

November / December 2019



The Castle Hills *Reporter*

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**Lighting of the
Lights**
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MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



As a part of this Reporter article, I would first like to thank the residents of the City of Castle Hills for electing me this past May as Mayor of this great community. Over the last six months, we have had some challenges but we will continue with steadfast movement to improve and enhance Castle Hills as one of the premier places to live and work in this region. Below, I would like to bring you up to date on the process of the FY 2020 Budget Adoption and also provide insight on events attended recently on behalf of the City of Castle Hills.

FY 2020 Budget Adoption Process:

One of the first steps to the development and adoption of the City's fiscal year budget is establishing a budget calendar. The budget calendar enhances transparency by outlining dates and goals which allows for an organized framework to review and evaluate the proposed budget towards adoption. A comprehensive budget calendar should include dates for workshops, a schedule for public notice hearings for the budget and dates related to hearings on the proposed tax rate leading to eventual adoption of the tax rate and budget. Ideally the budget calendar for any city should keep the staff and elected officials on target to meet certain deadlines and ensure accountability for actions during the budget process.

As part of the budget process, the City Council approves a proposed tax rate for the upcoming fiscal year which is programmed into the proposed budget; staff then notifies the tax-assessor collector's office with the tax rate the governing body has proposed so a public notice can be published stating what the new revenue would be attributable to and/or its purpose, as well as dates and times of the tax hearings if required. As part of a deadline to adopt a budget, the City must hold a hearing on the proposed budget, a budget hearing must take place least ten days after notice of the public hearing. The budget hearing is a necessary step which allows for adoption of the budget. The adoption of the tax rate cannot be done until the budget is adopted by the governing body. The tax rate must be adopted no less than three and not later than fourteen days after the second public hearing on the proposed tax rate.

At the Regular City Council meeting on June 11, 2019, City Council approved the budget calendar developed by the City Manager. Mr. Rapelye identified critical milestones that were required to be met and to ensure compliance for adoption. The FY 2020 Proposed Budget Calendar was approved and originally had a milestone for adoption of the budget and tax rate on September 17, 2019; this schedule provided some flexibility to adopt the budget and levy a tax rate before the end of September as required by State law. This calendar followed very closely to the same timeframe utilized over the past five years.

(Continued on page 3)

"The statements and facts contained in newsletter articles from the Mayor and City Council Members are their own personal views and should not be considered official city sponsored statements or facts and should not be relied upon as such."

CITY COUNCIL

JR Trevino

Mayor

Clyde R. McCormick *(holdover)*

Place 1

Mark F. Sanderson

Place 2

Amy McLin *(holdover)*

Place 3

Lesley Wenger,

Mayor Pro-Tem, Place 4

Douglas Gregory

Place 5

CITY STAFF

Ryan Rapelye

City Manager, (210) 293-9673

Vacant

City Secretary, (210) 293-9681

Lara Feagins

Finance, (210) 293-9674

James "Jim" Ladewig

Fire Department Chief

(210) 342-2341, ext. 217

Johnny Siemens

Police Department Chief

(210) 342-2341

Rick Harada

Public Works & Animal Control

Department Director

(210) 293-9676

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Monthly Meetings

All meetings are held at City Hall unless otherwise posted.

City Council

2nd Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Architectural Review Committee

1st Wednesday, 7:00pm

Upon Request

Board of Adjustment

4th Monday, 5:30 p.m.

Upon Request

Zoning Commission

1st Tuesday, 7:00pm

Upon Request

Crime Control & Prevention District

3rd Monday, 5:30pm

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At the August 13, 2019 Council meeting Council discussed and proposed to maintain the current tax rate and called for the two required tax rate public hearings for August 28 and September 10. This action began the clock ticking so to speak on the required future meeting/hearing times and dates. At this same meeting Councilmember Wenger made a motion and Councilmember Sanderson seconded to move the 2020 Budget public hearing from September 10, 2019, to September 17, 2019. Councilmember Wenger's motion effectively took away the buffer and flexibility to reschedule meetings if necessary. The City Manager, City Attorney and Staff tried to convey to Council the importance of staying within the original scheduled dates but were not allowed to explain in depth the process, as Councilmember Wenger only wanted the last possible day for the budget adoption.

