

City Manager Update (12-6-19)

Happy Friday! I trust everyone had a good Thanksgiving. I'm amazed that we all spend several days cooking and cleaning to prepare a meal that lasts 27-minutes. It is hard to believe the Holiday Season is already upon us and there are only 19 days left until Christmas. The City staff and work crews have been preparing for Festival of Lights this week with Christmas decorations being put up at the Rec Center, Library, City Hall, and the PD. Special thanks to the Electric Department for stringing lights on Main Street and on most City facilities.

Approximately 400 extras participated in a 4th of July parade scene filmed on Main Street last week as part of the Amazon Studio TV series "PANIC". The production company will not be returning to Smithville until after the first of the year. Since October, the production company (Picrow Streaming, Inc.) has spent approximately **\$150k** in our community on film permits, building rentals, business interruption fees, food, gas, and charitable donations. They have also hired local contractors and paid local talent (as extras) in support of the production. Although inconvenient at times, the production has definitely given our community an economic boost. The production company will be filming in Smithville off and on through March 2020.

Here is a list of significant accomplishments, issues, events, and activities since my last update:

- 1) **FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant (HMG) DR-4245 - Marburger Drainage Improvement Project Update** - The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) FINALLY approved the plans for the Marburger drainage improvement project that were submitted in September 2018....14-months ago. If you recall, the City applied for (and was awarded) a \$140k FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant (HMG) for drainage improvements on and around Marburger Street shortly after the October 2015 flood event. The existing terrain on Marburger and NE 1st Street is extremely flat and numerous homes have flooded over the past several years. The primary means of storm water collection is through a combination of open ditches (there is no curb and gutter in this area) and a shallow underground storm sewer system that feeds into an existing ditch located parallel to the railroad tracks. This ditch begins at Marburger Street and extends east approximately 5,900 feet where it outfalls into Willow Creek. The 1300 linear foot concrete valley gutter we plan to install to provide drainage relief on Marburger is in the UPRR Right-Of-Way (ROW) which required their sign-off. Numerous requests were made over the 14-month period to expedite the review and approval of the engineering design to no avail. As a result, the City had to request a 6-month project extension with FEMA to avoid de-obligation of funding. Bottom line, we are finally in a position to publish a Request for Proposal (RFP) to identify a construction contractor and start the project with estimated completion by July 2020.

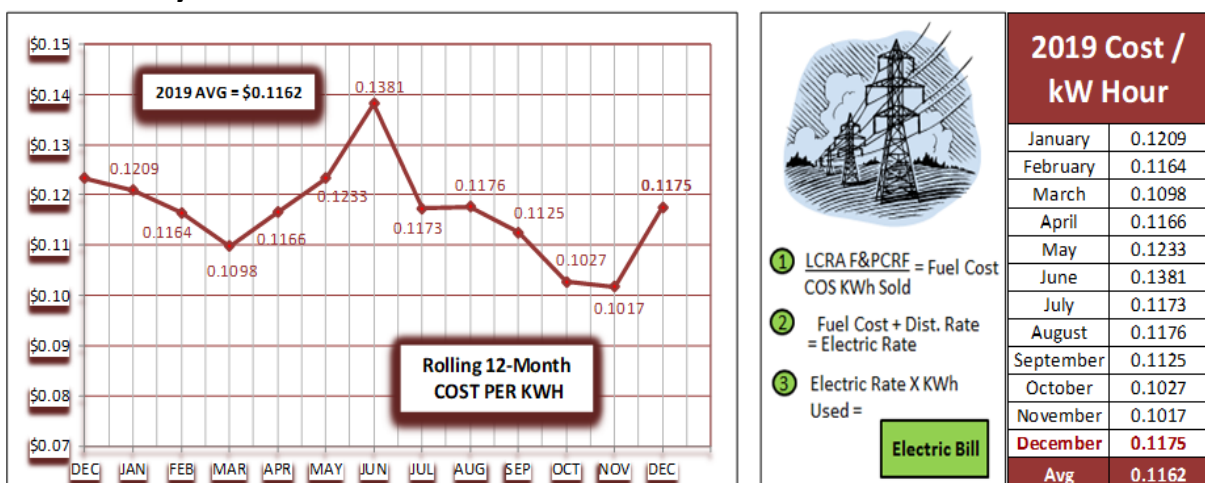
DR-4245 Marburger Drainage Improvement Project



