

## City Manager Update – 3/10/23

Last week's thunderstorms caused downed power lines, power outages, and fallen trees throughout our community. Personnel from the Public Works / Utilities department worked diligently throughout the night and well into the next day restoring power and removing downed trees, tree limbs, and debris from city streets. We experienced wind gusts of up to 60 mph (straight line winds) that tore off a substantial portion of the old First State Bank building's roof and deposited it on Main Street (SEE PHOTOS). The front door of the Post Office and the concession stand at the Little League field at MLK Park were also damaged. Fortunately, no one was injured. The City of Smithville Brush Dump on Mt. Pleasant Avenue (aka Dump Ground Rd) will be OPEN the next few WEEKENDS to allow citizens the opportunity to dispose of any downed trees and tree limbs. Only vegetative debris is allowed. As a reminder, it is illegal to dump construction debris, tires, trash, or other material at this location.

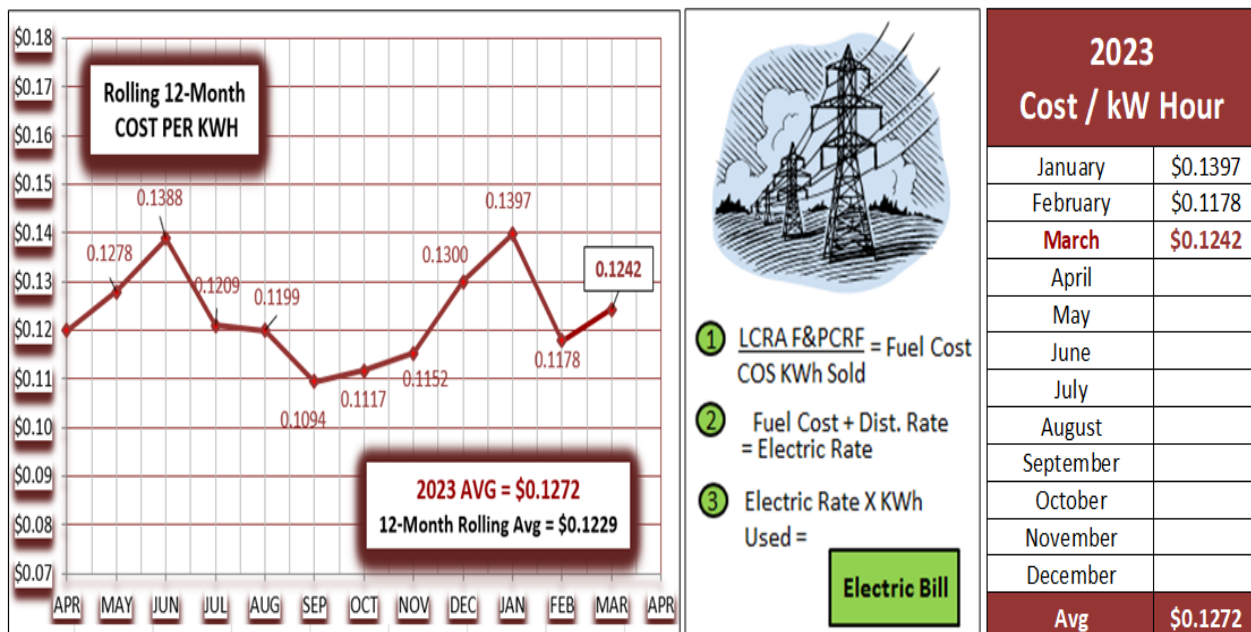
Daylight Savings time will begin on **Sunday, March 12, 2023**. Be sure to move your clocks ahead one (1) hour. "Spring Forward – Fall Back". It's also a good time to check/change out the batteries in your smoke detectors.

The mild temperatures and sunshine have been a welcome relief from the cold and rain in February. Wildflowers and trees are in full bloom. Bo Peep's Crossing on the Hill is covered with Bluebonnets, Pink Phlox, and Indian Paint wildflowers. This is a great location for photos of the kids and/or grandkids. So, please feel free to bring the family and take all the photos you like while the wildflowers are still in bloom. It is my hope that we are finished with any arctic blasts until next winter. Local farmers say that winter is not officially over until the mesquite and pecan trees bloom. For the past 2-weeks the oak pollen has left a film of yellow powder on everything outdoors and is wreaking havoc for those with allergies.

