

City Manager Update – 3/8/24

[Daylight Savings Time](#) will begin on **Sunday, March 10, 2024**. 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.

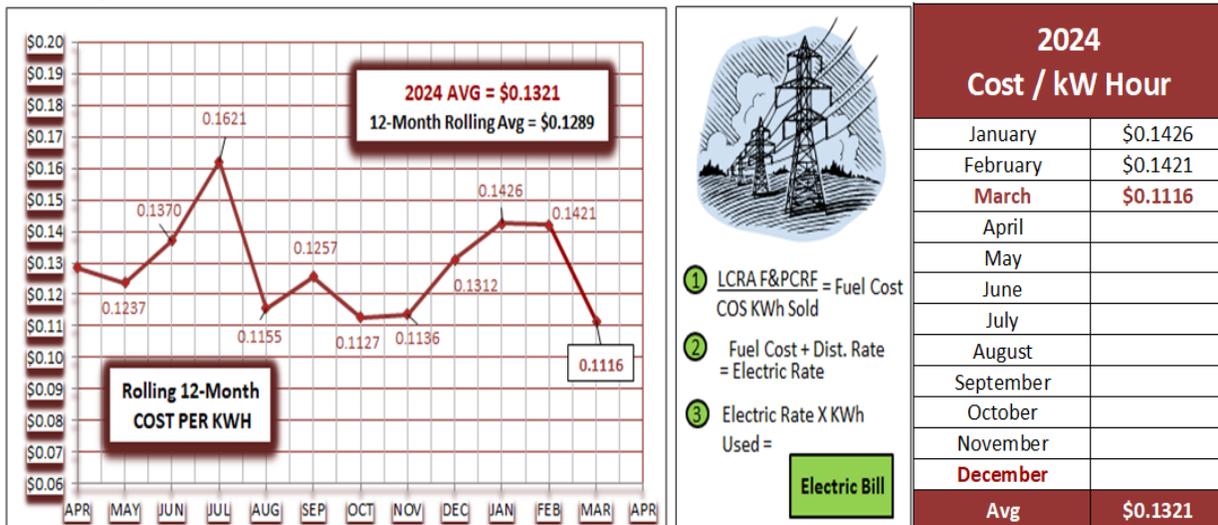
The mild temperatures and sunshine have been a welcome relief from the cold and dreary days of winter. Although Spring does not officially begin until March 19th, the wildflowers and trees are in full bloom. Bo Peep’s Crossing on the Hill is covered with Bluebonnets, Pink Phlox, and Indian Paint wildflowers. This is a great location to take photos of the kids and/or grandkids. So, please feel free to bring the family and take photos before the wildflowers begin to go to seed. It is my hope that we are finished with any arctic blasts until next winter as January was brutal. 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.

Jamboree preparations at Riverbend Park are in full swing. The annual celebration will be held **April 4, 2024 - April 6, 2024** marking the 65th year for the Critter. Click on the following links for the schedule and list of events → <http://www.jamboreesmithville.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/JamboreeCritter>. On behalf of the City of Smithville, I would like to extend a THANK YOU to the members of the Jamboree Committee for their efforts. This event takes months to plan and most folks in the community never give a second thought about what it takes to pull off a community celebration of this magnitude and duration. Last year approximately 27k people attended the 3-day event. Riverbend Park is looking great. Kudos to Edward Balusek and his team for paying attention to detail and going the extra mile mowing, weed-eating, and trimming trees at Riverbend Park. Edward’s crew will also be removing dirt and debris from the curbs and “gutters” along Loop 230. Loop 230 will be closed from 1:30 – 4:30 pm on Saturday, April 6th for the Jamboree parade. We will post on the city website and FB page communicating the Loop 230 closure and remind folks about the parade.