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- 2) **Gazley Creek Bridge / 4th Avenue Road Closure** - The off-system bridge at 4th Avenue over Gazley Creek was ordered CLOSED for public safety by the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) at 10:25 am on November 20, 2019. The City has been closely monitoring the condition of the Gazley Creek bridge (built in 1936) since Hurricane Harvey and requested a TXDOT inspection team evaluate the structural integrity after noticeable surface deformation was identified (SEE PHOTOS). TXDOT's team of structural engineers believe that the bridge's deterioration rate is unpredictable making the structural integrity "questionable". As such, the structure was deemed unsafe and immediately closed for public safety. A traffic detour via Live Oak at FM 2571 was established. Notices of the bridge / road closure and detour route were hand-delivered to residents who live on the "Hill" within 2-hours of the ordered closure. In addition, notices were posted on the City website and Facebook page. The City worked with the Smithville ISD to ensure this information was communicated to those parents with school-aged children on the Hill that ride the school bus. The City is currently working with TXDOT to identify an engineering solution that will most likely require the bridge to be replaced. The City is also working with the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) to ensure that the Live Oak crossing remain open to allow emergency services access to/from the Hill. Lastly, the City is seeking emergency funding assistance from the Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM) to cover the estimated \$1.3M bridge replacement cost. Construction will take approximately 6-9 months. For more information, click on the following link for a recent Austin American Statesman article → [TXDOT CLOSES DETERIORATING BRIDGE IN SMITHVILLE](#)
- 3) **2020 LCRA "Steps Forward Day" Project Application Submitted** – The City of Smithville submitted the 2020 "Steps Forward Day" project application(s) to the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) for consideration. Volunteers from LCRA will gather on Friday, April 3, 2020, to work on community projects throughout LCRA's service territory. Examples of potential projects include cleaning parks, painting pavilions, planting trees or doing carpentry work. Last year, LCRA volunteers painted fifty (50) ornamental light poles on Main Street and NW 1st around the Gazebo area. The volunteers also painted the steps and handicap ramp on the Gazebo. This year (if selected), LCRA volunteers will help the Smithville Community Gardens paint the interior and exterior of the city-owned facility located on SE 2nd street (the old Food Pantry). They will also paint all of the raised cinder block planting beds. The City also submitted an alternate project to paint curbs and parking spaces at the Smithville PD. The City will provide the equipment and tools necessary to support the project with LCRA providing the manpower (20-25 volunteers who will work 4-6 hours).
- 4) **Residential Cost Per Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Calculated** - An analysis of LCRA billing data was conducted to determine residential cost per kilowatt hour (kWh) in DECEMBER. LCRA fuel costs vary month to month and are based upon electric utility generation, transmission, line loss, and service fees. The LCRA fuel cost per kWh for December is \$0.0675. This represents a **30.4% INCREASE** in fuel cost compared to November's fuel cost of \$0.0517. Adding City's distribution fee of \$0.0500 and LCRA's \$0.0675 fuel cost, the cost per kWh for residential service in Smithville during DECEMBER will be **\$0.1175 per kWh**. Below you will find a "rolling" 12-month residential cost per kWh and a fuel cost comparison chart. On average, the cost per kWh for residential electric service in Smithville is between 11-12 cents with the typical household using 1,200 kW per month at a cost of \$144. Click on the following link for winter energy conservation tips → <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/fall-and-winter-energy-saving-tips>

