

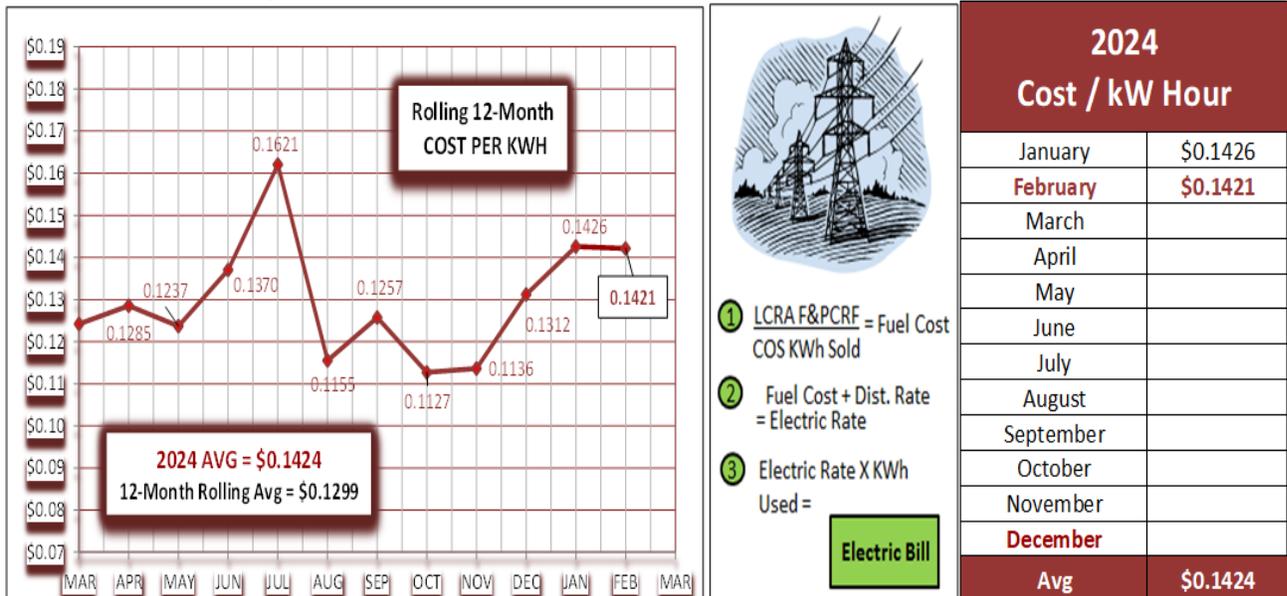
# City Manager Update – 2/9/24

With less than a month to go, Smithville is leading the competition in the “Extra Small Community” category (population < 5,000) for the “**2024 IT'S TIME TEXAS COMMUNITY CHALLENGE**”. Stockdale (population 1,435) is in 2<sup>nd</sup> place and proving to be a worthy adversary. Each year, Texans compete in the free, state-wide competition to see which communities can demonstrate the greatest commitment to healthy living. The winning community in each size category will receive recognition for their health-related efforts, along with a trophy, school district banner, and Governor's certificate. Approximately 115 community members from Smithville have registered to participate. Thanks to all who are currently participating in this competition with a special shout out to the City of Smithville “Avengers” (see PHOTOS). The City of Smithville has won this competition the past six (6) consecutive years and we are trying for Lucky #7. If you have not yet registered, there is still time to participate → Go to <https://ittcommunitychallenge.com/> and join the challenge!

Below you will find a list of accomplishments, activities, issues, events, and/or future plans since my last report:

- 1) Special-Called Council Meeting / Public Forum Scheduled to Discuss NE / NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Drainage Project** – There will be a Special-Called Council Meeting / Public Forum on **Wednesday, February 28, 2024** from 5:30 to 7:00 pm at City Hall (317 Main). The purpose of the meeting / public forum is to provide an overview of the NE / NW 2nd Drainage project with the Downtown Business Alliance (DBA) and the community. The engineering design of the \$2M drainage project (which includes upsizing the storm drain lines on NE / NW 2nd from Gresham to Ramona, lowering the street, replacing sidewalks, and adding handicap ramps / parking) is complete. We are about a month out from going to bid and selecting a general contractor to begin construction. This is one of 4 projects being funded by a \$13M GLO CDBG MIT grant with a 1% match. Tim Sanders (BEFCO Engineering) will be presenting an overview of the project. At the end of the meeting, we will use this forum to solicit input / feedback from the DBA regarding current issues / concerns affecting the downtown area. All citizens and interested parties are welcome and encouraged to attend.
- 2) Residential Cost Per Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Calculated** – An analysis of LCRA billing data was conducted to determine residential cost per kilowatt hour (kWh) in FEBRUARY. Fuel cost per kWh vary month to month and are based upon electric utility generation, transmission, line loss, unmetered sales, and service fees. The fuel cost per kWh for February is \$0.0871. This represents a **1% DECREASE** compared to January’s fuel cost of \$0.0876 despite having six (6) of below freezing weather in January. Adding the city's distribution fee of \$0.0550, the cost per kWh for residential service in Smithville during FEBRUARY will be \$0.1421 per kWh. Generally speaking, it costs more to heat a residence than it does to cool it as there is a greater outdoor temperature difference to make up to achieve what most folks consider “comfortable” inside....68°F in winter and 78°F in summer. The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) of Texas has published energy-savings tips on their website → <https://www.puc.texas.gov/consumer/facts/Save.aspx>.

