



The Stafford Newsletter



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Stafford's Quality of Life and Passenger Rail at Issue

H-GAC RAIL PUBLIC MEETING AT STAFFORD CENTRE ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13

Mark your calendars. A public meeting on a major expansion of freight rail activity in our City set for Thursday, October 13, 5:30-7:30 p.m., at the Stafford Centre, will likely have a significant impact on the quality of life, and the future of commuter rail, in our City. The Houston-Galveston Area Council will be conducting the last of several area meetings to receive public input on these volatile issues.

Mayor Leonard Scarcella has secured this meeting so the people of Stafford will have the opportunity to participate in the dialogue on the effects of Union Pacific Railroad building a second track through the City, thus greatly increasing the number of freight trains traversing through town each day, and tragically, eliminating passenger rail from ever being established along US 90A. He is fervent in his belief that support of this increased freight activity by UPRR will have devastating effects on our City and the quality of life of our citizens. The Mayor plans to present information during the hearing demonstrating the potential harmful effects of this proposal on the growth and prosperity of Stafford.

UPRR urges that, by having two tracks instead of one to move the 30 plus trains a day, motoring mobility of the public will be improved. What UPRR conveniently, and disingenuously, omits from their

discussion is that they have no intention of confining the number of trains moving through the City to 30. They have stated on numerous occasions, it is their desire, and full intention, to run 60, 70, or more trains through Stafford each day. The result is that the mobility of motorists will not be improved, but increasingly snarled. Add to that the two tracks will only occupy a third of the hundred feet of UPRR right-of-way, which would allow for the building of three more tracks - - and adding substantially more freight traffic.

Perhaps the most disheartening aspect of this proposal is that this will eliminate commuter rail in the City of Stafford in spite of aggressively pursuing it for more than 11 years. UPRR has closely followed this decade-long effort, even on occasion indicating support; however, in the last year, they have made it abundantly clear that they will use all of their multi-billion dollar resources, including their vast political access, to prevent any form of passenger rail on or along the US 90A Corridor.

This H-GAC study is one of the final pieces to provide credibility to vastly expand freight rail along US 90A while strangling any prospects for passenger rail.

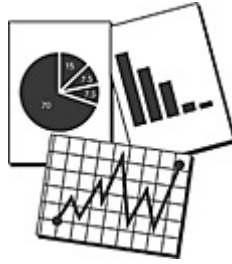
You are encouraged to attend this hearing. Your support will greatly aid this City.

ALARM PERMITS EXPIRE IN DECEMBER

2011 Alarm Permits expire December 31, 2011. Renew by January 31, 2012, for \$15. The fee is \$25 on or after February 1, 2012. Alarm Permits are available at the Stafford Police Department. For questions, call 281-261-3955. The Alarm Permit Application can be found at www.cityofstafford.com under the section "Forms, Instructions, Fees" on the front page.

FY 11-12 BUDGET IMPACTED BY STUMBLING ECONOMY

On September 7, Mayor Leonard Scarcella delivered the Budget Message for the City for the coming Fiscal Year 2011-2012. The Mayor emphasized that, in view of the economic climate prevailing in the country, it will challenge the City even more to continue to elevate its services and activities for the citizenry. This Message spells out the keys to continued success:



- ✓ No City property taxes. The one component that has propelled this City further than anyone expected in 1995 has been the elimination of the property tax. For the seventeenth consecutive year, the City of Stafford budget is predicated on a zero property tax. A significant number of businesses have located in our City, and many people live here because of it.
- ✓ Maintaining quality services. Over its history, Stafford has taken pride in continuously elevating the quality of services to its citizens and businesses. Despite the challenges presented by the economy, this budget provided for maintaining of these quality services which have delighted our citizens and gained praise from our neighbors.
- ✓ Eliminating general obligation debt. A momentous achievement has been reached in this budget. During the past decade, the City has been counting down to 2014 when it could pay off all outstanding general obligation debt. Although the bond indentures prohibit the City from currently extinguishing the debt, we are doing the next best thing: escrowing the full remaining balance of principal and interest owed, namely \$460,330, so that the City will not have to commit another dollar to the payment of bonded indebtedness. Thus, it becomes one of the few governmental entities in the Nation to have its total general obligation debt fully covered.
- ✓ Enhanced City appearance. In the past two years, Stafford has enhanced its appearance to such an extent that it has received widespread accolades. This has not been easy or inexpensive, but it has put a new face and an added dimension on this City.

- ✓ No employee layoffs. Something few others can say: This City has never handed out a “pink slip.” This year will be no exception; all employee positions will be retained. The City is fortunate to have outstanding employees. The assurance that they will not have the rug pulled from beneath them greatly adds to maintaining an excellent staff.
- ✓ Superior employee health care and retirement benefits. The strongest attributes of our employment program are the superior health care and retirement benefits. More than one doctor has commented that the health care program provided by the City for its employees is one of the best available in the public or private sector. This provides significant security for our employees and their dependents. The City takes pride in this self-funded plan.
- ✓ Major infrastructure improvements. Major infrastructure improvements which are paid from our operations accounts without any debt will again be highlighted. Those will include the completion of Dulles Avenue, the kickoff of the Brand Lane project and, assuming the City can obtain State participation, an extension of Staffordshire Road from Fifth Street to Scanlin Road.

