

# CITY

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## CONNECTION

Volume 10, Issue 5  
February 2014  
Calendar

### February 2014

- 4 - City Council Meeting at 6:00 p.m.
- 5 - Yard Waste Trimming Collection
- 6 - Planning & Zoning Commission -  
City Hall at 12 p.m.
- 12 - Heavy Trash & Large Yard Waste
- 18 - City Council Meeting at 6:00 p.m.
- 19 - Yard Waste Trimming Collection
- 20 - Planning & Zoning Commission -  
City Hall at 5:30 p.m.
- 26 - Heavy Trash & Large Yard Waste

### March 2014

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Submit requests for Heavy Trash pick-up  
before noon on Monday, the week of the pick-up  
at 294-5796.

Visit us online at  
[www.huntsvilletx.gov](http://www.huntsvilletx.gov) to  
learn more about City  
programs!

## Historically Underutilized Business Vendor Show - March 12

The City of Huntsville, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Sam Houston State University, the SHSU Small Business Development Center and Walker County will partner together as sponsors for the 18th Annual Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Vendor Show.

The HUB/Vendor Show will be held in the Lowman Student Center Ballroom, located on the SHSU campus, on March 12.

Sponsoring entities will provide tables for vendors, free of charge. Staff from the sponsoring entities, as well as from other state agencies, universities and surrounding local groups, will visit with exhibitors throughout the day.

Vendors are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to meet with local and state agencies to showcase their products and services, and purchasers and end-users from the sponsoring entities will also be on hand to review the presentations and answer questions.

Set-up for the event will begin at 8:00 a.m. the day of the show, and informative vendor training sessions will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. The training sessions will provide detailed information on how to do business with government entities.

The entities presenting training will include the State of Texas, Walker County and Billie Smith, City of Huntsville Purchasing Manager, who will present on how to do business with the City of Huntsville. Lunch will be served to the vendors, allowing an opportunity to network, with introductions and opening remarks beginning at 11:30.

The HUB Show is scheduled to conclude at 2:30 p.m.

"The main objective of the show is to assist vendors in the Huntsville area on how to increase their customer base to include government entities," Smith said. "Each level of government has slightly different bidding requirements and this can be daunting to the vendors. Each presenter will discuss various details pertaining to their purchasing processes and procedures."

Presenters will include Sharon Schultz, HUB Director with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice; Robert Barragan, Director of the SHSU Small Business Development Center; SHSU HUB Coordinator Bob Chapa; Walker County Purchasing Agent Mike Williford; and Smith, who will address any questions related to the City of Huntsville.

"While there will be no charge for booth space or to attend any part of the event, booth space will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis," Smith said. "Vendors from all across the state attend each year, and during the last several years, we have reached capacity prior to opening day."

For more information feel free to contact Billie Smith at (936) 291-5495, or to register your company for booth space, please call Lani Maness, with TDCJ HUB Coordinator at (936) 437-7061.

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## Sign up for our new newsletter, "This Week in Huntsville!"

The City's new bi-monthly, digital newsletter is really taking off, with new residents signing up and new features to keep everyone informed. Never miss an event again - sign up for your free **This Week in Huntsville** newsletter!

To subscribe, log onto the City's Web site, [www.huntsvilletx.gov](http://www.huntsvilletx.gov), click "**e-news Subscriptions**" on the left-hand side of the page, enter your email address and select "This Week in Huntsville."

You'll automatically receive a free, digital newsletter  
twice each month!

# City transitions from Microsoft e-mail system to Google Apps

The City of Huntsville is upgrading its email system from Microsoft Outlook to Google Apps, a transition which will allow staff to spend more time serving the citizens of Huntsville.

According to Information Technology Director Chris Vasquez, Google Apps – a unified messaging and collaboration platform – will fulfill a wide variety of needs for City employees including e-mail communication, scheduling, instant messaging, video sharing and more.

“This decision represents an important step forward for the City,” Vasquez said. “We want to equip all City employees with easy-to-use tools that allow them to be more productive and innovative in their jobs, as well as a system that can scale to keep up with the City’s demands.”

“By transitioning to Google Apps, the City of Huntsville continues to modernize its technology while freeing up City employees to focus on the vital work of serving our residents.”

Vasquez said the transition will offer several practical benefits, including the elimination of on premise server equipment which previously required extensive maintenance and repairs.

“As we considered upgrading our Microsoft Outlook system, we realized we were addressing weekly maintenance issues and other tasks which the switch to Google would eliminate,” Vasquez said. “As our new system is 100 percent Web-based, we will be able to cut IT costs while offering employees a suite of tools they did not have access to previously, such as Google Hangouts, Google Docs and Google Drive for storage.”

