

City Manager Update – 7/10/20

I hope everyone had a Happy (and safe) 4th of July. I live on the Hill (just within the City limits) on Live Oak and the fireworks in the county (about 300 yards away) wreaked havoc on my dogs. I'm sure other dog owners within the city limits experienced similar issues. The Smithville PD published notices on social media in advance of the 4th of July that discharging fireworks in town was punishable by fine. Twelve (12) compliant calls were received throughout town the evening of the 4th. However, the PD reported that each time they went out to investigate the complaint, it involved large groups and they were unable to establish the actual violator as the people quickly dispersed when they recognized the police car. As such, verbal warnings were issued to all parties.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to the Saunders and Salazar families for the passing of their loved ones **Diane Saunders** and **Cynthia Salazar**. Mrs. Saunders was a long-time resident of Smithville who always spoke her mind. Cynthia Salazar was the wife of Smithville Patrol Officer Frederico Salazar. Mrs. Salazar succumbed to COVID-19. Please keep these families in your thoughts and prayers.

As of 7/10/20, there have been 2,644,496 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 3,013 deaths identified in the state of Texas. There are now six-hundred-fifty (650) confirmed cases and eight (8) fatalities in Bastrop County. Smithville has incurred fifteen (15) confirmed COVID-19 cases within the city limits and twenty-four (24) cases in the unincorporated area of the 78957 Zip Code. Bastrop County OEM has published a [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) that provides the total number of confirmed cases, fatalities, and recoveries with gender, age, and location information (i.e., Bastrop, Elgin, Smithville, County, etc.) are also available.

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

- 1) City of Smithville Sales Tax Update** - Below are the sales tax allocations for July 2020 vs. July 2019 (retail sales made primarily in May). This data reflects RETAIL sales of goods and services subject to LOCAL sales tax. Our sales tax payment (receipt) for July was \$50,878. This represents a **16.86% INCREASE** (\$7,342) in our net payment compared to the same time last year. The unexpected increase in sales tax was attributed to greater local spending at grocery, furniture, and convenience stores. There was also a significant increase in on-line ordering where sales tax is credited to the delivery address/location. 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 - JULY 2020

County/City	Current Rate	Net Payment This Period	Comparable Payment Prior Year	% Change	2020 Payments To Date	2019 Payments To Date	% Change
Bastrop	1.50%	\$698,844	\$581,242	20.23%	\$4,529,973	\$4,295,585	5.45%
Elgin	1.50%	\$257,190	\$197,341	30.32%	\$1,605,725	\$1,299,111	23.60%
Smithville	1.50%	\$50,878	\$43,536	16.86%	\$367,308	\$322,893	13.75%
Bastrop County	0.50%	\$455,025	\$378,380	20.25%	\$3,019,326	\$2,698,814	11.87%

- 2) Smithville City Council Mandates Face Coverings in Public in Response to COVID-19** – On June 30, 2020 during a special-called meeting, the Smithville City Council voted unanimously to pass an emergency ordinance mandating citizens wear face masks in public beginning July 1, 2020. This action was necessary to help control the spread of COVID-19 in our community as we are seeing an exponential increase in the number of positive cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. A copy of the emergency ordinance is available via the City website. The mask ordinance is a temporary measure that will be in effect until August 28, 2020 unless the City Council decides to extend the requirement due to COVID-19. We are in a public health crisis and need everyone to comply with social distancing and face covering requirements. Two months ago, it was rare that we knew anyone with COVID-19. Now, more and more people we know are actively battling the illness. On numerous occasions I have seen folks in Smithville gathering in large groups, not wearing masks, and not practicing social distancing. On July 2, 2020 Governor Abbott issued [Executive Order GA-29](#) mandating face masks be worn in any County with twenty (20) or more positive COVID-19 cases. The reality is that if we cannot get the situation under control in the next few weeks, our hospitals will be overwhelmed --- more people will become infected, more people will die, and we will more than likely be facing additional shut-downs (something none of us want). Additionally, if the area hospitals are full with COVID-19 patients, it will be difficult for them to treat other life-threatening illnesses like a heart attack or stroke as there will be no trauma / hospital beds available. So please, wear your mask, wash your hands, maintain social distance, stay home if you are sick, be kind to one another, and let's all pray to the good Lord we get through this!

