

RANSOM CANYON CITY NEWS

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June City Council Docket

- New Council sworn in
- Mayor presents budget
- Water Tower \$756 K price tag
- Depository interest rates plummet to 1.5%
- Construction in progress still adds to sewer costs
- Natalie Price, daughter of former employee L.D. Price, graduates from nursing school. Thanks from Mother, Callie for years of city support.
- East Lake Shore natural spring drain poses problems
- Third police officer interviews set, new police car bought.
- New plat approved for Horseshoe Hill
- Cory Needham passes "D" Wastewater license exam
- Melissa Verett earns State Certified Public Manager designation.

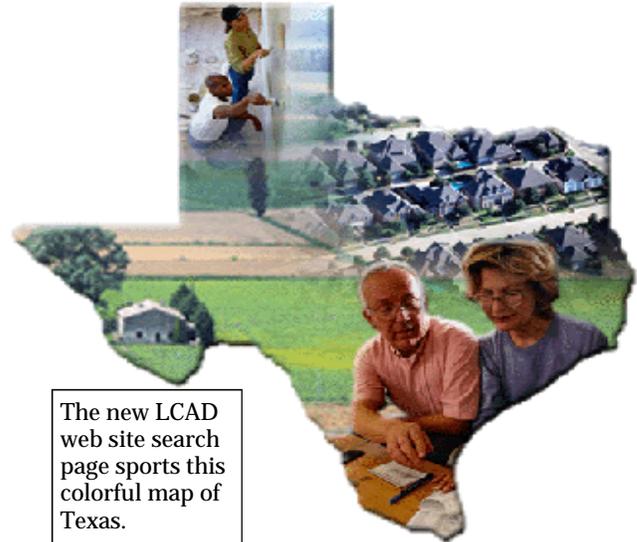
HOMEOWNERS FURIOUS OVER PROPERTY VALUES

City Hall telephones are ringing this month in response to the notices of assessed values that have been mailed from the Lubbock Central Appraisal District.

Values seem to have increased both on homes and on land.

If you question your valuation, you are probably in the majority this year. Texas Property Tax Laws guarantee you the right to protest the new assessment, but you must file, (mail in) your protest. A phone call to the LCAD may not yield immediate results because their office is overwhelmed right now with calls from Lubbock County. The most common response seems to be advice to mail the protest and wait for an appraiser to return the call to talk about it or to set up an appointment.

The law also says that cities cannot protest what appears to be an overall value increase unless the city has been singled out for reappraisal.



The new LCAD web site search page sports this colorful map of Texas.

This year's increases appear to be Lubbock County wide, with Lubbock Cooper increasing up to 25%. Ransom Canyon increased 9%.

The LCAD will invite taxpayers to file their protest and discuss their situation.

In Ransom Canyon, keep these facts close at hand.

Be sure you have all of your

exemptions. Ask the LCAD to review your square footage. Original building permits are on file at city hall for your reference. You can search your documentation on line through the Lubbock Central Appraisal District. Do a short search with the R#. Look for properties in your neighborhood that have sold. The appraisers look for comparable

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WATER TOWER COST LOOMS

To say that the water tower will cost more than the city expected is a fair understatement.

This unwelcome reality has been in the making for about a year as the engineers scratched their heads over

our bi-level system, and considered the best way to guarantee water pressure volume and safety for residents on both the top and the bottom of the canyon. In the meantime, TCEQ has sent a letter instructing the city to go forward with the project and to

include several special features to boot. The cost is expected to be \$625 K plus contingencies and engineering.

The city council has met once in budget work session. The

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CONSUMER CONFIDENCE REPORT 2003

FURIOUS HOMEOWNERS

(Continued from page 1)

sales, and the new grid will apply those square foot market values to your property.

Texas law says that property must be assessed at 100% market value. If you have bought your home in the last 2-3 years, you can present this sales information as documented evidence.

The appraisal district is held to the "market value" standard by the comptroller's office, and will be held to account if their "assessed value" is too low. The comptroller's office is responsible to be sure that school taxes

are being fairly assessed and collected, and they will audit the Appraisal Districts.

We are hearing mixed results from homeowners.

Some are receiving immediate adjustments, and some are being instructed to fill out the paperwork, and someone from the LCAD will be calling them to discuss it, or to make an appointment.

1. File (mail) your paperwork.
2. Do your homework.
3. Collect your data.
4. Check your exemptions.
5. Do a web search.

The LCAD website is new and can be navigated best using the R# property ID.

Last year adjustments took well into December and January to resolve, so watch the mail and be prepared.

Consider what you would sell your home for today. That number ideally is the same as the assessed value.

Ransom Canyon collects city taxes here. If you have questions call City Hall at 829-2470.

