



Mayor's Letter
January 16, 2016

WE STARTED THE NEW YEAR by looking back at last year. Specifically, at the January Town Council meeting, the independent auditors presented their findings for our fiscal 2015. **We received a clean opinion for the 8th straight year** – according to the auditors, our accounting systems are reliable and accurate and our financial controls are effective. I won't go into the specifics, the full audit report is available on the town website. The one measure I do want to highlight is the Town's liquidity. As a general policy, most auditors recommend that municipalities try and have a cash reserve of 25 percent of their annual expenses (i.e. three months of payments). This comes from the fact that nearly all towns operate on the same September 30th fiscal year-end as the government. So, in theory, if you used all your cash by September 30th, and didn't take in any more money (impossible), it would be three months until the property taxes start coming in at the end of December. It is very conservative – it is the gold standard. The auditors pointed out that the level of our rainy-day reserves exceeds 65% - we have more than twice as much cushion.

Let me give you the numbers as we stand today. Next week we will make our 2016 loan payment and retire \$145,000 in bonds. We still have a significant amount of property tax that hasn't been paid yet, and we have not

Bank Balances 1/16/16	
General Fund	\$360,334
Utility Fund	\$218,101
MDD	\$8,539
Cash on Hand	\$586,974

received most of our 2015 franchise fees, so our cash is going to increase significantly over the next month. With that in mind, the adjacent table shows our current bank balances. As you can see, we will have no problem making our payment. Our total payment for this year is \$ 172,850 (principle and interest), however the temporary \$0.05 debt servicing tax will generate only \$ 42,000. The other \$130,000 for our bond payment comes from our general fund revenues including sales taxes, and if necessary we can dip into some our

excess reserves. Financing our debt over 10 years instead of the more traditional 20 or 30 years has tightened up the budget quite a bit. I am very happy with our financial position, but we won't be putting in any sculpture gardens in LWV anytime soon.

I BELIEVE WE WILL SEE TWO NEW DEVELOPMENTS THIS YEAR. I was talking with a resident last week and they told me they liked the Town the way it is and didn't want anything to change. While I understood the sentiment, change is already here – NTTA isn't going to remove the toll bridge, Eldorado isn't the two lane pot-hole Garza lane, and JPMorgan Chase, Toyota USA, and Liberty Mutual executives aren't buying round-trip tickets. Think about it, with thousands of new houses going up on U.S. 380 and the associated traffic nightmare, how great would a development be that was on a quiet, wooded, lakefront small town. That's us. Future development is now. It's going to happen. We cannot stop it, **but we can manage it, we can do it our way.** The town council has spent the last four months working on parts of the Comprehensive plan, and we are continuing the effort. As I have written to you previously, the key to development is recognizing what makes you great and then not throwing it away. **Lakewood Village - What makes us great is right in our name.** Lakes, Woods, Village. Let's take them in that order.

LAKE. Almost 80 percent of the properties in LWV do not touch the lake. We are a lakefront community. I believe strongly that all of us must have lake access, and we must have a lakefront park. I had a resident tell me "if people want lake access they can buy a waterfront lot". Well then, I guess the people on Hillside will just have to wait it out until the 1000 year flood to make them waterfront. Seriously though, it's not a choice of *which* location for a park – **we only have one possible location left (no, the sewer plant doesn't count).** Our choice is simple, whether to have a waterfront park or forever close it off by letting developers build on it. And let's be clear – a park in LWV is a nature preserve – if you want a sandy beach, volleyball courts, boat ramp, and a snack bar to buy some beanie-weenies, then head on over to Little Elm Park. The Town council approved our master parks plan which requires developers to donate park land adjacent to Federal land (Corps property) to make sure that we have a **large** wildlife habitat rather than several small "pocket" parks with a bench or two. There are some people in town who do not want a park on the lake. I understand their concerns. The **nature preserve** we intend is nothing like a recreational park – there will be minimal impact to the adjacent landowners – in fact it will look virtually unchanged to what we see today. We are a small and very diverse town – we need to take actions that are inclusive and bring us together. **Lakefront. Community.**