On September 17th, Councilmembers Wenger and Sanderson failed to attend the Special City Council Meeting for the public hearing of the budget as approved unanimously by City Council on August 13, 2019. Since this was a "Special Meeting" a supermajority (4 Councilmembers not including the Mayor) of Council was required to be present for the City to be able to hold a meeting. With both Councilmembers not in attendance, the City of Castle Hills staff was forced to again publish a notice of requirement for a budget hearing and proceed with the required ten-day publication notice. It is important to note that a critical part of the budget process is the public hearing notice that must be published in advance of the ten days.

Also, as a result of not having this meeting on September 17, 2019, the September 24, 2019 meeting requirement to adopt a budget and tax rate could not be met. Since the second tax rate hearing was held on September 10, 2019, and as I indicated earlier, the tax rate required adoption within fourteen days. The tax rate cannot be adopted prior to the adoption of the budget. Since we did not have the September 24, 2019 Council meeting to adopt the budget and tax rate, this defaulted the City to the effective rate (.480619 per \$100 valuation), this only provided the City with \$61,000 of new revenue to collect for ad valorem taxes for street improvements versus the original proposed \$180,000.

As a result, the City Manager contacted the newspaper to publish a notice to hold a budget public hearing on September 29th, which must be done before adoption of a budget. September 29th is the last day that the City must adopt the tax rate per Texas Local Government Code §102.009. Since the City of Castle Hills was not able to adopt the budget at the previously scheduled time, the City must default to the "Effective Tax Rate" of .480619 per \$100 valuation of property. While we were fortunate to be able to maintain our City services, the additional \$120,000 that had been earmarked for streets and drainage does not exist.

I hope that this explanation sheds some clarity to a very cumbersome and lengthy process of budget and taxation for a municipality, as well as what actions or lack thereof that occurred within the budget process for the City of Castle Hills 2020 Budget.

As Mayor, I would like to ensure Citizens that the City is transparent, and that all citizens should be able to know what exactly is being done when elected officials are conducting public businesses. In reference to the City's process to adopt the FY 2020 Fiscal Year Budget this year, our City Manager delivered a balanced and transparent budget

which programmed and recommended the current tax rate. This tax rate had been in place for the last nine years (.501345 per \$100 of valuation of your property). While the property tax rate has not increased, new valuation and new properties have increased and by maintaining the same and/or current rate of (.501345 per \$100) would have yielded the City additional new revenue close to \$180,000 for the City of Castle Hills. The City Manager had earmarked the additional revenue for street and drainage improvements. While the incremental tax savings will likely not be felt by the average Castle Hills property owner, the individual tax savings from .501345 to .480619 tax rate on a \$400,000 property is ~\$6.91 a month.

Texas Municipal League Conference:

The Annual Texas Municipal League Conference was held the second week of October, the City of San Antonio was the host City. This conference brings various elected officials and City employees from cities all over the State to network and learn best practices. I am proud to say that I attended along with Councilmember McCormick, Councilmember McLin and our City Manager Ryan Rapelye. I've come to learn in my business that while these conferences can be time consuming, you never know when you will make that one contact, learn that one thing, or see how someone else is handling an issue.

One of the most interesting session for me was on Street Infrastructure. In this panel, the Public Works Director from Fort Worth discussed street maintenance and how to avoid the high costs of complete replacement. This was important reminder that while minimal maintenance may not appear to provide a substantial benefit, the increased longevity will ultimately provide a savings. Check out the bar graph.



(Continued on page 4)

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Stop the Bleed:

Earlier this year, I attended a conference and had an opportunity to hear from some of the survivors from Sutherland Springs as well as some of the first responders. Their story served as a chilling reminder that we never know when we will be faced with a life altering situation but the best, we can always be prepared to help those around us. I know that we all feel safe knowing that Castle Hills is a safe enclave and have some of the best first responders around, but the truth is tragedy knows no limitations. In doing what we can to be better prepared as a City, I along with City employees participated and received "Stop the Bleed" training. If you aren't familiar with Stop the Bleed, it is a hands-on program on how to properly apply a tourniquet and stop bleeding. This training gives participants hands on experience on how to save a life that is applicable whether it is an accident at home or an event like the tragedy in Sutherland Springs. I would like to thank the folks at Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council for providing the amazing training for free!