Below you will find a list of accomplishments, issues, events, and planned activities since my last update:

- 1) **Residential Cost Per Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Calculated** – An analysis of LCRA billing data was conducted to determine residential cost per kilowatt hour (kWh) in March. LCRA fuel costs vary month to month and are based upon utility generation, transmission, line loss, and service fees. The LCRA fuel cost per kWh for March is \$0.0742. This represents an **9.42% INCREASE** compared to February's fuel cost of \$0.1178. Adding the City's distribution fee of \$0.0500 and LCRA's \$0.0742 fuel cost, **the cost per kWh for residential service in Smithville during MARCH will be \$0.1242**. Below you will find a "rolling" 12-month residential cost per kWh chart. The Texas PUC has energy-savings tips on their website → <https://www.puc.texas.gov/consumer/facts/Save.aspx>. On average, the cost per kWh for electric service in Smithville is between 12-13 cents with the average household using 1,200 kW per month (\$156).

### City of Smithville Residential Cost Per kWh / LCRA F&PCRF - MARCH 2023



## City Manager Update – 3/10/23 (continued)

- 2) **2023 LCRA “Steps Forward Day” Project(s) Approved / Scheduled** – The City received notification that our 2023 “Steps Forward Day” project application(s) were approved. Volunteers from LCRA will gather on **Friday, April 28, 2023** 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 helped the Smithville Police Department install new landscape timbers, trim bushes, and repaint the curbs around the building. LCRA also painted the restrooms (exterior) at Riverbend Park. This year, LCRA volunteers will trim trees and clean around gravesites at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. A second project will be to paint the interior of the restrooms at Riverbend Park. The city will provide the supplies and equipment necessary to support the project with LCRA providing the manpower (typically 20-25 volunteers). The City of Smithville is fortunate to have LCRA as a community partner. Programs like Steps Forward and the Community Development Partnership Program (CDPP) have definitely made a positive impact.
- 3) **2023 City of Smithville Councilmember Elections** – Candidate filing for the 2023 City of Smithville General Election is complete. A list of candidates and the position for which they are running is provided below. Election Day is Saturday, May 6, 2023. Early voting begins April 24, 2023 and ends May 2, 2023. Voting will be at the Smithville Recreation Center (106 Royston). See schedule below and/or click on the following link for additional information (e.g., sample ballot, polling locations, etc.) → <https://www.bastropvotes.org/election-information-2/upcoming-elections/>. The Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce will be sponsoring a candidate forum on Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at the Smithville Rec Center (6:00 pm). Good luck to all the candidates.

### Smithville City Council Candidates For 2023 General Election

	Position	Candidate	Term Lenth	Term Expires	Election Type	Candidate Status
City of Smithville	Alderman - Place 1	Mitch Jameson	2-Years	May 2023	General	Challenger
		Tyrone Washington				Challenger
	Alderman - Place 2	Tom Etheredge	2-Years	May 2023	General	Incumbent
		Unopposed				
	Alderman - Place 3	Jimmy Jenkins	2-Years	May 2023	General	Challenger
		Monica Poss				Challenger
Note: Joanna Morgan (Place 1) and William Gordon (Place 2) are not seeking another term in office.						