WOOD(S). As part of the parks master plan, the Town Council adopted a trail system. The trail system serves many purposes. First, it operates as a greenbelt between the undeveloped land along Eldorado and our existing housing developments – without it, we are just another subdivision of fence on fence rooftop to rooftop houses. Second, it provides a peaceful area to transit to the park, a walking trail to improve everyone’s quality of life – not a sidewalk next to Eldorado with cars zipping by at 60 mph. In some developments, the “jogging trail” is a sterile 10-15 foot wide strip. **That’s not who we are.** The greenbelt will be 40 feet wide. The width insures that we can wind a walking trail through the area without having to remove trees and underbrush and minimize our impact. Third, the greenbelt will allow for wildlife to continue to exist – without the trail, the area will be a fenced back yard. This isn’t California, we don’t have tree preservation ordinances, if you want to remove trees on **your** property it’s **your** decision. Without the trail preserving the woods, they’re gone forever. Some adjacent residents don’t want the trail. I think that we can wind a 5 foot wide walking trail through the woods in a way that will have a minimal impact. I think the benefit of the trails is great, the permanent loss of our woods too great a cost. Imagine taking a bike ride or walk on the trail with your children on a Saturday morning or just a peaceful quiet walk after dinner. Let the rest of the world deal with the U.S. 380 traffic.

VILLAGE. We’re a small town, we will always be a small town. Although this presents a lot of challenges, one advantage is that we avoid lots of issues. The Town Council won’t be soon debating the salary of the police chief or hiring transportation consultants for the new DART rail station. **We are a village.** I think it is very cool that we allow golf carts, especially when I see teenagers driving to their friends’ houses (and they know, I know their parents, so they are super courteous). I use my golf cart exclusively on weekends, it’s a great way to meet people and just take in the world at a blistering eight mph. As part of the Comprehensive Plan we are working on our thoroughfare plan to enhance the ability of everyone to get to all parts of the village. There won’t be any walled-off “island” developments with inaccessible roads. **Everyone** should be able to get **everywhere** without risking life and limb on Eldorado.

TRANSPARENCY. The Town Council is working very hard on our master plans. It is absolutely critical that developers know what our expectations are and what they are **legally required to provide**. It has been over twenty years since we had a new development and a lot has changed. We are literally confronted with dozens of issues that were never contemplated (screening walls, roundabouts ? left & right turn-lanes, types of landscaping, recycled water for irrigation ?, design criteria for monuments and signs, even the naming of the streets – “Lakewood Village Drive”). Throw in water and sewer utilities (can they tie into the Shores ? Highridge? across Corps property ?) and it’s even more work.

Under Texas law, a town can adopt a master plan in one meeting, as long as the public can speak before we vote. For our parks and trails master plan, we went the extra mile; we published notice in the newspaper (not required), we posted it online, we had public hearings in November **and** December, and the Council discussed it at length in open session both months before adopting it. In a world where you can’t get 100 percent agreement that we landed on the moon, there is no way to only take actions that will gain unanimous support. **I speak for the entire council when I say that we are all working very hard to do what we feel is best for the entire town.** We respect that people can have differing opinions and although we may not agree, we are listening. Having said that, we promise to all of you that we will continue to have public hearings and be as transparent as possible as we make these important decisions.

When you come into Town Hall, often the first person you see is me. **I sit at the front table.** When paying their water bills, residents stop by just for a quick chat or ask me a question. When Carl, Ed, and myself meet with a developer, **we sit at the front table** in plain sight. I am fortunate that I have a job which allows me to work from the village for ten months out of the year. This is a really important time for the Town. It’s a small town, everyone knows where I live, you all know where to find me at Town Hall, and my email and cell number is **at the bottom of every Mayor’s letter**. If you have questions or want to voice a concern, myself and the council are listening. In big cities, usually a development only affects one councilmember’s precinct. Here, it affects **all of us**. Change is inevitable. We’re on top of it.

FACEBOOK. In today’s world, new technology changes quickly while the legal environment struggles to catch-up (drones vs. FAA and personal privacy, police using cell phones to track people, etc.). Social media can be a valuable tool to engage the public and can be an effective platform to provide community information. However, if elected officials contribute comments concerning town business, then that can be construed to be an official record just like any other town documents. But, **we are subject to the Texas Public Information Act** – which requires us to maintain our records for public access. There’s just no practical way to keep an archived record of postings on social media. That’s why, following our attorney’s advice, and like nearly all towns, we have a policy that **no councilmember will ever comment on social media**. The LWV Facebook page is not owned, operated, moderated or monitored by the Town. The official online source of town information is our website www.lakewoodvillagetx.us. So, if you frequent Facebook, I hope you will keep in mind that anyone can say **anything** on Facebook about the Town and they know there will be no reply.

