



City of Hunters Creek Neighborhood Newsletter

JANUARY 2009

City of Hunters Creek Village, #1 Hunters Creek Place, Hunters Creek Village, Texas 77024
Office: 713.465.2150 • Fax: 713.465.8357 • www.cityofhunterscreek.com



Bob Dodson

State of the City

I am proud of our accomplishments during a very challenging year, and I am looking forward to continuing our projects that make Hunters Creek Village one of the most desirable places to live in the state of Texas.

Here is a brief review of the construction and infrastructure enhancement projects, all of which added value to our homeowners, which we completed in 2008:

- The final phase of Memorial Drive drainage and pavement improvement
- Soldiers Creek Crossing
- Camelot Woods/Country Lane drainage and pavement replacement
- The improvement and repositioning of the Saddlewood/Memorial intersection
- Installation of two beautiful gardens at the East and West boundaries of the City
- Planted over 100 trees throughout the City

The following major projects are on the schedule for 2009:

- Creekside pavement and drainage
- Smithdale & Longshadows pavement and drainage
- Planting of an additional 150 trees throughout the City

City Council enacted a number of new ordinances and amendments during 2008. Complete copies of the following are available on our website, or at City Hall:

- **Tree Preservation:** Requires more trees to be saved and planted at new construction sites, and a permit is now required for any trees residents wish to remove.
- **Construction Sites:** Outside work must be conducted between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., and no work is now allowed on Sundays or holidays. Radios cannot be audible from the street. Strict site maintenance, fencing, and security is required.
- **Fences and Exterior Walls:** Height and placement of fences and exterior walls are now closely regulated. This new ordinance allows taller fences and walls and clarifies definitions and placement.
- **Garbage Collection:** How and when garbage is collected is closely regulated. A single site for garbage collection which cannot be behind a closed gate is required.

Following Hurricane Ike, we have spent over \$1 million for debris removal and I estimate the total will approach \$1.6 million once all bills are received and paid. The good news is we expect to be fully reimbursed by FEMA. So far, however, we have received our first installment of \$431,000 and are expecting the reimbursement process to proceed. It is our goal to at least have our \$1 million reserve fund replenished before this year's hurricane season starts.

Finances in 2009 and beyond will be our biggest challenge in this and subsequent years. City Council, in a 3–2 vote, elected not to increase our tax rate by 2 cents which would have added a mere \$200 to the average tax bill.

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State of the City *continued from page 1*

At the close of 2008, the average home in Hunters Creek Village was valued at over \$1 million, up \$80,000 from the previous year. It is my view that reinvestment in our City's infrastructure, saving for known future projects, and enhancement of City assets is what results in property valuation increases that we all enjoy.

City Council's cutting of my proposed tax rate while, at the same time, adding expenditures to my proposed 2009 budget will create significant challenges for our City.

We already have extended a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan ("CIP") out over a 10-plus year schedule. Because of the problems in our current economy, I expect interest earnings, sales tax revenue, tax collections, and permit revenue to be down significantly.

The City experienced 29 new construction starts in 2008. My recent discussions with new home builders indicate that 2009 starts will be in the 12 – 18 range.

Although I do not envision any loss in home values, it is a good bet that they will not appreciate at the same rate we have enjoyed in the past. This will further constrain tax revenue in the future.

Of all of the issues facing the City presently, these circumstances concern me the most.

Last year at this time I stated the following objectives for 2008:

- **Implement crime reduction strategies.** During 2008, Memorial Villages Police Department added one additional patrol officer to increase surveillance in Hunters Creek. We installed more visible, distinctive signs advising of the police substation at the Racquet Club. Our Chief's report found in this newsletter reports a reduction in crime rates this past year.
- **Provide a substantial homestead exemption.** I proposed a 10% homestead exemption but it was rejected by City Council.
- **Inventory and assess the City's infrastructure assets and develop a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan.** We have completed these important, forward looking analyses that will aid the City in its planning functions.

We closed a very challenging 2008 and are positioned to face the challenges of 2009 and beyond, thanks to our excellent staff, dedicated Council, focused Commissions and the many hard working volunteers who represent this wonderful City.

Please continue to keep me informed of your concerns and ideas. We will do our very best to respond promptly and effectively.

Again, thanks for giving me the distinct honor to serve the City of Hunters Creek Village.

Bob Dodson, Mayor

Hunters Creek Election Is Scheduled For May 9

The next Hunters Creek Village election will be held on May 9 at City Hall.

The election will be for the position of Mayor, now held by Bob Dodson; City Council Position #4, now held by Roger Stark; and City Council Position #5, now held by David Wegner. The term for each position is two years.

The first day to file for a place on the ballot, officially, is Saturday, February 7, but because City Hall is closed on Saturdays, the first available day to file is Monday, February 9. Applications will be available in the city secretary's office.

Early voting will be available from April 27 to May 5.

Village Fire Department Responded To 1,815 Calls In 2008

Your Village Fire Department, which provides service to all six Memorial Villages, had a busy year, having responded to 1815 calls. Half of these were EMS calls.

We incurred added expenses during Hurricane Ike and we are waiting for FEMA reimbursement. The station sustained only minor damage from the hurricane.

Ironically, we took delivery of a new fire engine two days before Ike made landfall.

The Village Fire Department is a full service department, providing fire and emergency management.



Fire Chief Calagna

Arbor Day Set to Help Replace Our Many Lost Trees

Arbor Day this February will be particularly important this year following the devastation caused by Hurricane Ike. Nearly all Hunters Creek residents lost trees or had trees that were heavily damaged by the hurricane. Arborists estimate the Villages lost over half of their tree canopy.

