



# The Stafford Newsletter

Thanksgiving



Volume 28, Issue 4

November 2007

## NEWSLETTER EXPANDED TO INCLUDE THE SPOTLIGHT FROM SMSD

The *Stafford Newsletter* which has been published by the City for the past twenty-five years will be expanded to include *The Spotlight* published by the Stafford Municipal School District. Not only will this bring the readers quarterly news articles about the City but will provide an insight into the activities and achievements of SMSD. Further, this joint effort will save taxpayers' dollars and will more broadly communicate the City's and SMSD's messages.

This development occurred as a result of a joint committee meeting initiated by SMSD Superintendent

H. D. Chambers in which City and School District representatives, as well as community members, discussed improving communications with our citizenry and businesses. Mayor Leonard Scarcella advocated incorporating the SMSD periodical into the City's publication.

Hopefully you will enjoy this expanded newsletter.

If you desire more information about either entity, you are encouraged to visit the City's website [www.cityofstafford.com](http://www.cityofstafford.com) or the Stafford Municipal School District's website [www.stafford.msd.esc4.net](http://www.stafford.msd.esc4.net).

## HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES TO DOMINATE THE CITY SCENE

Bulldozers, cranes, cement trucks and flagmen up, down and around US 90A, Murphy, Stafford, Staffordshire, Dulles and Kirkwood Roads send unmistakable messages: Beware – a delay is just ahead and it is going to be later than sooner before the underpasses, overpass, many roadway lanes and amenities are complete, the heavy equipment disappears and people can get back to normal motoring around the City.

The highway construction is progressing, but is slow and most of the detours, dust and disruption are likely to be with us through next year – assuming we have some reasonably good weather and the contractors stay committed to the task, which has not always been the case.

As has been noted, when this \$100,000,000 project is complete, it will all be worth the wait and inconvenience.



# CITY BUDGET FOR 2007-2008 ADOPTED

It is always a challenge to craft a City budget that requires NO CITY PROPERTY TAXES, pursues a pay-as-we-go strategy, emphasizes strong and enhanced services and programs and all predicated on sound fiscal policy. This was especially true this year with a \$3 million sales tax claim by the State Comptroller, the on-going and highly disruptive US 90A construction project, revising of the City employees' health care program and a transfer of garbage collection contractors. In spite of these hurdles, on September 26, 2007, City Council adopted its 2007-2008 budget. It encompassed these goals and policies as well as the following:

- A solid, but reasonable, program for additional infrastructure;
- A limited hiring practice of additional full-time personnel;
- A sound program for competitive employee salaries and benefits;
- A concerted effort to elevate the Stafford Municipal School District; and
- An expansion of popular activities and events at the Stafford Centre.

In order to overcome the impediments and to achieve these goals, the City will be focusing on enhancing economic development to generate additional resources while maintaining its long honored practice of carefully scrutinizing expenditures. The adopted budget requires approximately \$23 million in expenditures by the City and \$3 million of outlays by the Stafford Economic Development Corporation. The budget went into effect on October 1, 2007.

Sales tax is the leading revenue source producing \$13 million. Heading the list of departmental outlays will be those for public safety in the areas of police protection, fire protection, emergency medical services and emergency management services. All toll, the cost of these programs will exceed \$6 million. The maintenance of streets, grounds, parks and rights-of-ways will tally over \$4 million.

Some special aspects of this budget include funds to pursue major improvements to Stafford/Staffordshire Roads, landscaping of US 90A and US 59 and adding identification monuments, employee salary increases for the 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, employment of a full-time emergency management specialist and two more duty session officers for staffing of both fire stations in Stafford and significant assistance to SMSD to improve educational opportunities for our children.

After eliminating city property taxes in 1995, the City has continued to increase its cash balances. Although the much publicized dispute with the State Comptroller on the two sales tax refund claims of \$3 million reduced the City's fund balance, under the agreement with the State, the cash remains in the City's account drawing interest.

City Council and the Department Heads should once again be commended for enacting a refined Mayor's budget that not only protects the best interests of the citizens but charts a strong, innovative and fiscally sound course for a continuation of enhancing and elevating of the City.

---

**Events Will Begin at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, November 27, at the Stafford Centre**

## HOLIDAY TREE

The annual holiday tree lighting ceremony is again going to delight the children - young and old alike. This event not only lights the City's Christmas tree but has many stirring holiday programs including the visit by Santa Claus, several presentations by the school choirs, and dramatic re-

## LIGHTING SET

enactments of some of the more entertaining holiday folklore.

All events will take place at the Stafford Centre beginning at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, November 27.