## City of Smithville Residential Cost Per kWh - FEBRUARY



Note: Fuel & Power Cost Recovery Factor + City Distribution Fee\* (\$0.0550) = Cost / kWh

\*Residential Distribution Fee = \$0.0550/kWh (Effective October 1, 2023). Non-Resident (i.e., service outside city limit) Distribution Fee = \$0.0650/kWh

## City Manager Update – 2/9/24 (continued)

- 3) **Early Voting Schedule Published for the Upcoming 2024 Primary Election** - Early voting in the 2024 Primary Election will begin Tuesday, February 20, 2024 and end Friday, March 1, 2024. County, state, and federal candidates will be on the ballot. The Texas League of Women Voters has put together a very informative nonpartisan [2024 Primary Election Voter's Guide](#). In addition, there are multiple state propositions to consider -- thirteen (13) [Republican Propositions](#) and zero (0) Democratic Propositions. Election Day is Tuesday, March 5, 2024 (7:00 am to 7:00 pm). A list of candidates, polling locations, voting times, and sample ballots are available on the [bastropvotes.org](#) website.
- 4) **Smithville City Council and Smithville ISD Candidate Filing / Election Schedule** – Smithville City Council and Smithville ISD candidate filing for the upcoming election in May began Wednesday, January 17, 2024. Persons interested in filing to run for Mayor and/or City Council (Place 4, Place 5) and SISD Trustee (Place 3, Place 4) can pick up a candidate packet at City Hall or the Smithville ISD administrative building accordingly. The deadline to file is **February 16, 2024 at 5:00 pm**. Early voting dates will be published after the March 5, 2024 Primary Election. Election Day is Saturday, May 4, 2024 (7:00 am to 7:00 pm). A list of candidates, polling locations, voting times, and sample ballots (by precinct) will be available on the [bastropvotes.org](#) website after the March Primary Election. In the meantime, please see matrix below for the names of candidates that have filed as of 5:00 pm 2/9/24. Good luck to all Candidates!!!

### City Council / School Board Election Candidates – As of 2/9/24

	Position	Candidate	Term Lenth	Term Expires	Election Type	Candidate Status
City of Smithville	Mayor	Sharon Foerster	2-Years	May 2024	General	Incumbent
		Tom Etheredge				Challenger
	Alderman - Place 4	Mitchell Jameson	2-Years	May 2024	General	Incumbent
		Dane Garrison				Challenger
	Alderman - Place 5	Cathy Meeks	2-Years	May 2024	General	Challenger
		TBD				TBD
SISD	Trustee - Place 3	Bryan Jones	3-Years	May 2024	General	Challenger
		Casey Hanchey				Challenger
	Trustee - Place 4	Chelsa Vinklarek	3-Years	May 2024	General	Challenger
		TBD				TBD
<p><i>NOTE: Councilmember Janice Bruno (Place 5) is not seeking re-election. Councilmember Tom Etheredge (Place 2) is running for Mayor but has 1-year remaining on his term which expires in 2025. SISD Trustees Nancy Towry (Place 3) and Alan Hemphill (Place 4) are not seeking re-election.</i></p>						

