

RANSOM CANYON CITY NEWS

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City Council Meetings

- Marathon budget and committee meetings in June and July
- Horseshoe Hill Plat approved
- Water Tower Funding Provisions reviewed
- David Hettler will audit
- New Police Officer hired
- Buffalo Lake plans to lower Buffalo lake, make dam repairs, and marina repairs
- Engineers sent back to drawing board on Water Tower

COUNCIL SCRAPS WATER TOWER PLANS

Mayor Englund called a special meeting at City Hall July 15, just so the council could talk to the engineers about plans for the water tower.

Since the 2001 bond issue, councils have directed the engineers to solve the problem of the town's growing water needs: Increased storage capacity; pressure requirements; water delivery capacity and pressures; emergency power requirements; aging water ground tanks; aging water pump house; aging water lines, and a two level town with the capacity to double in size in 45 years.

Hugo Reed discovered troublesome irregularities, so they were told by the previous council to bring in an outside hydraulic firm to help.

The results of that study were that Half & Assoc. from Dallas recommended a new 350,000 capacity tower, do away with the old ground storage, and plan for systematic upgrades to the aging water line delivery system.



The cost, however, was \$750,000. The bond construction fund balance is \$315,000. The council did not want to finance the difference with another bond issue. They did not want to pay the difference out of savings.

So the new council instructed Hugo Reed to start over again and design an elevated tank

within our budget, using the current tanks and water pump house. Serious dedicated CIP funding for 1-2 yrs will supplement the eventual cash outlay. So far, \$40,000 has been spent for engineering. \$90 K is budgeted this year for repairs to the ground storage tanks and the water pump house.

NEW POLICE OFFICER ON DUTY

Officer Vance Schuette officially started to work July 6. Officer Schuette is a hometown boy. He grew up here and his extended family still lives here.

Vance and his wife, Lindsey, live in Ransom Canyon. Vance

has served many years on the fire department. He is also very involved with the fishing club.

The police department took delivery this week of a new police car, an Explorer X-cab pickup. Officer Hill will get the

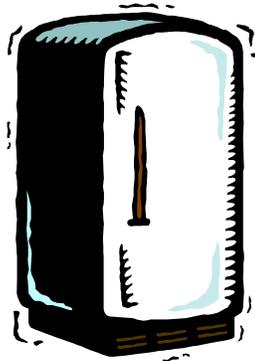
new car, and the old Crown Victoria will be detailed and cleaned up, and issued to Officer Schuette.

Vance will work for about a month with James (Hill), then will be patrolling on his own. Congrats, Vance!

TRASHY PROBLEMS

HAROLD NEEDHAM

The city recycling center is having a major problem with items that are mixed in with tree limbs. The only thing that should be put in the tree pile



is trees only. Employees have spent countless hours pulling out paper, wood, metal, cactus, bushes and all other types of trash. These things will not go into the chipper and could cause the chipper to break down. All trees should be cut into small pieces that can go through the chipper. City employees are having to do this, which keeps them from doing things that really need to be done. Please help the city by doing your part and reporting anyone who violates this policy. This is our front door. Please help us keep it tidy.

OPEN TOP ROLL OFFS

Please place all bushes, cactus, wood and other trash into the roll offs, not on the ground. Items forbidden in the roll offs are metal, tree limbs, small and large appliances. No tires are accepted at the site at all. These items should be taken to the landfill in Abernathy. No construction trash, please.

Again, please help us control the cost of the recycling center (\$1600 per month) by obeying the rules and reporting those who do not.



Homeowners seem to be receiving some adjustment to their initial values from the Appraisal District.

TAX APPRAISALS UPDATE

We have heard from many homeowners who protested their property values this year. All seem to have received some sort of compromise. They are taking along their sales information, their square footage calculations, their building permits, and comparable sales, if they can find them.

Some have received adjustments via a phone call, and some have actually gone the distance to an appointment downtown.

New property on the roll this year is only 2 million dollars. With all of the adjustments that we expect, the council is being cautious, and planning on only an \$83 million dollar

tax base. This is \$4 million more than last year's \$79 million. The preliminary tax roll was \$90 million, but that was never really a consideration.

At a \$.62 tax rate, an extra \$4 million will raise \$24,800 in revenue.

BUDGET HEARING PREVIEW

The annual budget hearing will be at the regular city council meeting August 10. At this meeting the budget will be presented and the council will take a record vote on a proposed tax rate. The tax hearing is scheduled for Tuesday, September 7. At this meeting, the tax rate will be the only item on the agenda.

The tax rate will actually be adopted after the budget is



adopted at the September 14 City Council Meeting. The new utility rates will be adopted by ordinance at this meeting

also.

This year, several fees will increase as well. Penalties for hot checks will increase. Fees for service interruption due to non-payment of water bills will increase. Building permit fees will increase to 17 cents per square foot from 6.5 cents. RV fees will remain the same.

Tax bills will be mailed in October.

REVENUE SOURCES SHORT LIST

There is a short list of revenue sources at Ransom Canyon.

