

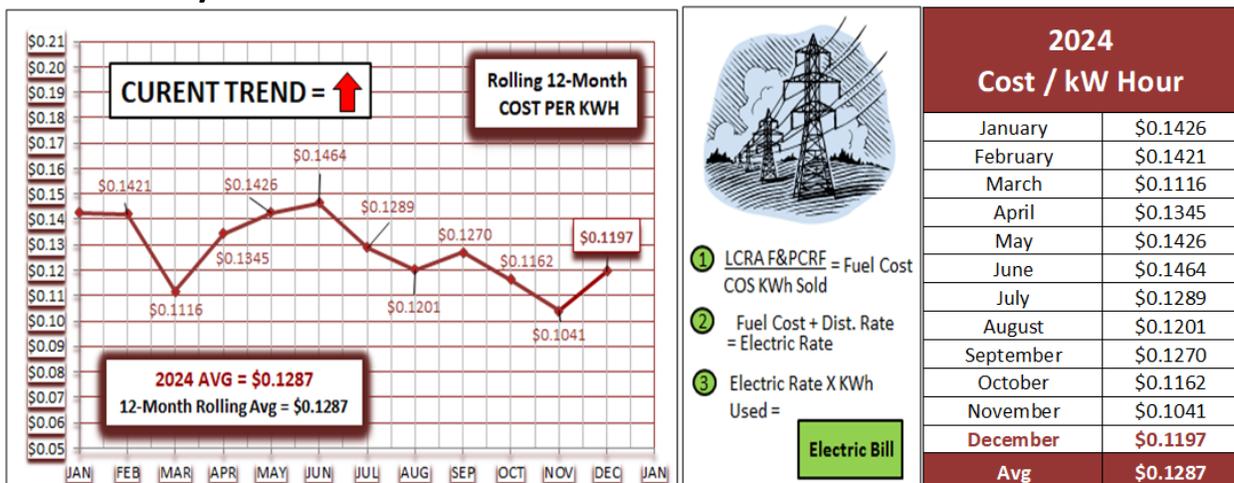
City Manager Update – 12/6/24

Happy Friday! I trust everyone had a good Thanksgiving. I am amazed that we all spend several days cooking and cleaning to prepare a meal that lasts 27-minutes. It is hard to believe the Holiday Season is already upon us and there are only 19 days left until Christmas. The City staff and work crews have been preparing for Festival of Lights this week with Christmas decorations being put up at the Rec Center, Library, City Hall, and the PD. Special thanks to the Electric Department for hanging banners along Loop 230 and re-stringing lights on Main Street and on most City facilities.

Here is a list of significant accomplishments, issues, events, and activities since my last update:

- 1) Wastewater Rates - Three Month Winter Water Averaging Begins December 1st** - 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/175/Rates>.
- 2) TDEM HMGP DR-4485 Grant Award Received** – The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) issued a sub-grant award for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) DR-4485 (Texas COVID-19 Pandemic funds) to the City of Smithville in the amount of \$658,400 to purchase and install two fixed emergency generators, concrete pads, fencing, fuel tanks, and automatic transfer switches at the Dorothy Nichols and Gazley Water Plants. The city match is 10% (\$65,840). The initial application was submitted in December 2021 with Langford Community Management Services and TRC Engineering, Inc. selected by the City Council as grant management and engineering consultants respectively in February 2022. A sub-recipient agreement with TDEM has been signed and a kick-off meeting was held on Tuesday, December 2, 2024. TRC Engineering, Inc. will be updating construction cost estimates prior to the City initiating Request(s) for Proposal (RFP) for a qualified construction contractor sometime after the first of the year. The generators will ensure the reliability of our water plant operations during power outages. The estimated construction start date is 6-9 months with the 10% match included in the FY25/26 budget.
- 3) Residential Cost Per Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Calculated** - An analysis of LCRA billing data was conducted to determine residential cost per kilowatt hour (kWh) in DECEMBER. 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 December is \$0.0647. Adding City's distribution fee of \$0.0550, the cost per kWh for residential service in Smithville during DECEMBER will be \$0.1197 per kWh. This represents a **14.97% INCREASE** in the cost per kWh compared to November's cost per kWh of \$0.1041. The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) of Texas has published cold weather energy-savings tips → <https://www.puc.texas.gov/consumer/facts/Save.aspx>. 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 12-13 cents.

