April, 2011



City Lights DeSoto, Texas



www.ci.desoto.tx.us 972.230.9600

A publication of the City of DeSoto Community Relations Department

Council Corner - A Message from James Zander, Place Six



As your newest City
Councilmember, I want to share
with you the City of DeSoto's latest
discussion regarding items on our
Capital Improvement Plan for a
proposed Hotel and Arts Venue.
The Honorable Mayor and City
Council are discussing a MixedUse Development to be located at
the southwest corner of Hampton
and Pleasant Run Roads. It will
include a 100 room hotel with
concierge services. 50 rooms will

be dedicated to hotel apartments and 50 will be high-end hotel rooms. The proposed Arts Venue would be located on Hampton Road just north of DeSoto Town Center. These two combined projects are projected to cost the tax payers approximately \$20 million. However, \$20 million is only an estimated number and the cost can be significantly decreased based upon the size of the actual projects.

The city's property tax rate was 69¢ per \$100 of value in fiscal year 2010. The proposed Hotel/Arts Venue could increase our tax rate to 85¢; this does not take into account any further drop in property values. This increased tax rate will impact our homeowners and potentially impede our quest for more commercial development and business recruitment efforts. However, this tax rate is still lower than the rate for City of Lancaster in fiscal year 2011.

When contemplating taking on additional debt for the city, there are a number of unknown factors that should be considered:

- Property values in Southern Dallas County are predicted to drop over the next three years. How will the decrease in property values affect DeSoto homeowners?
- Texas is in the midst of a \$27 billion, two-year budget shortfall which will trigger cuts to healthcare and education and possibly result in higher taxes which will impact the citizens of DeSoto adding to the financial burden of families working to meet their fiscal obligations.
- DeSoto is currently in the midst of a major transportation study to determine how best to meet the citizen's desires to have some form of public transportation. We, as yet, do not know the costs associated with any forthcoming

transportation plan.

• Debt was incurred with the Town Center project and the funding was based upon significant growth in new residential properties and continued industrial growth. Unfortunately the housing market crash and economic crisis prevented that growth from materializing. In order to satisfy this shortfall, the city was forced to raise the tax rate from 69¢ to 73¢ per \$100 of valuation in fiscal year 2011 and it will increase to 77¢ in fiscal year 2012. Local property tax collections; once a stable source of revenue, have increased in volatility and unpredictability.

The Capital Improvement Plan is an excellent proposal for progressive and lofty goals which I support. However, sound fiscal policies and accountability should complement these goals. After reviewing all of the current unknowns; my concern is that this may not be the appropriate time to take on new debt for our city because of the possible negative effect it could have on delivering our current level of excellent city services. According to the city's financial management office, property taxes will decrease by 2015 if no additional debt is incurred. Conversely, the tax rate may also increase if no additional new revenue is generated.

The City Council will continue to explore alternative ways to make DeSoto a premier city and will foster open and public discussions with our citizens regarding any major capital expenditures. In the coming months, I encourage you to take part in public forums that will be held to discuss these projects. Allow your voice to be heard on the future progress and financial stability of our All-America City.

Hon. James Zander City Councilmember, Place Six

The views and opinions reflected or expressed here may or may not represent the views and position of the City Council.

City Council and staff need to hear your thoughts and opinions on the City's Trash and Sanitation Services.

The city's contract with Republic Waste for trash and recycling collection expires in May, 2012 and staff has begun the process of asking residents to give us your thoughts and opinions about current services and what you would be willing to pay for going forward. A Town Hall Meeting will be held on Saturday, April 2nd at 9 a.m. at DeSoto City Hall to receive input on the city's sanitation and beautification efforts such as the street sweeper, the three-man litter crew and enhanced median landscaping. If you can't attend the meeting, please share your thoughts on our blog at http://blog.desototexas.com. Your input will be used to prepare the RFP for the new sanitation contract.

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Your Guide to Calling 9-1-1 Emergency Services

To best respond to an emergency situation, call takers, dispatchers and first responders need your help. Please familiarize yourself and those living or visiting your home with the following tips. This will ensure that the 9-1-1 call taker will be able to process your emergency call efficiently and send assistance as quickly as possible.



When should you call 9-1-1?

Call only in an emergencyl Please do not call for general information, directions,

weather or other non-emergency information. If you are not sure whether your situation is an emergency, call 9-1-1. Remember though, if you tie up 9-1-1 with non-emergency calls, you may be endangering someone else's life.

What you should do when calling 9-1-1?