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 cost per kWh for residential customers in March is \$0.0566. This represents an **35.01% DECREASE** compared to February’s fuel cost of \$0.0871. Adding the City’s distribution fee of \$0.0550 and LCRA’s \$0.0566 fuel cost, **the cost per kWh for residential service in Smithville during MARCH will be \$0.1116**. 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 78F in summer. Bottom line, most people stay inside and use more electricity cooking, watching TV, washing clothes, opening the fridge, and/or simply trying to keep their houses (and themselves) warm during extended periods of extremely cold weather. The Texas Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has energy-savings tips on their website → <https://www.puc.texas.gov/consumer/facts/Save.aspx>. On average, the annual 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 2024



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 – 3/8/24 (continued)

- 2) **2024 City of Smithville Councilmember, Mayor, and SISD School Board Elections** – Candidate filing for the 2024 City of Smithville General Election is complete. A list of candidates and the position(s) for which they are running is provided below. Election Day is Saturday, May 4, 2024. Early voting begins April 22, 2024 and ends April 30, 2024. Voting will be held at the Smithville Recreation Center (106 Royston). Click on the following link for additional information (e.g., sample ballot, polling locations, etc.) → <https://www.bastropvotes.org/election-information-2/upcoming-elections/>. As a reminder, all political signs on private property must be removed within 7-days after the election per City of Smithville Code of Ordinances, Chapter 14 - Zoning, Part 3, General Development Standards, [Section 3.7.2 - “Political Signs”](#). Good luck to all the candidates!

City Council, Mayor, and SISD Trustee Candidates For 2024 General Election

	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 Meek	2-Years	May 2024	General	Challenger
		Brandon Dunham				Challenger
SISD	Trustee - Place 3	Casey Hanchey	3-Years	May 2024	General	Challenger
		Bryan Jones				Challenger
	Trustee - Place 4	Chelsa Vinklarek	3-Years	May 2024	General	Unopposed

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.

- 3) **City of Smithville Wins the 2024 IT'S TIME TEXAS Community Challenge For 7th Consecutive Year!** - Congratulations are in order for all those who participated in the 2024 “IT'S TIME TEXAS Community Challenge”. Smithville came in 1st PLACE in the “extra small” community category (population between 1-5000) dominating Stockdale and La Joya logging 1,312,450 points with over 150 community participants. Similarly, the Smithville ISD took 1st place with 1,104,425 points beating out Stockdale ISD and Monte Alto ISD. This is the 7th 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 23rd and 74th in the “small” community category (population between 5,000-40,000) earning 105,900 and 5,050 points respectively. To put this in perspective, the City of Austin logged 1,303,675 points...8,775 points LESS than Smithville. Congratulations are in order for all who participated in this year’s challenge with a special THANK YOU to the Smithville “Avengers” who checked-in, stretched, danced, walked, and twisted their way to victory! Click on the following link for results → <https://ittcommunitychallenge.com/>.
- 4) **New City of Smithville Website Launched** – The city staff has been working with CivicPlus over the past 6-months to re-design the current City of Smithville website. The [new city website](#) was successfully launched on Friday, March 1, 2024 and features updated content with enhanced search engine optimization. The website design provides a more user-friendly, functional layout that is 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 also features 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.

City Manager Update – 3/8/24 (continued)

5) **City of Smithville Comprehensive Plan Kick-Off Meeting** – The City of Smithville Comprehensive Plan kick-off meeting will be held on Monday, March 11, 2024 at City Hall (317 Main Street) as part of the regularly scheduled Council meeting. Ms. Jerri Conrado (Langford Community Management Services) will be providing a brief overview of the Comprehensive Plan process to include project timelines, key dates, and deliverables. The presentation will focus on the following:

- Official RCP Kickoff with a brief introduction of the Key Stakeholders
- A brief overview of the data collection process
- Share a few examples from the community engagement portal
- Share the timeline for the key stakeholder group planning meetings
- Highlight the Additional Chapter options

