

# CITY

## CONNECTION

Volume 9, Issue 12

September 2013

## Calendar

### September 2013

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

### October 2013

- 1 - City Council Meeting at 5:00 p.m.
- 2 - Yard Waste Trimming Collection
- 3 - Planning & Zoning Commission - City Hall at 12 p.m.
- 9 - Heavy Trash & Large Yard Waste
- 15 - City Council Meeting at 6:00 p.m.
- 16 - Yard Waste Trimming Collection
- 17 - Planning & Zoning Commission - City Hall at 5:30 p.m.
- 23 - Heavy Trash & Large Yard Waste
- 30 - Yard Waste Trimming Collection

Submit requests for Heavy Trash pick-up before noon on Monday, the week of the pick-up at (936) 294-5796.

November City Council meeting dates are yet to be determined. Check the City's Web site for more information.

Visit us online at  
[www.huntsvilletx.gov](http://www.huntsvilletx.gov)  
to sign up for the new  
bi-monthly e-newsletter,  
"This Week in Huntsville"!

## City continues work on 2013-14 budget

The Huntsville City Council is expected to adopt the fiscal year 2013-14 budget and tax rate during its regular meeting on September 17, the first meeting after the first public hearing on the budget held on September 3.

The adoption of the budget and the tax rate will come after several months of intensive work by the City's Directors, the Finance Department, the City Manager and the Council as a whole, and is projected to pass without a tax increase. According to Mayor Mac Woodward, this is in light of the tax rate increase applied in fiscal year 2012-13 and the ability to reach a balanced budget without repeating the measure in fiscal year 2013-14.

"On Thursday, August 1, the City received property valuations from the Walker County Appraisal District, figures which allow for the calculation of the effective rate and the rollback rate for the coming fiscal year," Woodward said. "Based on those calculations, the effective rate for fiscal year 2013-14 was set at .4562 cents per \$100 valuation, with a rollback rate of .4503 cents per \$100 valuation.

"While the Council could legally adopt the rollback rate without voter approval, we are continuing the process of constructing the fiscal year 2013-14 City budget with the current tax rate of .4206 cents per \$100 valuation."

### **Budget timeline**

Planning for the 2013-14 annual budget began in April 2013, with policy-setting workshops between the City Council and City administration and the initial development of departmental budgets.

Work continued on departmental budgets through July 23, when a workshop was conducted to discuss major revenue and expenditure trends and other significant issues.

On August 16, per City Charter requirements, City Manager Benoit presented his recommended budget to the City Council, which included an estimated \$58,506,964 in expenditures and \$60,298,640 in revenues, not including fund balance appropriations.

One of the key elements of the City Manager's budget is the inclusion of potential new positions, new programs and restored programs to be included in the coming fiscal year. The document also includes recommended uses of fund balance dollars from the City's six primary funds.

The budget is primarily comprised of the General Fund, the Water Fund, the Wastewater Fund, the Solid Waste Fund, the Street Fund, and the Hotel Occupancy Tax, Tourism and Visitors Center Fund.

### **Critical elements**

According to Steve Ritter, Interim Finance Director, significant items in the fiscal year 2013-14 budget include new positions, program adjustments and increased Hotel Occupancy Tax revenues.

"In the General Fund, the Police Department was able to get three patrol officers back into the Public Safety budget, and we also have four new firefighters being funded by SAFER grants," he said. "However, the City is preparing to keep the firefighter positions in the budget after the grant funding has been fully utilized by allocating \$100,000 of their cost through non-grant revenues."

City Manager Matt Benoit said he is very grateful to have critical public safety positions in the fiscal year 2013-14 budget.

"Any time you're looking at a municipal government budget, one of your top priorities is the safety of your community," Benoit said. "Both the additional firefighters and the reinstatement of police officers will contribute in this capacity.

"Having the police officers back in the department will enable the restoration of a traffic enforcement unit, and dedicated traffic officers generally result in increased traffic contacts and reductions in collisions."

With respect to the City's utility funds - Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste - Ritter said the only fee increase would be applied as part of a 20-year rate study in the water fund.