- 1. When calling 9-1-1, speak clearly and be prepared to provide the:
- location of the incident
- telephone number you are calling from
- Description of the emergency. The call taker will send the appropriate emergency resources based on the description and nature of the emergency.
- Give your exact location street address and nearest intersection (cross street), including town, if possible. This information helps the 9-1-1 call taker send emergency response to the right location. If you are unsure of the location, look for landmarks, large buildings, street signs or mile markers to determine your location.
- Do not hang up until the call taker ends the call. If you are cut off, always call back and explain that were cut off.
- 4. **Stay on the line,** you may need to be transferred to another agency that can provide further assistance for your emergency.
- 5. **Provide all the information requested** to the call taker. It will help them help you!

For a quicker response to your 9-1-1 call, have your alarm system monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week by your local 911 emergency center. Alarm monitoring is now being offered as a fee based service by the City of DeSoto's 911 Call Center for \$25 per month and \$35 a month for a fully cellular system. No long-term contract is required.

There is a cost associated with having your monitored system reprogrammed to be monitored by DeSoto's 911 Call Center. As a result, the city offers a \$75 credit toward future monthly monitoring fees to help offset costs you may incur to have your system reprogrammed.

There is no faster response to your alarm system than the response provided by your city. For more information on the City of DeSoto Alarm Monitoring Program, please contact 972.230.5248 or go to www.swrcc.net/alarm.

April Often Brings Severe Weather, Be Prepared

It's April in Texas which means its also tornado season. We know from past experience, that tornadoes spawned from powerful thunderstorms can cause fatalities and devastate neighborhoods in seconds. DeSoto's Emergency Management Team would like to remind you to:

- Listen to NOAA Weather radio or local radio or TV newscasts for the latest weather information.
- If sirens sound, take cover in the interior portions of a structure. Its best to choose a predesignated safe area such as a closet or bathroom in the interior of your home on the lowest level that has no windows or outside walls.
- Put as many walls between you and the outside as possible.
- Get under a sturdy table and use your arms to protect your head and neck.
- Do not open windows.
- If you are in a vehicle, trailer or mobile home get out immediately and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy, nearby building or storm shelter. Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes.
- If you are outside with no shelter, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands.
- Do not get under an overpass or bridge. You are safer in a low, flat location.
- Never try to outrun a tornado, instead leave the vehicle immediately for a safe shelter.
- Watch out for flying debris. Flying debris from tornadoes causes most fatalities and injuries.

DeSoto will sound our sirens if a tornado has been spotted in our city limits or if one is spotted in Cedar Hill, Duncanville or other surrounding cities. During April, DeSoto Emergency Management would like to remind you to be aware of changing weather conditions and act responsibly if threatening weather occurs.

CITY CAENDAR

April

- 1 "To Be Young, Gifted and Black" opens in Corner Theatre
- 2 Sanitation Town Hall Meeting City Hall 9 a.m.
- 4 Park Development Corp. Mtg. City Hall 6:30 p.m.
- 5 City Council Meeting City Hall 7 p.m.
- 7 Keep DeSoto Beautiful Board Mtg. City Hall 6:30 p.m.
- 7 Library Advisory Board Mtg. Library Conf. Room 7 p.m.
- 9 CDC Candidate Forum City Hall 10 a.m.
- 11 DeSoto Arts Commission Mtg. City Hall 6 p.m.
- 12 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. City Hall 7 p.m.
- 16 E-recycling & Shredding Event Service Ctr. 9 a.m.
- 16 DeSoto's Got Talent Auditions City Hall 9 a.m.
- 16 Easter Egg Hunt DeSoto Town Center noon
- 19 City Council Mtg. City Hall 7 p.m.
- 25 DEDC Board Mtg. City Hall noon
- 26 Planning & Zoning Mtg. City Hall 7 p.m.
- 28 Mayor's Quarterly 360 Mtg. w/ HOA reps. City Hall 7 p.m.
- 29 Retirement Reception for Jim Baugh City Hall 2 p.m.
- 30 DeSoto's Got Talent Corner Theatre 7 p.m.

May

- 2 Park Development Corp. Mtg. City Hall 6:30 p.m.
- 3 City Council Meeting City Hall 7 p.m.
- 5 Keep DeSoto Beautiful Board Mtg. City Hall 6:30 p.m.
- 5 Library Advisory Board Mtg. Library Conference Room-7 p.m.
- 9 DeSoto Arts Commission Mtg. City Hall 6 p.m.
- 10 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. City Hall 7 p.m.
- 17 City Council Mtg. City Hall 7 p.m.
- 19 Music In The Park Don Diego Outdoor Amphitheater 7 p.m.
- 21 DeSoto Dining & Dialogue Dinner Event call 972.230.9648
- 23 DEDC Board Mtg. City Hall noon
- 24 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. City Hall 7 p.m.
- 30 City offices and facilities closed for Memorial Day Holiday

Will Your HOA Know What To Do When a Tornado Hits Your Neighborhood?