City Manager Update – 7/10/20 (continued)

- 3) **Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Parking Spaces Installed at City Hall** – Two (2) ADA-compliant handicap parking spaces have been constructed in front of City Hall. A local contractor (RES Construction 66, LLC) completed the work in June for approximately \$12k. The spaces are reserved for those individuals with mobility issues that have business to conduct in City Hall (e.g., paying bills, voting, etc.). The handicap spaces have been painted and signs posted. This project was long overdue and will be a welcome amenity to City Hall. (SEE PHOTOS)
- 4) **FY 2020-2021 Annual Operating Plan / Budget Process Initiated** - I am currently working with my staff to identify fiscal year 2020-21 goals and objectives as part of the initial annual operating planning and budget process. I will have a better feel for where we are and where we need to go in the coming weeks. We still have not received certification of our 2020 Appraisal Roll (taxable base) from the Bastrop County Appraisal District. The City of Smithville received official notice from BCAD communicating the preliminary estimate of property value(s) within the city limits. The total assessed property value (net taxable minus exemptions) for Smithville in 2020 is \$296,128,351. This represents an 7.67% increase (\$21,094,648) over last year's net taxable value of \$275,033,703. Based on the city's current tax rate of \$0.5690 per \$100 valuation, this could bring in an additional \$120,033 of revenue to the FY20/21 General Fund - barring any adjustments given to citizens who protest and win their appeals, added exemptions, etc. which typically equates to a 2-3% reduction of the total assessed value. Final property values (i.e., the certified tax roll) won't be published until the end of July. These values are what drives the effective tax rate. It is too early to tell what amount of tax increase, if any, we should consider for 2020-21. Jennifer will be setting up budget workshops and public hearing dates as we navigate the FY20-21 budget process. During the next 3-4 weeks, the staff and I will be focusing the majority of our time developing a balanced budget. In the interim, I would ask that the City Council and/or citizens email any projects or areas of focus they would like to see included as part of our annual operating plan / budget. See table below for the City of Smithville's historical property values / tax rates.

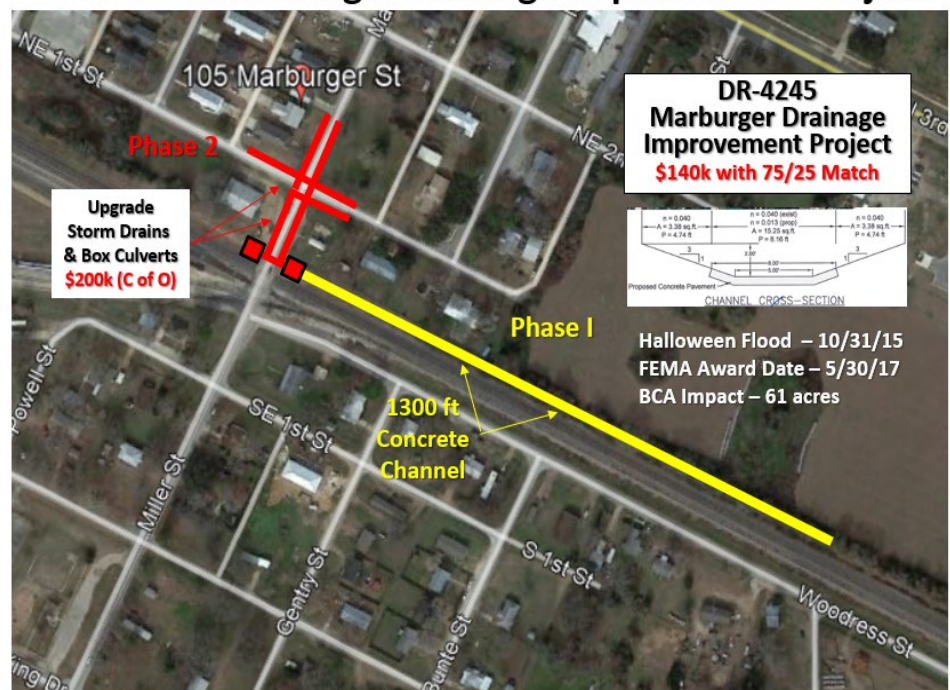
BCAD Property Valuation & City Tax Rate Comparison - PRELIMINARY						
Year	Assessed Valuation	% Change in Value	M&O Rate	I&S Rate	% Change	Total Tax Rate
2020	\$296,128,351	7.67%	TBD			
2019	\$275,033,703	10.90%	\$0.4525	\$0.1165	0.00%	\$0.5690
2018	\$247,999,239	3.83%	\$0.4455	\$0.1235	5.57%	\$0.5690
2017	\$238,861,226	14.15%	\$0.4166	\$0.1224	-4.77%	\$0.5390
2016	\$209,255,193	5.48%	\$0.4276	\$0.1384	2.28%	\$0.5660
2015	\$198,375,435	9.25%	\$0.4075	\$0.1459	0.00%	\$0.5534
2014	\$181,581,421	1.34%	\$0.3990	\$0.1544	9.37%	\$0.5534

