

## **From the Mayor's desk – 9/5/25**

Happy Friday!

The first week after Labor Day and the unofficial end of summer. A nice break from the crowds and a big beautiful beach with some seriously clear blue water out there to enjoy.

### Police Department:

Another successful holiday weekend without many major issues or problems. Thanks to all those who donated and helped at Stahlman Park command center over the weekend.

We are planning to detonate all the fireworks collected this summer at the end of October from the jetty. Lots of planning and approvals still needed, along with a firm date for the celebration. I think this will be a fun event for Surfside that could be an annual tradition to celebrate the end of summer.

Chief Hester is scheduling a town hall meeting this month, again date and time TBD. Please try to make it to the town hall as communication and dialog is critical for community policing to be successful.

### EMS Department:

We have our ambulance AC repaired and back in house now. They did a rough inspection and unfortunately found a good amount of engine knock in the motor, which we knew about. The ambulance service business who replaced our AC unit does not perform engine work, and was not able to diagnose the problem, nor quote the repair costs for us. We will be discussing the prospects of a replacement ambulance at next week's City Council meeting.

### Beach & Parks:

We are working with Brazoria County roads to plan the asphalt repairs on Beach Drive, Swordfish, and a few entrances to roads off Bluewater Hwy, the worst being Francis Ct. We have an interlocal agreement with the county to target up to 4 road asphalt projects per year. We are responsible for the purchase of materials needed and they provide the labor and equipment to do the jobs. These projects are scheduled to begin in October.

### Finance:

At our request, we will welcome TML to City Hall on September 21<sup>st</sup> for a financial boot camp. This will be part training for the entire City Hall staff and part deep dive into our accounting to ensure that we are positioned well going into the upcoming new fiscal year. Christie has improved our accounting practices, processes, and governance. Working with TML later this month will only make what we have better for the future.

### Public Works:

Again, this is repeat, but important: The new utilities billing system Muni-Link is up and running. If you were a Next Bill Pay customer in the past, then your payment ability did not transfer with the new system. You will need to create and set up an account including e-billing. We will be reviewing all past due accounts and making courtesy calls to our database of active phone numbers & email addresses. We understand that there could be issues with transfers to the new billing system. That said, after September billing cycle we will be making contact using red "Disconnect Notice" hang tags on doorknobs to all properties that are 60+ days overdue. The utility bill must be paid in full within 10 days of notification with our hang tag. If your bill is not paid in 10 days, your water will be shut off. In order to reconnect water service, 1) your bill must be paid in full, 2) a reconnection fee of \$200 must be paid, and 3) a deposit of \$75 additional must also be paid. Please make sure that you pay any outstanding utility bills in order to maintain water service at your home/property. We DO NOT want to disconnect water to anyone's home.

We will be offering a \$5 credit to any utility bill account for those who sign up for e-billing by January 1<sup>st</sup>. This credit will hit your account by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

### Other Items of Interest:

Last night City Council voted for a new proposed tax rate that will impact next fiscal year's General Fund income from property taxes. To catch everyone up on the proceedings, the month prior on August 19<sup>th</sup>, Council Member Gerber proposed a new tax rate of 0.311483 per \$100 that was accepted by Council. Then over the course of last week, both Amanda and Christie worked to uncover some details on our outstanding loans (Our Debt Ratio) that resulted in a much lower tax rate, actually 6% lower than the 0.311483 per \$100. At last night's meeting, Council Member Jalifi proposed that new lower tax rate of 0.292923 per \$100 that was accepted by Council. This new VOSB tax rate results in an estimated

\$1,711,289 of income for VOSB General Fund. In comparison this current fiscal year we currently have a tax rate of 0.279199 per \$100 for an estimated income of \$1,622,078. This new proposal is an increase of exactly \$13.72 per \$100,000 of appraised value by BCAD compared to 2024. Also to put this into perspective, the average VOSB tax rate over the last 8 years from 2017 – 2024 was 0.329879 per \$100. The VOSB tax rate under our control has gone down significantly over the last 8 years. Specifically, comparing the 2017 VOSB tax rate of 0.359506 per \$100 to our 2025 proposed VOSB tax rate of 0.292923 per \$100, it is 18.5% lower over that period. To put it plainly, our VOSB tax rate has gone down by 18.5% over the last 8 years and inflation has gone up on every expense that we incur to operate the Village. To tie this conversation back to other sections of my letter, a replacement ambulance which we will need soon will be about \$80,000 and this tax increase would be estimated to be \$89,211. It is not as simple as this tax increase pays for an ambulance, but hopefully it helps to demonstrate the real needs of the Village that this will fund. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact myself or Christie in Finance. I have already discussed this in detail with several visitors to City Hall earlier this week. Understanding the real facts on this topic is so much better than trying to distill opinions from social media into actual truth.

As always, I hope that you have a great day in wonderful Surfside Beach! I hope to see you around this weekend.

Thanks,

Zach