The Comprehensive Plan will address future land use, zoning, downtown revitalization, economic development, historic preservation, infrastructure, parks & recreation, community health, and housing by obtaining community input / feedback through a series of stakeholder meetings over the next 6-12 months. Plan development, revisions, public meetings, and final adoption will take another 6 months. There will be multiple opportunities for community input and stakeholder involvement. If you recall, the Smithville City Council awarded the General Land Office (GLO) Community Development Block Grant Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) Resilient Communities Program (RCP) grant management contract for the Comprehensive Plan to [Langford Community Management Services, Inc. \(LCMS\)](#) back in September 2022. This also included a comprehensive planning consultant [KU & Associates](#). Click on the following link for a copy of the → [Comprehensive Plan Proposal](#). LCMS submitted the GLO CDBG-MIT Resilient Communities Program (RCP) grant application on November 7, 2022. GLO awarded the City of Smithville the maximum amount available (\$300,000 with NO MATCH) on October 5, 2023. Additional information regarding the 2007, 2011, and 2012 comprehensive plans is available on city website → <https://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/186/Development-Plans>

6) **City to Recognize Milton’s Furniture for 75-Years of Service to our Community** – The City of Smithville will be recognizing Milton’s Furniture (206 NW Loop 230) during the Monday, March 11, 2024 City Council meeting for achieving 75-years as a local business. Milton’s was founded in 1948 by the late Milton Mutschink as a radio service, sales and repair business on Main Street. When the first television station began operations in Austin, the company added TV sales and service. Shortly after the introduction of TVs, Milton’s expanded to offer a full line of GE major appliances, which created a need for additional floor space. The company’s growth led to the construction of a new building on Texas 71, now Loop 230, where it remains and operates today. Throughout the years, several additions were made, extending floor space for a complete line of name brand furniture, bedding, appliances and accessories. The business is still owned and operated by Milton’s dedicated family members and employees, who practice the same values as originated by Milton, including customer satisfaction, honesty, reliability, service and quality merchandise. In 2008, the company added a warehouse directly across the street from the existing store to offer more in-stock items. Impressively, Milton’s Furniture has been voted the #1 Furniture store in Bastrop County every year since 2011.

7) **PHI Air Medical Transportation Contract / Renewal Agreement Under Consideration** – The City of Smithville is considering renewing its contract agreement with PHI Air Medical to provide "no cost" emergency medical air transport of citizens with life-threatening injuries / illnesses that reside within the Smithville City Limits. The proposed annual fee of \$13,272.00 is based on providing coverage to approximately 1896 households (an increase of \$861 or 123 additional households as identified by the most current / corrected residential census data). The plan will cover all Smithville citizens while they are in PHI Service Area (i.e., Bastrop County) at a cost of \$7.00 per household. For those citizens with insurance (including Medicare patients), the agreement will cover all co-pays, deductibles, and remaining balances for PHI transports. For those without insurance, the agreement will cover payment in full. For those citizens on Medicaid, PHI will receive a payment from the state. Citizens can upgrade to a full national household membership for \$30 per year that will provide coverage outside of the Bastrop County service area. On average, the cost for medical air transport in large metropolitan areas is \$10-15k per flight. However, the average cost for citizens in Bastrop County for medical air transport is \$45-50k. In 2023, there were six (6) PHI Air Medical transports in Smithville. If approved, the contract will be valid through April 30, 2025. This will be an item for discussion during the Monday, May 11, 2024 Council Meeting.

City Manager Update – 3/8/24 (continued)

8) Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Event Scheduled - The City of Smithville has partnered with the City of Bastrop, Keep Smithville Beautiful, Bastrop County, and Lee County to hold a PAINT, PESTICIDES, and USED CHEMICALS collection event on March 16, 2024 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facility located at 109 Taylor and SE 2nd Street in Smithville. Participants must have voucher to participate. Vouchers are available at City Hall (317 Main Street) or on-line. Click on the following link for more information -> https://www.co.bastrop.tx.us/page/ds.household_waste.

