



Lakewood Village Update

October 17, 2014

Hello Everyone,

A few quick community announcements: First, the Halloween Hayride will start at 6 p.m. at Town Hall on October 31st. Gary Newsome has lined up four trailers full of hay, now all we need is costumed candy-seekers looking for a ride through town. Parents are of course encouraged to ride, and we have one trailer dedicated to our youngest trick-or-treaters. On a related note - avoiding children while navigating our streets with the road construction will be challenging enough this year, please do not add to it by placing your bulk trash out early - Bulk Trash pickup is Tuesday November 4th - **please wait until November 1 at the earliest.** With so many children out in the dark, we don't need to be putting up visual barriers and blocking the view of driveways from the street. I really really don't want to spend the Council's time writing an ordinance about when you can put your trash out, so please, for safety, if you can wait until the January pickup that would be helpful, but if not, think before you put out your bulk trash. Second, several of our citizens are having garage sales on October 25th. It is not an organized Town event, just an FYI if you are interested and would like to capitalize on the expected bargain hunting traffic. Third, our old street signs are now available for purchase from our Town website - if you have been a long-time resident you can pick one up cheap. And finally, as everyone is aware, we lost Ken just a few weeks ago. We will be permanently honoring his contribution to the Town, but we are in uncharted waters here so we just want to take our time and do it right.

Road Update. Next week, the week of October 20th, the concrete work will shift back to Hillside and that street will be completed. About three weeks from the pour, we will open the full road, fix the road shoulders, grade the drainage culverts **where needed**, and place the sod. As some of you probably noticed, the sod closest to Town hall is not exactly "green" (whoever said we save the best for Town hall was way off). We're not worried, our contract calls for the landscaping to survive through the project's warranty period, which is two years - so if it doesn't make it, they will re-lay new grass. Since the road paving will be ongoing until December, this means that the Bermuda grass laid at the end of the project will likely go dormant. And no, we are not going to change the grass type, it is all Bermuda, all the time, everywhere the road company disturbs the soil. Rest assured, in the spring it will green up or it will be replaced by Jagoe. I look forward to your future complaints that the new grass is growing too fast and you are tired of cutting it.

Currently the job is 60 percent complete and we are on schedule for the mid-December deadline. With the end-of-job cleanup winding down in January (fixing some ruts in the sod, and re-setting the staging area at the front of Town, for example), I expect everything back to "normal" by the Super Bowl. Let me once again remind everyone that the \$150 flatwork permit fee has been waived by the Town for the construction zone. I strongly encourage anyone who has a "problem" driveway to try to correct it now. We have further reduced the cost to you by allowing the driveway companies to remove the old concrete and put it across from Town hall where we will collect it and recycle it. Normally companies charge about \$2.00 per square foot to demolish the old driveway and haul it to the dump. I have told them they must pass the savings on to you, so this should cut that cost by about half. That is good for you, and the fact that we are collecting and recycling the old concrete rather than watching it go to the dump is good for all of us. But, once the road project is over, all of the incentives will expire - so you have a couple of months to go - and then that's it. The Town Council has done all we can do to help you financially. If you need the names of the companies doing driveway work in town give us (meaning Linda) a call at Town hall. We (meaning Linda) can also tell you where they are working in Town so you can take a look at their finished product and talk to your neighbor that had the work done.

We know, and we have a plan. While a lot of our time and focus has been spent on our new roads, we are aware of the problems with some of the other roads. Personally, I think my street, Carrie is the worst, Dave thinks its Melody, and Clint (who lives on Lakecrest) just smiles. Either way, I know we can't just ignore these streets and the others for several years until we pay off the bonds and concrete the rest of Town. So, let me tell you what we are going to do about it.

First, there are three spots in Town where we have done underground utility repairs where we had to cut into the street - specifically (1) across Highridge past Woodcrest, (2) the Highridge and Lakecrest intersection, and (3) very recently Melody Lane. At the end of the road project in December, Jagoe will be asphaltting all of the transition areas for the concrete roads where they intersect Highridge. We have already contracted with them to use their paving equipment to install asphalt patches to repair our three problem areas - it will be done professionally with new road base and will be rolled and compacted. We just need to wait a little while longer and we will get it done. The job is just too small for us to hire a contractor that can get it done any faster.