Property tax issues are difficult for city councils, but they are especially difficult in Ransom Canyon, where property taxes on households supply 45% of the city's entire revenue budget.

We do not have commercial business. Commercial business property and inventory taxes ease the burden on homeowners. We have only homeowners (and land owners) to pay property taxes.

Business personal property is taxable, but this dollar revenue amount is minor.

Other revenue sources here are limited.

There is no city sales tax.

There is a franchise tax for the utility companies.

The library has a 4K annual grant from Lubbock County. The police have a small education grant.

There are various fees: Building Permits, Sewer tap Permits, Boat permits, RV rental.

Buffalo Lake pays 46% of the operating cost and the construction cost of the sewer plant.

Earned interest has fallen to 1.5%.

Thanks to supporters of the

library ! Their annual donations pay for many things that the city would be hard pressed to provide.

That's about it.

There have been five long, arduous city council budget work sessions, in addition to several special committee meetings in June and July.
Hats off to Peterson, Hulslander and Speed. These councilmen "go the distance."
The budget must be ready for the record vote on the tax rate in August.

CITY EXPENSES

Unfunded federal mandates for Homeland security, FEMA, TCEQ (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality), and other governing agencies continue to burden small cities with increased expenses in the face of dwindling revenues. The fines that would accompany non-compliance are prohibitive.

To stay in compliance we incur additional legal fees, engineering fees, building inspection fees and staff education and licensing expenses.

Insurance expenses climb. Health and Safety issues require reasonable funding. Councils struggle with defining "reasonable."

Ransom Canyon is a small town, and is an elegant neighborhood. Residents here demand, and receive, exclusive service.

This year's city council struggled as never before with these issues.

"Government at work " is hard work this year!

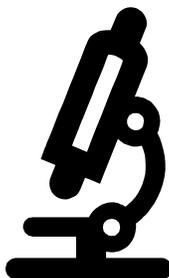
*Support your local city.
Attend a city council meeting!*

2003-04 FISCAL YEAR AUDIT

GASB 34 is upon us! The Governmental Accounting Standards Board, (GASB) is the oversight body for city auditing, and this year their rule # 34 applies to us. It's a population thing. It essentially says that a city must report revenues, expenses, and all fixed assets as if the city were a business. This year we must account for the infrastructure of the city, and depreciate all assets. This

means we must calculate the ages of all of the streets, the water and sewer lines, the drainage easements, the lift stations, the curb and gutter and pavement.

We have reported our water utility enterprise for several years as if it were a business, either earning or losing money. The audit is more expensive this



year due to the requirements of this rule. A city's bond rating depends in great measure on the condition of the audits, so we must pay attention. Just one more thing.

City of Ransom Canyon

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**Ransom Canyon
City Council**

**Mayor
Robert Englund**

**Mayor Pro-Tem
David Peterson**

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

NOTICE: Aerial mosquito spraying is being done on an as-needed basis through a contract with Everett Flying Service. He sprays when the weather is calm, usually early in the morning. Ordering a mosquito spray is not a scientific decision. We call when the complaints increase. The season notice is posted on the City Hall door. Sprayings are posted on the web site and notice is given in the city newsletter. To help further, we will try to get notice up on the Fire Station marquee. We have sprayed three times this season, and expect to spray again July 22. If you have special considerations, we will make an attempt to telephone you to advise you of a spray event. Our Mayor Pro-Tem is an entomologist, and this is very helpful to determine courses of action for us. In a combined City/County effort, The City of Lubbock Health Department supplements our spray efforts with a ground application of malathion. They check the pools and playas regularly, and troubleshoot hot spots throughout mosquito season. We see the City of Lubbock trucks out frequently checking for mosquitoes.

BUDGET WORK IN PROGRESS

For several years, expense increases have outdistanced revenues. This budget year challenged the council as never before to sharpen their pencils and make cuts in expenses wherever possible, without seriously cutting services to the public.

Both the Operations and the Administration Departments replaced a full time employee with a half-time employee this year. The "City News" will still be published, but there will be no color copies. Admin IT expense was cut, and admin education was cut. Operations is giving up their cell phones, and they have cut their budget in small ways in many areas. There will be fewer new tools, fewer landscaping chemicals, same old dump truck, pick up, and same old uniforms, and fewer



dollars for schools. The old blue fire tanker truck that has been out of service for years will be replaced with a used tanker truck instead of a new one. The EOC budget was cut, and the fire department is using this budget to buy a saw. The fire department will cut education, dues, and IT

expense. The police department will cut equipment, dues, fuel and maintenance. Cell phone contracts were renegotiated.

Health insurance expenses did not increase. The employees will get a 3% increase. Liability expenses, engineering, legal and audit fees will all go up. The garbage collection enterprise is marginal. There will be a 3% increase in water purchase from the City of

Lubbock.

After all the cuts were made, in order to make ends meet, the council chose to increase the water, sewer and garbage bills by \$6.50 per month. To help cover the cost of capital equipment repairs, they will transfer \$50,000 from savings.