This budget for the City and the Stafford Economic Development Corporation is \$28 million. The largest revenue producer will be sales tax, which will generate over \$13 million. Requiring the most amount of funding will be the emergency services departments – police, fire and related units – at a total cost of about \$7.5 million. Public Works follows close behind with over \$5 million in expenditures, which includes the Dulles Avenue and Brand Lane projects and extension of Staffordshire. Other notable areas are the operation of the Stafford Centre and contributions to the Stafford Municipal School District.

The full Budget Message can be found on the City’s website or picked up at City Hall.



City of Stafford offices will be closed:
Thursday-Friday, November 24-25 for Thanksgiving
Friday-Monday, December 23-26 for Christmas



DATE OF TREE LIGHTING ANNOUNCED

City Council has designated Monday, November 28, as the official Tree Lighting event in the City. As in past years, it will be conducted at the Stafford Centre beginning at 7 p.m.

Among the many features will be the posting of the colors by the Stafford High School ROTC, the Stafford Middle

and High School Choirs and the arrival of Santa Claus. Refreshments will be served in the Centre's ballrooms.

The City of Stafford is co-sponsoring the event with the Stafford Historical Society.



DANCE AWAY AT NEW YEAR'S EVE BASH



The sixth annual Rockin' New Year's Eve Bash will be held at the Stafford Centre Saturday, December 31, from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m.

This year's celebration features The Doppelganger Band, a nine-piece band which has been wowing audiences in the Houston area for many years.

Tickets are \$85 per person - for dinner, party favors, two drinks and a champagne toast at midnight - and can be purchased by calling 281-208-6900 or at www.staffordcentre.com. Catering will be provided by Ray's Gourmet Country Restaurant.

Come dance the night away at the Stafford Centre.

STAFFORD CENTRE SCHEDULES ARRAY OF FALL AND WINTER EVENTS

- October 13 - Houston-Galveston Area Council Regional Goods Movement Study public meeting, 5:30-7:30 p.m.**
- October 15 - Labrada Texas State Body Building Competition**
- October 16 - Fort Bend Symphony Orchestra's "In an English Garden"**
- October 17 - Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce presents City of Stafford Business Update, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**
- October 19-23 - Menopause - The Musical (Play)**
- October 22-23 - 8th Annual Houston Vintage Book & Paper Festival**
- October 27 - The UP! Experience**
- October 28-29 - Steve Tyrell concert**
- October 30 - Anna Maria Di Micco concert**
- November 4-5 - Sugar Plum Market**
- November 28 - City of Stafford Tree Lighting**
- November 30 - America concert**
- December 4 - Fort Bend Symphony Orchestra's "Deck the Halls"**
- December 9 - Superintendent Lawrence Hindt Overview of SMSD, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**
- December 9-11 - Ballet Forte's "Nutcracker"**
- December 12 - SMSD Band's Christmas concert**
- December 18 - Los Tres Reyes**
- December 31 - City of Stafford 7th Annual Rockin' New Year's Eve**
- January 12 - Ray Price's 86th Birthday concert**



City of Stafford
2610 South Main
Stafford, TX 77477

GARBAGE RATES TO DECREASE



City Council has just entered into a new garbage contract which will actually reduce the cost per household from the current \$16.57 to \$14.60 per month. The services to our citizens will remain the same.

In addition to the garbage service referenced above, at the request of the Sugar Creek Home Owner's Association, City Council approved an agreement for off-curb collection service which will cost each resident living in the Sugar Creek Subdivision \$21.42 per month. In previous years, the Sugar Creek Home Owner's Association had garbage collected by a private contractor. We believe this service will be most beneficial to the residents of Sugar Creek.

As part of the new contract, there is the potential for recycling. A number of years ago, the City had a recycling

program with a contracted garbage collector. However, due to numerous factors and mainly the inability to recycle many of the items, the program was discontinued. Recycling has taken on a new and elevated status because of advanced technology.

In order to determine your attitude towards recycling, City Council will be conducting a survey and also evaluating the viability of such a program. We invite you to respond to the survey shown below.

In the event you have any comments, we encourage you to go to the "Hot Topics" section of the City's website where you can express those views. You will be kept informed as to your and your fellow citizens' attitudes about such a program.



Survey on Recycling



1. Would you support the City of Stafford offering recycling service in conjunction with its garbage contract at an additional cost to you of \$2.40 per month, which would be added to your garbage bill?
2. Would you be in favor of the City of Stafford having recycling drop off locations, instead of door-to-door pickup, without a charge to you?

Please email your comments, including your name and address, to Ms. Jo Ann Holloway at jholloway@cityofstafford.com, call her at 281-261-3922 or mail to her at 2610 S. Main, Stafford, TX 77477.