**Citizens to Be Heard:**

A resolution was passed at the September 10, 2019 City Council meeting to comply with House Bill 2804 which allows citizens to be heard at the beginning of a meeting and on individual items. If you attend a City Council meeting, a sign-up sheet is available for anyone wishing to speak at a meeting. This process will provide citizens the ability to address City Council on topics of concern or a specific item on the agenda.

As always, if I can be of assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

JR Trevino, Mayor

JTrevino@CastleHills-TX.gov
210-559-5940



MESSAGE FROM THE CITY MANAGER

By Ryan D. Rapelye, City Manager

FY 2020 Budget Overview, City Projects and Activities!

FY 2020 Adopted Budget:

The FY2020 Adopted Budget maintains current operating levels and represents the expected revenues and planned expenditures for the City of Castle Hills' fiscal year from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. The adopted budget is transparent and defines the allocated needs identified by staff to maintain current service levels while maintaining a conservative fiscal approach. The development of the budget should always seek to balance the demand for quality services with the ever-increasing cost to deliver those services. As City Manager, my goal has been to ensure that the City staff is focused on customer service and effectively carrying out our City services. In developing any annual budget, we don't want to lose focus of the delivery of City services, our responsiveness and the overall impact to customer service.

Also, our reserves will continue to be maintained at adequate levels, which should protect the City from future uncertainties.

The FY 2020 Adopted Budget provides expenses for our City's core services such as Public Safety (Fire, Police and Dispatch), sanitation/streets within our Public Works, Municipal Court and Administration. These departments all fall under the General Fund, which is the largest fund. All of the City's salaries and benefits are funded out of the General Fund. The FY2020 Adopted Budget provides for the reinstatement of two positions that were only partially funded in FY2019 the administration office – permit clerk and finance clerk – re-appropriating these back to full time positions. In the Streets Department, \$85,000 was programmed into the streets maintenance – minor and infrastructure line item which is a \$35,000 increase from last year's budget. This will allow for additional projects to be

(Continued on page 5)



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addressed, including the City to continue its partnership with North East Independent School District on a second phase of sidewalks along Honeysuckle and Lemonwood next to the Castle Hills Elementary School.

In the Adopted FY 2020 budget, a number of capital projects have been identified. Current projects which have been programmed into funding in FY2020 include Banyan/Glentower Watershed III – Street and Drainage Project, Mimosa/Krameria to West Avenue Drainage project (Watershed II) and \$400,000 for the Seal Coat Project for street maintenance. Also, as a part of the FY 2020, \$30,000 is allocated to continue with additional facility improvements.

Projects Current & Future:

Phase III Roadway Improvements (Antler Drive) – Construction is progressing per project schedule and within budget. Currently construction of SAWS utilities and drainage improvements is approximately 99% complete. City roadway and drainage improvements are 87% complete. Remaining items are final asphalt surface course installation, sodding, site cleanup and restoration. Construction is anticipated to be fully complete by January, 2020.

Watershed III Phase I (Banyan and Glentower Drainage Improvements) – Currently the design is in the final phase for this storm sewer and roadway reconstruction project. The City is working with CPS Energy and SAWS on joint bids which is expected to be complete by late November. Bids are anticipated to be received in December which would allow construction to commence in late January 2020. Construction time is estimated at nine months.

Street Maintenance Program – City received the executed agreement from Bexar County to assist in securing purchasing services from a Bexar County contractor to provide construction, enabling the City to take advantage of high volume, low price construction materials for street maintenance service for this project. The FY 2020 adopted budget has \$400,000 programmed for moving forward for seal coating over 25 streets.

South Winston/West Castle – Contractor has been selected and work is to commence in Late-November for reconstruction of the intersection.