“We feel utilizing Google Apps will increase employee collaboration and productivity, as well as increase the security of our documents.”

Vasquez said the City staff would be trained on Google from February 12 through 14, with the system slated to go live on February 17.

“Several other local governments have made the transition to Google with great results, including the Cities of Lewisville, Nacogdoches, and Longview,” he said. “We’re excited to see what it can do for us.”

For more information, contact Vasquez at (936) 291-5429.

# Strategic Planning in process

The City Council conducted their first Strategic Planning session on Friday, January 24, resulting in the development of a wide range of community initiatives.

The group will meet again on February 20 to refine the plan and make further suggestions.

Citizens are encouraged to visit the City’s Web site, [www.huntsvilletx.gov](http://www.huntsvilletx.gov) or come to a City Council meeting to stay up-to-date on the Strategic Planning process. Updates will also appear in the new “This Week in Huntsville” digital newsletter.

Citizens are encouraged to contact their Council representatives at any time with recommendations or concerns.

## Huntsville Public Library art contest winners to be

## announced February 22!

During a special Artwork Unveiling Ceremony on Saturday, February 22 beginning at 1 p.m., a panel of community members will chose 12 winners from a group of nearly 100 entries submitted by children and teens between five and 18 years of age.

Stop by and check out the incredible artistic talent of the youth of Huntsville!



# City expects time, cost savings from automated payroll system

The City of Huntsville will soon integrate Kronos workforce management software into all departments, replacing a manual timesheet process with an automated system that will feed employees' attendance data directly into the City's payroll system.

According to Steve Ritter, Finance Director, the transition will produce time and cost savings as well as lessen the likelihood of human error in cataloguing working hours for all City staff.

"With the Kronos system, we'll do away with filling out physical time sheets at the division level," he said. "Once the software is operational, employees will log in to work using either a card or their computer, and that information will be imported directly into our payroll system."

"The Kronos software will help us stay on track with all of the federal and state guidelines that surround workforce management, from the Federal Labor Standards Act to the Family Medical Leave Act, not to mention the more recent Affordable Care Act."

"The system will also let us keep track of leave balances for all employees on a real-time basis, as well as make sure our part-time people aren't going over their available hours per week."

Liesa Hackett, Payroll Administrator with the Finance Department, indicated there are several significant advantages of automating an organization's time and attendance system.

"We've been looking at automating our payroll system for about five years - I started the research, and our Information Technology department worked with me later in the process to consider the technical application," she said. "Everything we found indicated that automated workforce management would lead to improved

productivity, a reduction in payroll errors, reduced overtime costs, greater reporting capabilities and the universal application of City policies."

Bill Wavra, IT Network Administrator, said the transition to Kronos will represent a significant decrease in the amount of equipment maintenance required to keep track of employees' time, as well as a seamless integration with existing City software.

"As Kronos works through 'the cloud,' it will feed data directly into our existing financial software, New World Systems, at regular intervals," Wavra said. "Even if the City experienced a power outage, the time clocks themselves will store a significant amount of data, so we would still be able to keep track of when our employees were on the clock."

The greatest advantage of the new system, Hackett said, would be a complex reporting system and an increase in employee and supervisor accountability.

"Not only will an automated system give us more accurate, easy-to-track data, but it will provide data from which the City can extrapolate all kinds of information and trends," she said. "If the City Manager wanted to keep track of which departments were using a certain amount of overtime, for example, we could provide that information virtually with the push of a button."

Ritter said the City is very excited to see the long-term benefits of using the Kronos software.

"We absolutely have room to grow with the ways in which we use this software," he said. "There is additional potential, such as scheduling functions or mobile applications that we could integrate in the future with enough success."

For more information, contact Ritter at (936) 291-5486.

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## Remember - Recycle Grease and Antifreeze!

Like many other residential customers, do you plan on replacing the antifreeze in your vehicle this winter? Do you plan on disposing of other kinds of liquids, including motor oil, peanut oil or cooking oil? Don't run those materials down the drain - **recycle them!**

The City of Huntsville Solid Waste Services Department offers free, year-round recycling for these liquids as well as other items for residential customers at the Recycling Drop-Off Center, located at 590 I-45 North from 7:30 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Other items, including oil filters, are recycled in specifically marked collection barrels. As they are flammable, neither gasoline nor diesel from lawn equipment or vehicles will be accepted for disposal or recycling.

