

# CITY OF GREY FOREST

*from the Mayor's desk ...*



FEBRUARY 2019

Greetings,

I trust your Holidays were filled with laughter, family, and friends. We enjoyed our holidays which began with Pat and I holding, what we have been told, was the first ever Christmas Party for the Staff, Police Officers (active & reserve), and Council members at our house. Several of our friends and a couple of grandkids helped in this endeavor. Some fifty pounds of meat was prepared along with sides, desserts, and an open bar. Pat is not only a great cook and baker, but she can produce in volume. I believe it is important to hold events such as these to create a sense of “team” for those who serve us.

## **GENERAL:**

✓ It is that time of year where trimming or cutting of any oak tree is prohibited within the corporate limits of the City of Grey Forest and ETJ which runs from the first day of February to the last day of June per Amended Ordinance No. 164. Should you have questions you may review the ordinance at City Hall.

✓ A number of our citizens continue to have complaints about people not picking up after their dog. I spoke with Matt Vyverman, a citizen who recommended as the police conduct their patrols, to speak with those walking their dogs reminding them to pick up and offering to provide the dog owner a baggie. This was a great idea and I’ve instructed the Chief to implement this courtesy effort.

✓ As you may recall from my last letter, upon being elected Mayor, I conducted an assessment of the City’s property, physical plant, and administrative functions/

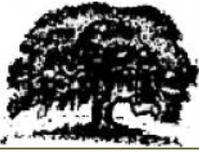
procedures. One item of concern was the old Scenic Loop Playground Club “swim hole” which is now owned by the City. In its condition, it poses a health and physical hazard to anyone using it plus a potential legal liability. Additionally, Texas Commission on Environment Quality and Texas Department of Health Standards regulations made it impossible to operate it as an “authorized” swimming facility. Discussions were held by Council and citizens resulting in adoption of Resolution No. 003-18 closing for authorized swimming, the former Scenic Loop Playground Club, Inc.’s “swim hole” (pool), but allowing for “swimming at own risk!” As part of Resolution No. 003-18 the former “Swim Hole” was renamed “Deep Springs Dam.” One citizen was particularly helpful, and I want to thank Kelly Luckett for her input. Should you have questions you may review the resolution at City Hall.

## **ALAMO AREA REGIONAL RADIO SYSTEM (AARRS):**

In August the City of San Antonio (COSA) approached the City of Grey Forest (COGF) about a partnership between the COSA, CPS Energy, and Bexar County in updating their Public Safety Land Mobile Radio system. In short, what they were proposing was locating a radio tower on City property where our City well and water towers are located. The Council took up the issue and authorized me to negotiate for the City; since, due to Federal Regulations we could not simply say “no”.

Council members, Grey Forest Utilities, and Police provided suggestions in the development of my negotiating position. Special thanks go to Councilwomen Geri Poss for her very in-depth input.

In September, I submitted the City’s



negotiating position to AARRS. In this document I commended COSA and AARRS for their desire to upgrade the system. However, based upon a terrain analysis I conducted, COSA had another location which would provide the same capabilities and COSA owned it. Additionally, I pointed out the location I recommended would not inconvenience Grey Forest citizens during construction, maintenance, nor future de-construction, would not clutter the scenic views which we have, would be away from a populated area, would eliminate potential damage to COGF only water supply, and placement of a radio tower would have a negative effect on homeowners' property values.

Should the COSA wish to proceed with the construction of the tower the following would need to occur: roads to the proposed site would need to be rebuilt, a 15 year lease would cost \$8,000 per month with an annual 5% compounding increase, a \$60,000 leasing deposit paid to COGF, revenue sharing of 30% of the total revenue generated, installation of state of the art equipment to redirect energy from the City well and towers from potential lightning strikes, and the list went on. You may review my letter to the COSA at City Hall.

I met with representatives from Bexar County and COSA between September and November. On November 9<sup>th</sup> COSA withdrew their request. Our negotiations were a success! We were happy!

### **INTERCITY COOPERATION:**

The City Council and myself continue to look for ways to cooperate with our neighbors with the objective to help our citizens and reduce costs; to this end relations have been built in the following areas:

- **Dispatch Services:** We have an agreement with Helotes for police dispatch services which costs COGF \$5,000 per year. So what is the big deal? Helotes has charged other cities \$90,000 per

year or more. This is a nice helping hand, and it's much appreciated!

- **Police Backup:** We have an agreement with Helotes for their officers to back ours in the event of a potentially dangerous situation while we will do the same for theirs. If we didn't have this agreement our officers would need to rely strictly on the Bexar County Sheriff's Department for backup which routinely takes about 20 minutes for a Deputy to arrive on site. This time delay is much too long in a dangerous situation which our and Helotes' officers routinely face.

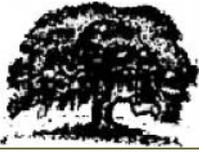
- **Equipment Sharing:** This primarily extends to Public Works, but it has crossed over to City Administration and Police. Helotes and Grey Forest each have some equipment the other does not but needs to use on a periodic basis; e.g., we have a dump trailer and Helotes has a 5 ton dump truck.

