

## **From the Mayor's Desk - 1/24/25:**

Happy Friday!

I hope everyone was warm and safe this week with the cold and snow/ice. I want to personally thank a team of many from City Hall staff that prepped exceptionally before, managed exceptionally during, and started up safely after the winter storm. All city buildings were fitted for water flush valves where needed and drained by Beach & Parks. Utilities freeze prep and power loss prep completed by Public Works. The ICW bridge and roads were monitored and maintained in collaboration with Brazoria county by PD. Emergency Management was monitored and documented by EMS. Post freeze canvassing of homes for water line damage done in collaboration by PW, PD & Beach/Parks. A true team effort that I am proud of, and also very appreciative of the folks that stayed overnight (without water!) to ensure the safety and support of the people of Surfside. Well Done and Thanks!

### Human Resources:

HR policies have been re-written for multiple topics, including – Hiring, Terminations, Attendance, and Complaints/Grievances. Training and sign off on these policies will occur in the coming weeks with all department leaders and all city employees. There are still some more to clean up and improve but these were most pressing based on previous issues experienced. Thanks to Janet and a few local residents with HR backgrounds for working to improve our policies and allow all employees at City Hall to understand what is expected of them, their supervisor, and how to raise concerns properly when necessary.

The Police Chief posting will be live for one more week, coming down on January 31<sup>st</sup>. After that, we will be vetting applicants with the help of TX Police Chiefs Association, and moving forward with interviews in February. The interview panel will be made up of Mayor, HR Director, Member of TPCA, an Alderman, a Surfside Citizen, and a retired Law Enforcement & FBI Agent. This is a very important position to fill permanently in our Village and this process will be taken very seriously. I anticipate the hiring process to be completed late February.

### Public Works:

Water bills were due this week on Wednesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>. As a result of the storm, we understand that hand carried bill payments and US mailed bill payments may be delayed. We will waive the late fees for any water bill payment made in person or received via US mail by 5pm today, Friday, January 24<sup>th</sup>.

A report on the results of the freeze this week - 1 city water main break & repair, 16 customer water line breaks shut off, no loss of system water pressure (above 45 psi citywide), two of three generators operated normal (third generator is down for service). Great job by the PW crew. Success loves preparation!

Vacuum sewer lines didn't fair as well. The rain and sleet/snow runoff overwhelmed the system and shut down all three lines. PW crews are actively working to get them back in service.

#### Beach & Parks:

Flush valves installed at Stahlman and City Hall & PD. All water lines drained with zero damage upon start up. Cold work this week on freeze preparation, but worth the efforts.

Hay & Christmas trees distributed on the beach for dune nourishment project, permitted through GLO and funded from Beach pass sales. This is the first year for small hay bales used in dune nourishment. The strategy is to build dunes from Christmas trees collecting windblown sand, and then longer term plant growth nourishment from hay bale decomposition. If this method works, we will plan to fund this activity annually for dune building.

#### Other items of Interest:

City council will be evaluating and voting on a potential increase in short term rental registration fees at next city council meeting in February. We currently require a one time \$50 registration fee for any short term rental property (Airbnb, VRBO type beach house). Evaluating other neighboring coastal municipalities short term rental fee structure, it has been realized that we are not in line with how others are structured and managing income streams from short term rentals. Others like, Galveston, Crystal Beach, Jamaica Beach, Treasure Island, and Corpus have an annual short term operation fee of \$250 that they use as income to fund city operations. This new income could be used on expenses in our General Fund and Systems Fund, of which both are significantly taxed during the high influx of tourists in the summer. If you have an opinion on this potential increase and annual collection of the short term rental fee, in line with other TX coastal communities, please let your City Council members know. They will be the ones casting "your" vote on this item. Their emails are listed on this website.

Chili cook off is Saturday hosted by Surfside Surf Station. Hope to see people outside in the warmer weather enjoying some local chili chefs masterpieces, a cold beverage, and some good conversations.

Dune day is Saturday on the beach. SOBA is hosting this event to finish place the Christmas trees in the dunes and then tie & stake them in order to better affix them in place. Come out and join the volunteers in this activity to build back our dunes that were lost in last summer's storms.

We are coming upon the last days of early bird half price beach passes for sale at City Hall. Next Friday, January 31<sup>st</sup> is the last day to receive the early bird discounted \$15 beach pass.

As always, take care of yourself and each other.

Hope to see you around the island this weekend!

Zach