- 4) **City of Smithville Wins the 2023 IT'S TIME TEXAS Community Challenge For 6<sup>th</sup> Consecutive Year** - Congratulations are in order for all those who participated in the 2023 “IT'S TIME TEXAS Community Challenge”. Smithville came in 1<sup>st</sup> PLACE in the “extra small” community category (population between 1-5000) dominating La Joya and Stockdale logging 858,750 points with over 150 community participants. Similarly, the Smithville ISD took 1<sup>st</sup> place with 678,550 points beating out Monte Alto ISD and Stockdale ISD. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> year in a row that Smithville has won the competition! H-E-B sponsored the free, state-wide competition in which Texas communities compete to see which communities can demonstrate the greatest commitment to healthy living. The winning community in each size category will receive a trophy, school district banner, and Governor's certificate. Bastrop and Elgin placed 8<sup>th</sup> and 63<sup>rd</sup> in the “small” community category (population between 5,000-40,000) earning 652,900 and 14,300 points respectively. Congratulations! Click on the link for results → <https://ittcommunitychallenge.com/>.
- 5) **City Council Authorizes Action to Recover Delinquent Utility Accounts** – Beginning **June 1, 2023**, utility customers with past due accounts greater than 30-days will have their service disconnected. Per City Council action on January 9, 2023, a concerted effort will be made to reduce the number of past-due utility accounts by limiting the number of days a customer is allowed to be delinquent. In the past, many utility customers with delinquent accounts (exceeding 90-days) were allowed to continue receiving services if the customer made payment arrangements. With a 10% late penalty accruing each month (and continued utility usage), many customers simply could not honor their agreements. As a result, utility services were disconnected and the delinquent account(s) sent to a collection agency. This is revenue the city will very likely never recover. In fact, the City has incurred more than \$850k in lost utility revenue associated with delinquent accounts over the past 10 years. Ultimately, establishing a 30-day past-due limit will benefit both the customer and the City by reducing the delinquent utility customer’s balance to something manageable while enabling more reliable payment of utility services provided. Please contact the City Utility Department on (512) 237-3282 if you have any questions or need additional information.

## City Manager Update – 3/10/23 (continued)

- 6) **CenterPoint Energy Annual Gas Reliability Infrastructure Program (GRIP) Interim Rate Adjustment (IRA)** - The City is a member of the Alliance of CenterPoint Municipalities (“ACM”). The ACM group was organized by a number of municipalities served by CenterPoint Energy Resources Corp., South Texas Division (“CenterPoint”) and has been represented by the law firm of Herrera Law & Associates, PLLC (through Mr. Alfred R. Herrera) to assist in reviewing applications to change rates submitted by CenterPoint. CenterPoint Energy is asking the Texas Railroad Commission for a Gas Reliability Infrastructure Program (GRIP) Interim Rate Adjustment (IRA) to their base rate(s). Under Texas law (re: Gas Utilities Regulatory Act), we do not have the ability to oppose the rate increase. However, we can postpone the effective date of the proposed increase for 45-days. The rate will be increased by \$3.72/month for residential service and \$7.51/month for small commercial service. The adjusted monthly charge (base rate) will be \$30.75 and \$48.93 respectively. This represents an average increase between 13-18%. The rate increase will help recover incremental spending for capital infrastructure improvements in its South Texas Division during the 2023 calendar year. The proposed IRA will become effective on **May 1, 2023** unless the City chooses to suspend the IRA effective date until **June 15, 2023**. This will be an item for consideration during the March 13, 2023 Council meeting.
- 7) **City-Wide Clean-up / Used Tire Collection / Electronics Recycling Event Held** - On Saturday, February 18, 2023, the City of Smithville partnered with the City of Bastrop, Keep Smithville Beautiful, Bastrop County, and Lee County to hold a **USED TIRE and ELECTRONICS RECYCLING EVENT** at the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facility located at 109 Taylor and SE 2nd Street in Smithville. In addition, the City held its annual **CITY-WIDE CLEAN-UP**. Approximately 700 used tires, 9 tons of bulk trash, and several hundred pounds of old electronic equipment were dropped off for recycling and/or FREE disposal. A special THANK YOU to the forty-four (44) volunteers that helped make the event a success. The next HHW collection event is scheduled for **April 15, 2023**.
- 8) **City of Smithville Comprehensive Plan Status Update** - The City's next Comprehensive Plan effort will begin in 2023, and will use grant dollars to pay a consultant for their work through the General Land Office (GLO) Community Development Block Grant Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) Resilient Communities Program (RCP). The City Council awarded the Comprehensive Plan contract to [Langford Community Management Services, Inc. \(LCMS\)](#) in September 2022, which also included the comprehensive planning consultant [KU & Associates](#). Click on the following link for a copy of the → [Comprehensive Plan Proposal](#). LCMS submitted the grant application on the City's behalf for the maximum amount available (\$300,000) on November 7, 2022. Requests for additional information from GLO were received and submitted on 12/09/22 and 2/14/23 respectively. GLO required that the City resubmit its Employer Identification Number (EIN) and requested a Federal Information Processing System (FIPS) number be added to the Environmental Exempt form (which was not on the original application instructions). At this point, we are still waiting for approval, award, and contract. Once awarded, the process will take 18-24 months and will provide multiple opportunities for community input and stakeholder involvement. Additional information regarding the comprehensive plan, is available via city website → <https://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/our-community/development-plans/>
- 9) **City of Smithville Sales Tax Update** - Below are the sales tax allocations for March 2023 vs. March 2022 (retail sales made primarily in January). This data reflects RETAIL sales of goods and services subject to LOCAL sales tax. Our sales tax payment (receipt) for March was \$62,561. This represents an **8.27% DECREASE** (\$5,643) in our net payment compared to the same time last year. Other than inflation, the reason for the local decline remains uncertain. Folks simply did not spend as much in Smithville during January as they did in Bastrop and Elgin. As a reminder, sales tax dollars are used to make street / road repairs and help pay for community services like FIRE and POLICE. Remember...SHOP LOCAL - it makes a difference!!!