- **Training:** Presently, Helotes and Grey Forest share training primarily for police, but we have shared Emergency Management Training too.

### **CITY BOUNDARY SURVEY:**

The COGF is having a survey conducted of the City boundaries to meet the requirements laid out in Texas Local Government Code and to meet Federal government requirements. The last comprehensive survey was done when the City was incorporated in 1962 and amended in 1995. The Local Government Code requires the City to record its boundary with the County.

Since 1995 various properties, at the owners request, have been annexed. Of the 24 cities in Bexar County, Grey Forest is the only one remiss in meeting this requirement. Additionally, COGF is required to file changes with the US Census Bureau for the upcoming 2020 census. The survey will be completed by the US Census Bureau filing deadline of May 31<sup>st</sup>.



Speaking of the census you will be able to self-respond to the census via internet, telephone, and paper.

### **STATE OF TEXAS ACTIONS AFFECTING GREY FOREST:**

If you refer back to my last letter, October 2018, I addressed the challenge Texas cities face with 30% of all legislation being passed having a direct effect on Texas cities in the form of greater costs, increased manpower requirements, and increased bureaucracy. Here are a few:

✓Eminent Domain: Legislation passed in 2015 requires cities to annually complete a form with the comptroller relating to each city's statutory eminent domain authority. (The failure to fill out the form could result in a \$1,000 penalty against the city.) While the COGF has had no eminent domain actions our City Secretary still must spend time completing the report.

✓Texas Division of Emergency Management, as of last year, requires the city to complete and submit annually a new TDEM-147, Emergency Management Director/Coordinator Notification form.

✓Wandering about talking with others, I discovered the Texas Legislative 85<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session passed SB 1849, known as the Sandra Bland Act, requiring eight hours of de-escalation training for each police officer unless the officer meets very restrictive exceptions. In the COGF, only our Police Chief meets these exceptions. While I appreciate the well intentioned thought on the part of the 85<sup>th</sup> Legislative in passing this bill, they passed this bill as an "unfunded" requirement. This means the COGF and others have the choice of not doing the training and thus not being in compliance with State law or stealing from other parts of the budget thus reducing services; e.g., trash pickup, police protection, and effective administration of the City or something else. It

would cost the COGF approximately \$3,300 plus instructor expenses to complete this training. So I did some research and found a Certified Instructor and with hat in hand along with a good sob story convinced him to do this training free for our city. My concern with the State's actions is not so much as another training requirement, but with the "unfunded" aspect of the requirement. I encourage each of you to contact our State Representatives and Senators to tell them it's time to stop putting undue financial burdens on small municipalities by passing "unfunded" legislation, such as the Sandra Bland Act.

✓SB 1004, Small Cell Node, was passed in the 85<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session limiting a city's ability to manage its right-of-way (ROW) use by telecommunication companies. SB 1004 primary focus:

- access to the public ROW in Texas municipalities for small cells ("network nodes") — and the limiting compensation due to cities for use of the ROW for this equipment
- ability of small cell "network providers" to attach to poles and other structures owned by municipalities, such as streetlights and traffic signals

Council learned of this legislation and its impact, setting off a flurry of activity in August to mitigate the effects of this law by putting in place a new city ordinance before we have telecom companies knocking on our door. Councilwomen Susan Darst and Kimberly Verity took the lead in attending various workshops which addressed this topic. Presently, Susan Darst is putting the final touches on this new city ordinance. I extend my thanks to both.

✓For your information: Presently, the 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session is meeting and considering 66 bills which could affect Texas cities and by extension you.



**CITY ADMINISTRATION:**

We have filled the new part-time position of Assistant to the City Secretary which I wrote about in my last letter. Welcome Joni Baker!

Joni brings to the City result-oriented skills in office administration and banking. She joined us in October and slipped right in making a positive impact. She has started the process of sorting through the huge pile of files which



**JONI BAKER**

accumulated over the years determining what must be retained and what may be destroyed. This is a major task due to various record retention requirements plus the mass of files which no longer need to be retained. And she still is only working in the Admin Office at present. Next stop the City Hall attic. Over the years to save storage costs files have been stored in the City Hall attic. In the future, we will be scanning these old files into a digital format in order to reduce storage requirements and organization and ease of access.

The Administration and Municipal Court's computers have been replaced with the objective of improving efficiency and effectiveness of our personnel. We have also started the migration to online computing with the transition to QuickBooks online. In time, we will be almost totally digital. It provides for better security and redundancy.

The City has a new website which allows for better navigation and web security. Be sure to check it out: [www.greyforest-tx.gov](http://www.greyforest-tx.gov).

Lastly, I have been Mayor for nine months and have had the opportunity to work closely with Shannan Kinsley our City Secretary. How fortunate we are to have her! In my 47 years of

leading and managing people she ranks at the top for professional knowledge, demeanor, dedication, steadfastness, and interpersonal communication skills. Not much happens within the City which she doesn't touch in some way: Police Department, Public Works, outside agencies, Madla Park, the Community Board and the public. She is the face of Grey Forest! Thank you Shannan.