Other projects and activities:

The Public Works team led by Mr. Rick Harada did a tremendous job to clean-up the drainage channel behind HEB at Loop 410. The channel had over time become heavily overgrown with vegetation and sediment build-up. Mr. Harada and his crew utilized all necessary resources and rented heavier equipment to remove the sediment and vegetation in order to clear the channel. The City had requested quotes for this clean-up ranging from \$40,000 to \$120,000, however, our Public Works Department was able to move forward without having to outsource.

Last month, the City had a contractor re-stripe West Avenue from Jackson Keller to Lockhill Selma. The re-striping provided better delineation between lanes on this thoroughfare. Also, the City completed drainage improvements at Roundup and Adobe and

worked with the private property owner at 1919 NW Loop 410 to address the drainage impoundment at these two locations.

Over the last year, the Zoning Commissions have reviewed the proposed changes from the Zoning Review Committee and have made additional recommended amendments to Chapter 50 of the City's Code of Ordinances which includes additions to home occupations and the establishment of a short-term rental ordinance and application, with operational requirements for Castle Hills. These revisions as recommended by the Zoning Commission, including the potential adoption of a short-term rental ordinance is expected to be introduced to City Council at a future meeting, tentatively scheduled for December.

The City is in the process of updating the City's Master Plan. The expected timeline is to bring this forward to City Council in February 2020. The Ad HOC project committee, which has been meeting over the last year, has developed new ideas and has discussed how the City can better position itself in the role of economic development, including the need to foster and market our business community with the goal of recruiting further retail and commercial business. The committee is also looking at quality of life projects for the Commons including other areas of the City and evaluating planning aspects to enhance the City of Castle Hills.

In Closing, moving forward, we need to tell a better story which details and highlights why Castle Hills is a great place to live and work. This should expand on its strengths and opportunities our City has to offer whether it is our City services, businesses or the quality of life component. The City of Castle Hills is fortunate and unique to have a dedicated public safety team which encompasses fire, police and a 24/7 dispatch which is key to response time in critical situations. The City is also blessed to have weekly collection for residential sanitation including brush and recycle services. Now that the FY 2020 Budget has been adopted for the upcoming year will allow for these outstanding services to continue for the residents of Castle Hills.

Please contact me at rrapelye@castlehills-tx.gov or at the office at 210.293.9673 if you have any questions on projects or need assistance with services from the City of Castle Hills.

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COUNCIL COMMENTS



CLYDE R. McCORMICK
PLACE 1 (Holdover)

Well, this is my last article as an Alderman of Castle Hills. My term as a "holdover" will end with the swearing in of my successor after the election in November. I didn't get as much done as I had hoped and however there is much left to be done.

Conflict of Interest

The term is widely used and misused. Black's Law Dictionary says the term is used in connection with public officials when their public duty may clash with matters of the private pecuniary interest of the individual official concerned.

In the case of our municipal officials, it is a matter of state statute found in Chapter 171 of the Texas Local Government Code (LGC) which is summarized here. A Local Public official is defined as any "member of the governing body or another official, whether elected or appointed, paid or unpaid of any... municipality, or local governmental entity who exercises responsibilities beyond those that are advisory in nature." (171.001(1) LGC). This is a VERY broad definition which appears to include appointees as well as all our elected officials, city council, CCPD Board, committees and municipal officers.

The two areas of possible conflict of interest in statute are business entities and real estate. A "business entity" "means a sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, firm, joint-stock company, holding company, receivership, trust or any other entity recognized by law." (171.002(2) LGC).

The question is whether the public official has a substantial interest in either a business entity or real estate which might affect or conflict with his performance of the duties of his office. A substantial interest in a business entity is present if, either: 1. the

official received ten percent or more of his gross income for the previous year from the business entity; or 2. the individual owns ten percent or more of the voting stock or shares of the business entity or owns either ten percent or more or \$15,000 or more of the fair market value of the business entity. (171.002(a)1&2 LGC). "A person has a substantial interest in real property if the interest is an equitable or legal ownership with a fair market value of \$2500 or more" (171.002(b) LGC).

Notably, a Local Public Official is also considered to have a substantial interest "if a person related to the official in the first degree by consanguinity or affinity, as determined under Chapter 573 (Texas) Government Code, has a substantial interest under this section." (171.002(c)) So family members (like mother, father, wife, husband, sister, brother or child) may also create a conflict of interest for the Local Public Official.

