

# CITY

## CONNECTION

Volume 9, Issue 3

December 2012

### Calendar

#### December 2012

- 3 City Council Meeting at 5:00 p.m
- 5 Yard Waste Trimming Collection
- 6 Planning & Zoning Commission -  
City Hall at 12 p.m.
- 6 Sam Houston Statue Visitor Center-  
Gift Shop Open House - 5 to 7 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

#### January 2013

- 1 New Year's Day - City closed
- 2 Yard Waste Trimming Collection
- 3 Planning & Zoning Commission -  
City Hall at 12 p.m.
- 8 City Council Meeting at 6:00 p.m.
- 9 Heavy Trash & Large Yard Waste
- 16 Yard Waste Trimming Collection
- 17 Planning & Zoning Commission -  
City Hall at 5:30 p.m.
- 22 City Council Meeting at 6:00 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 294-5796.

Please note irregular City Council meeting schedule for December.

Visit us online at  
[www.huntsvilletx.gov](http://www.huntsvilletx.gov) for  
more information!

## City Manager, FY12-13 budget updates

### **City making significant strides to balance FY12-13 budget**

During the November 27 regular City Council meeting, significant steps were taken toward balancing the FY2012-13 budget, and more advances will be made in the coming months.

The City Council meeting packet - available on the City's Web site - outlines two groups of major changes to the budget. Taken together, reductions to Operating and Salary and Benefit accounts totaled \$738,250.

"The budget passed by the City Council in September included a deficit of around \$1.4 million, and when Council increased property taxes, that brought in around \$400,000 and put us about a million dollars from where we needed to be," said Chuck Pinto, Interim City Manager. "The last 60 days since that budget was passed have been spent getting the budget to a balanced level. The budget revision passed on November 27 showed Council and the public how much closer we are to a balanced budget this year."

Beyond the direct budget cuts, Pinto said the City is also working on several ongoing efforts to reduce costs including a hiring freeze and early retirement incentives.

"In addition, we have also consolidated the City into one health insurance program," Pinto said. "By changing and reworking the way we do business with health insurance, we've found some deep discounts to take advantage of."

"We've already saved about \$50,000, and I think we'll be able to save anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000 in health insurance costs over the next year."

### **Working on future budgets**

Looking to the future, Council has also cut two large expenditures totaling nearly \$600,000 from future budgets. While the expenditures will remain in the FY 2012-13 budget, they will not be included in the FY2013-14 budget.

"One significant item we took out for next year was a one-time expenditure of \$280,000 for the airport," Pinto said. "We saw there was already a lot of work being done on the airport in the next three years that will be funded through the Capital budget, so it's just that additional expenditure that was taken out."

Pinto said another expenditure of \$311,000, which was previously being transferred to the Capital budget for new projects, would also not be included in the FY2013-14 budget.

"In past budgets, we've had about \$311,000 moved from other budgets into the Capital budget for projects, but in the future, those projects will be financed or bonded," Pinto said. "The only difference will be that capital projects will require debt to be incurred where they were formerly paid for in cash. This change is not affecting the Capital Improvement Plan. The CIP right now is on schedule, and we're moving closer to the way most cities manage and pay for new projects."

### **Appointing Acting City Manager**

Another significant point of the November 27 Council meeting was the appointment of Public Works Director Aron Kulhavy as the acting City Manager.

Pinto said Kulhavy will fill the position for the month of December, and possibly for a brief period while the permanent City Manager gets acclimated to Huntsville.

"Mr. Kulhavy will be fully in charge of the City's operations until we have a new City Manager hired, which should be around the first of the year," Pinto said. "He'll have direct access to me during that time, but it will also give someone on staff valuable experience as backup."

"Anytime you have a permanent City Manager, it's a good idea to have someone with experience who can fill in as needed. This gives Kulhavy a chance to get involved, and it gives the Council a chance to slow down and wait for their new manager."

Kulhavy, who holds a Master's degree in Public Administration, said he is looking forward to the opportunity to gain experience in a City Manager's role.

"I respectfully accept the opportunity to serve the City as acting City Manager, and my goal is to keep the day-to-day functions of the City moving forward until a permanent City Manager is placed," he said.