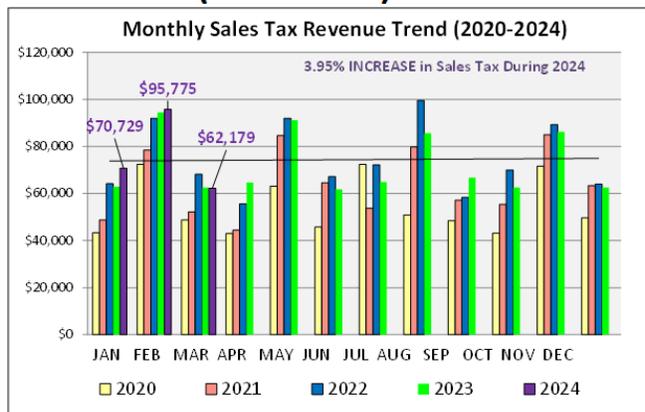
9) City of Smithville Sales Tax Update - Below are the sales tax allocations for March 2024 vs. March 2023 (retail sales made primarily in January). This data reflects RETAIL sales of goods and services subject to LOCAL sales tax that were purchased in Smithville. Our sales tax payment (receipt) for March was \$62,179. This represents a **0.61% 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 3.95%. 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 the LIBRARY, FIRE, and POLICE. Thanks to all who continue to SHOP LOCAL --- it makes a difference!!!

Bastrop County Sales Tax Allocation - March 2024

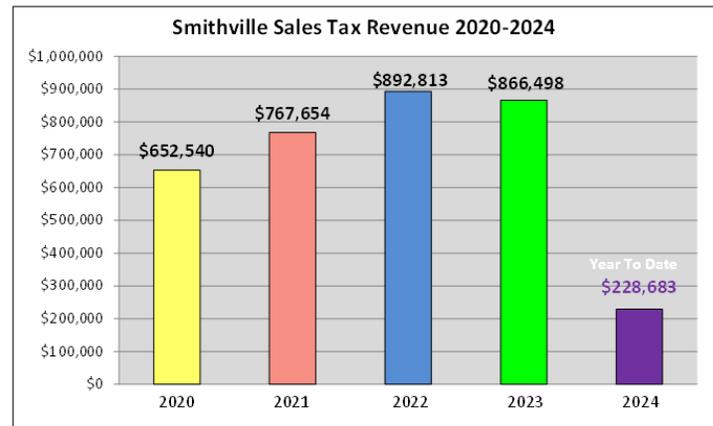
County/City	Current Rate	Net Payment This Period	Comparable Payment Prior Year	% Change	2024 Payments To Date	2023 Payments	% Change
Bastrop	1.50%	\$916,206	\$901,054	1.68%	\$3,145,758	\$3,053,268	3.02%
Elgin	1.50%	\$304,190	\$291,588	4.32%	\$1,012,006	\$978,650	3.40%
Smithville	1.50%	\$62,179	\$62,561	-0.61%	\$228,683	\$219,979	3.95%
Bastrop County	0.50%	\$622,435	\$601,436	3.49%	\$2,141,674	\$2,057,164	4.10%

Smithville Sales Tax Revenue (2020-2024)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
JAN	\$39,325	\$43,347	\$48,759	\$64,226	\$62,860	\$70,729
FEB	\$59,926	\$72,422	\$78,459	\$92,024	\$94,558	\$95,775
MAR	\$36,333	\$48,809	\$52,210	\$68,204	\$62,561	\$62,179
APR	\$39,391	\$42,977	\$44,438	\$55,574	\$64,717	
MAY	\$60,837	\$63,095	\$84,622	\$92,007	\$91,169	
JUN	\$43,545	\$45,779	\$64,516	\$67,197	\$61,809	
JUL	\$43,536	\$72,352	\$53,723	\$72,234	\$64,911	
AUG	\$58,843	\$50,878	\$79,858	\$99,610	\$85,733	
SEP	\$47,330	\$48,442	\$57,169	\$58,446	\$66,831	
OCT	\$40,562	\$43,150	\$55,398	\$69,994	\$62,501	
NOV	\$57,870	\$71,574	\$85,087	\$89,312	\$86,235	
DEC	\$48,244	\$49,714	\$63,415	\$63,985	\$62,613	



Sales Tax Revenue	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	\$575,742	\$652,540	\$767,654	\$892,813	\$866,498	\$228,683



SHOP LOCAL

It makes a difference!!!