- 5) **Used Tire Collection / Electronics Recycling Event Held** - 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 COLLECTION event on Saturday, January 20, 2024 at the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facility located at 109 Taylor and SE 2nd Street in Smithville. The event was well attended with over 400 used tires collected and 23 gaylords filled with dozens of old computers, flat panel televisions, and miscellaneous electronics brought in for recycling (see PHOTOS). Thanks to all who volunteered to make this a successful event!!! The next HHW collection event for disposal of PAINT, PESTICIDES, and CHEMICALS is scheduled for March 23, 2024.
- 6) **2022-23 Fiscal Year Financial Audit Scheduled** – The FY22-23 financial audit will begin **Tuesday, February 22, 2024**. Last year, the City received a “clean” financial audit for our prior fiscal year’s performance confirming compliance with government accounting standards. There were no material findings and we maintained our S&P “AA-minus” bond rating. This year’s annual audit is being conducted by Singleton, Clark & Company over a 2-week period. The focus of the audit will be on internal financial controls, payroll, procurement, HR, accounts payable, and accounts receivable, etc. Multiple federal, state, and local grants for infrastructure improvements have triggered the requirement to conduct a single audit. The Code of Federal Register Regulations (CFR), Title 2, Chapter II, Part 200, Subparts A through F requires Federal grant recipients to submit a Single Audit report if, in the fiscal year, \$750,000 or more was expended in Federal Grant Awards (all sources combined). Approximately \$1.8M in federal and state grants were awarded to the City of Smithville during 2023 for sidewalks, bullet-resistant shields, drainage improvements, ARPA and TDHCA HOME funding. The results of the annual financial audit will be presented by Jack Clark during the April 8, 2024 Council meeting.

## City Manager Update – 2/9/24 (continued)

7) **City Council to Consider Allocating Funds for Patriotic 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration** - The vendor we have used for the past 2-years (Big Dog Pyro) has reached out one last time to offer the City of Smithville the opportunity to schedule a 4th of July celebration at Riverbend Park. The past events were funded under the ARPA Tourism category and have been well attended and very successful. If this is something the Council would like to pursue, we have enough ARPA funding available (due to cost savings) to allocate \$15-20k for the 4th of July event with the remaining balance to be raised by privatized sponsorships / donations. There have also been discussions about sponsoring a [LIGHTED DRONE SHOW](#) as an alternative. Lighted drone shows are gaining in popularity as they do not represent a fire risk nor cause issue with dogs and/or veterans with PTSD. The minimum cost for a 100-drone show on the 4th of July is \$35k (July 6th- \$20k). Drones require 3 ft2 for launch and cannot be flown over people / populated area. So, unfortunately, this would prevent having a show in the downtown area. If there is interest in a lighted drone show or traditional pyrotechnic display, we need to verify a date for a placeholder.....July 2nd (Tuesday - \$25k) or July 4th (Thursday - \$45k). This will require a 50% downpayment. If there is no interest, we can notify the vendors and forfeit the placeholder on their respective calendars. Either way, we need to let vendors know. This will be an item for discussion and action during the Monday, February 12, 2024 Council meeting.

8) **New City of Smithville Website Scheduled to Launch March 1, 2024** – The city staff has been working with CivicPlus the past 6-months to re-design the current City of Smithville website. The new website is scheduled to launch on Friday, March 1, 2024 and will feature updated content with enhanced search engine optimization and a more user-friendly, functional layout accessible by both computer and mobile platforms. An [on-line survey](#) was conducted via social media posts and direct email distribution in August of 2023 seeking community input regarding the look, feel, and functionality of the new website. Results of the survey were shared with the public during the [November 13, 2023 City Council meeting \(re: Item 20\)](#) and with CivicPlus which helped guide the website design. Citizens will have the ability to make utility payments, submit work orders (via SeeClickFix), read news and announcements, and access the city calendar of meetings / events. The website will also feature an on-line Message Board for use by Councilmembers to share their thoughts with citizens on a variety of topics. Per the Texas Open Meetings Act (TOMA), Councilmembers may not vote or take action by posting on the city’s on-line Message Board and only City Council members and authorized staff will be allowed to post. Citizens will have access to the Message Board but will be unable to make comments. Additional announcements regarding the new website launch will be included in the utility bills, the city website, and posted on social media (e.g., NextDoor and Facebook).

9) **Smithville SEE/CLICK/FIX Issue Reporting Platform Reminder** - SeeClickFix is a user-friendly, cloud-based platform that gives citizens the ability to “connect” with City Hall through a variety of means. Citizens can report issues (e.g., pothole, broken street light, etc.) using their smartphones, Facebook, and/or the City website. The system automatically documents the location via GPS coordinates and creates a work order that is routed to the department responsible for resolving the issue and completing the work. Citizens can also forward photos of the issue to the City. The platform has been tailored to track closure status, work order aging, location, and type of issue being reported. This partnership not only allows Smithville citizens to report problems, but also to view, comment on, and vote to fix problems submitted by their neighbors. Citizens can even create their own “watch areas” to receive

notifications about all the issues reported in their community, enabling them to follow the progress of all service requests — not just the ones they report. The SeeClickFix app also keeps citizens engaged during the process by communicating what steps have been (or will be taken) to resolve the issue while providing links to other important information like City News, Calendar, and Utilities. The SeeClickFix mobile app is available for download on Android → [SeeClickFix-ANDROID](#) and iPhone → [SeeClickFix-iPHONE](#). In addition to the mobile apps, citizens can send reports to the City website. SeeClickFix provides a reliable issue(s) reporting / work order platform to enhance citizen engagement and improve operational efficiency.