## Special events at the Huntsville Public Library

Children and teens have a variety of special activities to look forward to at the Huntsville Public Library this holiday season.

Beginning December 4 and continuing through the January, a range of events will be held including book clubs, classes for arts and crafts, unique holiday performances and regularly scheduled favorites like Story Hour.

Read through the list below to find that perfect activity, or talk with Janelle Valera, Children's Coordinator or Natosha Gibbs, Teen Advisor, for more information.

The Huntsville Public Library is located at 1219 13<sup>th</sup> Street. Call (936) 291-5472 or (936) 291-5910 for more information, or visit [www.myhuntsvillelibrary.com](http://www.myhuntsvillelibrary.com).

### Library Kids' Book Club

Kids, do you love stories and want to share the magic of books with others? Are you looking for new reading adventures? Then the Huntsville Public Library Kids' Book Club is for you. We will meet the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month to explore a different book with activities, crafts and discussion. Children will be divided into groups depending upon comfort of reading level, with the older readers focusing on chapter books and the younger readers focusing on early readers and picture books. This month we will meet on **December 4th at 4:30 PM** in the Children's Room. Older readers will focus on Mythology and younger readers will focus on "Nate the Great" and "Fancy Nancy." All readers are welcome, even if you haven't read the books.

### Who Let the Dogs Out?.....at the library!

The Huntsville Public Library will host the Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.) program on **Tuesday, December 11th from 4:00-5:30 PM**. The R.E.A.D program improves children's reading skills by employing a powerful method, reading to a registered therapy dog, in a relaxed, safe, non-judgmental environment. This program will continue every 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month. Registration is recommended. If your child would like the opportunity to participate in this program, please call the library.

### Teen Scene: Leathercraft Workshop

On **December 13<sup>th</sup> from 4:30-6:00 PM** the Huntsville Public Library will host another Teen Scene event. This special Christmas program will include a leathercraft workshop, teaching the fine art of working with raw hides to create handmade gifts, such as wallets, purses, and belts. All materials will be provided, as will refreshments. This program is free and open to teens 13-18 years old. Future teen programs will continue on the second Tuesday of each month from 4:30-6:00 p.m..

### Teen Scene: Special Winter Break Edition

On **December 27<sup>th</sup> from 4:30-6:00**, the Huntsville Public

Library- in celebration of winter break- will offer a special Teen Scene for all those teens bored without school. Teens are invited to design, create, and mold a unique Masquerade Ball mask and/or hat for any upcoming New Year's celebrations. All materials will be provided, as will refreshments. This program is free and open to teens 13-18 years old. Future teen programs will continue on the second Tuesday of each month from 4:30-6:00 PM.

### Special Winter Break Program: Stained Glass Window Craft

Kids, join us at the Huntsville Public Library for a special winter break craft on **December 31<sup>st</sup> at 2:00 PM** in the Library Community Room. We will design colorful stained glass-like artwork from tissue paper. Hang these festive creations on your window to brighten up any holiday season throughout the upcoming year. This program is free and open to children of all ages.

### December 2012 - Story Hour at the Library

The Huntsville Public Library hosts Story Hour every Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. at the library. This complimentary program promotes emergent reading skills for young children. Story Hour includes stories, songs, dance and finger plays and concludes with a craft activity. The theme for December 5th will be "**Fun and Music**" with special guest Ms. Dolores from The Golden Corral Restaurant of Huntsville.

The theme for December 12th will be "**Gingerbread Buddies**" with activities focused around holiday gingerbread cookies and houses. The theme for December 19th will be "**Very Merry Christmas Tales**" with activities celebrating Christmas. The theme for December 26th will be "**Birthday Bash**" with activities focused around Birthdays in 2013.

### 2nd Annual Library Art Contest

The Huntsville Public Library is proud to announce the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Library Art Contest supported by the Huntsville Public Library Friends. The theme for this year's contest is "**A Parade of Animals**". Students are encouraged to submit artwork of creatures friendly and ferocious to be enlarged, framed, and displayed in the Children's Room of the Huntsville Public Library. This contest is open to all children and teens 5-18 years of age. All entries must be delivered on 8 ½ X 11 white paper, along with an entry form, to the Huntsville Public Library by **January 4th, 2013 at 5:00 PM**. Entry forms are available at [www.myhuntsvillelibrary.com](http://www.myhuntsvillelibrary.com). Entries will be judged by a panel of community members and 12 winners will be announced at the official Artwork Unveiling Ceremony on Saturday February 23, 2013. Winning artwork will be exhibited in the Children's Room Art Gallery of the Huntsville Public Library for one year.