*Sales Tax Revenue helps pay for
Fire, Police, Street Repairs,
Library, Airport, Rec Center and
Animal Control*

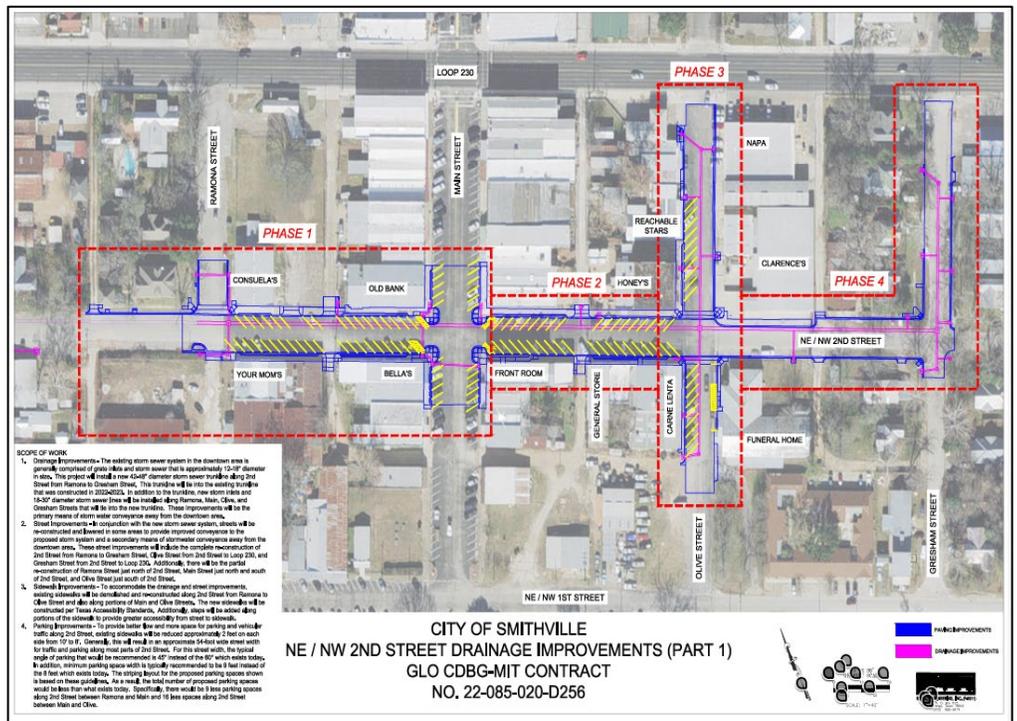
Data Source: <https://comptroller.texas.gov/transparency/local/allocations/sales-tax/cities.php>

City Manager Update – 3/8/24 (continued)

10) Avenue Insights Hotel Occupancy Tax / Short-Term Rental (STR) Platform Launched - 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 Platform was successfully launched on March 1, 2024 and has been designed to allow STR owners to register their properties and pay their hotel occupancy taxes on-line → <https://www.hoteltaxonline.com/default.sto.aspx>. In addition, the platform will 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. 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) is between \$104-154k. Click on the following link to access a list of [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) and Instructions](#) for filing HOT / registering STR on-line.