City of Smithville Residential Cost Per kWh – DECEMBER 2019



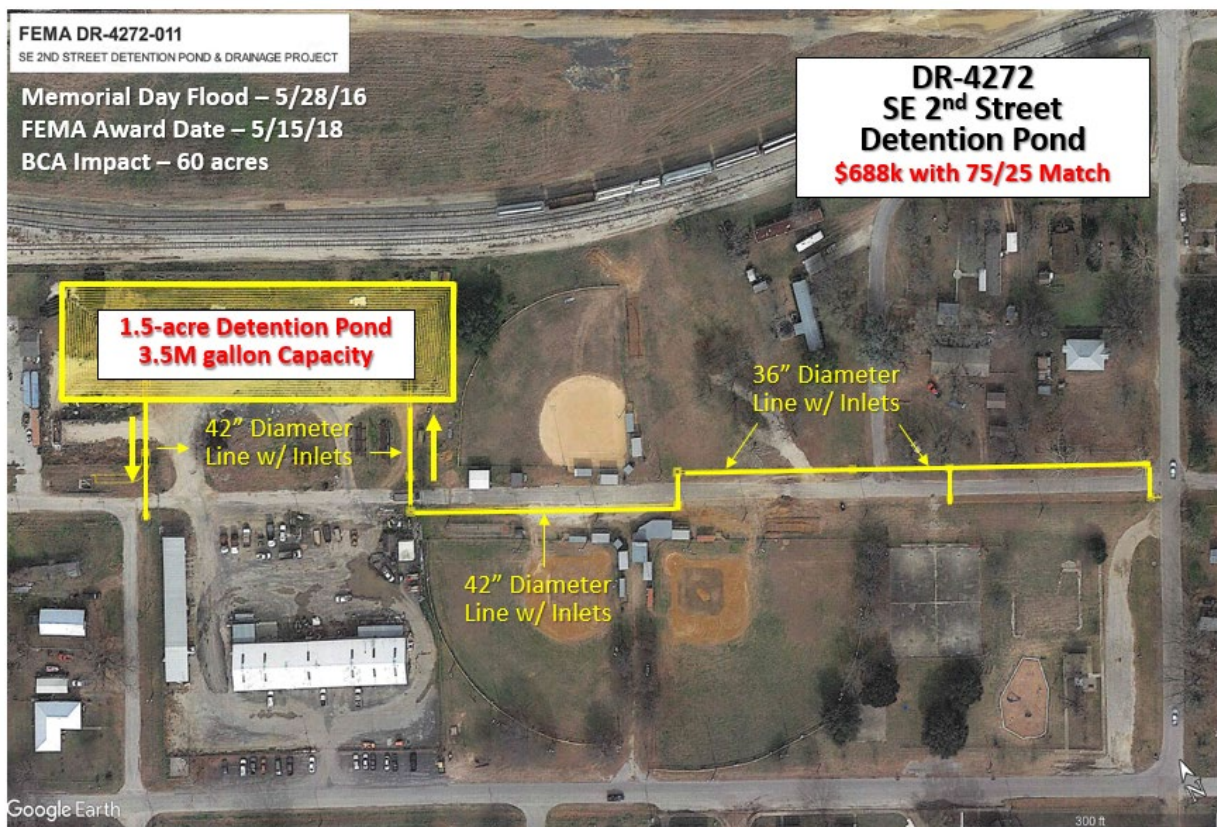
Note: LCRA Fuel & Power Cost Recovery Factor (See Table Above) + City Distribution Fee* (\$0.0500) = Cost / kWh

*Residential Distribution Fee = \$0.500/kWh. Non-Resident (i.e., service outside city limit) Distribution Fee = \$0.650/kWh Effective October 1, 2019

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- 5) **St. David's Foundation "Parks With a Purpose" Grant Awarded for MLK Park** - The St. David's Foundation has awarded Smithville with a \$100,000 grant for outdoor fitness equipment, sunshade, a water fountain, an adult/child swing, and swing designed for wheelchairs, as well as funding for program "Activation" through a partnership with the SISD ACE After School program. The goal of this project is to provide new all-abilities, inter-generational playground equipment, and more opportunities to encourage the community to go to MLK park for healthy activities outside. This 12-month project will begin in early January.
- 6) **Texas Parks & Wildlife Department Grant Application Submitted for Keilberg Park** - The City submitted another Parks program request to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) for \$132,000 which would pay for improvements to Keilberg Park. This includes an all-abilities playscape and intergenerational playground equipment as well as outdoor fitness equipment, upgrades to the CCC-built concession stand to include an ADA-compliant restroom, and a water fountain that will serve a person standing, a person in a wheelchair, and a dog. Additionally, City crews and volunteers will clear the brush and poison ivy out of the wooded area so that the SISD ACE After School program can provide additional "Activation" programming. In addition, the City crews will improve the gravel parking lot area. We will be notified this spring whether we would be awarded this 12-month grant, which would begin in May, 2020.
- 7) **FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant (HMG) DR-4272 Project Kick-Off Meeting** - After the 2016 Memorial Day flood, the City applied for and received a \$688k FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant (HMG) to upgrade drainage lines on SE 2nd Street and construct a detention pond behind the City Warehouse located at 1000 MLK Drive. The 1.5-acre detention pond will hold approximately 3.5M gallons of water that will help alleviate flooding at the City Warehouse and along SE 2nd Street. Both the detention pond and new storm water collection system has been sized to mitigate up to the 10-year, 24-hour storm event. On 12/5/19, the City staff met with representatives from the Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM), Langford Community Management Services (LCMS), and Cohn-Resnick for a project kick-off meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the grant terms and conditions, review procurement guidelines, verify City match, and identify the construction timeline. The project match requirement is 25% of the total grant amount or \$172k. The City match is a budgeted expense that will be paid using dedicated C of O funds. The next step is to prepare bid documents and publish a Request for Proposal (RFP) so that a construction contractor can be selected by the Council. The target completion date for this project is on or before February 9, 2021.

DR-4272 - SE 2nd Street Drainage Improvement Project



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There are several events going on in Smithville during the Holidays and it is going to be a very busy couple of weeks:

The **29th Annual Festival of Lights** and the Lighted Parade is on **Saturday, December 7th** from 10am-9pm. This event has grown every year and the Chamber expects a record crowd will be attending the parade. The Gazebo lighting will be at 6:30 p.m. and parade begins at 7:00 p.m. This year, no city officials will be riding in the parade. However, councilmembers should plan to attend the lighting of the Gazebo with the Mayor. Come enjoy live music, food vendors, kid's activities, and photos with Santa (sponsored by the Smithville Police Department).