An offense, a class A misdemeanor, occurs if the Local Public Official violates section 171.004, acts as surety for a business entity that has work, business or a contract with the city or acts as surety on any official bond required a of an officer of the city. (171.003(a)&(b)).

A Local Public Official who has a substantial interest in a business entity or real property is required to file, before any vote that might involve the business entity or real property, an affidavit describing the nature and extent of the interest and shall abstain from further participation in the matter if, either: 1.the action taken on the matter will have a special economic impact on the business entity distinguishable from the impact on the public; or, 2. it is reasonably foreseeable that the action taken on the matter will have a special economic impact on the value of the real property, distinguishable from the impact on the public.(171.004(a)&(b)LGC).

However, a Local Public Official who is required to file and who does file an affidavit may not be required to abstain from participation in the matter if the majority of members of the entity is composed of member who are also required to file and who do file affidavits of similar interests in the same official action. (171.004(c)LGC).

The Governing Body of a governmental entity (City Council, CCPD board) must take a separate vote on any budget item regarding a contract with a business entity in which a member of the governing body has a substantial interest. The member with the substantial interest may not participate in the vote, except as authorized under 171.004(c). The member may vote on the final budget if the member has otherwise complied with Chapter 171 and the matter in which the member was concerned has been resolved. (171.005(b)).

A finding of a violation under this chapter may not render the action of the governing body voidable if the action would have passed without the vote of the member who was in violation of Chapter171LGC.

(171.006). Chapter 171 preempts the common law of conflicts of interest but is cumulative of municipal charter provisions and municipal ordinances defining and prohibiting conflicts of interest. (171.007(a)&(b)LGC). It is permissible for a Local Public Official to serve, without pay or other remuneration, on the board

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Castle Hills Resident

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of a private non-profit corporation or other entity. (171.009LGC). There are substantial limitations on judges or commissioners whose appearance or signature of pleadings may constitute a substantial interest in the entity for which they appeared or signed pleadings. (See 171.010 LGC for impact of this chapter on the practice of law).

What is left to be done- A great deal!

Mr. Rapelye is still doing a fine job as City Manager! We have a great staff and good people. They are our best assets. Thank you for your support during my tenure on the City Council. I had hoped to see more accomplished but we have gotten some things done and I hope to see more done in the near future. Our local politics should not be concerned with the National Political Dysfunction, rather focus on our city, local business, neighborhoods and our people. I hope the trend toward more civil political discourse will continue. Please don't assume that everyone who disagrees with you is evil, they aren't. Be Nice! It is the loyal opposition who allow us to sharpen our ideas on their disagreement. The secret is that there are no "sides". Within the disagreement lies a successful compromise, or a new idea and a better outcome than either "side" could have achieved alone. Be excellent to one another.

Clyde R "Skip" McCormick
210-383-8941
cmccor5683@aol.com



DOUGLAS GREGORY
PLACE 5

During the last year or so, as chairman of the Digital Sign Committee, I have, with the support of that committee, hammered out another contract with a communication company. The result of which around provides now over \$300,000 of new revenue annually is received to our City for at least the next 20-25 years. These revenues go directly to address street and drainage repairs.

The City has an 80/20 split on digital billboard revenue. 80% is drainage and 20% is for streets. The most recent agreement will yield over \$2.M in new drainage and street revenue over the term of the agreement. In January of this year, I requested a special City Council meeting to discuss projects surrounding drainage concerns within the Master Drainage Plan which are now programmed into the City Capital Improvement Plan. If approved, more than \$3-5M will be spent on repairs effecting various streets with drainage issues throughout the City.

First, Antler is in the middle of a complete reconstruction and makeover. One of the longest streets in Castle Hills, this "southern cone" project will bring a new street, curbs, and sidewalks to this heavily used artery which has required much needed repair.

Second, Banyan which is in very poor condition. Banyan is a major carrier of stormwater from other streets; this project will involve full depth repair, concrete and installation of new drainage outlets which should bring flooding relief to a large number of families/residents

from several other streets including Banyan. This project also involves drainage inlets to be installed on Glentower to channel the water to the outfall.

