



The Stafford Newsletter



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In Civic Center at 1415 Constitution Avenue

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING SET FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, AT 7 P.M.

The new year offers some very encouraging signs. Foremost among them is the apparent end to the debilitating recession of 2008. Although we are not back to the level of economic activity in the City that this crippling downturn caused, there are optimistic aspects which appear to allow the City to aggressively move forward with its development. Having said this, we can not ignore some negative situations which will require our best efforts to prevent from shackling this City. One such distressing element is the proposed increase in disquieting freight rail activity with the corresponding ramification of choking off future passenger rail services.

The Town Meeting, which has long been an annual event, will examine all of the prominent components of the City and look toward new opportunities.

As is the tradition, the meeting will commence with the State of the City and Goals for 2012 presented by Mayor Leonard Scarcella. Each City Director will follow with an overview of activities in his or her respective department. An added feature will be a brief presentation by the economic development consultant, Mike Barnes, who will provide an insight on the approach to be utilized for attracting new businesses and adding vitality to the City. After the reports, the general public will have the opportunity for comments and questions pertaining to all of the following topics:

- a) City's economy, zero property tax, sales and other taxes, and fiscal condition;
- b) Zoning, rezoning, building standards and regulations, and landscaping of major corridors;
- c) Police and fire protection, emergency management operations and homeland security;
- d) Stafford Centre and Stafford Civic Center;
- e) Stafford Municipal School District, Houston Community College and educational opportunities;
- f) Major highway improvements, streets, mobility and commuter rail;
- g) Parks and Swimming Pool;
- h) Municipal Court;
- i) Stafford Municipal Educational Television Station, streaming video, websites and intellectual technology;
- j) Home Rule Charter Review Commission;
- k) Recycling;
- l) Smoke-free restaurants and other private businesses;
- m) Future water supply and sanitary sewer; and
- n) Other matters of interest to the City.

This year's meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 25, at 7 p.m., in the Civic Center. You are strongly encouraged to attend and participate in this event and share your suggestions, comments, and questions. It will be televised live on S-METV, Channel 16 Comcast, with rebroadcasts for those who are unable to attend.

HOME RULE CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION FORWARDS RECOMMENDATIONS

As provided in the Home Rule Charter, City Council named a Commission last year consisting of Gwen Goodwin, Johnny Nunez, Mike Sachs, A.J. Honore and John Rose (who serves as Chairman) to thoroughly review the Charter and to forward recommendations to City Council for consideration. Following more than six months of discussions and deliberations, with the opportunity for the public to comment, the Commission has made two recommendations which Council will review next month.

Specifically, those proposals by the Commission are as follow:

Section 5.08 – Notification and Qualifications of City Officers. The City Secretary shall notify all persons elected or appointed to office of their election or appointment . . . An officer elected shall, after taking the oath of

office as prescribed by this section, take office and enter upon his or her duties . . . [This language sets forth that individuals take the duties after taking the oath of office. The language in the Charter states “at the next meeting”. This phrase would be deleted. The current practice is for individuals to take the oath and take the duties at the same meeting, but that is not in accordance with the Charter.]

Section 10.15 – Charter Review Commission. Subsection (a). Every five (5) years the City Council shall at its first regular meeting in July appoint a Charter Review Commission of four (4) or more qualified voters of the City. [This is the recommended language. With 4 members, the quorum would be 3. Council can appoint as many members as they want.]

As indicated in the previous article, the Town Meeting will afford the public an opportunity to comment on the Commission’s recommendations.

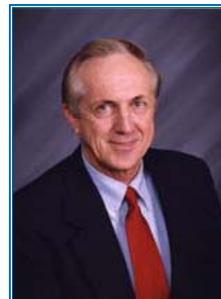
THREE COUNCIL POSITIONS ON MAY BALLOT



Councilman Ken Mathew



Councilman Robert Sorbet



Councilman Cecil Willis

While the presidential election is capturing much attention, there will be a significant local election in which three positions held on City Council, namely those by Ken Mathew, Robert Sorbet and Cecil Willis, will be up for election in May.

Filing for positions on the ballot may begin on Saturday, February 4. However, the City Secretary’s office

will not be open that day. Therefore, applications can be filed beginning Monday, February 6 through Monday, March 5, at 5 p.m. Anyone interested in seeking the Councilmember two-year positions should contact the election official, City Secretary Bonnie Baiamonte, at City Hall.