In the event of a major disaster, professional first responders, such as the fire and police departments, may not be able to help you because of impassable streets or they could be overwhelmed by the sheer number of victims.

It is then that civilians must rely on their own knowledge and skills to provide for themselves and assist their neighbors. Through the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA, the City of DeSoto has a FREE program available to help residents prepare for disasters and provides training in skills to deal with them. It is called C.E.R.T. (Community Emergency Response Team).

C.E.R.T. volunteers are trained in disaster preparation, search and rescue, fire suppression and emergency first aid by classroom lectures and "hands-on" drills. While the training benefits everyone, it is more effective in "teams" established within neighborhoods so they can function on their own until the first responders arrive.

With this in mind, a special effort is being made to present the C.E.R.T. program to Home Owner Associations and/or geographic neighborhoods. If you are interested in a FREE 15-minute C.E.R.T. informational presentation to your group, please call Don Dewberry at 214.356.6320 or Gordy VanSteenberg at 972.230.4815 to arrange a date or check out our web site at cert-bswr.org for more information.

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Earth Month Activities - DeSoto Is Going Green!!

Electronics Recycling Event April 16th

Old computers and electronics can be placed out for pick-up with your regular trash service. However, when Republic Waste (Duncan Disposal) collects them, they go to our landfill and are not recycled. Tossing hundreds of computers, keyboards and cell phones into landfills poses serious health and environmental risks. Today, most electronic components can be reused, recycled and diverted from the waste stream. The City of DeSoto, is partnering with Goodwill Industries of Dallas to divert computers and related electronics from area landfills by offering recycling of electronic equipment during Earth Month.

On Saturday, April 16th from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., bring your unwanted electronic



items (excluding TV's) to the DeSoto Service Center located at 809 W. Spinner Road for recycling. Here's a list of items that will be accepted for recycling free of charge: personal computers, monitors, hard drives, keyboards and mice, printers, toner and ink cartridges, scanners, peripherals and gadgets, cell phones, webcams, servers and racks, power supplies and chargers, cables and wires, networking

equipment, servers and racks, gaming equipment, PDAs and other small electronic devices.

Help us protect the environment by keeping electronic waste materials out of landfills and putting them back into the manufacturing process to make new products.

Household Hazardous Waste Event - May 14th 9 a.m. to noon at the DeSoto Pump Station, 620 E. Westmoreland Road

If you have household hazardous waste that cannot be discarded along with the regular trash such as paint, oil, fertilizer, acid, gasoline, or pesticides, you can bring it to the City of DeSoto Household Hazardous Waste event with a voucher. The event will take place at the DeSoto Pump Station, 620 N. Westmoreland Rd on Saturday, May 14th from 9 a.m. to noon.

Vouchers can be obtained from the City of DeSoto Action Center located in City Hall or by calling 972. 230.9600. We have a limited number of vouchers available. Only DeSoto residents will be allowed to participate and you will be asked to show proof of residency in order to obtain your voucher. Space is limited to the first 125 who sign up.

City Manger, Jim Baugh will retire on April 29, 2011

After nearly forty years of public service, DeSoto City Manager Jim Baugh will officially retire at the end of April. Over the last fourteen years in DeSoto, Baugh implemented a host of strategic initiatives that included the bi-annual budget forecasting system, vehicle, furniture and computer replacement programs, a five year Capital Improvement Program which resulted in the renovation of all city parks and most city facilities and employee recognition and performance incentive programs. One of his most notable accomplishments was DeSoto's designation as a distinguished National League of Cities - All-America City in 2006.

The DeSoto City Council voted in May, 2010 to name the city hall facility, the Jim Baugh Government Center upon his retirement from public service. On Friday, April 29th at 2 p.m. the DeSoto City Council and staff will host a retirement reception in Jim's honor at the DeSoto Civic Center to unveil the sign renaming the building. The public is invited to join us in thanking Jim Baugh for his vision, leadership and commitment to DeSoto.

Avoid Identity Theft by Shredding Your Personal Documents

Identity theft is a serious problem in today's society. One way to protect yourself is to make sure that identity thieves aren't gaining access to your personal information through junk mail or other documents you have placed in the trash. The best way to assure this doesn't happen is to shred your junk mail and other personal documents before discarding.

If you don't have access to a paper shredder, bring the items you wish to shred to the DeSoto Service Center located at 809 W. Spinner Road on Saturday, April 16, 2011 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. There will be a mobile document shredding unit on-site to shred your personal household documents at no cost. (Commercial documents will not be accepted.) You must show proof of DeSoto residency with a driver's

license or current utility bill.