City of Smithville Residential Cost Per kWh – DECEMBER 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 – 12/6/24 (continued)

- 4) **City of Smithville Receives \$50k Keep Texas Beautiful / HEB Grant for Recycling Center Improvements** – Keep Texas Beautiful (KTB), through its Keep Texas Recycling program has awarded the City of Smithville \$50k in grant funding as part of the H-E-B Community Recycling Grant Program. Created in 2021, this program seeks projects that will help communities build sustainable recycling opportunities and/or increase public education and awareness around waste reduction and recycling. Funding for this grant is provided by H-E-B. Projects could include, but are not limited to, the purchase of recycling equipment, recycling facility upgrades, community education/outreach, and improving recycling efficiency. All identified projects must be completed by November 2025. The release of funding is pending City Council approval of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- 5) **Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Expansion Study Completed** – During a Special-Called City Council meeting and workshop held on Thursday, November 14, 2024, BEFCO Engineering, Inc. presented the results of the [Wastewater Treatment Facility \(WWTF\) Expansion Study](#). The focus of the WWTF expansion study included evaluating existing WWTF infrastructure, developing growth assumptions, identifying future infrastructure system needs, and determining associated cost estimates to refurbish / expand the city’s wastewater treatment capacity. The estimated wastewater system refurbishment / expansion cost ranges from \$5-36M. In summary, the City of Smithville has enough wastewater capacity to meet the current demand with room for expansion in the short-term (2-3 years). However, the Gazley WWTF and supporting infrastructure is antiquated and will need to be refurbished / upgraded sooner than later. The 3 to 5-year timeframe is where the urgency exists and what our focus has been with the wastewater expansion study as it will take that long to design, fund, and build a new wastewater plant. In the interim, funding sources (e.g., TWDB / GLO grants, impact fees, public improvement districts, bonds, C of O’s, etc.) are currently being explored per City Council direction.
- 6) **Insurance Services Office (ISO) Public Protection Classification Summary Report Completed** - The City of Smithville sent a formal request to have an updated Insurance Services Office (ISO) field survey conducted. It has been approximately 6-years since our last survey and we have made many improvements to our water supply infrastructure to include the addition ground storage tanks, pump stations, and multiple fire hydrants in newly developed subdivisions. The ISO evaluates a community’s fire protection capabilities and assigns a Public Protection Classification (PPC) score from 1-10 with “1” being “outstanding” and “10” being “poor”. ISO's PPC program evaluates communities according to a uniform set of criteria:
- **Needed Fire Flows** which are representative building locations used to determine the theoretical amount of water necessary for fire suppression purposes;
 - **Emergency Communications** including emergency reporting, telecommunicators, and dispatching systems;
 - **Fire Department** including equipment, staffing, training, geographic distribution of fire companies, operational considerations, and community risk reduction;
 - **Water Supply** including inspection and flow testing of hydrants, alternative water supply operations, and a careful evaluation of the amount of available water compared with the amount needed to suppress fires up to 3,500 gpm.

In general, the cost of fire insurance in a community with a good PPC score is substantially lower than a community with a poor PPC. Fire department staffing, communications, response time, training, and equipment are all considered as well as the City’s fire suppression systems and water supply. Generally speaking, each increase or decrease in a community’s PPC score will impact insurance premiums by 4-5%. Currently, the City has a **Class 5** PPC score (average). Going forward, there are opportunities for improvement that include increased fire department training, recordkeeping, and inspection/test of fire hydrants. The City will be working with the Smithville Volunteer Fire Department, the Smithville Police Department (Dispatch), and the Public Works Department to address the identified areas for improvement with a re-assessment planned in 12-18 months. The 2024 ISO summary report is available → [ISO Public Protection Classification Summary Report](#).