Detailed information will appear in the April issue of the *Newsletter*.

Messages

City Offices Will Be Closed:

Monday, February 20
President’s Day
Friday, April 6
Good Friday

Tree Limb Pickup:

Monday, February 6
Monday, April 2

Alarm Permit:

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

REZONING OF PROPERTY FOR SINGLE-FAMILY USE CREATES DIVISION AND ACRIMONY

In October, a proposal to rezone about 28 acres of the Promenade Subdivision from a zoning designation of the Primary Corridor to single-family dwelling was brought before the Planning and Zoning Commission. The applicant as well as numerous citizens testified in favor of this suggestion. After extensive discussion, the Commission in a series of highly divided decisions recommended the change to City Council for approval.

The following week, the matter was presented to Council with the majority of the people speaking in favor and the minority in opposition. The main question: Should prime commercial property be converted to single-family residential, thus, allowing additional residential development and imposing additional costs on the City while depriving the City of valuable commercial property?

Ultimately, after lengthy and contentious discussion, City Council - - by a 4 to 3 vote - - made a motion to

grant approval of 18 acres, or 65%, of the property which was originally requested to be rezoned.

Just last month after plats were approved reflecting the rezoned property, City Council again had a very lengthy debate about the advisability of the rezoning and the ultimate impacts on the City and its future economic viability.

This has been a most divisive issue. It has created acrimony among members of City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission and the SMSD Board of Trustees. Additionally, this discord has spilled into the general citizenry.

The ultimate result of this is yet to be determined. The questions: Whether the touted very expensive dwellings that were suggested by the promoter will become a reality and enhance the City; or, whether quality commercial development in the area will be impeded, thus, undermining future services for all our citizens?

Shows Will Be on February 3 and 4 in Stafford Centre Performing Arts Theatre

SMSD CHOIR PRESENTS GREASE

The City of Stafford will be co-sponsoring the production of *Grease* at the Stafford Centre on Friday, February 3 and Saturday, February 4. The SMSD Choir and other school members, totaling about 140 students, will be presenting the musical classic *Grease* in the Performing Arts Theatre of the Stafford Centre.

As a material part of the sponsorship, the City provides the use of the Stafford Centre for the rehearsals and productions.

Per the agreement with SMSD, a limited number of free tickets will be available to Stafford citizens for each of the shows. The tickets will be held at the Stafford Centre box office and printed "upon demand" on a first-come, first-serve basis. Citizens desiring these tickets must show proof of residency.



Jan 21-22 – Sugar Land Home and Garden Show; **Jan 29** – India Culture Center, India Republic Day Festival; **Feb 3-4** – SMSD Choir, *Grease*; **Feb 11** – Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Go Texan Fundraiser Banquet and Dance; **Feb 17** – Ides of March Classic Rock Concert; **Feb 18** – Greater Houston Train Show; **Feb 19** – Fort Bend Symphony, *Far Away Places*; **Feb 29** – Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce, Luncheon with Commissioner Prestage; **Mar 2-4** – Fort Bend Theatre, *Music Man*; **Mar 16** – UH Filipino Students Association, Modern Dance Performance; **Mar 17** – Yordano in Concert; **Mar 31** – Fort Bend Women's Center, *Boogie*; **Apr 14-15** – Ballet Forte, Spring Performance



City of Stafford
2610 South Main
Stafford, TX 77477

City Buys 3 Fire Trucks and 4 Police Cars

NEW FIRE AND POLICE VEHICLES ORDERED



illustration of pumper truck similar to the two recently authorized for purchase last month

Before the curtain fell on 2011, City Council authorized the purchase of two firefighting pumpers, one brush truck and four police vehicles. The fire equipment has a cost approaching \$1,200,000 while the police cars will tally \$122,000.

Acquisition of the new fire equipment has an authorization for firemen to travel to Wisconsin to view the proposed equipment and provide input into various details of the trucks. If all goes as anticipated, the construction of the fire trucks will be completed for shipping to Stafford by this August.

In his briefing to Council for these fire trucks, Fire Chief Larry DiCamillo explained that the existing department equipment - - two 1996 pumpers and one 2001 squad - - has reached the end of its recommended life cycle and requires heavy maintenance upkeep. He stressed that acquiring these new trucks would help solidify our ISO rating of 1, which puts the City in the top one-tenth of one percent of all firefighting entities in the Nation.

All of the police cars are expected to be received, outfitted and in service by the end of February.