

NOVEMBER 2015

The Castle Hills **Reporter**

LIGHTING OF THE LIGHTS

DECEMBER, 1 2015

.....
Please join us for hot chocolate,
cookies and singing.
.....

7:30 PM

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Message From the Mayor

What is a City Manager Worth?

The city council faced this question during the budget cycle not only for the city manager but for all the staff salaries. Deciding the worth of an employee is not a task to be taken lightly and is critical in the development of the annual budget. As Mayor, I believe that maintaining a strong dedicated staff is vital for any city or business. Staff turnover is disruptive, creates gaps in institutional knowledge, and costs the city tax dollars to advertise, interview and hire new employees and these are just a few of the problems that occur when a staff member leaves employment.

The City Manager position is that of the Chief Executive Officer. The responsibilities include day to day operations, planning, staff management, stewardship of your tax dollars, economic development, crisis management, and community relations. Establishing a fair and equitable salary requires a great deal of research and homework. Not only did I contact other Mayors in the area, but I spoke with CEO's of multi-billion dollar corporations. Comparing cities is never an apples to apples comparison. Other cities with our demographics are not the same as Castle Hills nor is Castle Hills the same as their city. Workload, hours worked, duties as an administrator, management of special events or catastrophes, size of the city annual budget are all factors that impact the salaries of the city manager, department heads, and staff.

The Mayor and the City Council do not make these salary decisions unilaterally, but actively seek input from the city manager and department heads, the city attorney and even the Texas Ethics Board. Castle Hills has true professionals conducting the day to day affairs of the city and setting salaries must reflect that professionalism.

Diane Pfeil has served as the City Manager since July 2014. She started her tenure as an interim city manager at a time when the mayor resigned suddenly followed by a city councilmember. As the council filled the council vacancies, Diane began the process of developing a budget for the upcoming fiscal year, issued Request of Qualifications for new city engineers, and city attorney, while familiarizing herself with the daily operations of each of the departments. During the holidays, the tragedy struck at the Wedgwood and Diane displayed tremendous leadership and compassion as the event moved from immediate response to long term recovery efforts. As 2015 progressed, Diane continued her efforts getting projects ready for council approval including the long awaited street maintenance plan and stormwater management plan. Both of which are in Year 1 implementation phases. It is this "can do" approach even in trying times and with difficult projects that has moved Castle Hills from stagnation to action.

Each of our city staff are encouraged to embrace innovative ideas and take action. Diane has written on the dry erase board in her office in bold letters "ONE CITY....ONE TEAM". This is the attitude that strengthens the staff, the city government and the community.

It is the cumulative evaluation of many factors that help decide what a city manager and staff are worth. As a small city government, we can never fully compensate the staff for their many dedicated hours of service and highest levels of professionalism, but we can try to provide a fair compensation package, a friendly work environment, and offer our thanks and gratitude for a job well done.

Cheryl and I offer you and your family joy during this holiday season.

Tim Howell, Mayor
City of Castle Hills Texas
www.cityofcastlehills.com
timothyallanhowell@yahoo.com



*Tim Howell
Mayor*

CITY COUNCIL

Tim Howell
Mayor

Lesley Wenger
Place 1

Matthew Daggett
Place 2

John Squire
Place 3

Frank Paul
Place 4, Mayor Pro Tem

Douglas Gregory
Place 5, Treasurer

CITY STAFF
(210) 342-2341

Diane Pfeil
City Manager, ext. 214

Kymberlee Buntyn
City Secretary, ext. 216

Suzanne Riley
Finance, ext. 224

Jerry Riedel
Fire Department Chief, ext. 217

Wayne Davis
Police Department Chief, ext. 210

Rick Harada
Public Works & Animal Control
Department Director, ext. 206

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POLICE CALL 911

Non-emergency (210) 342-2341

Monthly Meetings
All meetings are held at
City Hall unless otherwise posted.