### Bastrop County Sales Tax Allocation - March 2023

County/City	Current Rate	Net Payment This Period	Comparable Payment Prior Year	% Change	2023 Payments To Date	2022 Payments	% Change
Bastrop	1.50%	\$901,054	\$791,530	13.83%	\$3,053,268	\$2,786,380	9.57%
Elgin	1.50%	\$291,588	\$251,603	15.89%	\$978,650	\$858,846	13.94%
Smithville	1.50%	\$62,561	\$68,204	-8.27%	\$219,979	\$224,454	-1.99%
Bastrop County	0.50%	\$601,436	\$504,685	19.17%	\$2,057,164	\$1,819,736	13.04%

## City Manager Update – 3/10/23 (continued)

- 10) City Council to Consider Resolution Supporting H.B. 2717 “Maximum Length of Trains”** - The City of Smithville will consider a resolution in support of [HB 2717](#) sponsored by [District 143 Representative Ana Hernandez](#). If passed, HB 2717 would establish a maximum length of 8,500’ for any train operating in Texas . Here is a link to the text of the → [proposed legislation](#). It is not uncommon to have trains in excess of 10,000 ft coming through Smithville while parents are dropping off and/or picking-up school aged children resulting in gridlocked traffic and excessive delays along Hwy 95 and Loop 230. Not to mention cutting off all available routes for emergency personnel between the south and north side(s) of our community. This will be an item for discussion and action during the Monday, March 13, 2023 Council meeting.
- 11) City Council to Consider Resolution Supporting H.B. 9 “Texas Broadband Infrastructure Fund”** - The City of Smithville will consider a resolution in support of [HB 9](#) sponsored by [District 9 Representative Trent Ashby](#). If passed, HB 9 would develop broadband telecommunications services through an appropriation of public funds. Here is a link to the text of the → [proposed legislation](#). Smithville clearly needs to address Broadband as an economic development issue as our rural community is still underserved by broadband providers. A number of [federal agencies provide funds](#) connected to grant/loan projects and programs that could be of use in Smithville. Several businesses, nonprofit organizations, and governmental entities have been coalescing to be ready to build broadband infrastructure once needs and funding sources are more clearly identified and once champions come to the fore. The City of Smithville intends to work with the Smithville Workforce Training Center, Bastrop County, BCC, and other local partners to ensure that our community is included in this effort. This will be an item for discussion and action during the Monday, March 13, 2023 Council meeting.
- 12) New Code Enforcement Officer Hired** - The City of recently hired a new Code Enforcement Officer. **Lisa Pierce** began her career in the 1990 when she was hired by Comal County as an Animal Control Officer. In 1991, Lisa attended the police academy in San Antonio, Texas obtaining her Basic Peace Officer’s license. Shortly thereafter, she went to work for the City of Garden Ridge, Texas as a patrol officer and canine handler. Lisa took a break from police work until 2014 to raise her children and moved to Weimar where she worked as the Code Enforcement and Animal Control Officer. Lisa is a certified code enforcement officer and licensed plumbing inspector. Lisa is grateful for the opportunity to work for the City of Smithville and says that; “One of my biggest challenges in code enforcement is that most people are not aware of the laws that make up the “codes” even exist”. Her goal is to educate citizens about what the laws are and why they are enforced. Lisa can be reached on **(737) 677-9448** and is available to answer questions or discuss any code compliance issues or concerns citizens may have. Welcome aboard Lisa!
- 13) Economic Development Workshop Scheduled** – The City of Smithville will hold an Economic Development Workshop on Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at City Hall (317 Main Street) from 5:00-6:30 pm. The workshop will be presented by Lorie Vincent, CEcD, President of [ACCELERATION by design LLC](#). This high-level economic development workshop will address the need and importance of economic development strategies that fuel job creation, increase capital investment, attract and nurture the workforce and enhance quality of life. Topics to be covered will include maximizing your assets, workforce/talent development, housing, education, elevating your marketing, targeted recruitment, downtown revitalization, business retention & expansion and more. Click link for [AGENDA](#).
- 14) New Recycling Center Hours of Operation** - Beginning March 15, 2023, the Smithville Recycling Center will be **CLOSED** on **MONDAYS** and **TUESDAYS** to improve resource utilization and operational efficiency (see schedule below). The City will have an employee working Wednesday through Sunday from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm to keep the Recycling Center from being overwhelmed and all recycling material sorted and bailed. Closing the Recycling Center on Monday and Tuesday will allow adequate time to restock, clean, and maintain equipment / buildings.