- 7) **“Notify Me” Alerts Available on City Website** – In an effort to enhance communication, improve community engagement, and increase transparency, the City has a new feature on our website whereby citizens can receive notification via text and/or email for a variety of city notices, meetings, and events. On the city website landing page, there is a **“Notify Me”** radial button that will allow citizens to sign up for over 2-dozen types of alerts (e.g., council agendas, specific meeting dates, general news, alerts, city manager updates, etc.). Citizens will need to set-up an account and user-defined password. Once the set-up and login are complete, citizens can select the type of notifications they would like to receive and method of delivery (e.g., text, email).

City Manager Update – 12/6/24 (continued)

- 8) **WaterSmart (VertexOne) Customer Interface Portal Available to City of Smithville Utility Customers** – The WaterSmart (VertexOne) customer interface portal is now available to all Smithville utility customers. WaterSmart is a user-friendly platform that will help citizens better monitor and manage the water portion of their utility bills by providing the ability to set up leak alerts, track water usage, view historical trends, and pay on-line. WaterSmart can also generate a water “score” compared to other local neighborhood use and offer cost savings recommendations / solutions to help citizens conserve water and save money. For additional information, click on the following link to see the capabilities of → [WaterSmart](#) and/or contact the Smithville Utility Department on (512) 237-3282. Customers will need their utility account number to log in and set-up a password to access the [Smithville WaterSmart Portal](#). In the future, we will be adding an interface to allow citizens to monitor their electric use.
- 9) **Council to Consider Born-Again Emporium (BAE) Annexation** – The City staff has been working with Born-Again Emporium (BAE) over the past 2-months to expedite voluntary annexation of the property. BAE is requesting annexation to reduce their operational costs and obtain local law enforcement support. They have had several incidents in the past (e.g., shoplifting, disturbing the peace, etc.) where BCSO was unable to respond in a timely manner. BAE does not pay property taxes as they are a non-profit organization. So, the City will not receive any property tax benefits. However, BAE sales are averaging \$8-10k per week (\$40k per month) of which the City will be eligible to receive 1.5% of that amount (approximately \$600 per month) once the property is annexed. Currently BAE pays 1.5x the “residential” rate for utilities (water, sewer, electric, garbage, etc.) as they are outside of our city limits. In the past year, BAE’s average monthly utility bill was \$850 ranging from \$525 to \$1150. So, BAE will recognize \$250-275 in operational cost savings per month at the lower residential rate. The loss in utility revenue will be offset by future sales tax receipts for which the City will become eligible to receive after annexation. We have taken all the steps necessary for annexation including sending public notices (to adjacent landowners, taxing entities, and newspaper, etc.), scheduling public hearings, and developing a service plan. All of this will be part of the Council agenda on December 9, 2024. If the Council approves annexation, the BAE property will come into the city limits as SF1 zoning and will need to be re-zoned to C3 (Highway Commercial). Re-zoning will be an item that will go to the P&Z Commission and Council in January.

There are several events going on in Smithville and it is going to be a very busy couple of weeks:

The annual **Smithville Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD) Christmas Party** will be held on **Friday, December 6th** at the Pavilion in Riverbend Park. Social starts at 6:00 p.m. with Dinner at 7:00 pm. Councilmembers are welcome and encouraged to attend.

The [33rd Annual Festival of Lights](#) and Indoor / Outdoor Arts & Crafts Fair is scheduled for **Saturday, December 7th** on Main Street and at the Recreation Center (106 Royston) from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

The next **City Council Meeting** will be held on **Monday, December 9th** at City Hall (317 Main) beginning at 6:00 pm. Click → [HERE](#) for a copy of the agenda.

The **Smithville Public Library** will be holding their [Annual Open House](#) on **Thursday, December 12th** from 4:00 - 6:30 pm.

The **Smithville ISD Central Office Annual Holiday Luncheon** will be held on **Wednesday, December 18th** from 2:00 - 4:30 pm at the Admin Building (red brick building located at 901 NE 6th St). Councilmembers and the Mayor are invited.

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE – City Offices will be CLOSED on the following days:

CHRISTMAS:

- Tuesday, December 24th – (Close at Noon)
- Wednesday, December 25th – Holiday
- Thursday, December 26th – Holiday

NEW YEARS:

- Wednesday, January 1st – Holiday

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information. Happy Holidays!!!

-- Robert --