Third, North Manton is being considered for a project which is expected to bring significant relief to those homes threatened with flooding caused by major stormwater from San Antonio, specifically the Lockhill-Selma and West Avenue area.

Fourth, the Mimosa/Krameria drainage channel project is currently being engineered and is about 70% complete and is on target for Council by January of 2020. This area has a serious threat of potential flooding for residents along this channel throughout our City.

Finally, the City Manager has a list of areas that need major attention which require a cost of nearly \$10 million, this involves the reconstruction of several streets in Castle Hills. These projects might require a bond issue with in our community. Further study on this will be necessary before the City Manager and I bring this to Council for consideration in early 2020.

The City Manager and I have been working very hard over the last 12 months putting in many hours of discussion with City Employees and our on-demand engineers on many of these projects. Engineering/design on some of these street/drainage projects are nearly complete which is necessary before construction. The City Council will have an opportunity to vote on these projects soon. I am very hopeful that the time, our City Manager, City Employees and I have devoted to these projects will pay off. This is a lot to swallow but I believe it will be worth it.

If there are any concerns, please feel free to call me at 21.378.4481 or 210.342.5442.

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AMY McLIN
PLACE 3 (Holdover)

Along with Mayor JR Trevino, Alderman McCormick and our City Manager, Ryan Rapelye, I am pleased to have represented the City of Castle Hills at the Texas Municipal League's Annual Conference which was held in San Antonio October 9-11. There were numerous educational sessions, inspirational speakers, and an exhibit hall full of everything City! I chose to attend a total of more than 14.5 hours of seminars and presentations so that I could bring back as much information as possible to our City.

The seminars that I attended were:

1. Overview of Debt Financing Options;
2. Pavement Data Collection, Rating History, and Management Programs in the Five Largest Cities in Texas;
3. Preparing for the 2020 Census: How Cities Can Work Towards a Complete Count;
4. Councils, Courts, and Cities – C3 of Texas;
5. When is a Conversation Criminal? Open Meetings, Constitutionality – Protected Free Speech, and the New Law on Walking Quorums; and
6. Elevating Trust in Local Government.

Additionally, the three Key Note/Luncheon Speakers were inspiring speaking on: (1) Technology, Innovation, Invention, and the change needed to make the future happen because of us and not to us; (2) Normal is Overrated – Aim Higher; and (3) A Conversation About Community and Resilience with Dee Margo, Mayor of El Paso, about the Walmart shooting.

Almost all of us agree that in Castle Hills we would like to focus on street, infrastructure work, and drainage needs. All of the work needed will cost A LOT of money. However, there are numerous options for the City when it comes to financing debt. There are different types of bonds (e.g., refunding bonds and revenue bonds), certificates of obligations, tax notes, and public property finance contractual obligations. Everyone of these financing options has pros and cons, but they might be a way for

us to restructure how we pay for some things to free up money for streets, drainage, and other needs. If we can accomplish more work in a faster amount of time, we will create economies of scale that result in a more affordable cost. Our City Manager has been trying to position our City so that we have many financing options available to us based on identified the needs of our current projects with probable costs outlined in the Capital Improvements Plan.

The Pavement Data Collection presentation was amazing! It was fascinating to hear how the five largest cities in Texas have tackled the hundreds of miles of asphalt, concrete, and brick streets that they are responsible for maintaining. The key seems to be creating a reliable system for collecting data and regularly updating the data so that you can create a street maintenance program that continually strives to prolong the life of streets based on the Pavement Condition Index (PCI) which is collected for all city streets and alleys. Maintenance is the key to healthy streets and Council should not be involved in this process for anything other than approving projects as the money becomes available. I am happy to share more if this topic interests you.

If I can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

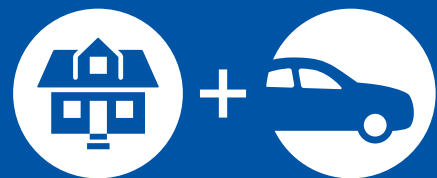
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Castle Hills Fire Department

By Jim Ladewig

Fire Chief

This past month the entire Castle Hills City staff participated in a training program called "Stop the Bleed." Stop the Bleed is a national program sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security to promote awareness and encourage bystanders to get trained and equipped in helping with bleeding emergencies prior to the arrival of first responders. The class was instructed by STRAC, South Texas Regional Advisory Council, offering the class on three consecutive days in which staff from all city departments attended. If anyone wishes for additional information on this training please contact the City offices.