- 5) **Government Land Office (GLO) Community Development Block Grant Mitigation Funding** – In May, Commissioner George P. Bush announced the kick-off of the application process for the first round of more than \$2.3 billion for mitigation projects to protect Texas communities hit by Hurricane Harvey and severe flooding in 2015 and 2016. The Texas General Land Office (GLO) will be administering the funds allocated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the Community Development Block Grant Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) program. Projects will be evaluated and scored based on several factors including benefit to regions and local communities repetitively damaged by floods and other disasters. The Hurricane Harvey State Mitigation Competition will fund mitigation projects for Hurricane Harvey HUD and state-designated Most Impacted and Distressed (MID) areas. The competition is open to cities, counties, state entities, and special purpose districts. Examples of projects include flood control and drainage improvements, infrastructure improvements, green infrastructure, public facilities, and buyouts. Each proposed project must have an estimated cost between \$3 million to \$100 million. For the 2015 and 2016 Floods State Mitigation Competitions, each separate competition will provide funds to cities, counties, Indian Tribes, and councils of governments (COG) to address risks in the 2015 and 2016 Floods HUD and State MID areas. Examples of projects include flood control and drainage improvements, infrastructure improvements, green infrastructure, public facilities, and buyouts. Each proposed project must have an estimated cost between \$3 million to \$10 million. HUD defines mitigation as activities that increase resilience to disasters and reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of loss of life, injury, damage to and loss of property, and suffering and hardship, by lessening the impact of future disasters. Through a Texas Water Development Board (TWBD) grant awarded in 2015, the City previously conducted a 2D-Flood Plain Modeling Study of Gazley and Willow Creek(s) that identified approximately \$40M in regional drainage infrastructure improvement projects that would qualify. The GLO CDBG-MIT grant applications are due by October 28, 2020. If awarded, the City will be responsible for a 1% match.

City Manager Update – 7/10/20 (continued)