RANSOM CANYON FUNDING

Since the contentious hearings and the rollback election in 1996, Ransom Canyon has struggled with budgeting for savings in order to provide necessary services to the community, and build financial emergency operating reserves.

In 1999 the city faced the task of rebuilding an aging

infrastructure. The council started with replacement of the Lubbock Water line. Lift stations have been replaced. Streets have been replaced.

Most water lines and sewer lines are 40 years old, and the council will probably consider a long term plan for this replacement. This year, however, the water tower must be

built.

The sewer plant was built because the old one was too small. The Water Commission said "fix it." Now the water supply system is also too small, and the TCEQ says "fix it."

Funds have been socked away since 1996, and will likely be tapped this year.

"Consider what you would sell your home for today. That number ideally should be the assessed value. "

BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

(Continued from page 1)

preliminary budget hearing is July 13.

The budget is beginning work-in-progress, and the council is still examining line item department requests.

The council tried to keep increases to a standard 3%, with some exceptions. There will be associated expenses for the third police officer and

third police car. Gasoline cost estimates were higher.

Group Health Insurance costs are expected to be up 25% or more. The group loss ratio continues to be high. Not much hope for a break, here. The sewer plant continues to compound in unexpected operation expenses. Cell phones are also a concern, due to employee personal use and billing difficulties that are being encountered with

Cingular.

Other technology issues were discussed in great detail.

Discussions about the fire department and EOC center, staffing issues and capital purchases were delayed until the next work session July 6.

City of Ransom Canyon

24 Lee Kitchens Drive
Ransom Canyon, Texas 79366

Phone: 806-829-2470
Fax: 806-829-2680
Email: ransomcanyon@sptc.net



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**Ransom Canyon
City Council**

**Mayor
Robert Englund**

**Mayor Pro-Tem
David Peterson**

**Aldermen:
Ron Cox
Richard Hulslander
Inez Speed
Earl Starks**

Received this month at City Hall:

“Dear City of Ransom Canyon Person,

“By the time we get home from our vacation our water bill will be about 2 weeks past due. I got the impression from something that was said in the city news letter a month or two ago that I would be better off in the gentle hands of al Caida (sic) than with y’all if I paid late.

“I hope the enclosed check will be sufficient to cover the upcoming bill. If not, maybe you could put my boat up for sale. It ought to bring enough to satisfy the water bill until autumn.

“Sometimes I think I would be better off if I didn’t read the city news letter or the Echo. I had a devilish time cleaning up my black garbage bags after finding out I had been a victim of a vicious practical joke. They are awfully expensive, you know; especially the ones with the yellow pucker strings, and I wouldn’t have any other kind. I have my pride.”

Author’s name withheld.

TAX RATES AND USER FEES

Revenue sources at Ransom Canyon are limited.

It is difficult to compare Ransom Canyon property tax rates to other cities because other cities have taxable sources that Ransom Canyon does not have. Ransom Canyon has single family residential homes, and some business personal property. That’s all.

We do not have taxable, commercial storefront business. It’s a trade-off. We also don’t have 7-11’s, Starbucks and gas stations on every other corner.

We do not have a sales tax.

Interestingly enough, there is commercial business taking place in Ransom Canyon, and the city could have a revenue stream from a sales tax. The comptroller’s office estimates that a Ransom Canyon sales tax would raise \$6-10K per year. This is a voter initiative.

The only existing tax rate is the property tax rate, and it is adopted in two parts, operations and debt.. The bonded debt rate is set, but the operation rate can be increased up to 8% . If the final total rate raises more money than was raised in the previous year, the city must hold a hearing. If the city adopts a rate higher than the lower of either the effective rate or the rollback rate, then the city is subject to a rollback election.

Ransom Canyon tax rates :

- 2003 - \$.62
- 2002 - \$.62
- 2001 - \$.62 (add bond debt)
- 2000 - \$.57631
- 1999 - \$.59
- 1998 - \$.59
- 1997 - \$.59
- 1996 - \$.59
- 1995 - \$.653
- 1994 - \$.73992

- 1993 – \$.73992
- 1992 - \$.79
- 1991 -- \$.79
- 1990 – \$.79

Last year the tax value for Ransom Canyon was \$79 million dollars. The LCAD has advised us to use \$83 million for budget purposes.

Every penny on the tax rate would raise \$8300 more revenue.

The health of the Utility Enterprise depends on water rates, sewer and garbage rates, RV rates, and penalties.

Utility franchise fees are still at 3%. Lubbock County continues their library grant, but donations from Friends of the Library are a big source of library funding.

The city council is thinking of new sources of revenue, including increasing building permit fees to help cover inspection costs.