11) Council to Consider Awarding Construction Contract for NE/NW 2nd Drainage Improvement – The bid opening for the GLO CDBG-MIT NE/NW 2nd Drainage Project was held on Wednesday, March 6, 2024. The City received two (2) bids for the project ranging from \$1,918,417.67 to \$2,729,922.00. The low bidder for the project was WJC Constructors Services, LLC of Smithville. BEFCO Engineering's review of their bid submittal determined WJC Constructors Services, LLC did provide a complete bid submittal package and was not missing any items. As such, it is recommended that **WJC Constructors Services, LLC** be awarded the contract in the amount of \$1,918,417.67. Construction will take approximately 12-months (beginning in May) and will be done in phases starting at NW 2nd and Ramona and ending at NE 2nd and Gresham. The project includes upsizing the storm drain lines, lowering / repaving the street, adding curbs, drainage inlets, handicap ramps / parking, and replacing sidewalks. Originally, the design of the project included widening NE/NW 2nd by removing 2-ft of the 10-ft sidewalk from each side of the street (see diagram below). However, given citizen's concerns (and after holding multiple discussions with the building / property owners) **the city will NOT be widening any streets at this time**. The sidewalks will still be replaced as was always planned as part of the GLO grant. We just won't be losing 2-ft of sidewalk on either side of NE/NW 2nd. Unfortunately, there will be no opportunity to spend GLO grant funds on beautification to add trees / planters, etc. as part of the drainage project. We can address downtown revitalization and sidewalk beautification during the comp plan process as part of our long-term strategy. The city will also be adding handicap parking at the corners of Main and NE/NW 2nd (as planned) and widen the parking spaces from 8 to 9 feet leaving the angle at 60 degrees. This will minimize the loss of parking space along NE/NW 2nd to six (6). So, instead of parking 50 spaces between Main and Olive on NE 2nd, you will have 44. Regarding business interruption during construction, the WJC Constructors Services, LLC will be working on only one

side of the street at a time. So, at least 25 spaces on NE/NW 2nd will be available at any given time. The exception will be when the roadway is repaved with hot mix which will require 24-hours to allow for the new asphalt to set / cure. To this end, Mr. Edward Allen has graciously offered to open up his parking lot next to Consuela's for overflow parking at no charge. We would need to do some patchwork and stripe spaces to maintain some order and/or protocol as to where people should park. This will be an item for discussion and action during the March 11, 2024 Council meeting.



City Manager Update – 3/8/24 (continued)

- 12) 2024 LCRA “Steps Forward Day” Project Application Approved** – The City of Smithville received notice from to the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) communicating that our “Steps Forward Day” project application(s) was approved. As such, volunteers from LCRA will gather on Friday, April 12, 2024, 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 trimmed trees and cleaned around gravesites at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. LCRA also painted the interior of the restrooms at Riverbend Park. This year LCRA volunteers repaint 53 ornamental lights in the downtown area. The city will provide the supplies and equipment necessary to support the project(s) 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.
- 13) Special-Called Council Meeting / Public Forum Held** – The City of Smithville held a Special-Called Council Meeting & Public Forum on Wednesday, February 28, 2024 from 5:30 to 8:00 pm at City Hall (317 Main). The purpose of the meeting / public forum was to provide information regarding the \$2.0M General Land Office (GLO) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Mitigation (MIT) project to improve drainage on NE/NW 2nd and the \$600k TXDOT TA/Set-Aside grant to construct Main Street ADA Ramps and NW 1st Street sidewalks. In addition, an overview of the downtown revitalization projects (past and present) was provided. Click on the following link for a copy of the presentation → [City of Smithville Special-Called Council Meeting Public Forum Presentation – 2/28/24](#).
- 14) City Purchases Fuel Concession at the Smithville-Crawford Municipal Airport from Fayette Aero, LLC** – For the past 20-years, the fuel concession at the Smithville-Crawford Municipal Airport (84R) was owned by Mr. Randy Foster (Fayette Aero, LLC) out of LaGrange. Mr. Foster had a contract with the city for the exclusive right to sell aviation fuel (100LL) at 84R. The city was paid \$0.05 / gallon sold. The average amount of fuel sold per year is approximately 8,000-10,000 gallons. The average annual revenue the City received was between \$400-500. The fuel was typically marked up anywhere from \$1.00 to 1.50 based upon market price. Of course, the City had no maintenance or fuel expense tied to the concession. The strategy going forward will be to add a minimal mark-up (e.g., \$0.20-0.25 cents) to entice pilots to come to 84R to refuel at a bargain price (similar to what most motorists will do to go out of their way to purchase cheap gas). Once here, most pilots will grab one of the courtesy cars and visit downtown to eat and/or shop. With cheaper prices, we can sell more aviation fuel which in turn, will generate more revenue. Not to mention the added benefit of having more visitors venture downtown. The city paid \$35k for the fuel concession leveraging TXDOT Aviation’s Routine Airport Maintenance Program (RAMP) which will reimburse at 90/10. So, for \$3.5k, the city is now able to sell aviation fuel for profit with ROI in less than a year. Special thanks to Sandy Meyerson for his assistance with this initiative.