City Council
2nd Tuesday, 6:30pm

Architectural Review Committee
3rd Monday, 7:00pm
Upon Request

Board of Adjustment
3rd Wednesday, 7:00pm
Upon Request

Zoning Commission
1st Tuesday, 7:00pm
Upon Request

Crime Control & Prevention District
3rd Monday, 5:30pm
As Needed

TIME TO BE THANKFUL

By Diane Pfeil, City Manager

As the crisp air moves in and the signs of the holidays are all around us, I thought it would be a good time to remember some of the things I am thankful for in this great community we all call home. I refer to Castle Hills as our great "Hometown."

One of the reasons Castle Hills has a hometown atmosphere is the volunteerism and dedication of our citizens. Area churches routinely contact the City for volunteer projects. Castle Hills First Baptist Church and Wayside Chapel church members donated their manpower to tackle the vegetation to keep the Commons a nice place to host community events or get a bit of exercise on the walking trail.

The community organizations exemplify the impact residents coming together for the common good can accomplish. The Woman's Club promotes interest in beautification, safety, friendship, health and good citizenship. Their ribbon cuttings welcome new businesses into our town. The Woman's Club extends their generosity in many ways including the purchase of new workout equipment for the police department. Castle Hills Movie nights, the Halloween Carnival, Easter Egg Hunt and other fun events are the hard work of the Castle Hills Community Organization and bolster our small town atmosphere. This dynamic group continually looks for innovative ways to provide activities for young and old. I look forward to their plans for 2016. The Quilters Guild, the Garden Club and the Woman's Bridge Club provide opportunities to socialize with others and enhance your skills. Fiesta Castle Hills is a group of residents who bring a bit of Fiesta to our hometown. The parade and 5K Run/Walk are planned for April 16, 2016, so mark your calendar and spend the day watching the parade and visiting the many vendor booths while enjoying friends, food and music at the Commons.

If you are looking for ways to meet fellow residents, share common interests, or just be a part of a great group, consider joining one of these wonderful organizations. It is volunteers that make these groups a success and lots of fun.

The various boards, commissions and committees are comprised of volunteers who work tirelessly to plan a course for our city. Each meeting I attend, I am amazed at the passion and dedication of each of the members. The chairperson conducts meaningful meetings to help move our city forward.

Individual residents are always stepping up to give of themselves. Betty Howard honors the employees with an Employee Appreciation social. Ron Wolma provides a wild game dinner at the holidays for the city staff. Jana Baker organized and provided the refreshments, American flags, and goodie bags for the September 11th Memorial Circle of

Support in addition to the many donations and community support she quietly provides throughout the year. There are countless others who stop by with cookies and meals for staff during the year. On National Night Out neighbors gathered to rekindle friendships, meet new neighbors, and show solidarity as a neighborhood against crime.

Even the youth in our community are stepping up to enhance not only the beauty of Castle Hills, but also to improve the environment. Girl Scout Troop Number 189 are fourth graders planning a Rain Garden at St. George's Episcopal School. Many of you have seen the grassy detention pond at West Avenue and W. Castle Lane. The girls are researching and working with the San Antonio River Authority and area engineers to determine if they can plant vegetation that would beautify the area and improve the quality of the stormwater that passes through the detention basin during rain events. This is a progressive inventive project and I am impressed that these girls are tackling such an important issue. They, at their very young age, are role models for all citizens.

Some of you do not have spare time to volunteer within the community, but you improve the quality of life, help to maintain property values and make Castle Hills a vibrant wonderful community every day. You keep your yard and landscaping neat and trimmed, you follow codes for proper storage of personal items, brush and leaves are properly disposed of, and you respect your neighbors and keep a watchful eye on each other. It is these simple day to day activities that make this a great community.

Collectively we have moved mountains and continue to make this "hometown" of ours a special place to live. The staff and I wish you a very Happy Holiday season and a prosperous New Year!

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COUNCIL MEETING

HIGHLIGHTS



August 25, 2015 – Special City Council Meeting

- Held 1st required public hearing on proposed FY 2016 budget and proposed 2015 tax rate.