In August, The Town Council approved the 2015 budget where we created the Town's first ever legally restricted fund - **The Road Maintenance (RM) Fund** - which consists of money which can only be used for repairs for the non-concrete roads, like CARRIE. Since most of our property tax money is earmarked for the bond payments, we have had to devise a plan to obtain sources of new money to be deposited into the RM fund. Here's what we are going to do. First, our economic development organizations, the Lakewood Village EDC and the Lakewood Village MDD have stepped up and are contributing significant portions of their sales taxes to the RM fund. Second, the Town Council has adopted a franchise fee for commercial roll-off containers (dumpsters) that Allied Waste will charge their users and pay to the town. The garbage trucks cause the most damage to our streets, so it is logical to collect some of the repair money from the thing that is one of the biggest causes of the repairs to be made in the first place.

To make it work, before the end of the year, I will be presenting to council an amendment to the building code whereby all new house construction will be required to use a roll-off container. This will improve the cleanliness of the job sites and will allow us to collect franchise fees, which will be deposited in the RM fund. Builders already have to pay for trash removal on their jobs - so the financial impact on the cost of any new homes will be negligible. This will also solve an ongoing compliance issue: most builders in town have been using private trash haulers who don't pay sales tax to Lakewood Village as they are legally required. Fair is fair, you and I pay sales tax on garbage every month.

Lastly, I will be proposing that we charge Allied a franchise fee for residential garbage service of \$2.00 per month per house. If approved, this will result in an additional \$2.00 fee on you utility bill. I know, I know, nobody likes raising rates, but our last increase in any of our rates (water/sewer/garbage) was in September of 2011 - so over three years ago. And our new five-year contract with Allied calls for our current \$17 monthly garbage rate to remain unchanged until 2016 (over four years since the last increase). Our 2015 budget did not have any increase in the water, sewer, or garbage rates for the fourth year in a row. Before anyone complains, I think if you ask some people that live elsewhere, you'll find that a \$2.00 increase in the water/sewer/garbage over 4 years is very very reasonable - it is less than 2 % of the average bill over a four year period. It seems like my DIRECTV bill increases every 4 months; I wish it was every 4 years. I believe that \$2.00 is the smallest amount that is sufficient to accomplish our goals.

Collectively, all of these measures should generate revenues of approximately \$15,000 annually toward the RM Fund. We may spend all or a portion of the money this year, or over a two-year cycle we would have \$30,000 which can be used to perform more significant repairs. But, no more asphalt overlays. Repairs will not include any additional paving, since we would just grind it up when we replace the road with concrete. One of our biggest problems with road repairs is that our jobs are small. I recall about five years ago when we talked to several companies about paving - they were talking in "miles" and we were talking in "feet", so none were interested. Obtaining the money for repairs is a necessary first step, but getting the repairs done correctly and cost effectively is our biggest challenge. The plan is in place, we're committed to getting it done.

I bet you didn't notice. Finally, our wastewater plant and a submarine have something in common. They are both silent. For the first time in almost 20 years we have turned off the blower motors that supply air to the digester - they are now on timers. The installation of the fine air diffusers was completed and our system is now fully operational and much more efficient. In addition, the blowers have now been housed in a new small building to further reduce noise when they do run and it keeps the motors out of the weather. I will keep you updated on our energy consumption savings. If you wander near the plant, you will also see that we have increased the height of the berm in front and we have now used the road fill dirt to wrap the berm around the side of the plant. Thus, now the plant is totally hidden from view - so you can walk to the lake through Witt park and you will not see, hear, or smell anything - you won't even know the plant is there, and I think that's pretty cool.

Now this I did notice. Back in August when I mentioned the budget, I asked everyone to be vigilant when they pay sales tax and make sure it goes to Lakewood Village. As we all know, in the 75068 zip code which we share with three other cities, Little Elm is the 800 pound gorilla, so most retailers use them as the default. **You have to pay the sales tax anyway**, so when you purchase something online, pay for your cellphone service, or just have a repair at your house, demand they use Lakewood Village. We get our sales tax check from the State with a two-month delay, so we just got the August check last week. It was an all-time record for Lakewood Village - even higher than any of our previous Christmas months - the highest for any month ever. Wow. It was triple the amount that we collected for the same month last year. Great job. Remember, we are only getting about 20% of our new-road bond payment from the \$0.05 tax increase, so we have to find the other 80% through higher operating efficiency, other revenues, and cost cutting. We are off to a great start to the new fiscal year. The sales tax you pay might seem too small to worry about, but when you add it all up, it does make a difference

Mark your Calendars. The November Council meeting is scheduled for November 13th. But the real excitement begins on November 10th. For three days, through November 12th, our independent auditor will be here performing the 2014 annual financial audit. My plan is to have reviewed the audit and have it ready for public distribution and Council approval at the January meeting.

Our sewer plant is quiet. Our town is *Lakewood Village*



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