With cooler temperatures finally arriving it is important to have all heating appliances inspected and serviced by licensed technicians. Furnaces should be checked for operation, cleanliness and if gas fired, be checked for any carbon monoxide issues. If you do have gas fired appliances you should have carbon monoxide detectors along with smoke detectors in your home, with batteries being replaced twice a year. The dates inside these units should be checked to determine the age of the units. Some expire as early as six years up to 10 years old. Please refer to manufacturer's recommendations for specific expiration periods. For those homes with working fireplaces, these too should be inspected by a licensed professional to assure there are no cracks in the flue and that nothing has caused a blockage in the chimney. Keeping these items in good working order should ensure for a less stressful fall and winter months.



Code Compliance

Happy November everyone. This month's Code Compliance article will touch on a few violations that seem to be on the uptick. Please remember that garbage receptacles have to be placed out of sight by a certain time frame; "Sec. 36-30. (d)... Garbage containers shall not be placed curbside or in the right-of-way for collection earlier than 6:00 p.m. the day before collection day.(e)After a garbage container has been emptied by the city it shall be removed from the right-of-way of a street at the earliest possible time on the same day of collection and returned to an area of storage on private property not readily visible from the street." Tree limbs and branches are growing far lower over right-of-ways than is allowed by code; "Sec. 48-137. It shall be unlawful for any tree, shrub, vine, hedge, palm, or vegetation of any kind to be located, grown, planted maintained or cultivated in such a manner that any portion of (those items) may overhang or obtrude upon or over any curb, roadway, pavement, or alley unless there is a full 14-foot vertical clearance between the surface of all portions for such curb, roadway, pavement, or alley. The 14-foot clearance must be maintained under all weather conditions and circumstances." Please note the terms "curb" and "alley". Please ensure that first-responder apparatus and solid waste vehicles have safe, unobstructed access to your homes or businesses. Finally, please refer to Sec. 50-427 and 50-428 for what can and cannot be performed as a home occupation. Thank you for reporting violations of any type. Please be aware that the enforcement process does take time. As always, you can always file against your neighbor if you feel the legal process does not represent your personal interests. Thanks for your understanding.



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Ribbon Cutting Event



Public Works

City of Castle Hills
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Sunday, December 1st
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If you are new (*or not so new*) to Castle Hills...Welcome! The Castle Hills Woman's Club is beginning its 67th year and we are eagerly accepting new members. Our club is a multigenerational group of women who contribute their time and talents to civic, charitable, and social projects in the City. If you are interested or have any questions please email me and I would be happy to help you. Good Works, Good Friends, Good Times....The Castle Hills Woman's Club!

Judy Crawford, President
Jcrawford4@satx.rr.com

Passports



The City of Castle Hills is now officially able to accept paperwork for U.S. passport applications at city hall. The passport application services are available on a walk-in basis:

- Monday: 8:30 am to 2 pm;
- Wednesday: 8:30 am to 4 pm;
- Friday: 10 am to 2 pm

Appointments are available for Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

To schedule an appointment call (210) 293-9674 or (210) 342-2341.

For more information regarding how to apply for or renew your passport, please visit the U.S. Department of State website at:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html>



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Were you denied life insurance benefits because your insurance company claims your loved one lied on the policy application?

While this is one of the tactics used by insurance companies to deny life insurance claims, the standard necessary to prove such misrepresentation is very high in Texas. Don't let a life insurance company take advantage of you. Contact us at **(210) 733-4177** to set up a free consultation on your life insurance denial claim. We will fight to get you the benefits you deserve.

¿Se le negó un reclamo de beneficios de seguro de vida porque la compañía de seguro insiste que su ser querido mintió en su aplicación?