September 8, 2015 – Regular City Council Meeting

- Approved of replat and subdivision plat establishing Castle Hills M.O.B.
- Appointed members to the Zoning Review Committee: Marc Schnall, Eric Friedland, Susan Kilgore, Terry Warth, John Kenny, Pam Grunwald, and Tim Turner.
- Approved repairs for the Fire Department Building and authorized the City Manager to execute the contract.
- Announced Fitness Challenge 2015 winners: Jim Cheatham, Romeo Munoz and Johnny Siemens.
- Announced VIA Town Hall meeting will be held Tuesday, November 17th, 2015 at 6:30pm.
- Receipt of the 2015 Second Quarter Investment Report was acknowledged.

September 15, 2015 – Special City Council Meeting

- Held 2nd required public hearing on proposed FY 2016 budget and proposed 2015 tax rate.

September 21, 2015 – Special City Council Meeting

- Approved Priority II of the Master Drainage Plan for the City of Castle Hills and authorized the City Manager to execute the contract.
- Approved Purchase of tasers from inclusive accumulated surplus funds from CCPD.
- Approved Ordinance adopting the fiscal year 2016 budget.
- Approved Ordinance adopting the 2015 Tax Rate of \$0.501345/\$100 of taxable valuation.
- Approved Ordinance ratifying the fiscal year 2016 Budget raising more property tax than last year's budget by \$255,358.00 or .096% and of that amount, \$58,336.46 is tax revenue to be generated from new property tax added to the tax roll this year.

- Conducted a Public Hearing and approved the adopted budget for the Crime Control and Prevention District for fiscal year 2016.

September 30, 2015 - Special City Council Meeting

- Approved Ordinance amending the 2015 budget to increase the salary of the City Manager.

October 13, 2015 – Regular City Council Meeting

- Presented Certificate of Appreciation to Ernie Young & Staff at Whataburger #755.
- Presented Certificate of Appreciation & Plaque to Mr. William Beuhler for his years of service as CCPD President 2008-2015.
- Recognized Sgt. Esteban Zuniga & Sgt. Donald Spears, graduates of **FBI/LEEDA** (Law Enforcement Development Association).
- Approved the application from Castle Hills Oak, LLC for a retail/office shell building at 1973 NW Loop 410.
- Amended Sec. 50-590, to allow for appointment of two alternate members for the Zoning Commission.
- Conducted a public hearing regarding Dwight Juettemeyer, for rezoning and a special use permit at 212 Lemonwood Dr. The item was tabled until the January 2016 council meeting.



Council Comments



Lesley Wenger,
Place 1

What's Wrong With Your Water Bill?

This September people began to receive what they thought were unusually high water bills and complaints were covered on TV and in the Express-News. Ultimately SAWS explained that errors had occurred because some bills had been “estimated” instead of read from the water meters. But they have yet to explain how they reached the “estimates.”

The method of billing for water in an incomprehensible manner has proliferated throughout the U.S., so it's difficult to pinpoint where the insanity began. Take a look at the back of your water bill (only available on hard copy bills) and you will note that you are paying for water usage in two sections: (1) Domestic Water Charge and (2) Domestic Water Supply Fee. In each case you're being charged for gallons used, thereby paying twice for the same usage. SAWS, as a utility owned by the City, has to apply to the San Antonio City Council for approval of rate increases. The story is that some years back the Council refused to approve a rate increase due to blowback from voters. But behind the scenes it was suggested that SAWS could insert a separate charge—on their own—and thus was born the Water Supply Fee.

While BexarMet was not a city-owned utility, they thought it was a clever idea and promptly adopted it because it was a way to disguise the rate charged for water.

On top of this chicanery, the tiered system was added. Even though SAWS—like any other water utility—is in the business of selling water, the more you use with the tiers, the higher the rate. This is the exact opposite of most other business models which give a price break to those purchasing larger quantities. The argument for tiered rates is that we do not have enough water, so residents are urged to use less. However those who are entitled to a commercial rate do get a break with the logic that businesses use similar amounts all year long vs. homeowners who use more in the summer, allowing the utility to plan for the commercial usage. Having had the opportunity to review bills sent to hospitals, restaurants and carwashes, among others, they too were frequently higher in the summer—but still got the commercial break.

