



The Stafford Newsletter



Volume 30, Issue 1

January 2009

In Civic Center at 1415 Constitution Avenue

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING SET FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, AT 7 P.M.

With the many extraordinary circumstances confronting our nation at this time, the City of Stafford Annual Town Meeting takes on added significance. This year's meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 28, 2009, at 7 p.m., in the Civic Center at 1415 Constitution Avenue. As is the tradition, Mayor Leonard Scarcella will deliver the State of the City Message at the beginning of the meeting, which will be followed by reports from the Department Heads on the activities, services and conditions of the City. After the reports, there will be the opportunity for comments and questions from the general public pertaining to the following topics:

- (a) City's economy, zero property tax, sale and other taxes, and fiscal condition.
- (b) Zoning, enhanced building standards and new regulations, and landscaping for the US 90A and FM 1092 corridors.
- (c) Police and fire protection, emergency management program, and homeland security.
- (d) Stafford Centre and Stafford Civic Center.
- (e) Stafford Municipal School District, Houston Community College, educational opportunities, and potential City/SMSD annexations.
- (f) US 90A, Stafford/Staffordshire Road Improvements, highways, streets, mobility, drainage, and water.
- (g) Parks.
- (h) Municipal Court.
- (i) Stafford Municipal Educational Television Station.
- (j) Joint elections for City, SMSD, and Fort Bend Co. W.C.&I.D. #2.
- (k) Other matters of interest affecting the City.

This meeting will be televised live on S-METV, Channel 16 Comcast. There will be numerous rebroadcasts over the days to follow. You are encouraged to attend and participate in this event and share your suggestions, comments, and questions.

MEMORIAL GARDEN TO BE DEDICATED



Public Works Director, Lawrence Vaccaro, Jr., shown standing in Margaret Havens Historical Memorial Garden (story on Page 2)

81ST TEXAS LEGISLATURE NOW IN SESSION

To Stafford, the legislative session can either be extremely beneficial or potentially devastating, or both. The achievements of Stafford are well known around the halls of the Capitol in Austin. Equally so are the circumstances surrounding the Stafford Municipal School District. In order to advance the efforts of the City and SMSD, City Council has hired two lobbyists: Marta Greytok to address City-related matters and John Pitts to work with SMSD, its superintendent, school board, and City Council to provide our school district with the best legal footing for offering outstanding opportunities to Stafford students.

Both Ms. Greytok and Mr. Pitts are very seasoned in dealing with the legislature, its members, and other state officials impacting new laws. They will be spending virtually every day between now and the end of May in their efforts to assist and protect the City and SMSD in the 81st Session of the Texas Legislature.

City and school officials alike will be devoting a significant amount of time to support the lobbyists, including testifying in Austin on legislation affecting the City and SMSD.

Based on early activities in the Legislature, an intriguing and challenging session is anticipated in 2009.

Mayor and Three Councilmen to Be Elected

CITY ELECTION SCHEDULED ON MAY 9

In May, the two-year terms for incumbents Mayor Leonard Scarcella and Councilmen John Rose, Wen Guerra, and Jeff Smith will expire.

Final details for the election are being formulated by City Council in conjunction with the Stafford Municipal School District Board of Trustees to

conform to the agreement for a joint City/SMSD election for the three Council positions and for two School Board positions, those being of Mike Guerra and Etienne Zak.

Filing for a place on the ballot on City Council will begin on February 7 at City Hall and run through March 9.

MEMORIAL GARDEN (continued from Page 1)

The Memorial Garden which was a consolidated proposal of the Stafford Historical Society, the City Parks Department, and City Council is nearing completion and exceeding expectations for the enhancement and beautification of the City Hall Complex.

Under the direction and guidance of Public Works Director Lawrence Vaccaro, Jr., City forces constructed and landscaped this lovely facility. This park and garden is meant to recognize those prominent in Stafford beginning with its founding in 1821 by William Stafford. It was named after Margaret Havens, in a recommendation by the Stafford Historical Society, for her devotion and dream to preserve the history of Stafford. The Historical Society, under the direction of its President, Councilman Jeff Smith, played a significant role in advancing this effort. Intricately involved in this endeavor was the City Parks

Committee under the leadership of Mayor Pro Tem John Rose.

Notable features of the park are the water fountain and history walls. Additionally, there are benches, pavers, and bricks which allow persons with a connection to the City and its history to have that relationship recognized.

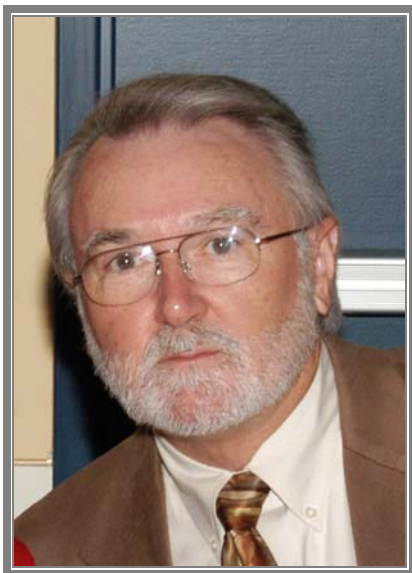
John Ferro, a strong advocate of this project, was authorized by City Council to market the benches, pavers, and bricks. Thus far, 89 persons have made purchases totaling \$37,500.