Aunque ésta es una de las tácticas que usan las compañías de seguro de vida para negar reclamos, el nivel de evidencia necesario para probar una representación falsa es muy alto en Texas. No deje que una compañía de seguro de vida se aproveche de usted. Contáctenos al **(210) 733-4177** para fijar una cita de consulta gratis para discutir su reclamo de seguro de vida. Pelearemos por ayudarle a recuperar los beneficios que se merece.

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Lemon (and Orange) Love: Citrus Trees for Your Landscape

By Donna Fossum

SAWS conservation planner



Many people wonder whether they can plant citrus trees in central Texas and if they'll even be productive. I speak from experience when I say yes!

In fact, Meyer lemon is the citrus tree I've had good success with. It's hardy and a splendid producer. Just ask my coworkers who enjoy the fruits of my labor (no pun intended!) when I bring it in to the office around Thanksgiving each year.

Meyer lemons are a cross between a lemon and an orange so they're quite a bit bigger than a regular lemon. The juice is very sweet and makes excellent lemonade and pies. I've even made Meyer lemon jelly with the juice. Who needs butter when you have homemade Meyer lemon jelly?!

Morning sun and afternoon shade is best for growing Meyer lemon trees in our blazing hot summers. Make sure the soil is evenly watered and allow the soil to dry out before watering the plant again. A little high-nitrogen fertilizer between April and September should keep the plant healthy and happy.

Other types of citrus that are excellent for our area are 'Orange Frost' and 'Arctic Frost' (tangerine hybrids). The most cold-hardy 'Arctic Frost' survived 9 degrees F and the most cold-hardy 'Orange Frost' survived 12 degrees F. If you live in an area that's prone to freezing, it's best to grow these citrus trees in containers so you can move them to a protected area during periods of extreme cold. The taste of these is sweet/tart with a true citrus flavor. The peel is easily removed with a low seed count. Sure to please those of us who love citrus!

Depending what part of central Texas you're in, they may need to be protected during hard freezes.



Better Business Bureau
REPORT

Church & Charity Scams

By Jason Meza

Regional Director - San Antonio

Reports from around South Texas have revealed several charity scams on the rise. Recently, scammers have been posing as local priests and pastors in order to call parishioners asking for gift cards or wire transfers, allegedly for charitable purposes. And as the Holidays approach, you might receive calls or emails from large charities asking for a financial gift. The problem is they might send you to an imitated website or even worse, identity theft.

It is always important to be aware if someone approaches you asking for a donation, even if they claim to be a trustworthy figure such as your local priest or non-profit, to do your research before giving. Charity scams were one of the top ten riskiest scams in 2018, according to BBB's Small Business Scams research report.

Better Business Bureau has the following tips to avoid falling victim:

- **Ask questions.** Ask the caller their name, what organization or church they work for and what charity they're collecting for. Some scammers may hang up, others may give you answers. Any reputable charity will be happy to pass along their information and let you make an informed decision before donating.
- **Do your research.** Search online to see if the church or organization is real. You can visit give.org and view charity reports through BBB. Be diligent with your research; scammers can simply look up a church's name and associated pastor to sound legit. And they often use names that sound like established charities.
- **Call the church.** If the caller gives you the name of a church, hang up and call directly to ask if they are actively collecting for a charity. If they are not collecting donations, they may want to know that people are using their church's name in a scam, so they can warn parishioners.
- **Have a refusal script.** If you are approached by someone asking for a donation it is always a good idea to have a refusal script ready. Let them know you have made all of your charitable contributions for the year, but you will be happy to consider their organization in the future. If they become aggressive or demand immediate funds, this is probably a scam.
- **Report it.** If a scammer contacts you pretending to be a pastor or priest, call your local sheriff's office and file a report at bbb.org/ScamTracker.

Christmas Word Scramble

naast _____

eret _____

noretamn _____

ganel _____

ownsnam _____

gitsconk _____

repsten _____

lednac _____



Answers: Santa, tree, ornament, angel, snowman, stocking, present, candle



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Published and distributed by:
Neighborhood News, Inc.
3740 Colony Drive Suite LL100
San Antonio, TX 78230
(210) 558-3160 * (210) 558-3163 fax

Info@NeighborhoodNews.com • www.NeighborhoodNews.com

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