Finally we have the meter fee—charged monthly whether or not you use any water. The larger the meter, the higher the fee. These fees first got bumped up in 2000 with the claim that a larger meter provides greater capacity—in fact BexarMet gave it a new name: Capacity Reservation Fee—requiring the utility to reserve more water. Because of the significant discrepancy between the monthly cost of 1 ½ “, 1” and ¾ “meters, many

ratepayers have switched to smaller meters. And guess what—they use the same amount of water with the smaller meter than they used with the larger one.

SAWS has now admitted, in the latest bill imbroglio, that they had to estimate bills because they did not have enough meter readers. Yet when they found they were going to have to issue over \$1 Million in credits to overcharged customers—suddenly they hired more meter readers. The SAWS Board, which is not elected, routinely overlooks mismanagement because they do not represent anyone, despite claims to the contrary, so they have no real contact with ratepayers.

In the meantime the cost of figuring out what you are due in a credit for an incorrect “estimated” bill is complicated by the tiered rates—it is not simply a question of how much you used from one read to the next, but of when you used those gallons—and that is a guessing game. Not surprisingly, with all the complaints, it has been virtually impossible to get through to Customer Service in the past month and it appears that the \$1 Million mistake is based solely on those customers who have been able to get a complaint filed. Everyone else will have to wait. And maybe you will forget about it and move on with your life. That's what SAWS is counting on.

The only good news here is that residents of Castle Hills, as former BexarMet customers, are not yet full SAWS customers. When the State Legislature approved the takeover by SAWS they were given 5 years to fully integrate and until that process is complete we remain District Special Project (DSP) customers whose water rates cannot be raised. The last rate increase at BexarMet was in September 2010, and our water rates have been stagnant ever since. You can find the rates posted on SAWS website Rates page under District Special Project. Because of this latest billing issue, it would be advisable to check your water meter every month around the time your meter is read, and write down the number. That way you have solid argument in the event of a dispute.

Lesley Wenger, City Council, Place 1
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Matthew Daggett,
Place 2

My family and I enjoyed visiting with so many wonderful neighbors during National Night Out. It was amazing watching the awe and wonder of the neighborhood children as they climbed in and explored the fire trucks and police vehicles. National Night Out is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen communities, build relationships, and enjoy each other's company. If you did not have a block party in your neighborhood, I encourage you next year to plan to host an event and get to know your neighbors!

The Oak Wilt Seminar presented by Mark Duff, a Staff Forester with the Texas A&M Forest Service generated a great response from the community. Oak wilt is a devastating disease that destroys one of the greatest assets of Castle Hills, our tree canopy. Please be sure to paint all wounds or cuts when trimming oak trees, hire reputable knowledgeable arborist if you do not do the trimming yourself, and help to stop the spread of this disease. For more information on oak wilt, please visit: www.texasoakwilt.org.

I hope to see you and your family on December 1st for the "Lighting of the Lights" at the Commons. Refreshments and fun will be served!

Happy holidays and a prosperous New Year from the Daggett Family!

Respectfully,
Matthew Daggett
City Council, Place 2
mdaggett@cityofcastlehills.com



Douglas Gregory,
PLACE 5

When I returned to City Council last year I compared Castle Hills to a corporation with Councilmembers as the Board of Directors and you the taxpayers as shareholders. Let's review how events thru 2015 are playing out:

The budget was balanced.
No increase in your property tax rate.
\$1 million in street repairs are occurring with another \$1 million projected for 2016.
For the first time we have a Master Plan for drainage problems.
New sources of income are being developed.
Wedgwood disaster professionally addressed.

Performance does not just happen. The above is a solid record of success and we have a right to feel that Castle Hills has changed course toward a brighter, fiscally sound future. Problems still lie ahead but with further hard work, citizen input and healthy Council debate, I expect that the 2016 report will reflect continued improvements.

May the glow of the holiday season be found in your hearts and homes. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to one and all.

Respectfully,
Councilman Gregory
pg.6



John Squire,
PLACE 3

To All residents, city staff and friends I would like to wish everyone a happy and heartfelt Thanksgiving and in saying so, I believe that we do have a lot to be thankful for in our City.