## Holiday cooking safety tips

The City of Huntsville has safety tips to those residents who choose to deep-fry their turkeys this holiday season for preparation and grease disposal.

According to Fire Chief Tom Grisham, there are several key points to remember when frying a turkey in grease, and keeping them in mind may help prevent dangerous accidents.

"Every turkey fryer comes with instructions, and it's very important to read those completely before commencing your cooking," Grisham said. "Also, make sure when you do begin cooking that your turkey fryer is not in a garage or under any kind of structure. Many calls we have had have been the result of grease boiling over onto a deck and setting the wood on fire.

"Also, make sure you have the correct level of grease. This can be tested by placing a turkey in an empty fryer, filling the fryer with water to cover the turkey, removing the turkey, then pouring out the water and filling the fryer with grease to the previous water line."

Turkey preparation, Grisham said, is also a source of trouble if not conducted properly.

"If you put a wet or partially thawed turkey into 350 degree grease, it will boil over," he said. "Make sure your turkey is completely thawed and dry, and make sure to keep children and pets away from the fryer just in case."

Finally, both when placing a turkey in grease and removing the turkey, use caution and move the turkey 1 to 1½ inches at a time.

"When putting the turkey in or removing the turkey from the fryer, use caution," Grisham said. "Wear gloves, a long sleeved shirt and closed-toe shoes. Also, have a fire extinguisher available that has a Class B rating, an ABC or BC, for flammable liquids.

Proper grease disposal is also very important. According to Mark Reed, city wastewater superintendent, grease is a waste the sewer system cannot handle and thus should be kept out of the system.

"Grease should not be poured down the drain because, as the wastewater flows through the sewer line, the grease would continue to build, restricting the flow of wastewater," he said. "It is better to put grease in the garbage instead of the drain. Residents should put used grease and oil in a jar, coffee can, or other suitable container. Put paper towels or some type of absorbent material in, seal the container, wrap it in newspaper, then place it in the trash," Reed said.

## Statue Visitor Center and Gift Shop Open House - December 6

The Sam Houston Statue Visitor Center and Gift Shop will hold its annual Christmas Open House on Thursday, December 6 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., and even Santa is expected to attend.

Guests will receive 25 percent off all merchandise, excluding consignment, and will have a wide variety of Texas-themed items including ornaments, wine glasses, purses, clothing, jewelry, cookbooks and stocking stuffers.

"Come enjoy a special Christmas Open House at the Sam Houston Statue Visitor Center and Gift Shop," said Jamie Matthews, Visitor Services Coordinator. "Bring your children and cameras to take that special picture with Santa, while enjoying Christmas refreshments."

According to Matthews, the facility also has a few new touches to enjoy.

"We have a beautiful new porch that was recently repainted, and we've also got beautiful Christmas decorations and lights all around the facility," she said. "We hope people will come by and see for themselves."

The Sam Houston Statue Visitor Center and Gift Shop is located at 7600 Highway 75 South, Huntsville, TX 77340.

For more information, call the Visitor Center at (936)291-9726.

## Huntsville Fire Department working to preserve local history - *Citizen submissions requested*

The Huntsville Fire Department is asking citizens to share memories, stories and photos of Fire Station Number 2, located at 2109 Sam Houston Avenue.

As part of a special initiative on the part of the Fire Department staff, citizens are encouraged to either email historical documents or bring them by the fire station to be copied.

"We've had a lot of people tell us different things about the fire station, and we realized that we're losing a lot of its history," said HFD Captain Jason January. "What we'd like is for everyone to give us their accounts, their pictures, anything that might be useful in recording the history of the fire department."

To assist in the effort, January has established an email address - [hfdhistory@yahoo.com](mailto:hfdhistory@yahoo.com) - to which residents are encouraged to send applicable items.

"If someone wants to bring their pictures by the fire station, we can scan them and give them right back," January said. "We can also make copies of any paper documents. Our priority is getting access to those rare photos and documents before something happens and they're gone forever."