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

Saturday, March 8-9, 2024 – [Smithville Folk Music Festival](#) – Carne Lenta (114 NE 2nd Street).

Saturday, March 9, 2024 – Smithville Rec Center [3rd ANNUAL 5k COLOR RUN](#). Check-in begins at 9:00 am with 10:00 am START TIME. Register online at <https://www.ci.smithville.tx.us/218/Fun-Runs-Special-Events>.

Sunday, March 10, 2024 - Daylight Savings time begins. Set clocks ahead one (1) hour. “Spring Forward – Fall Back”.

Monday, March 11, 2024 - CITY COUNCIL meeting will be held at 6:00 pm (City Hall – 317 Main). Click link to access the [COUNCIL AGENDA](#) and [COUNCIL DATA PACKET](#)

Saturday, March 16, 2024 - PAINT, PESTICIDES, and USED CHEMICALS Collection Event (9:00 am to 12:00 pm) at the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facility located at 109 Taylor and SE 2nd Street. Vouchers required.

Sunday, March 17, 2024 – St. Patrick’s Day

City Manager Update – 3/8/24 (continued)

Thursday, March 21, 2024 - CHAMBER MIXER & RIBBON CUTTING - Sponsored by the Abbey's Tavern & Grill, 205 NE Loop 230 – 5:00 to 7:00 pm.

Monday, March 19, 2024 – First day of Spring.

Friday, March 22, 2024 - The BEST MONTHLY BREAKFAST will be held at the Texas Grill Restaurant (101 HWY 71 West) in Bastrop and is sponsored by McCreary Veselka Bragg & Allen and hosted by the Bastrop County Appraisal District (BCAD) from 8:00-9:30 am. Kristin Miles (Bastrop County Elections Administrator) will be the guest speaker.

Saturday, March 23, 2024 - 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/>

Friday, March 29, 2024 – City Offices will be CLOSED in observance of Good Friday.

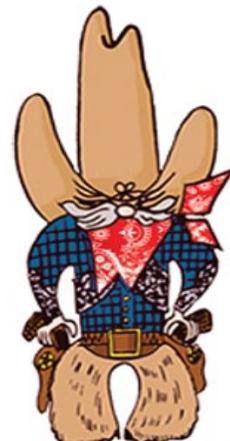
Sunday, March 31, 2024 – Easter Sunday.

April 4, 2024 - April 6, 2024 – Smithville Jamboree!

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

--Robert--


Happy
St. Patrick's Day



PHOTOS - 3/8/24

Residential Home Construction on Loop 230 East – “The Prairie” Subdivision



Residential Home Construction – M5 Subdivision



Spring Cleaning!



2024 ITT Community Challenge



2024 ITT Community Challenge



Crepe Myrtle Trimming on Charleston Blvd



Wildflowers at Bo Peep’s Crossing on the Hill