We have made advances in the maintenance and repair of our streets. Just to be clear, it took our City quite a while to get into this situation as regards to maintenance and repair. However, with continued focus, effort and time our streets will get to a level of which we can all be proud. There are no short cuts to this type of work. The repair of our streets is a long process with huge lead times. The big question I continue to struggle with is "Why can't this work get done faster?" Well, several items come into play as we move forward in this process, and a few of them include the selection process to maximize the value of OUR tax dollars, utilization of various maintenance methodologies, prioritization of our various streets based on empirical data, deciding which streets need a complete redesign to help control storm water drainage issues, coordination with SAWS (which is a long lead time process) to get water/waste water lines repaired and upgraded before the street is resurfaced, the engineering design process, contract bidding/selection/awarding, scheduling by the selected contractor to get each work scope completed, and finally the time and resources required for our Public Works staff to take care of all of the other day to day demands.

Now, with all that and our limited resources combined with good decisions, we have and continue to make progress as evidenced by the rebuilding and resurfacing of the streets to date, the ongoing maintenance work (i.e. crack sealing, surface rejuvenation, pot hole repairs, medium sized cuts for pavement replacement, street drainage repairs), and the associated Public Works administrative organization, planning, and support for the work that continues to take place across our City. As I said, with focused efforts we will continue to work through this issue over time and I look forward to the results.

I continue to ask, and thank everyone, for their help and involvement in OUR city. Please contact me with any questions. I am available to discuss our City's issues and encourage you to keep in touch. I can be reached at:

- email address – jsquire@cityofcastlehills.com or
- phone – 210-390-4611

From my family to yours – Happy Holidays!

Respectfully,
John Squire

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Frank Paul,
PLACE 4

The decision to run for political office is not a decision entered into lightly. The training is limited, the responsibilities can be enormous, and the pay comes as smiles, occasional applause or sometimes jeers. Politics on the local level is the purist of political offices. Constituents are your neighbors whom you see at the grocery store, at your place of worship, at the hardware store and when you drive down your street. Local elected officials are not politicians working in a government office, but citizens who decided to help make a difference by volunteering to serve. My job as a council member is to represent you the citizen, the taxpayer, the neighbor, and often the friend.

I make every effort to stop and visit with you, the people I am tasked to represent. Hearing what you say is not enough, I must listen as well. I may not always provide you the solutions you hoped for or in the timeframe you might like, and this is often due

to the very laws we are sworn to uphold. For example, when citizens sign-up to speak during "Citizens to Be Heard" at council meetings, the Texas Open Meetings Act prohibits council from engaging in dialog with the citizen speaking. To do so would violate the Open Meetings Act. The Mayor can instruct staff to follow up with the citizen, but we cannot have a conversation at the city council meeting.

Government moves slowly, but the system is based on public notice and transparency. Infrastructure takes time to plan and build. Infrastructure that has not been maintained, such as our streets are not fixed overnight. We are currently addressing streets, but that requires that we address drainage as well. You probably have been seeing the work being done in Phase One of the street repairs and the drainage improvements in neighborhoods around the city. These two projects will be a work in progress for many years. Drainage is a particularly difficult issue, as the world's greatest engineering project may still be insufficient if Mother Nature brings a 500 or 1000 year flooding event. As a council member, I must find the balance with spending tax dollars, dividing funding where it best serves the greater good, and all the while looking at the present needs and the long term consequences.

I take our duties as your elected official very seriously. I am your neighbor and available to listen to your concerns, and your ideas for solutions.

I hope to see you at council meetings and around Castle Hills. May your holidays be filled with family and friends!

Frank Paul, Mayor Pro Tem, Councilmember, Place 4
fpaul@cityofcastlehills.com

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Mendez Engineering PLLC – Engineering

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Castle Hills Embroidery, Inc. - Retail



Fire Department Employee News

On September 11, 2015, four of your Castle Hills firefighters participated in the SA110-9/11 Memorial Tower Climb in downtown San Antonio. This event was held to honor the first responders who lost their lives on 9/11/2001. Participants climbed the stairs of the Tower of The Americas not once, but twice, to replicate the climb of the 110 stories of the World Trade Center. Congratulations and thanks to Curtis Covey, Joe Hernandez, Joshua Jahns and Kolin Jonas on their extraordinary efforts.