- 6) **GLO CDBG-MIT Engineering Services Request for Qualification (RFQ) Received** – The City of Smithville published a Request for Qualification (“RFQ”) in the Austin American Statesman for engineering service required to develop budget, scope of work, and draft specifications for the preparation of a General Land Office (GLO) CDBG-MIT application. This will include 2015, 2016, Hurricane Harvey State Mitigation Competition and Method of Distribution activities(s), and upon funding, the subsequent preliminary and final design plans, bid documents, and necessary interim and final inspections required by the City. RFQ’s for engineering services were received and reviewed by City staff on July 10, 2020. Experience, work performance, and capacity to perform were criteria used by the City staff to evaluate / differentiate each engineering consultant's qualifications. Six (6) Engineering services consultants submitted their qualifications for consideration. However, further evaluation is required as each engineering firm’s qualifications were very closely rated and ranked. As such, the recommendation will not be presented to the City Council for consideration / selection until the August 10, 2020 City Council meeting.
- 7) **GLO CDBG-MIT Grant Management Services Request for Proposal (RFP) Received** – The City of Smithville published a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) in the Austin American Statesman for professional administration services to assist in its application(s) for and implementation of one or more contracts, if awarded, from the GLO’s CDBG – MIT program. The City is considering applying for such funding for construction of flood mitigation projects and associated activities. Proposals for grant management were received and reviewed on July 8, 2020. Experience, work performance, capacity to perform, and cost were the criteria to be used by the City staff to evaluate / differentiate each consultant’s qualifications. However, **Langford Community Management Services, Inc.** was the only grant management service provider to submit a proposal and as such will be presented as the preferred administration services consultant. This will be an agenda item for discussion and action at the July 13, 2020 Council meeting.
- 8) **FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant (HMG) DR-4245 - Marburger Drainage Improvement Project Complete** - As previously reported, the Marburger drainage improvement project (HMG DR-4245) was awarded to 304 Construction, LLC during the February 10, 2020 council meeting. Phase 1 of the project involved the installation of a 1300 linear foot concrete valley gutter to provide drainage relief on Marburger and NE 1st street. 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 that is located parallel to the railroad tracks. This ditch begins at Marburger Street and extends southeast approximately 5,900 feet where it outfalls into Willow Creek. Construction began March 30, 2020 and took 75 days to complete. Phase 2 of the project involved drainage upgrades to storm drains and culverts running parallel to NE 1st and Marburger. **304 Construction, LLC** submitted the lowest bid and was awarded the contract during the March 9, 2020

DR-4245 Marburger Drainage Improvement Project

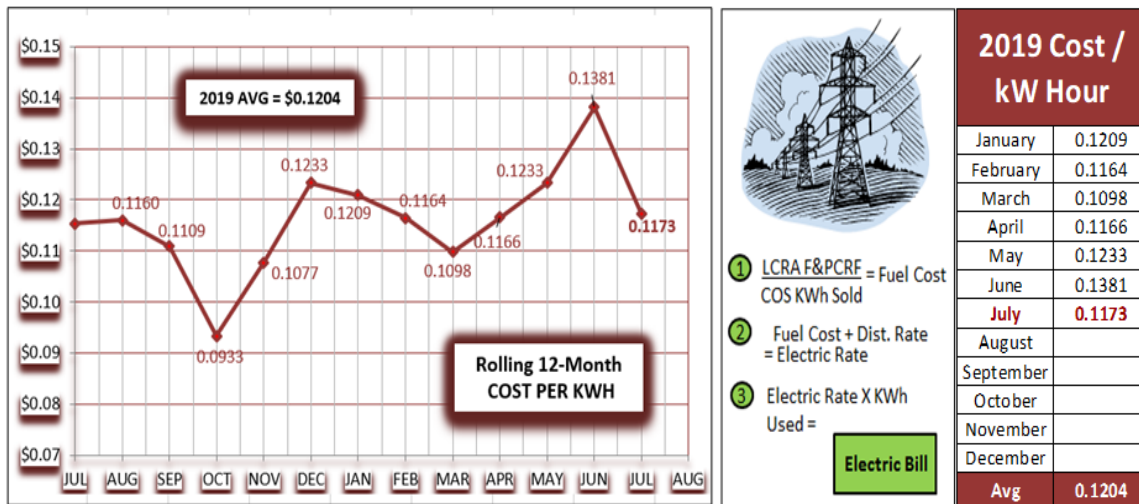


City Council meeting. Phase 2 construction began on April 20, 2020 and was completed on July 8, 2020 with the certificate of substantial completion being issued. The single 24” diameter drainage line was replaced with four (4) runs of 18” diameter arch pipe which basically tripled the drainage capacity. The total cost of the Phase 2 project was \$150k. The combined cost of the Marburger, 1st Street, and McSweeney flood mitigation project was approximately \$300k. The process to apply for FEMA funding, obtain approval from the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), select an engineering design firm, and complete construction took almost 4 years. (SEE PHOTOS)

City Manager Update – 7/10/20 (continued)