**POLICE DEPARTMENT:**

Chief David Bejar retired January 31st. Chief Bejar served our community extraordinarily well since he was sworn in May 24, 2013. His calm, unflappable approach and understanding of the uniqueness of Grey Forest was much appreciated.



**CHIEF BEJAR WITH WIFE, BETTY, & MAYOR PHIL HOWARD AT RETIREMENT CEREMONY**

He steadily without much fanfare improved the department; building upon what Chief Rutledge had created. As testimony of his effectiveness all you have to do is look at a Bexar County crime activity map. Grey Forest is almost totally blank - meaning almost no crime. He will be missed. His plans are to travel the USA in his RV.

While we will feel the loss of Chief Bejar, our



**CHIEF RENE RODRIGUEZ BEING SWORN IN BY MAYOR PHIL HOWARD**

Police Department and City are still in very capable hands. Chief Rene Rodriguez was sworn in on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Chief Rodriguez



is an accomplished, highly experienced former San Antonio officer. His experience includes being a patrol officer, violent crimes detective, and detective in the repeat crimes program, plus supervisor of major crime scenes. He is a high energy individual and has been busy the month of January reviewing facilities, SOPs, and talking with active and reserve officers. Please make Chief Rodriguez welcome.

Speaking of crime and the near non-existence of it within Grey Forest. On January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1 p.m. Sergeant Elliot Rodriguez, no relationship to Chief Rodriguez, while on patrol in Grey Forest witnessed a felony theft in progress. Three suspects stole landscaping equipment from a bed of a truck parked



**SGT. RODRIGUEZ**

outside of a home. He notified dispatch and stopped the suspects a short distance away from the scene and held them at gunpoint until backup (Chiefs Bejar and Rodriguez) could assist in safely extracting them from the suspect's vehicle. Once backup arrived the suspects were cuffed, searched, and arrested during which time the suspects made physical threats towards the officers. It was discovered upon booking, the suspects had prior criminal records. Sergeant Rodriguez job well done!

**MADLA PARK:**

Here is an idea for a fun outing. The 2019 Madla Park Annual Fundraiser will take place on Saturday March 23, 2019 from 4 – 8pm, at La Hacienda Scenic Loop, 25615 Boerne Stage Road. It will include a Silent and Live Auction. The guest speaker, Dr. Bradford Wilcox, will be discussing Hill Country Land Management and its impact on recharge. Cocktails and a variety of tasty appetizers will be served on the fireside patio. Tickets are \$80. Most of the money to run Madla Park comes from

the fund raising efforts of The Senator Frank L. Madla, Jr. Park Conservancy a 501(c) 3. A portion of your ticket is tax deductible. Space is limited so purchase your tickets now.

<https://madlapark2019fundraisertickets.eventbrite.com>

The Madla Park cottage and the well house will be receiving a new roof thanks to Madla Park Board member Storms Duthie's efforts and with the funds provided by The Senator Frank L. Madla, Jr. Park Conservancy donation to the COGF.



**STORMS DUTHIE**

You may lend a hand in keeping Madla Park pristine by joining with other volunteers at the park the third Saturday of every month at 9:00 a.m.

**COMMUNITY BOARD:**

The Community Board has been actively improving City grounds and creeks.

Pictured below is Community Board Chairperson Madeline McCloskey and Community Board member Peter Carey taking a break from cutting



ligustrum, an invasive species, in the creek behind Grey Moss Inn. The goal is to have all invasive species removed before the end of the year plus potential hazards such as metal and wire rope which



has been discovered in various parts of the creek and grounds.

It is the Community Boards intention to install a drinking water fountain near the Community Center, ballpark, and tennis court area in the near future.

Later this year the Community Board will be holding a Grey Forest Arbor Day. During this day shade trees will be planted near the border of the parking area (Cedar Elm, Monterrey Oaks, and possible other shade trees). In time, we will have trees to relax under while being protected from the Texas sun.

An Information Kiosk has been installed next to the Community grounds parking area. Please feel free to utilize this kiosk for events, lost and found, for sale, celebrations, etc. On the back of the kiosk is the community center address which will help guide guests to the grounds.

Be sure to mark your calendars for the internationally known July 4<sup>th</sup> Grey Forest

Independence Day Parade and Celebration; fun times for family, friends, and strangers.

In conclusion, we have a lot going on. The City Staff, Departments, and Committees continue to move forward to make Grey Forest an even more enjoyable, safe place to live while increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of operations and conforming to Federal, State, and County laws and regulations.

Sincerely,

Phillip A. Howard  
Mayor, Grey Forest, TX  
18502 Scenic Loop Road • Grey Forest, TX 78023  
(210) 695-3261  
[phoward@greyforest-tx.gov](mailto:phoward@greyforest-tx.gov)

In the future, we plan to send City correspondence to you electronically to get information out more quickly and to reduce cost. Your email address is for City use only and will not be shared with any non-City organizations!

Please provide Shannan with your email address:  
[slkinsley@greyforest-tx.gov](mailto:slkinsley@greyforest-tx.gov)