Fall Safety Tips

As the cooler weather sets in (hopefully soon), here are a few tips to get safely through the fall season:

Change Smoke Alarm Batteries

If you did not change the batteries in your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors when you turn back your clocks for Daylight Saving Time, be sure to take time now to keep your family safe and change the batteries. Make sure to test the alarms with the new batteries installed. Check and replace any home fire extinguishers that have expired.

Service Your Furnace

Before the cold autumn and winter weather sets in, be sure to call your heating and cooling company to service your HVAC System. A specialist should inspect the furnace to make sure everything is in working order and that there are no leaks.

Exercise Candle Caution

Candles are a great way to give a room that warm glow, but they can also cause fires. According to the National Candle Association, almost 10,000 home fires start with improper candle use. Never leave candles burning if you go out or go to sleep, and keep your candles away from pets and kids.

Holiday Lighting

As you bring out the holiday decorations, carefully check strings of lights for crimps in the wiring or frayed wires. Holiday lights are inexpensive, so never hesitate to discard damaged or old lights and replace with new. If you are using outside timers to turn on holiday decorations or lights, double check to ensure the timer and the decorations are rated for outside use.

The Castle Hills Fire Department staff and families wish you a wonderful holiday season. Chief Riedel.

ANNIVERSARIES

5 Years

Esteban Zuniga, Police Department

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Kymberlee Buntyn, Administration



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Have a Happy and Safe Holiday Season

We hope everyone is enjoying the cooler temperatures and looking forward to a nice, peaceful holiday season. We want to provide you with a couple tips to help keep you and your property safe from crime.

Holiday Shopping:

Do not leave your purse in your vehicle.

Do not leave your valuables in plain view.

If you shop at different stores and want to place your purchases in your trunk, look around and make sure no one is watching. Always lock your trunk. Many of you may not know that there is a trunk release in your car. A potential burglar could simply break in and utilize the trunk release to get away with your valuables.

Holiday Gift Giving:

Do not advertise to the possible intruder the mountains of presents under your Christmas tree.

After the festivities, do not leave empty boxes, like big screen TV boxes, computer boxes, video game boxes, piled up in plain sight for the public to see. The empty boxes tell the would-be intruders what was received and that it is brand new. A better option would be to dispose of gift boxes in a recycling dumpster or fold the boxes and place them in a trash bag to conceal the boxes from prying eyes.

Holiday Driving

With all the hustle and bustle of the holidays, there will be

an increase in traffic congestion in and around Castle Hills. Congestion occurs at Blanco Rd, Lockhill-Selma, San Pedro and NW Loop 410. Be considerate of others, take a deep breath, and stay calm. It is not worth elevating your blood pressure.

While enjoying the festivities, be sure to assign a designated driver to ensure you safely return home from holiday parties without endangering yourself or others.

Holiday Safety Tips

If you are receiving packages from different carriers, please do not have them delivered to your front porch. Opportunistic criminals cruise the neighborhoods looking for packages left on doorsteps.

If you are going to leave town to visit with friends or loved ones, ask a neighbor to take in your newspapers and check your mail. Remember to call Dispatch and put in a "house check request". It is always better to be safe and let us watch your house while you are away.

As always, feel free to contact us with any comments or concerns you have. We are here for you 24/7. Have a Happy and wonderful Holiday Season!!!



Wayne Davis
Chief, Castle Hills PD



Join us for a Breakfast Feast and Open House and see why 7 year old Hunter loves Independence Hill!



"I love coming here because everyone is having fun and doing stuff together."
— Hunter Samples, age 7

**Saturday,
November 14th, 2015
9:30am**

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HOLIDAY BRUSH AND LEAF PICKUP



The Holidays are here! There are 5 holiday weeks between November and January, which means there are only 8 Brush and Leaf pickup services during that time. We would like to remind you to plan accordingly for your brush and leaf pickup needs during these upcoming months, as there will be NO Brush or Leaf pickup on the Holiday weeks. There will be regular Brush and Leaf pickup 2 times in November, and 3 times in December and January. Please refer to the calendar below for service and non-service holiday weeks:

