

From the Mayor's desk – 3/7/25

Happy Friday!

First and foremost, at the Special City Council Meeting last night, Council voted and approved the addition of Philip Hester to the position of Chief of Police. He will be sworn into that position and interim Chief Marsh will remain on the force as 2nd in command. Continuity is very important and I want to personally thank Marsh for stepping in at a time of need for the Village and holding things together in PD. His character and commitment are commendable, and he deserves our gratitude.

As a Council, we decided to employ the Texas Police Chiefs Association to recruit, vet, and interview candidates for Chief of Police. The interview panel was made up of myself (Mayor), Jon Gerber (Council), Dick Petree (Citizen), Richard Rennison (9yr part-time resident and retired Supervisory Special FBI Agent for Chambers, Galveston, Brazoria, Ft. Bend, Matagorda and Wharton counties), Gene Ellis (Executive Director Texas Police Chiefs Association), and Janet Solis (Surfside HR). Four candidates were interviewed and the panel unanimously selected Philip Hester. Last night in Special Session the Council heard debriefs from the interview panel with Q&A, a debrief of the background check completed by Freeport PD, and also were provided face-to-face interview time with candidate Philip Hester. After this extensive process, Council reconvened to vote and approve Philip Hester as our next permanent Chief of Police.

Without going into too much detail, Mr. Hester has been part of this area for 45 years. He is recently retired from Matagorda County Sheriff's Office, where he had 11 years of beach patrol experience. He had experience as S.W.A.T. commander in Clute where he worked for 10 years. During my own background check, I received praise and recommendations for Mr. Hester from our Pct. 1 Constable along with our region's Texas Ranger. I thought that was very telling as I value the importance of having solid working relationships with other agencies. I am excited about Mr. Hester joining the Village of Surfside Beach and looking forward to his first PD town hall meeting to meet the community.

Public Works:

Amanda & Erick are working together with a non-profit grant writing agency from Austin to get a submission on 2 HMGP grants for a fixed generator at City Hall & Police/EMS building and a portable generator for Utilities. This grant would pay 90% of the costs of each.

Human Resources:

Hiring and orientation have started for seasonal employees on the Beach. More to be hired, so if interested, please contact City Hall. Don't forget the \$500 bonus if you stay the whole season!

EMS Director position will be reposted. We had a lack of qualified candidates and want to repost expanded to some new websites.

There will be an open position upcoming in April for a Finance Director. This posting will be active very soon. If interested, please contact City Hall.

There is an opening for Deputy Court Clerk posted. If interested, please contact City Hall.

Beach & Parks:

The 2 pallets of EZ Street Asphalt that is designed to work in wet applications, was delivered this week. Beach & Parks crew will be applying the materials next week to potholes on Ft Velasco, Surf, and Jettyview in anticipation of the St Patrick's Day parade next weekend.

Spring break starts the beach season today and we are geared up to support the beach for the summer. The booths will have attendants selling beach passes starting today for the summer season. As promised, here are some of the results of the Beach Management meetings held with City Secretary, Beach & Parks, and PD. The goal here is to reduce litter and glass on the beach, maintain a safe beach environment for everyone, and engaging with beachgoers to ensure that everyone is having some fun.

Beach Patrol and Enforcement: 1) Dune side parking from the Main entrance to Fin Alley. Past that point we need to maintain a roadway wide enough to safely allow ambulance to pass. 2) Beach passes are required and will be enforced by PD. 3) Minor infractions for glass, litter, leash laws, etc. will get warnings first and citations will follow if not corrected. 4) One way traffic (excluding golf carts) will be turned around, and citations will be written based on officer discretion of cooperation, 5) 15 MPH speed limits will be maintained, and major infractions will result in citations at officer discretion, 6) Any golf cart/UTV without the required license, slow moving sign and lights will receive a citation. Lastly, golf carts may receive citations for violation of one way from other police forces (Sherriff, DPS, etc.). Please be aware of that reality.

Other Items of Interest:

Plenty of questions about the heavy equipment around Parkview and the Jetty area. This is not our project. The County Parks Department is doing some work to repair damages from the hurricane(s) and restore the walkover in that area. For more details, please contact the Brazoria County Parks Department.

The Beach booths are officially open, so that means this is the first unofficial day of Summer in Surfside. Get out and enjoy it!

Have a great day and I hope to see you around the island this weekend!

Thanks,

Zach