- 9) **Residential Cost Per Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Calculated** - An analysis of LCRA billing data was conducted to determine residential cost per kilowatt hour (kWh) in JULY. 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 July is \$ 0.0676. This represents a **12.01% DECREASE** compared to June's fuel cost of \$0.0769. Adding the City's distribution fee of \$0.0500 and LCRA's \$0.0676 fuel cost, the cost per kWh for residential service in Smithville **during JULY will be \$0.1176**. 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. **Note: Beginning August 1, 2020, the \$4.00 credit card processing fee and late fees for overdue utility accounts will be reinstituted.**

City of Smithville Residential Cost Per kWh - JULY

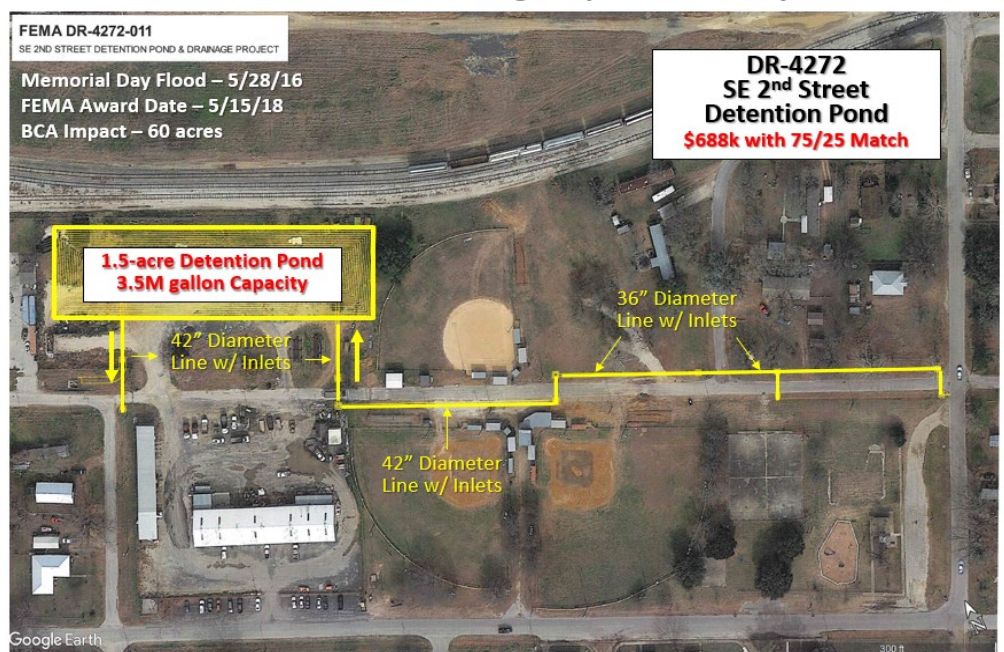


Note: LCRA Fuel & Power Cost Recovery Factor (See Table Above) + City Distribution Fee* (\$0.0500) = Cost / kWh

*Residential Distribution Fee Increase of \$0.005 Approved by City Council on October 1, 2017

- 10) **FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant (DR-4272) SE 2nd Street Detention Pond Project Update** - 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 (see diagram below). Both the detention pond and new storm water collection system have been sized to mitigate up to the 10-year, 24-hour storm event. 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 bid opening for the SE 2nd Street Detention Pond and Drainage Project was held on Tuesday, February 18, 2020 with the contract being awarded to the low bidder of the project **WJC Constructors, LLC** in the amount of \$512,509. Construction of the detention pond began June 8, 2020 and is 60% complete. (SEE PHOTOS)

DR-4272 - SE 2nd Street Drainage Improvement Project



City Manager Update – 7/10/20 (continued)