### SeeClickFix Overview

**WHAT:**

- Platform for Citizens to Report Issues using Smart Phone
- Low Cost Solution – (subscription fee)
- Create, Assign, Process, and Track Work Orders

**BENEFITS:**

- Increase Productivity / Efficiency
- Enhance Customer Service

**HOW:**

- Partner with SCF to Customize platform for City Use



Connect your neighborhood to City Hall

Get the FREE Smithville SeeClickFix mobile app for a faster, easier way to notify City Hall about that pothole or broken street light in your neighborhood. You can also report concerns directly on the city's website.

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google play

SeeClickFix



## City Manager Update – 2/9/24 (continued)

**10) Avenue Insights Hotel Occupancy Tax / Short-Term Rental (STR) Platform to Launch March 1, 2024** - Avenue Insights & Analytics, LLC provides administrative services and compliance monitoring for Hotel Occupancy Tax collection associated with Short-Term Rentals (STR). The STR Monitoring, Identification, and Compliance Services are designed to help the city enhance its short-term rental/lodging tax revenues by providing web monitoring, web portal and identification services thereby producing previously unrealized revenue and improved compliance opportunities. STR owners will be able to register their properties and pay their hotel occupancy taxes on-line. Preliminary analysis indicates that there are 43 properties registered on various short-term rental websites in Smithville with the average nightly rental rate of \$204.71. The estimated unrealized annual STR tax revenue (at 50-75% occupancy range) is between \$104-154k.

**11) Wastewater Rates - Three Month Winter Water Average Will End February, 29, 2024** - Wastewater rates in Smithville are set by using a three (3) month “winter” water use average between DECEMBER and FEBRUARY. You can reduce your monthly wastewater (sewer) bill by conserving water during these months. In the event that the monthly water usage for any month is less than the computed “winter water average,” the lesser of the two shall be used as the basis for calculating the wastewater bill. Residential customers pay a \$15.00 sewer base rate per month and \$4.00 sewer fee per 1000 gallons of water used. Cut back on water use between December and February and let the savings begin! For a list of all utility rates in Smithville, click on the following link → <https://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/city-departments/utilities/rates/>.

**12) City Council Approves Purchase of On-Line Cemetery Services Platform** – The City Council approved entering into a contract with All Funeral Services, LLC during the January 8, 2024 council meeting. All Funeral Services offers a turnkey, online platform that streamlines business operations and offers better customer service experience (e.g., digitized cemetery records / plot mapping, on-line sales, and genealogy search capability). The on-line platform will be compatible with both web-based and smart phone formats and will provide links to local florists, funeral service providers, and monument sales vendors offering a convenient “one-stop-shop” for our customer base. The initial set-up fee is approximately \$23k for both Oak Hill and Mt. Pleasant cemeteries and will be paid over a 3-year period. Thereafter, the annual license / subscription fee is 3.99% of any plots sold with a minimum of \$100 / month. Cemetery plots for property owners inside the city limits cost \$1000. Cemetery plots for property owners outside the city limits cost \$2000. So, the corresponding fee would be \$39.99 and \$79.80 respectively for each lot purchased. On average, the revenue from cemetery plot sales is \$35k per year. So, the estimated annual license fee would be \$1,200-\$1,500 assuming similar sales. The project will take 6-9 months to fully implement. Click on the following link for a copy of the contract and the presentation All Funeral Services, LLC provided to the City Council and members of the public during the January 8, 2024 City Council meeting → [City Council Data Package \(re: Item #15\)](#).

**13) Smithville Solar Two, LLC Construction Permit Issued** – On October 13, 2023, the Smithville City Council unanimously approved entering into a 25-year solar Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Smithville Solar Two, LLC to build a 1-Megawatt single axis photovoltaic solar array on property located next to the Smithville Municipal Airport on the west side of Loop 230. Our current wholesale power agreement with LCRA allows the City of Smithville to purchase up to 15% of alternative energy through a 3rd party. The existing solar array generates approximately 2.9 Megawatts (6%) with the second array providing an additional 6% of alternative energy capacity. Construction plans for the Smithville Solar Two, LLC project were reviewed and approved by the City and a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party engineering consultant on February 7, 2024. Construction of the second solar array will begin in March with the system commissioned and fully operational by January 2025. All costs for building the second solar array will be the responsibility of UGE / Smithville Solar Two, LLC.