Please place all your documents in boxes. Do not bring them loose in bags as documents must be stacked to go into the shredder. There is a limit of 10 boxes of household material per person for shredding. If you prefer, you can watch your



documents being shredded. If you have any questions regarding household document shredding, please call the City of DeSoto Action Center at 972.230.9600.

A Reminder from Code Enforcement

City Ordinance requires that weeds and grass be kept below twelve inches in height and that trimmings are not allowed to accumulate in any gutter, street, sidewalk, alley or any other public or private property.

The owner or occupant of the property is required to maintain the property from the street in the front to the middle of the alley in the back (or the property line). This includes the front, back and side yards, the right-of-way (the area between the sidewalk and the curb,) and the alley and easement (the area behind the property).

- High grass must be mowed.
- Grass/weeds, should be cut and removed at least once every 15 days on land developed for residential use, and every 30 days on other types of premises.
- Any acreage must be maintained with a perimeter of a minimum of 200 feet from any property line adjacent to any developed residential or non-residential property.

If you have questions, please contact Code Enforcement at 469.658.3075.

The City of DeSoto website has undergone a facelift. Check out www.ci.desoto.tx.us into see the new design and features. Also, follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

The Next DeSoto Dining and Dialogue Dinner is May 21st

Do you know your neighbors? Do you feel personally connected to the DeSoto community? Have you attended a DeSoto Dining and Dialogue Dinner event? If your answer to these questions is no, please consider this your personal invitation to attend the next DeSoto Dining and Dialogue Dinner event on Saturday, May 21st at 6:30 p.m.

For the last seven years, DeSoto Dining and Dialogue has brought together people of various ages and backgrounds to discuss making DeSoto a more vibrant place for all. By connecting neighbors, the program seeks to build relationships among people from different backgrounds with the ultimate goal of sharing experiences and building a strong community; regardless of color, culture or class.

The purpose of DeSoto Dining and Dialogue (DDD) is to bring together a group of strangers who all have something in common. They all live or work in DeSoto and care about their community. DDD is a volunteer-run organization that provides individuals the opportunity to get to know one another at dinner events with 8 to 10 participants. These dinners are held three times a year in private homes, churches or restaurants all over town on the same night. The discussion is lead by a trained facilitator who guides participants through questions designed to elicit thoughts and opinions on issues facing our community.

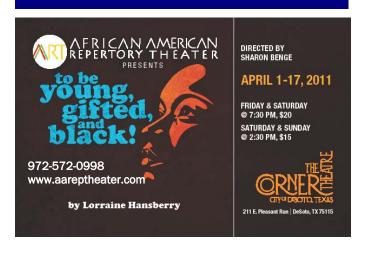
To keep the program strong, we need new guests to attend the next dinner on May 21, 2011. High School students can receive five hours of community service for attending. As a guest, your only

obligation is to attend the dinner and participate in the discussion. We also invite previous guests to join us on May 21st. All you need to do it go to desotodd.org. and register or call Kathy Jones at 972.230.9648 to register by phone. We must receive your registration by May 9th to participate in this dinner. Make a commitment to build a strong community by attending DeSoto Dining and Dialogue.



City Election Cancelled

Candidates were unopposed for City Council Place 2 and Place 4; therefore, the City of DeSoto will not be participating in the May 14, 2011 General Election. If you would like to keep up with other elections being held in Dallas County, visit the Dallas County Elections Department website at www.dalcoelections.org.







Salsa Dance Performance & Lessons May 7th 7p.m. Hampton Inn & Suites \$25 /couple call DAC 972.230.9648

A Message for Time Warner Cable Subscribers

On October 1, 2010, Time Warner migrated the city's government channel 16 to the digital tier and discontinued broadcasting in analog. This conversion requires that DeSoto subscribers must have their TVs attached to a cable box in order to view channel 16. If you have a newer digital TV, the government channel can also be viewed on channel 15.5. Subscribers who did not have a cable box were offered a free converter box upon request. In October, this conversion only affected channel 16. Due to the complexity of migrating the channels, the remaining public, education and government (PEG) channels to include 95, 97 and 98, will be migrated to digital in May, 2011. Time Warner provided the City of DeSoto and all subscribers with the required notification in March. Again, if a customer requests the digital converter box needed to continue to see the PEG access channel, Time Warner will provide one free converter box per household upon request. If you have any questions, please 972.230.9648

Caster Egg Hunt Sat. April 16th, DeSoto Town Center at Noon

Join the Easter Bunny and the DeSoto Youth Advisory Council for our annual Easter Egg Hunt. Free admission. For more information call 972.230.9651. In case of rain, all activities will move indoors to the Recreation Center.