Unfortunately, due to disposal restrictions, the Solid Waste Services Department is not able to pick up liquids on a curbside basis. If you have any questions, please call 936-294-5743.

## City of Huntsville residential customers: It's time to "winterize" your sewer charge

Water meter usage for the months of November through February is used to calculate your new sewer average charge for the next year. Consciously reducing your water usage during these months could lower your sewer charge. Methods to reduce usage include limiting or completely eliminating outside watering. The new sewer average charge will be effective with the April billing (due in May).

"Basically, the City of Huntsville would just like to advise residents to curtail any kind of outdoor watering, such as washing cars, in order to keep water consumption down during winter months," said Jerri Weaver, City of Huntsville Billing and Revenue Manager. "Also, residents should be aware of any water leaks and make sure to have those repaired."

For more information, contact City of Huntsville Utility Billing at (936) 291-5431.

# Citizens invited to participate in annual Trash Bash event

Walker County Proud Communities will sponsor the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Trash Bash on Saturday, March 1, and citizens are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to dispose of waste materials at no cost. The event will be held from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

According to Esther Herklotz, Solid Waste and Recycling Superintendent for the City of Huntsville, the Trash Bash is a very successful effort which offers multiple convenient drop-off locations.

“The City of Huntsville is very proud to take part in this year’s Trash Bash, and we hope to see both residents and business owners take advantage of free material disposal,” she said. “In 2013, 425 vehicles came through the three drop-off sites which include the City of Huntsville Disposal and Recycling Facility, Walker County Precinct Barn 3 and Walker County Precinct Barn 4. At the end of the day, a total of 153.55 tons of garbage, tires and metal were collected.

“All three drop-off sites will still be available this year – let’s see if we can top our total from last year!”

Over 100 volunteers from the Walker County Sheriff’s Office,

Walker County Community Supervision and Corrections, Master Gardeners, Walker County Environmental Enforcement, Walker County Commissioners, Try 2 Recycle, Waste Management of Houston and the City of Huntsville Disposal and Recycling staff assist during this multi-site event.

The drop-off sites do not accept farm implement tires, concrete, bricks, burn barrels, liquids of any type, vehicle batteries or junk vehicles.

For more information, contact Herklotz at (936) 294-5724.

## Items to bring:

Old furniture, Appliances, Tires,  
Broken swing sets, Bagged garbage  
Metal products, Bicycles

# City welcomes new Capital Improvement Program manager

As the manager of the City’s Capital Improvement Program, Mike Goebel has assumed a considerable amount of responsibility for the future of Huntsville.

Working as part of the Community and Economic Development department, Goebel will partner with dozens of City staff to create an ongoing timeline of CIP projects, undertakings that go outside the realm of day-to-day maintenance. Though Goebel retired last year after a career that included military service, construction



Mike Goebel, CIP Manager

management and development, he said his brief time out of the workforce left him ready to start anew and apply his multi-faceted skill set.

“When you work all your life and decide to retire, you quickly find – or, at least I found – there is not a lot to keep you busy,” Goebel said. “My hope is that I will be able to bring in some new ideas and strategies from my experiences with the public and private sectors.

“I am very excited to get started - the first few weeks have been great, my coworkers are very

knowledgeable, and everyone has been very helpful.”

After graduating from the University of Houston in 1978 and earning a Bachelor of Science in Civil Technology, Goebel served in the Vietnam War and was awarded two Purple Hearts.

From there, he began a 15-year career with Houston Lighting and Power, where he served as a Civil Engineering Supervisor and focused on plan and specification development for a variety of projects.

“When I left Houston Lighting and Power, I moved on to another Houston-based company, Universal Services,” he said. “There, as an Operations Manager, I was responsible for construction contracts with entities like the Texas Department of Transportation, the City of Houston and Harris County.”

Finally, in 1994, Goebel joined BSL Golf & Development as a general manager, where he oversaw cost estimations, contract review, and client interactions surrounding the construction and renovation of golf courses and subdivisions.

“During my time at BSL, we developed and constructed a 220-home subdivision in Jersey Village and a 300-home subdivision in Fort Hood,” he said. “Completing those projects required close contact with the municipal governments involved, and that gave me significant exposure to their construction requirements, zoning practices and other preferences.”

When he retired in January 2013, Goebel said it did not take long for him to get “bored to death.”

“The first time I saw this job posting online, I thought, ‘This job fits me perfectly!’” he said. “I’d like to work here for another 20 years and put the experiences I’ve had so far to good use.”

Goebel may be reached at (936) 294-5789.