### Current Development Projects UNDER CONSTRUCTION

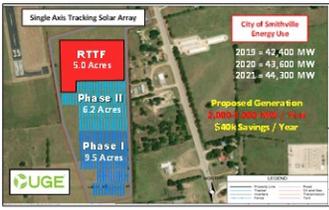
#### Smithville Solar II - PPA

- UGE Acquired Smithville Solar in JAN'23
- City has first right of refusal for Phase II
- 1-MW Solar Installation
- 15.7-acre tract off of Loop 230
- **\$1.4M Developer Investment**
- City can purchase up to 15% of Load
- 25-Yr. Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)



**STATUS:**

- Phase II PPA terms and conditions (including price per kWh) approved by Smithville City Council in October 2023.
- PHASE II Construction Permit Issued – February 2024
- **Construction Start Date – March 2024**
- Completion Date – DEC 2024



**SMITHVILLE TEXAS**

## City Manager Update – 2/9/24 (continued)

**14) City of Smithville Sales Tax Update** - Below are the sales tax allocations for February 2024 vs. February 2023 (retail sales made primarily in December). This data reflects RETAIL sales of goods and services subject to LOCAL sales tax that were purchased in Smithville during the Holiday shopping season. Our sales tax payment (receipt) for February was \$95,775. This represents a **1.28% INCREASE** in our net payment compared to the same time last year with Smithville leading the “municipal pack” for the greatest overall year-to-date percentage increase within Bastrop County at 5.77%. In the past 5-years, our annual sales tax receipts have increased 33.6%!!! As a reminder, sales tax dollars are used to make street / road repairs and help pay for community services like FIRE and POLICE. Thanks to all who continue to SHOP LOCAL --- it makes a difference!!!

### Bastrop County Sales Tax Allocation - FEBRUARY 2024

County/City	Current Rate	Net Payment This Period	Comparable Payment Prior Year	% Change	2024 Payments To Date	2023 Payments	% Change
Bastrop	1.50%	\$1,198,859	\$1,173,677	2.14%	\$2,229,552	\$2,152,214	3.59%
Elgin	1.50%	\$385,950	\$371,413	3.91%	\$707,816	\$687,061	3.02%
Smithville	1.50%	\$95,775	\$94,558	<b>1.28%</b>	\$166,505	\$157,418	<b>5.77%</b>
Bastrop County	0.50%	\$805,031	\$797,107	0.99%	\$1,519,240	\$1,455,728	4.36%

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

The Smithville Chamber of Commerce ANNUAL BANQUET will be held on **Friday, February 9, 2024** from 6:00 – 10:00 pm at the Smithville Recreation Center (106 Royston).

The next CITY COUNCIL meeting will be held at 6:00 pm on **Monday, February 12, 2024** at City Hall. Click on the following link for the [AGENDA](#) and [DATA PACKAGE](#).

Valentines Day is **Wednesday, February 14, 2024**.

The deadline to file for City Council and/or the Office of the Mayor is 5:00 pm **Friday, February 16, 2024**.

ITT Challenge [MLK Jr. / Black History Month Walk](#) is scheduled for 10:00 am **Saturday, February 17, 2024**.

City Offices will be CLOSED on **Monday, February 19, 2024** in observance of President’s Day.

The next Bastrop County BEST BREAKFAST will be held on **Friday, February 23, 2024** at Your Mom’s (109 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (from 8:00 am to 9:30 am).

A SPECIAL-CALLED CITY COUNCIL MEETING / PUBLIC FORUM will be held on **Wednesday, February 28, 2024** from 5:30 to 7:00 pm to provide an overview of the NE / NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Drainage project.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information. Have a great weekend. Have a Happy Valentine’s Day!

--Robert--



# PHOTOS – 2/9/24

## Bastrop County HHW Used Tire and Electronic Recycling Event



## Miscellaneous Drainage Projects – 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street b/n Garwood and Bishop



## New City Warehouse Rack Storage and Office Area Remodel



## Public Works (Water / Wastewater Department) Getting the Job Done!!!



## 2024 ITT Community Challenge Leaderboard – As of 2/9/24



← Leaderboard: Commun...		
MY COMMUNITY EXTRA SMALL		ALL
1st	Smithville	785,450 points >
2nd	Stockdale	703,450 points >
3rd	La Joya	241,375 points >
4th	Hardin	231,425 points >
5th	Ector	112,725 points >