"In 2011, a water rate study was conducted in an effort to generate revenue for expansion to the Trinity River Authority water plant and other elements of the City's water infrastructure," he said. "The rate increase for 2013-14 - which will be a little bit over five percent - is part of a 20-year effort to raise those funds gradually. As described in the rate study, future rate increases will take place in smaller amounts."

Two City initiatives - adjustments to existing Texas Municipal Retirement System benefits and the continued implementation of Step and Grade salary increases - impacted all of the City's funds that support personnel costs.

See Budget, continued on page 4

# November 5 Regular and Special Election information

The Huntsville City Council passed two ordinances in August which established the City's portion of the Regular and Special Joint Election ballot for November 5.

The Joint Election, being facilitated by Walker County, will also include state constitutional amendments, as well as potential items for consideration from the Huntsville Independent School District, the Walker County Hospital District and other entities.

The City measures will include races for the Mayor at-large, four Council seats representing each of the City's wards, and a Special Election for the vacant At-Large Position One Council seat. As well, seven proposed amendments to the City Charter will be presented to voters as part of the Special Election. Per the language in Ordinances 2013-34 and 2013-38 -adopted on August 6 and 20, respectively - the ballots will include the items below.

According to City Secretary Lee Woodward, the drawings for ballot position will take place on August 28 for the Regular Election seats and on September 5 for the Special Election seat.

## Charter amendments

The Special Election ballot will also include seven proposed Charter amendments, to appear as follows. Voters will have the option to vote for or against each of the amendments.

**I. Shall Article II, Sections 2.01(a) and 2.01(b) of the existing Charter, be consolidated into one section 2.01 to provide that the City may extend its boundaries and annex and disannex territory to the extent and in the manner provided by the constitution and laws of the State of Texas to read as follows?**

In the event that Proposition 1 is approved by the voters on November 5, 2013, Article Two, Section 2.01 shall read as follows:

“EXTENSION OF BOUNDARIES. The City Council shall have the power by ordinance to fix the boundaries of the City of Huntsville. Without limiting the previous sentence, this power includes the ability to annex and to disannex territory, when permitted, to the extent, in the manner, and subject to any restrictions or limitations, provided by the constitution and laws of the State of Texas.

Section 2.01(a) REPEALED. Section 2.01(b) REPEALED.

**II. Shall Article IV, Section 4.07 of the existing City Charter relating to where city council meetings are held be amended to read as follows?**

“All meetings of the council shall be held at the City Hall of Huntsville or at such other public place within the city as may be approved by Council and, except as otherwise permitted by law, all meetings shall be open to the public and closed or executive meetings or sessions shall only be permitted as authorized by law.”

**III. Shall Article IV, Section 4.12, of the existing City Charter that allows an employee who is not appointed by the City Council to appeal a decision on a grievance of that employee to the City Council be deleted?**

**IV. Shall Article XI, Section 11.02 (f) of the City Charter be amended by striking the sentence “Such audit shall be on a non-certified basis.”?**

**V. Shall Article XI, Section 11.13 of the existing City Charter, relating to the sale of bonds issued by the City be amended to read as follows?**

“No bond, other than refunding bonds issued to refund and in exchange for previously issued outstanding bonds, issued by the City shall be sold for less than par value and accrued interest.

All bonds of the City having been issued in conformity with the laws of the State of Texas, and having been delivered to the purchaser thereof, shall thereafter be incontestable, and all bonds issued to refund and in exchange for outstanding bonds previously issued shall, after said exchange, be incontestable.”

## CITY POLLING LOCATIONS FOR NOVEMBER 5 ELECTION

### Ward 1 –

**Pct. 102** - Walker County Annex,  
1301 Sam Houston Avenue Suite 101

### Ward 2 –

**Pct. 201** - Walker County Storm Shelter/Veterans Complex,  
445 State Highway 75 North

**Pct. 401** - University Heights Baptist Church,  
2400 Sycamore Avenue

### Ward 3 –

**Pct.101** - Walker County Annex  
**Pct. 301** - Huntsville ISD Transportation Building,  
95 Martin Luther King Dr.

### Ward 4 –

**Pct. 205** - Elkins Lake Conference Center,  
634 Cherry Hills Drive

**Pct. 206** - Huntsville Fire Station #1,  
1987 Veterans Memorial Parkway

**Pct. 401** - University Heights Baptist Church

All Walker County polling locations are available at [www.co.walker.tx.us](http://www.co.walker.tx.us) in the “Current Elections” tab, and will be included in the October City Connection.