NOVEMBER							DECEMBER							JANUARY						
s	m	t	w	t	f	s	s	m	t	w	t	f	s	s	m	t	w	t	f	s
								1	2	3	4	5						1	2	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
29	30													31						

HOLIDAY WEEK = NO SERVICES

NON-Holiday Week = Regular Brush and Leaf services



3 bundles of Brush per week



10 Bags of Leaves per week

Shweiki

Also, please be sure to clean out the grass and sediment growing between the street and the curb in front of your property. The best way to remove grass and sediment from the curb area is to break the roots by scraping under it with the flat edge of a spade shovel. Once the grass and sediment are broken free, then use the point of the shovel to scrape it out. After the sediment and grass are removed, you can use a weed eater going forward to keep it trimmed. Keeping the curb areas free of weeds and sediment plays an important role in extending the life of the pavement by reducing cracking and chipping. Each homeowner is responsible for keeping the easement and right-of-way clean, per city ordinance Sec. 26-118. We need everyone’s help to maintain the integrity of the right-of-ways. We wish you a safe and happy Holiday season!



Please share your abundant bounty with the hungry in the San Antonio area by making a donation of food items (from the 12 most wanted list below) or pet food at City Hall. Donations are accepted Nov 1, 2015 through Jan 1, 2016. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of many!



Make Food Safety a Holiday Tradition

For years, washing the turkey in the kitchen sink was a holiday tradition. My mom, her mom and grandmother all rinsed the turkey off prior to putting it in the oven. Food scientists now agree that rinsing raw turkeys and raw meats in the kitchen sink may do more harm than good.

In one study, food scientists found that Salmonella and other bacteria can become airborne and transported up to three feet while rinsing raw poultry and meat. In most kitchens spice racks, cooking utensils, coffee pots, clean dishes and even baby's bottles are likely to be sitting within three feet of the kitchen sink. Take a quick look in your own kitchen; what's within three feet of your sink?

You can expect to find some amount of bacteria on raw poultry and meats; that's why you need to ensure these foods reach a specific temperature when cooking. Different products have different cooking temperatures. For poultry, the safe cooking temperature is 165 degrees F for 15 seconds. The only way to determine if a turkey has reached 165 degrees is to use a food thermometer. If the safe cooking temperature has not been reached continue cooking the bird.

Frying turkeys in deep-fat fryers is becoming a new holiday tradition for many families. If frying the holiday turkey is a tradition in your house keep in mind that fire departments in the US respond to more than 1,000 fires each involving this practice. Statistics from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) indicate that deep-fat fryer fires result in more than \$15 million in property damage each year. Hot oil splatter can cause serious burns and life threatening injuries to adults and children. In one study Texas leads the nation in turkey frying accidents. Last year, at least one individual in Texas had to be hospitalized for burns received while attempting to deep-fat fry a turkey.

Don't get burned on an old or a new holiday tradition. Make having a safe Holiday Season a tradition every year. Before you start thawing your turkey or deep-fat frying it, take a few minutes to read "Food Safety Tips for Healthy Holidays" from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and "Deep Fat Frying and Food Safety" from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Both of these safety guidelines are available at the following Website: <http://foodsafesa.squarespace.com/holiday-food-safety/>

Homer Emery, City Health Inspector

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DEBRIS ON PROPERTY

This year the largest amount of letters sent and citations issued were for the violation of "Debris On Property". This code has some non-specific open language that can and often does encompass a wide range of issues. There are several ways by which a resident can avoid a letter of violation for this issue. First and foremost, never deposit tree clippings, etc. in excess of the limit that the Public Works department will pick up on regular pick-up days; that which will fit into three thirty-gallon containers or the equivalent. The Public Works crews do not carry a "sample" thirty-gallon container by which they measure what does and doesn't make the mentioned limit of brush nor are they tasked with stopping at each and every debris pile to measure the amount. Note that if more than what the crews estimate to be that acceptable amount is present, no amount of that debris will be collected and that, in turn, becomes a Code violation. Debris can also be defined as clutter or an area of a house (in public view) used as an outdoor storage area, even in an informal sense, as well as fallow landscaping material and/or construction tailing or debris.