The park site originally anticipated to cost more than \$200,000 was accomplished for about half that amount. For this, much credit goes to Mr. Vaccaro. With the funds from the sale of benches, pavers, and bricks, the net cost to the City is expected to be about \$50,000.

City Council will be setting a dedication date in the very near future.

LEADERSHIP OF S-METV CHANGES HANDS

Originator Bill Springer Retires



Stafford's well-known and respected Producer-Director/Television Production Supervisor for S-METV, Bill Springer, retired December 31 to return to Georgetown, Texas, his hometown.

Bill's television career in Texas began in 1967 and spanned over 41 years. It included more than 25 years with Houston's Channel 2, as reporter, photographer, and later, producer. Bill may be best known in Houston for producing the "Eyes of Texas".

Bill subsequently did a stint for Missouri City's MCTV before joining Stafford's S-METV station in August 1999. Shortly thereafter, he was telecasting City Council meetings live.

Bill stated he considered himself lucky to have been with the City almost 10 years and that he enjoyed working with the people of Stafford.

At a recent employee banquet, Bill received a standing ovation. Mayor Leonard Scarcella commended him on his hard work and expressed the City's appreciation for all he contributed in organizing and elevating S-METV, and noted how much he would be missed.

Best wishes to Bill and wife, Jana!

New Director Carolyn Entricht Takes Reins

S-METV welcomed Carolyn Wallace Entricht on board just before the start of the New Year as the new Producer-Director/Television Production Supervisor for S-METV.

Carolyn was in the long-time (20 years) role of producer-director for KHOU-TV, Channel 11. She and her husband are residents of Missouri City.

Carolyn comes to us with a varied and extensive background in television that began following her graduation from the University of Florida. She brings filming, editing, directing, management, and technical skills to the position that will move S-METV forward in numerous ways.

COUNCIL GRANTS ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR SAT PREP COURSE



Superintendent H.D. Chambers and SMSD students Jonathan Nguyen and Janile Patriarca (shown above) made a compelling presentation before City Council to expand the SAT preps from 60 to 90 students, all of whom are Stafford students with the great majority attending SMSD.

After hearing from the SMSD Superintendent and the two students, Council unanimously approved an additional \$5,000, bringing the total for this program to \$20,000.

****ANNOUNCEMENTS****

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Stafford Choirs present

OLIVER!



Friday, January 30, at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 31, at 7 p.m.

Sunday, February 1, at 2 p.m.

For ticket information:

call 281-261-9200, ext. 3197;

email lprice@stafford.msdc4.net; or

visit www.staffordchoir.com.

Renew annual Burglary/Fire Alarm Permits:

All existing permits expired on December 31, 2008, and are due for renewal by January 31. Contact Janice Morgan at 281-261-3955 to receive a 2009 application.

Mark dates for tree limb pickup:

Monday, February 2

Monday, April 6

City offices will be closed:

President's Day - Monday, February 16

Good Friday - Friday, April 10



City of Stafford
2610 South Main
Stafford, TX 77477

Ten Years of Planning and Construction Become Reality

US 90A PROJECT ALMOST COMPLETE

Initial discussions for the improvement of US 90A with two underpasses, the shifting of the railroad tracks, and an expanded rights-of-way began about ten years ago.

Within the next few months, construction of US 90A will be completed. Add to that substantial landscaping enhancements planned as part of the more than \$100 million endeavor. More than \$3 million in funding for the landscaping is coming from the Stafford Economic Development Corporation. This is a prominent by-product of the program in a concerted effort to enhance the

economy and appearance of this corridor.

Coordinating that with the recently enacted Zoning Ordinance amendments, which are still evolving, the mobility and appearance of Stafford will be changed forever.

By consolidating all of the improvements by the Texas Department of Transportation and the City, there will be a new dynamic to Stafford. Staffordians have had to endure numerous inconveniences over the past few years as this project unfolded. With its completion, the long-awaited improvements and facelift will finally be a reality.

U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT TAGS **STAFFORD AS “LOW-TAX RETIREMENT GEM”**

An unexpected recognition by *U.S. News and World Report* in November designated Stafford as a “low-tax retirement gem.” According to *U.S. News*, Americans spent more on taxes in 2008 than on food, clothing, and housing combined. Magazine staff looked at more than 2,000 locations to find places with low taxes and amenities important to retirees like a reasonable cost of living and fine recreational and cultural choices.

The City of Stafford has no state income tax or city property taxes. The article noted that in Stafford “retirees can take in the ballet, theater, concerts, and seminars” all at home at the Stafford Centre. Obviously the magazine concluded what Staffordians have known for a long time – that Stafford is a very unique city combining some of the best tax benefits in the nation with outstanding amenities and culture.