

From the Mayor's desk - 1/23/26

Happy Friday!

Bundle up and stay warm this weekend. Reminder to take care of your water pipes to avoid freeze and burst. First, insulate as you can, draining your water is even better. If you don't drain it, then try to free flow the water on short intervals during the time where temps are in the 20's. About every hour or so on full flow for both hot & cold. Also, the drip method will help. The drip method works best with a consistent flowing stream of water. A constant water stream about the size of a pencil lead will relieve the pressure build up from expanding frozen water that bursts a water pipe.

A very important message about home heating. It is critical to your safety to make sure that you do not use heat/fire sources that off-gas carbon monoxide inside your home/camper. Burning propane indoors and unvented is one example of this extremely dangerous activity. DON'T DO IT. Any combustion from a generator or fire source must be vented outside. The buildup of carbon monoxide can and will kill you. It is not worth that risk, so please be aware and make others aware!

Our furry and green friends. Keep pets inside if possible and ensure they avoid frostbite. Bring plants inside as you can and cover/wrap your outdoor plants with sheets & blankets. Remember that the storm will bring wind so prepare for that as you cover them.

Emergency Management:

Lots of activity in EMC this week with the weather forecast. Backup power in place for Emergency Operations Center (EOC) which has been activated. Preparations are being made at City Hall buildings. The EMC chain of command is ready to go to work as needed in case of emergency. Very pleased with the preparedness going into this potential freeze event. Plan for the worst and hope for the best.

Human Resources:

The posting for the new City Administrator position has one week remaining. To date we have 18 candidates that will be vetted by Clear Career Professionals in early February. The ~5 finalists will then be brought to Surfside for in person interviews at City Hall preliminarily scheduled for February 27th. This date is still to be finalized. Again, the recruiter has suggested that we have an open forum with citizens as part of the process to allow the candidates to meet and hear from residents, and for you to ask questions of prospective City Administrator candidates. More to come.

Grants & Major Projects:

We had a monthly update meeting this week on the Groins & Beach nourishment project. I invited and was joined by Chet Davidson who has been a vocal and concerned citizen on this project. The TxGLO and Coast & Harbor Engineering update was unfortunately a month delay in submission of engineering for final project manual by C&H to TxGLO. This was earlier estimated to be completed on 12/15/25 and is now estimated to be completed on 1/30/26. From submission of final project manual, the TxGLO then develops the construction RFP solicitation needed to bid and award the contract. An anticipated timeline for the project was supplied by Coast & Harbor which is below:

Groin & Beach Nourishment Project

<u>Description</u>	<u>Duration (days)</u>	<u>Tentative Start</u>	<u>Tentative End</u>
Coast & Harbor submits final Project Manual to TxGLO for approval	20	1/10/2026	1/30/2026
TxGLO develops construction RFP solicitation	60	1/30/2026	3/31/2026
Construction RFP Solicitation posted	30	3/31/2026	4/30/2026
Proposal Opening	0	4/30/2026	4/30/2026
Proposal Evaluation	30	4/30/2026	5/30/2026
Contract award Recommendation & Approval	30	5/30/2026	6/29/2026
Construction Contract Execution	15	6/29/2026	7/14/2026
US Treasury Dept Approval (RESTORE Funds)	45	7/14/2026	8/28/2026
NTP for construction contract issued	7	8/28/2026	9/4/2026
Pre-construction activities, Pre-construction conference and contractor mobilization	30	9/4/2026	10/4/2026
Construction activities start on site	0	10/4/2026	10/4/2026

Construction activities end on site, substantial completion inspection and demob	295	10/4/2026	7/26/2027
Construction Close-out	60	7/26/2027	9/24/2027

In addition we also had a monthly update meeting with HGAC & TxGLO on the Sewer replacement project that will replace one of our three vacuum sewer lines with a gravity system. The line to be replaced is the closest to the Gulf, servicing Beach Drive & Seashell. This one is also experiencing delays. It was expected that TxGLO was to execute the contract with HGAC by end of 2025, which is the next hurdle needed to then kick off the project with GrantWorks & Lynn Engineering. The TxGLO missed their due date and responded that “the contract amendment is being routed for review by multiple departments through Docusign”. No estimated due date on the contract was given. This project along with the Groins project has required many calls to our District 17 State Senator Joan Huffman who has gotten involved to push through the delays with TxGLO. It appears that will be the case again. Once the contract is signed, we already have an additional contract in place with HGAC to start activity. I expect construction to start in late summer on this project, and will publish a project timeline like the Groin & Beach Nourishment Project above once we have one in place.

We recently signed off to receive a \$63,000 grant from TxGLO CDBG-DR Mitigation, which is a Community Development Block Grant for Disaster Recovery. These funds were secured as a result of qualifying through TxCDBG surveys which identified that beneficiaries of the project are of low to moderate income. The project will include work on streets, water, and sewer on Swordfish and Pompano Lane. This activity is at the infancy stages with many more updates to come.

Lastly, we have been selected for FEMA review from an application submitted for FEMA HMGP grant for DR-4798 (Hurricane Beryl) to pay for a new generator. This is the very first hurdle on this grant and FEMA review will take “a few weeks to several months”. Based on our interactions with FEMA post Beryl, I am leaning toward the “several months” projection. It’s good to be selected to move forward, but we have a long way to go with this grant.

Tourism:

I wanted to add this topic to today’s letter to address an agenda item on Advertising that was brought forward at last week’s City Council meeting when I was out on vacation. I most definitely did not get a chance to speak a word at that meeting,

which was unfortunate, but will turn that public monologue into a public dialogue at next meeting. To start, Advertising expense is paid from the Hotel Fund that is funded by Hotel Occupancy Taxes paid from Short Term Rentals. VOSB Advertising should be targeted to bring in overnight guests to rent hotel rooms and AirBNB type short term rentals. Advertising funding has zero to do with income coming from Property Tax or Utility Bills, and is only funded by Hotel Occupancy Tax. The document shared at the Council meeting was an Estimate of potential Marketing/Advertising work that a vendor, Freestyle, suggested. It was not an invoice, a contract to perform work, or an obligation to pay for work as estimated. It was authorization to proceed on a retainer agreement where (quoted from Freestyle Estimate) "Freestyle will be providing services in the form of a monthly retainer for the Surfside Beach advertising campaign. Each month Freestyle will reserve and invoice, at minimum 16 hours of Marketing Services and 5 hours for Creative Services." The monthly retainer is \$200/hr, which amounts to \$4,200 and can be cancelled at any time. To be clear, the budgeted amount in Hotel Fund for Advertising that was discussed many times with City Council is well in excess of \$4,200. David the new Tourism leader is working with Freestyle to direct and approve their work and in turn any invoices resulting from it. I will work with David to provide an update here weekly on Tourism and Advertising activities to keep everyone abreast of how we are attempting to pull in more overnight guests to benefit our Hotels, AirBNBs, and local businesses.

Other items of interest:

The "Early Bird" beach passes for sale at City Hall are only available until the end of the month, **which is next Friday!** They are available for half price (\$15) only during the month of January. One per person please.

A meeting is scheduled next week on Monday with the City of Freeport to discuss the water bill credit due and potential payback options. Any potential solutions from this meeting will be vetted through City Council and voted for approvals. I will report back next week on details of the total credit owed and possible payback scenarios.

As always, I hope that you have a great day in wonderful Surfside Beach! Stay warm. Take care of yourself and look out for your neighbors. It does take a Village!!

Thanks,

Zach