The next area of concern for the year and will continue to be in 2016 is the shape of the alleys in Castle Hills. Property owners have the obligation and responsibility to maintain alley ways associated with their properties. There seems to be some confusion that once a tree crosses into a public right-of-way, it's no longer an issue for the property owner. This is not the case. The property owner has the duty, by code, to ensure the safe maintenance of alleys. This type of violation, along with vegetation covering traffic control signage and/or devices is an immediate public safety concern and can no longer be treated as a "back burner" issue. It is easier and less expensive for the property owner to obtain a free tree cutting permit (if the owner does the work themselves) to rectify these violations than to pay for a civil injury lawsuit, ruin taxpayer-bought equipment or even to show up to Municipal Court to pay a fine. As it was this year, going forward into 2016 property owners who fail to comply with this code will be cited directly into court after one notification letter of the violation if the violation still exists after the deadline date.

Low tree branches and limbs over a public roadway continue to be a problem and will continue to be addressed in the coming year. The vegetation must be maintained at a minimum of 12 feet of vertical clearance in all weather conditions and circumstances. All roads, no matter the length, designation or location will be subject to this code enforcement activity.

Thanks for your time. Have a safe and happy holiday season.

By L. Zamarron
Code Compliance Investigator



Happy Fall !!!! By the time you read this the CHCO Fall Festival (Halloween Party) will have come and gone; another great FREE annual event for the residents of Castle Hills. We hope that you and your families participated and had an outstanding time.

Next year we hope to have more changes on the way for the Castle Hills Community Organization and additional activities for residents of all ages. We hope that you have noticed and appreciated some of the changes implemented by this year's board of directors. New membership brings new ideas. New ideas bring opportunities for all residents. We have heard your recommendations and are researching all options to ensure that we are providing safe and legal activities for the residents of Castle Hills.

How can you help provide quality activities you ask? Become a member. Currently only 10 percent of all households in Castle Hills are members, yet more than 40 percent of residents take part in our activities. While we appreciate and look forward to everyone's participation the cost of activities for the CHCO increase each year due to the increase in the cost of living as well as inflation. The cost of membership is only \$25.00 per year per household for residents and \$50.00 per year for businesses. This allows you to attend all activities throughout the year FREE OF CHARGE. We don't even mind you bringing visitors from out of state and friends from across San Antonio. The benefits of membership far out way the fees of any other activity or club your family may belong to. Do you know on average it costs a family of four \$80.00 to go see a movie? And that same family can expect to pay over \$95.00 to attend an NBA game? And that is each time you go to these events. For the families that came to our movie nights, thank you and we hope you had a great season and while we are talking about it your \$25.00 membership saved you over \$240.00 in ticket costs, food and drinks.

Next year will bring new activities, even some that will be for members only. If you are a member thank you for your support, if you are not a member consider joining you can't really find a better deal around. Remember One Community, One Family. For more information check out our Facebook page www.facebook.com/castlehillscmmunityorganization and for membership please contact Stacia Spridgen at spridgensl@hotmail.com or John Kenny at vpchco@gmail.com

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YOUR COMMUNITY



Mayor Howell greets the School Safety Patrol students from Jackson Keller Elementary at the Circle of Support.



Ribbon cutting at Cyclo Coffee and Barista Academy at 2211 NW Military, Ste. 114 with owner Sylvia Miller, city officials, city staff and the members of the Castle Hills Woman's Club.



Mr. William Beuhler was recognized for his seven years as the Chairman of the CCPD by Police Chief Davis and Mayor Howell at the October city council meeting.



Councilman Daggett, wife Kirsten and sons visit with CH residents on National Night Out.



Mayor Howell administered the Oath of Office for Kymberlee Buntyn the newly appointed City Secretary.



Office Singleton and Liz Larsen enjoy National Night Out and look forward to Fiesta Castle Hills in April 2016.

go green

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Castle Hills Fire and Police respectfully gather on September 11th during the Circle of Support Memorial Service.



Lee High School Color Guard present the colors for the September 11th Circle of Support.



Neighbors on Glentower share food and fun on National Night Out.



Fire Lieutenant Darryl Dover gives young resident, Jake, a bird's eye view of the fire ladder truck at the National Night Out party on Irongate.



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