining and purchasing power as a single multiagency co-op.

### • Barriers to Success

- The implementation of new fiscal policies and cost control mechanisms across multiple agencies will be complex. Delays to confusion and unwillingness to work as regional partners may produce significant delays.
- Partner organizations may choose to silo their operations or might be hesitant to collaborate on group purchases due to operational concerns.
- If regional leaders lack awareness or concern regarding the importance of cost control initiatives, they will likely not express a willingness to participate in group efforts.

"Effective stewardship of the public finances has to be at the heart of everything we do."
-Liz Kendall



### Initiative 10 - Zero Assumption Leadership

- Accountable Leader Fire Chief Shannon Stephens
- Work Team Assistant Chief of Operations and Training Chief
- Timeline August 2023 Completion August 2024
- Strategic Goals
  - Establish and define clear and measurable performance expectations between each level of leadership and their direct reports. (Expectations)
  - Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to evaluate employee effectiveness across measured timelines of evaluation. (Evaluations)
  - Hold leaders accountable for their actions and decisions to foster a transparent performance review process. (Accountability)
- Barriers to Success
  - Possible lack of moral courage in leadership levels to uphold the program's critical Expectations, Evaluations, and Accountability tenets.
  - "Buddy to Boss" challenges of new supervisors transitioning from peer group.

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better."
-Maya Angelou

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the entire City of Harker Heights leadership team for their unwavering support and vision in shaping our city's future. Our sincere appreciation goes to our esteemed Mayor and members of the City Council for their commitment and dedication to making our community the shining star of Central Texas.

We also want to express our deep appreciation for the members of city management, whose commitment and tireless efforts will be instrumental in driving forward the enhancement of fire and life safety efforts within our community. Your temperament, experience, and professionalism are the compass we follow.

A special note of thanks goes to all department directors whose support and collaborative teamwork will be essential in bringing this 5-year strategic plan to fruition. Together, we embark on a journey towards a brighter and more prosperous future for our city, driven by unity, dedication, and the collective commitment to the well-being of our community.

### Harker Heights Mayor & City Council

Michael D. Blomquist – Mayor
Lynda Nash – Mayor Pro Tem
Jennifer McCann – Place 1 Council Member
Stacey L. Wilson – Place 2 Council Member
Tony Canterino – Place 3 Council Member
Sam Halabi – Place 5 Council Member

Harker Heights Office of the City Manager
David Mitchell - City Manager
Jerry Bark - Assistant City Manager

**Harker Heights Department Directors** 

Jeff Achee – Parks & Recreation
Gary Bates – Information Technology
Leona Clay – Human Resources
Betiale Hawkins – Police Department
Julie Helsham – City Secretary
Mark Hyde – Public Works
Ayesha Lealiiee – Finance
Kristina Ramirez – Planning & Development
Lisa Youngblood - Library

With profound appreciation, Shannon Stephens, Fire Chief

"A river cuts through rock, not because of its power, but because of its persistence."

Jim Watkins