FROM OUR LAST ACTION-PACKED COUNCIL MEETING.

1. Melody and Carrie Road Repairs – The town council authorized me to execute the contract with town engineers Kimley-Horn to develop **TxDot design standards** and bid specifications for extensive road repairs including leveling, shoulder prep work, base repair, and new chip and seal. Kimley-Horn will also administer the competitive bidding process, evaluate bidder qualifications, and recommend the final contractor. The repairs will be paid for through our dedicated road maintenance fund. Work should begin and end in early summer.

2. Highridge Mailbox Reconstruction – The Town Council approved the concept plan and authorized me to develop final designs and firm costs for the new mailboxes. The mailbox location and facility are now 20 years old, are in poor shape, and are situated in a location with poor sight lines and no ability to pull off the road. The details of the proposed plan include:

- There will be no change to the 40 ft. by 8 ft. layout of the individual mailbox units. A new platform will be built approximately 20 feet to the north on Highridge. Thus, there will be no interruption in service. The old facility will be demolished and the area returned to green space.
- The platform will be 11 feet off of the street, to allow for a **full-width access lane** that will take you completely off of the road. The access lane will be approximately 50 feet long to allow for a safe transition onto and off of Highridge. **The entire facility including the access lane will be located in the Town's existing right-of-way.** There will be no encroachment on private property.
- The building will be covered, with a composite **shingle roof**. The building will have energy efficient lighting operating on low-light sensors. The facility will be encircled by a metal railing (sorry but the last remaining green pipe is going away).
- The bulletin board will be replaced, and the mailboxes will be painted.

3. Emergency water interconnection – The Town Council authorized me to finalize the interlocal agreement with Little Elm, develop final designs, acquire easements, and obtain firm costs for the pipeline. We currently have 230 water connections, when we reach 250 houses, TCEQ rules require us to have backup power generators. However, under **Texas Administrative Code 290.45(b)(1)(D)** water systems are exempt if they have an emergency interconnection with another water system. So the added benefit is we can avoid purchasing costly generators.

4. Hillside Fire Hydrants – The Town Council approved my request to install three additional hydrants on Hillside Drive at a cost of \$24,000. This continues our plan to bring the Town up to modern fire protection standards which call for all house to be within 250 feet of a fire hydrant. Peninsula and Parkwood will be a challenge since the smaller mains will require some new pipe as well as boring under driveways. We're working on a plan.

5. Other Issues – The Town Council approved our new **snow/ice removal plan**. Councilman Ed Reed is working with Little Elm and Denton County to insure that we coordinate our emergency responses. The Town Council approved an initiative by Councilman Clint Bushong to lower the **water heater inspection fee** to \$25. While the replacement of water heaters can be a great do-it-yourself project, we have real safety concerns that with gas, water, and high voltage present, failure can be tragic. The cost isn't worth the risk. In response to changes in state law, the Town Council approved the **electioneering ordinance** which follows new regulations governing the placement of signs and campaigning on public property. I updated the council on our noise reduction efforts at the sewer plant – we are continuing work on blower motor improvements and will be installing solid fencing along the back of the plant. Lastly, in response to new open-carry laws, the Town Council banned all firearms (open or concealed) from our open meetings – they are already banned from Town Hall.

AS YOU CAN SEE, the Town Council is dedicating an enormous amount of effort. Repairs to Melody Lane won't affect Lakecrest; the new fire hydrants on Hillside won't impact Meadowlake residents; the new mailboxes won't have an impact on Peninsula residents; and Carrie residents can't hear the sewer plant, so they won't benefit from the noise reductions. As you can see, **we make decisions that we think are best for the Town. The whole town.** Everything we do can't benefit **everyone, every time, everywhere.**

It appears I have hit my self-imposed three page limit. Everyone stay warm.

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Mayor



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