- 11) 4th Avenue Bridge Construction Update** - The 4th Avenue bridge construction on the "Hill" is progressing nicely. Five (5) 135' bridge beams were set in place on June 25th. The work required a 900-ton crane and a crew of 25 to accomplish. It was quite an undertaking. The new bridge over Gazley Creek will have two (2) 12-ft lanes with 5-ft shoulders. TXDOT agreed to cover the \$1.3M cost to design and rebuild the bridge with the City only having to pay a \$6.5k match. Barring any significant weather delays, the project is scheduled to be completed in the next 30-45 days (SEE PHOTOS). Click on the following link for → [drone footage](#) of the bridge beam installation.
- 12) Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) HOME Grant Construction** – The City of Smithville (working through Langford Community Management Services) submitted two Housing Rehabilitation Assistance (HRA) Program grant applications to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) in March 2019. The HRA program is more commonly referred to as the HOME grant program. The City of Smithville was guaranteed enough funds to build two (2) new \$100k homes within the city limits once eligible homes and candidates are identified. The HOME grant program funds rehabilitation (or reconstruction) of homes owned and occupied by low-to-moderate income residents of our community. Eligible homes must be inside the city limits and homeowners must have clear title to their property, be current on their property taxes (and mortgage, if applicable), and must have incomes below the 60% area median family income limits for Bastrop County. The City match requirement for the HOME grant program is 1% of the total construction cost for every thousand population. Our current (estimated) population is 4250. This makes the match 5% or \$10k for the two homes (unfortunately TDHCA rounds "up"). We can waive fees or other charges associated with HOME project (e.g., debris removal and container fees, tap fees, electrical hook up, building permits, etc.) to meet the in-kind match criteria. Two qualified candidates (property owners) have been identified at 207 Gentry and 307 Yeager. **RM Quality Construction, LLC** has begun demolition and construction of the new homes with completion estimated to take 120-days. These homes will be twentieth (20th) and twenty-first (21st) HOME grant houses to be built in Smithville since 2003.
- 13) Texas A&M Forest Service Emergency Facilities & Land Use Renewal Agreement** - On Monday, July 13, 2020, the City Council will be considering the approval of an Emergency Facilities & Land Use Agreement to allow the Texas A&M Forest Service to stage firefighting aircraft, support equipment, and personnel at the Smithville Crawford Municipal Airport as a means to expedite emergency response in the event of an area wildfire. If approved, the Emergency Facilities & Land Use Agreement will be in effect until August 31, 2021. Typically, fire-fighting personnel use the Pilot's Lounge as their temporary operational base and remain at the airport until the threat of wildfires subside.
- 14) Smithville Chamber of Commerce Launches New Website** - The Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce has "gone live" with a new and improved website at: <https://www.smithvilletx.org/>. Included in the updated site are new sections on economic development, available commercial properties, tourism links, and a visitor guide.

Below you will find a list of events / meetings planned over the next few weeks in Smithville:

The next **Smithville City Council** meeting will be held on **Monday, July 13, 2020** (6:00 pm) via Zoom. Citizens can access the meeting via YouTube → www.youtube.com/channel/UCN7rJz0wVks4zWV9EvKcH5w. Click → [HERE](#) for agenda.

Election Day for the 2020 Primary Runoff and Special Election (Senate District 14) is **Tuesday, July 14, 2020** from 7:00 am – 7:00 pm. Click on the following link for sample ballots and precinct locations → <https://www.bastropvotes.org/>

The next **Historic Preservation and Design Standards Committee (HPDSC)** meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, July 15, 2020** at 5:30 pm via Zoom. The [HPDSC AGENDA](#) includes the review of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for a pair of light fixtures at 304/305 Main street. Citizens can access the HPDSC meeting via YouTube → www.youtube.com/channel/UCN7rJz0wVks4zWV9EvKcH5w.

The **2020 Census** deadline is October 31, 2020. The current response rate for Smithville is 59%. On **Thursday, July 16, 2020**, Census Takers will start knocking on doors if you haven't yet responded. If you have not already done so (and you don't want to see someone at your door), please go online to www.my2020census.gov and complete the Census.

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

-- Robert --

PHOTOS – 7/10/20

Marburger Phase 2 Drainage Improvement Project - COMPLETED



ADA Compliant Parking and Ramp Construction @ City Hall - COMPLETED



4th Avenue Bridge over Gazley Creek Construction Progress (Est. Completion – August 21, 2020)



SE 2nd Street Detention Pond FEMA DR-4272 – (Estimated Completion Date – September 1, 2020)