Hunters Creek residents will again have the opportunity to buy new trees for their yards as part of the City's Arbor Day celebration.

Order forms and more information is available in the green flyer included with this newsletter. Residents are encouraged to join with the City in replanting trees to maintain and restore the ambiance of our unique environment.

An Update From Police Chief Gary Brye



Police Chief Gary Brye

Although the number of residential type burglaries in 2008 slightly decreased from 19 to 17 from the previous year in Hunters Creek Village, we certainly have not been immune from the increase in crime in the western parts of the Houston metroplex.

Your Memorial Villages Police Department is working diligently with other law enforcement agencies to investigate cases in our area. Our objective is to minimize the possibility that our residents become victims of crime.

Last month, the Memorial Villages Police Department received \$123,425.00 in funding from the Harris County District Attorney's office to pay for enhanced crime prevention and detection equipment. We are using these funds for mobile laptop replacements and upgrades, infra-red equipment that enables officers to see in the darkness, and sophisticated fingerprint equipment.

We used our new Infra-red equipment a few days ago to assist us in locating two aggravated robbery suspects who had committed a robbery in Sugar Land, and then drove to Hunters Creek Village.

Our records reveal that jewelry, electronics and cash are most often taken in burglaries in our area.

We urge you, as residents of Hunters Creek Village, to join the Memorial Villages Police Department in a co-operative effort to reduce crime in our community. You can work with us by acting on the following crime prevention strategies.

1. **BE ALERT** and **IMMEDIATELY** report any suspicious person(s) or activity to our office (713-365-3700) or call 911. Please be prepared to explain the situation. Calls from residents have resulted in many recent apprehensions.

2. When you are away from home **be aware of your surroundings**. It is a good idea when in a public parking lot **NOT** to park next to a vehicle with a person or people inside. When entering a public building, be aware of anyone who appears to be loitering near entrances and watching people as they enter and leave. You should report any suspicious person to a building employee inside.

3. When shopping, do not overburden yourself with packages. If necessary, make more than one trip to drop off packages in your vehicle or, if available, store your packages in a customer pickup area until you are ready to leave the store. When approaching your vehicle, have your keys out and ready. As soon as you get in your vehicle, **immediately** lock all doors before taking time to store your packages.

4. When driving, watch your mirrors for any vehicle that appears to be following you. If you believe that you are being followed make several un-signaled turns and see if the suspicious vehicle makes the same turns. If it does, **DO NOT** drive home, use your cellular phone to call police or drive to a police or fire station where you can expect to receive help. There have been recent occurrences of persons being followed home and being robbed.

Notice the regular meeting date for City Council has been changed to the 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m.

New Garbage Recycling Ordinance Now in Effect

A new garbage and recycling ordinance was adopted last October.

The ordinance involves the placement of receptacles for the collection and disposal of solid waste, and it enforces the "back door" pickup policy that has been in effect for many years.

Important elements of the ordinance are:

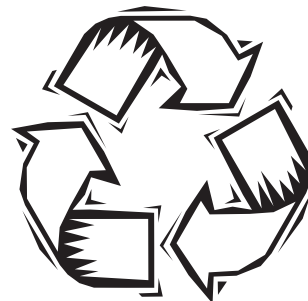
- The point of collection must be behind the front building line and within 50 feet of a driveway and must be accessible on the dates of collection.
- The point of collection may be screened from view, but may not be located inside a gated, fenced or walled enclosure unless the enclosure is solely for the purpose of storing garbage.
- Garbage must be stored and delivered to the point of collection in rigid enclosed containers that are reasonably resistant to being opened or disturbed by dogs or other wild or domesticated animals.

- Yard and garden waste must be tied into bundles or placed in appropriate disposable or permanent containers. Sturdy plastic bags may be used as containers for yard and garden waste.

- Recyclable materials shall be placed in designated containers identified for recycling.

- Heavy trash shall be placed at the curb in front of the residence not more than 24 hours before the date designated for heavy trash collection, and it is not required to be placed in any form of container.

City Council adopted the ordinance as part of an ongoing effort to maintain the ambiance of Hunters Creek Village.



IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

EMERGENCY

Emergency 911
 Police..... 713.365.3700
 Fire 713.468.7941

UTILITIES

Electricity 713.207.2222
 Gas 713.659.2111
 Water & Sewer 713.465.8318
 Cable 713.462.9000
 Trash Collection (Royal Disposal)..... 713.526.1536
 Report Street Light Outages 713.465.2150



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Emergency Firm Responded Quickly After Hurricane Hit

Hurricane Ike's devastation throughout Hunters Creek Village hit in September and some of our residents are still in the final stages of cleanup up and finishing damage repairs.

City Council, in 2006, retained Omni Pinnacle, LLC, from Slidell, Louisiana, to remove debris in the event of a hurricane.

This company's first of 40 trucks arrived within 12 hours after Ike cut a swath throughout our Village on September 12, and their cleanup was completed November 25.

Workers were most appreciative of the hospitality of our citizens who offered food and drink to them all during the cleanup operation.

Most of our homes were without power for as long as two weeks, mainly because Center Point Energy's Wirt Road Switching Station, which provides power in our area, was virtually destroyed by the hurricane and it took two weeks to make the necessary repairs.

Omni subcontracted much of the work and City Council was generally pleased with the job the workers did in cleaning our streets and hauling away the vast amount of debris.

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