**VI. Shall Article XI, Section 11.17 of the existing City Charter, that relates to the issuance of new debt by the City be amended by deleting the last sentence “A favorable majority of all votes cast at the City election is required for approval.” and inserting as the last sentence “A favorable majority of the qualified voters voting on the proposed issuance of new debt is required for approval.”?**

**VII. Shall Article XIV, Section 14.18 of the existing City Charter, that requires the reading of all reports made by the State of Texas concerning the City be deleted?**

The “Current Election(s)” tab on Walker County's home page will continue to be updated as information is announced. Visit [www.co.walker.tx.us](http://www.co.walker.tx.us) for all elections affecting Walker County's registered voters.

Sample ballots are expected to be available for review both on the site and at the Walker County Annex, located at 1301 Sam Houston Avenue Rm 114, around October 1.

The City of Huntsville Election information will also be available at the City's Web site, [www.huntsvilletx.gov](http://www.huntsvilletx.gov). The City will also make copies of sample ballots available at their facilities, including City Hall, the Service Center, the Huntsville Police Department and others.

# November 5 general and special election ballot to include local option liquor measure

*City residents in voting precincts 201, 205, 206 eligible to participate*

On the November 5 general and special election ballot, City residents in three voting precincts, along with County residents in two voting precincts, will have an opportunity to vote on a local option liquor measure affecting dry areas in Justice Precinct 2.

Registered voters of Justice Precinct 2, which consists of voting precincts 201, 203, 204, 205 and 206, will be eligible to vote on the ballot measure for or against "the legal sale of all alcoholic beverages including mixed beverages."

## Redistricting results in voting precinct changes

*Updated voter registration certificate, notice provided by County Voter registrar*

Following the completion of redistricting by the City of Huntsville and Walker County, local residents affected by the process may now be in another election precinct.

Due to these changes, the Walker County Voter Registration office sent out notifications in August with new voter registration certificates, encouraging residents to visit the current election tab on the County's Web site - [www.co.walker.tx.us](http://www.co.walker.tx.us) - to verify their poll place for the November 5 election along with other important election information.

"An official notification was mailed to all affected voters," said Diana McRae, County Election Officer. "However, if you did not receive notification and believe you may be affected by redistricting, please contact the Voter Registration Office at (936) 436-4959 to confirm your precinct and poll place."

As a result of redistricting, the First Presbyterian Church at 1801 19th Street will no longer be a poll place. It is now located in precinct 102,

along with many residents who live in that general area.

"Please refer to your new voter registration certificate to confirm your precinct," McRae advised. "If you live in precinct 102, you will be voting at the Walker County Annex at 1301 Sam Houston Avenue.

"Precinct 201 now has a new poll place located at the Walker County Storm Shelter/Veteran's Complex, located at 455 State Highway 75 North."

McRae said there were other areas of the City that were affected by the redistricting.

"Please refer to your new voter registration card to confirm your new voting precinct or call the Voter Registration Office to confirm," she said.

Election information is also available on the City of Huntsville Web site, [www.huntsvilletx.gov](http://www.huntsvilletx.gov).

## Dates to Remember

for the  
November 5, 2013  
election

First day to apply for  
ballot by mail  
September 6

Last day to  
register to vote or  
make name/address  
changes:  
October 7

Early voting begins:  
October 21

Early voting ends:  
November 1

Election Day:  
November 5  
7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

## Photo ID Required for Texas Voters

**Voters are now required to present one of the following forms of photo ID when voting in person:**

- (1) Texas driver license issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)
- (2) Texas Election Identification Certificate issued by DPS
- (3) Texas personal identification card issued by DPS
- (4) Texas concealed handgun license issued by DPS
- (5) United States military identification card containing your photograph
- (6) United States citizenship certificate containing your photograph
- (7) United States passport

*\*\*With the exception of the U.S. citizenship certificate, the identification must be current or have expired no more than 60 days before being presented for voter qualification at the polling place.\*\**

The voters name on the identification presented must match or be "substantially similar" to the name on the official list of registered voters (poll list).