January said the department would appreciate all submissions be sent no later than December 31, 2012. The City will provide additional information on this project as it becomes available during the month of December.

## Four incumbent Council members re-elected

City Council members Keith Olson and Don Johnson - Positions 3 and 4 at-large, respectfully - were re-elected during the November 6 Special and General election. City Council members James Fitch and Lydia Montgomery - Positions 1 and 2 at-large, respectfully - ran unopposed and were also re-elected.

"I want to personally thank Huntsville citizens for re-electing me to the City Council," Johnson said. "Your votes allow continuity on the council and the ability to move forward efficiently.

"I am committed to keep working for all citizens, and I ask you share your knowledge and suggestions for improving our City, as well as positive public comments to describe good things happening in our community."

Council member Keith Olson also expressed gratitude to the citizens of Huntsville as well as a desire to work together as a community.

"With everything going on both in our city and across the country, we're going to have to pay attention and show a unified front," Olson said. "I'm excited about the coming placement of a permanent City Manager, and I'm thrilled with the amount of hard work of the City staff to facilitate a near-balanced budget.

"I'm grateful for all the support of the community over the past two years, and I'm looking forward to serving for another two. My door is always open to the citizens of Huntsville."

## Solid Waste/Recycling holiday closures: Residential and commercial users affected

The City of Huntsville Solid Waste Transfer Station will observe Christmas on **Tuesday, December 25**. Due to closure for the Christmas holiday, there will be no garbage collected residentially or commercially on that date. Only on the following Monday or Tuesday collection days will excess bagged garbage outside of the residential garbage carts be collected. Customers with Tuesday, December 25, garbage collection will instead be collected on Friday, December 28, with recycling collection postponed until the following Friday, January 4, 2013. Businesses with a Tuesday, December 25 collection day and with commercial dumpsters, roll-offs or compactors will be collected on Monday, December 24, or Wednesday, December 26.

The Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling Facility will be closed to the public on Tuesday, December 25. The Recycling Drop-Off Center, located at 590 IH-45 North, will be closed to the public on Monday, December 24 and Tuesday, December 25.

Finally, the Solid Waste Transfer Station will be open for business on New Year's Day, Tuesday, January 1, 2013. There will be garbage collected both residentially and commercially. The Recycling Facility will be closed.

The Streets Department will pick up Christmas trees (not artificial) at the street's edge from Monday, January 7, 2013 through Friday, January 11, only. Your trees must be on the curb by January 7.

The Solid Waste Department will pickup up Christmas trees (not artificial) at the street's edge on Wednesday, January 2 and Wednesday, January 9 only.

<b>Monday, December 24, 2012</b>	<b>Both residential and commercial collection will run; Facility open</b>
<b>Tuesday, December 25, 2012</b>	<b>No residential or commercial garbage collection; Facility closed</b>
<b>Tuesday, January 1, 2013</b>	<b>Both residential and commercial collection will run; Facility open</b>

City residents may dispose their non-artificial Christmas trees to the Solid Waste Disposal Facility, free of charge with their current City of Huntsville residential utility bill during regular business hours. Christmas trees must be unloaded at the brush pile only.

If you have any questions about the garbage collection, the Solid Waste Transfer Facility, or the Recycling Drop-Off Center, please call the Solid Waste Division at 936-294-5743.

### Let's Recycle 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 or diesel from lawn equipment nor 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.

### 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. "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.

### Holiday Safety Tips from the Huntsville Police Department

- While shopping, stay alert and be aware of your surroundings and those around you.
- Avoid shopping alone.
- Park in a well-lit area, lock your car, close your windows and hide any bags/gifts in the trunk.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash; pay with credit card/check when able.
- Carry your purse close to your body, and keep your wallet in a front pocket or inside coat pocket.
- Do not carry too many packages at one time. Try to consolidate your packages into one or two bags.
- Try to shop when the shopping malls are less crowded.
- When shopping with children, teach them to go to a store clerk/ security guard if you get separated.
- After the holidays, don't leave empty boxes for new electronic items in plain view at the curb.
- Update or create a home inventory list with serial numbers, including videos or photos of all your valuables, in the event that items are stolen.