### **RECYCLING CENTER – NEW HOURS OF OPERATION**

**Monday – CLOSED**

**Tuesday – CLOSED**

Wednesday – 6:00 am to 10:00 pm

Thursday – 6:00 am to 10:00 pm

Friday – 6:00 am to 10:00 pm

Saturday – 6:00 am to 10:00 pm

Sunday – 6:00 am to 10:00 pm

## City Manager Update – 3/10/23 (continued)

There are several events / activities planned the next few weeks in Smithville:

**Saturday, March 11, 2023** – Smithville Rec Center [2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL 5k COLOR RUN](#). Check-in begins at 9:00 am with 10:00 am START TIME. Register online at <https://smithville.recdesk.com/Community/Program>

**Sunday, March 12, 2023** - Daylight Savings time begins. Set clocks ahead one (1) hour. “Spring Forward – Fall Back”.

**Monday, March 13, 2023** - CITY COUNCIL meeting will be held at 6:00 pm (City Hall – 317 Main). Click for link to access the [COUNCIL DATA PACKET #1](#), [COUNCIL DATA PACKET #2](#), and [COUNCIL AGENDA](#).

**Tuesday, March 14, 2023** – [ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT](#) workshop will be held at 5:00 pm (City Hall – 317 Main)

**Thursday, March 16, 2023** - CHAMBER MIXER - Sponsored by the Smithville Noon Lion’s Club & Pocket’s Grille, at Pocket’s Grill, 205 Fawcett St. – 5:00 to 7:00 pm.

**Monday, March 20, 2023** – First day of Spring.

**Friday, March 31, 2023** - The monthly BEST BREAKFAST is sponsored by the Bastrop County Appraisal District (BCAD) and will be held in Bastrop at **Anita’s Mexican Restaurant** located at 1004 Main Street from 8:00-9:30 am.

**Saturday, April 1, 2023** - Smithville Empty Bowl Project will be held at the Recreation Center (106 Royston) from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. EMPTY BOWL INFO: <https://www.facebook.com/smithvilleemptybowlproject/>

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information. Have a great weekend!

--Robert--





## PHOTOS - 3/10/23

Sidewalk Construction on North side of Loop 230



Family Dollar / Dollar Tree Construction In-Progress (301 Myrtle Lane and Loop 230)



Damage from March 2, 2023 Thunderstorm



City-wide Clean-Up / Used Tires / Electronics Recycling Collection Event



Wildflowers at Bo Peep's Crossing on the Hill