Tree Limb Pickup: Monday, December 3  
City of Stafford offices closed: Thursday-Friday,  
November 22-23 & Monday-Tuesday, December 24-25

# TEACHERS GALA & SILVER ANNIVERSARY OF SMSD OPENING HUGE SUCCESS

On September 15, 2007, the City took pride in sponsoring the Inaugural Teacher Appreciation Gala and 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the Stafford Municipal School District. Funded by the City and held in the ballrooms of the Stafford Centre, the event recognized the teachers of SMSD and expressed appreciation to these educators who will be teaching the children of Stafford during the 2007-2008 school year.

Prominent among the acknowledgments that evening were the recognition of long term educators in the District, outstanding teachers of the year and all the teachers of the District. A fine dinner was enjoyed by all.

One of the key elements of this

Celebration was the Silver Anniversary of August 26, 1982: the first day Stafford students were educated at SMSD. This is one of the most auspicious and revered dates in the history of Stafford. The audience included many who had been there on that special date when students got off of the buses and stepped into the converted warehouse-turned-elementary school for the opening day of classes.

The evening sent a message of not only cooperation between the City and SMSD, the only municipal school district in Texas, but strong support for the teachers of the District. It was a celebration that will long be remembered in Stafford.

---

## Bring in 2008 at the Stafford Centre

# STAFFORD CENTRE OFFERS DAZZLING ARRAY OF FORTHCOMING ENTERTAINMENT

The third annual **City of Stafford/K-Hits 107.5 Rockin New Year's Eve Bash** will take place at the Stafford Centre on Monday, December 31, from 7 p.m. until 1 a.m.



This year's celebration features the local phenom band, **The Fab 5**, which have wowed audiences in the Houston area for

many years with their selections from The Beatles as well as hits from the 60's, 70's and 80's.

As always, party favors will be on hand, and there will be a champagne toast at midnight.

Catering this year will be provided by Churrasco's Restaurant. The menu for the festive event is:

**Appetizer:** Plantains & Sauces

**Salad:** Ensalada with Cilantro dressing

**Entrée:** Puntas - Grilled Beef Tenderloin, Served with Choice of Jalapeno, Green Peppercorn or Setas Sauce

Pollo Ajillo - Sautéed Garlic Chicken with Tomatoes & Scallions

Andina - Sautéed Shrimp, Pan Roasted Tilapia & Aji Pepper Sauce

**Dessert Extravaganza:** Tres Leches en Coup; Chocolate delirio squares; Alfajores (pastry); Chocolate chip cookies

**Beverage:** Iced tea, coffee

Early bird tickets, which go on sale Friday, November 9, will be \$53.75 a person. Once those seats are sold, tickets will be \$75 a person. The ticket price includes two complimentary drink tickets. Join us for what promises to be our best New Year's Eve celebration in Stafford.

Other upcoming events include country icon Ray Price, who returns on December 1. Holiday performances commence with BalletForte's annual presentation of *The Nutcracker* on December 7-9, and the world renown Moscow Ballet's *Nutcracker* on December 28-29. For more information or to order tickets, call the Stafford Centre at 281-208-6900 or visit [www.staffordcentre.com](http://www.staffordcentre.com).





**City of Stafford**  
**2610 South Main**  
**Stafford, TX 77477**

PRSRT STD  
US Postage  
Paid  
Stafford, TX 77477  
Permit No. 390

Or Current Resident

---

## **CITY/SMSD AGREE ON JOINT MAY ELECTIONS**

With an action by the Stafford Municipal School District Board of Trustees on October 8, a long and stormy chapter in the conducting of future Board of Trustees elections was laid to rest. The SMSD Board voted to approve a joint election agreement with City Council that would have future Council/Trustee elections jointly held in May of each year beginning in 2008.

As was widely reported, in December of last year SMSD voted to change from May elections with the City to have joint elections with Fort Bend and Harris Counties in November of each year. Since this conflicted with the previous twenty-three year process of having joint elections with the City in May and went against the will of the strong majority of citizens, City Council, the Mayor and two citizens filed suit to require May elections.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Court of Appeals ruled for the District in March by refusing to order May elections. However, a month later the Texas Attorney General rejected the arguments approved by the Court and opined that annual November elections occurring in odd number years were not supported by the law, thus precluding the November 2007 election which had previously been adopted by the SMSD Board.

After extensive discussions and negotiations between the entities and many public comments on the subject, City Council approved the joint election agreement which was subsequently approved by the SMSD Board. Under the terms of this arrangement, Councilmember and Trustee elections will be conducted jointly.

General election day voting will be held at City Hall as it has been for decades, while early voting will be conducted at both City Hall and the School Administration Building. The City will bear the lion's share of election expenses for both the City and SMSD.

Although there remain some advocates of the November four year term election cycle for Trustees, the large majority of citizens have been vocal in expressing their support for Trustees to be elected for three year terms each May.

Probably the most noteworthy aspect of this controversy is that the will of the overwhelming majority of citizens has prevailed.