**Voters are encouraged to update their voter registration to reflect the names on their IDs before the October 7 deadline.**

Additional information, including material on further exemptions, is available through the Texas Secretary of State's office at [www.votetexas.gov](http://www.votetexas.gov).



# City receives fourth annual Achievement of Excellence in Procurement award

The City of Huntsville received its fourth annual Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award in August, becoming one of only 43 governmental agencies in Texas and 58 U.S. cities to receive the honor.

The award, issued by the National Procurement Institute, is based on 18 best practice requirements. Of the 200 points available, the City earned 125 points in the current fiscal year.

"The Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award recognized organization excellence in procurement, and this is the fourth consecutive year our City has received this honor," said Steve Ritter, Interim Finance Director. "This would not have been possible without Billie Smith, our Purchasing Manager. The judging criteria are designed to measure innovation, professionalism, e-procurement, productivity, and leadership attributes of the procurement function, and Smith demonstrates each of those qualities in her work for the City. We are very honored to receive this award."

One significant change underway is the transition to a free, web-based e-Procurement service called Public Purchase, which offers all of the major elements of the paid service utilized in the past.

The City will make further information available as soon as possible.

"Our first priority is to maintain lawful, transparent practices – we want our residents to have confidence that the City is gaining the best quality and the best value on purchases. One way of doing this is to simplify access to our processes and documents," Smith said. "We want working with the City to be as easy as possible for vendors, and the department is always looking for ways to improve."

The Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award is recognized by both state and national agencies including the Texas Public Purchasing Association and the National Association of State Procurement Officials.

For more information, visit the National Procurement Institute Web site, [www.npicconnection.org](http://www.npicconnection.org), or contact Ritter at (936) 291-5486 or Smith at (936) 294-5495.

## Police/Fire:

### Stats for July 2013

#### Police:

Calls for service: **4581**

Accidents investigated: **74**

Animal Control complaints investigated: **96**

#### Fire:

Calls for service: **107**

Main alarm calls: **9**

## Budget, continued from page 1

"Throughout fiscal year 2013-14, the cost of continuing our Step and Grade plan, as well as the rate increase required with TMRS adjustments, will affect all of our major funds," Ritter said. "The TMRS costs will be applied January 1, while Step and Grade costs increases are applied based on employee review schedules.

"We have, however, budgeted an increase of over \$45,000 in Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue, which represents a significantly higher number of people staying overnight in Huntsville."

With respect to insurance adjustments, Benoit said adjustments were made following a two-month period of staff input through live surveys.

"While we did make adjustments to some of the fringe benefits offered to our employees and retirees, we took great care to keep our core benefit package costs as low as possible, and we feel this strategy will be of the greatest benefit to the majority of our staff," he said.

Benoit said he was grateful to the Council, the Directors and the staff for their work on the 2013-14 budget.

"I would like to thank the City Council for their direction, support and encouragement with my first budget for the City of Huntsville," he said. "I would also like to thank the Department Directors for their willingness to attack some difficult financial challenges and provide creative solutions for consideration.

"Finally, I would like to provide special thanks to Steve Ritter, Interim Finance Director, and the entire Finance Department, for the insight, flexibility and hard work displayed in producing this document."

## New Huntsville Public Library Hours

The Huntsville Public Library will implement a new schedule beginning August 26, 2013, which is the first day of school. City Librarian Linda Dodson briefed the City Council on the proposed changes at their August 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, expressing her hopes that this would improve service on several fronts.

"This meets customers' requests that the open at the same time every week day, gives staff the time needed to do the behind-the-scenes work that impacts customers (such as cataloging and preparing new books to go on the shelves, processing Interlibrary Loans, and planning programs), and reduces distractions so staff can concentrate on customers when the library is open," Dodson said.

**Beginning August 26, 2013, the Library's hours will be:**

<b>Monday-Wednesday</b>	<b>10:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>10:30 a.m. – 7 p.m.</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>10:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Noon – 4 p.m.</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Closed</b>

The Huntsville Public Library is located at 1219 13<sup>th</sup> Street. **For more information, contact Dodson at 936-291-5470** or visit [www.myhuntsvillelibrary.com](http://www.myhuntsvillelibrary.com).