The **Smithville Public Library** will be holding an Open House on **Thursday, December 12th** (from 4:00 - 6:30 pm)

The annual **Smithville Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD) Christmas Party** will be held on **Friday, December 6th** at the Pavilion in Riverbend Park. Social starts at 6:00 p.m. with Dinner at 7:00 pm. Councilmembers are welcome and encouraged to attend.

The City will be holding a **Holiday Open House** (all day) at City Hall on **Tuesday, December 10th** ...nothing fancy but we will have cookies, punch, and cider during the day. The public is welcome to attend.

The **Towers Nursing Home Annual Christmas Basket Raffle** will be held on **Saturday, December 14th** from 2-4 pm at the new nursing home at 372 Hill Road. You can help make this year's raffle a bigger success by donating a basket for the raffle; donating money for the staff to purchase and wrap your basket; and of course, attend the event. Contact Dana Crim at the Towers at 512-237-4606 for more information.

There will be a **Smithville Holiday Scavenger Hunt** hosted by the Chamber of Commerce and E.H. Mercantile on **December 14th** from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. The event will begin and end at E.H. Mercantile (1509 Dorothy Nichols Road). There is a \$20 entry fee per vehicle, all proceeds donated for the Holidays! Cars and golf carts welcome. Bonus points for: driving a golf cart (we're a golf cart friendly community), team all dressed in Christmas Holiday Attire, or vehicle decorated for the Christmas Holiday. Things you might need: grocery store size bag, paper and coloring supplies, camera or camera phone. Prizes awards for top 3 teams. Pre-register online at www.smithvilletx.org or register on-site the day of the event.

The **City Christmas Party** will be on **Saturday, December 14th** at Riverbend Park. We will be holding a margarita and salsa contest. Gates open at noon with judging at 3:00 and 4:00pm respectively. A fajita dinner will be served at 6:00 pm. We will have horseshoes, washers, dominos, music, and fire pits. Thanks in advance to those Councilmembers who will be available to judge!

The **Smithville ISD Central Office Annual Holiday Luncheon** will be held on **Thursday, December 19th** from 10:30 am to 1:30 pm at the Admin Building (red brick building located at 901 NE 6th St). Councilmembers and the Mayor are invited.

The **Annual Chamber Holiday Mixer** will be held on **Thursday, December 19th** from 5:00-7:00 pm at Milton's (206 NW Loop 230). The event is being sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, Pease Custom Floors, LP and Milton's. Councilmembers and the Mayor are encouraged to attend.

Volunteers are needed to help wrap presents for the Smithville Police Association's Blue Santa program. Wrapping will be done on **Thursday, December 19th** in the old Born-Again Emporium building (230 NW Loop 230) from 5:00 pm until all gifts are wrapped. PLEASE consider volunteering as there are literally hundreds of presents that need to be wrapped. For more information, call Greg Stewart at 512-237-3228.

Below you will find the City of Smithville Holiday schedule. This information has been communicated on our City website, Facebook Page, and inside the November / December Utility Bill in the message section. In addition, we will post notices on the doors of City Hall one week in advance of the scheduled Holiday closure(s).

CHRISTMAS:

- Tuesday, December 24th – (Close at Noon)
- Wednesday, December 25th – Holiday
- Thursday, December 26th – Holiday

NEW YEARS:

- Wednesday, January 1st – Holiday

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information. Happy Holidays!!!

-- Robert --



PHOTOS – 12/6/19

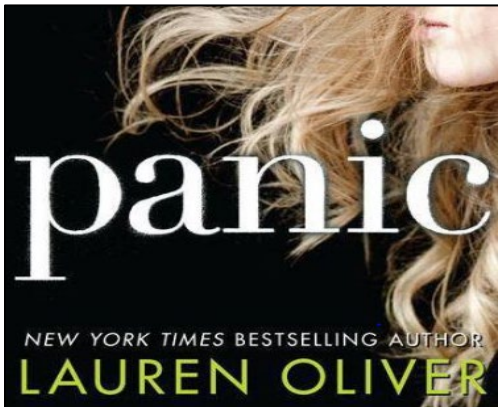
4th Avenue Bridge Over Gazley Creek Closed - Detour via Live Oak & FM 2571



2019 City Hall and Main Street Christmas Decorations / Blue Santa



Amazon Studios TV Series "PANIC" Filming a 4th of July Parade Scene on Main Street



SISD Tiger Band

Boom Light @ 1st and Main

Extras Holding @ Rec Center

