

Paul Harvey was an American radio icon for well over 50 years who I enjoyed listening to on my drive to and from work each day. His program “The Rest of the Story” was told about something or someone most people had heard of but didn’t know the back story or all of the details. He has yet to be replaced or replicated on the airways. In keeping with his style, I wanted to “talk” to you about a couple of things coming up for 2026.

The James W. Fair group developed this Hide-A-Way Lake, Inc. community many decades ago. Since that time there have been many arrangements and agreements prompting more growth and development. I, like you probably, weren’t aware of all the things still left pending on the table. Before us now is a somewhat final milestone to develop lots that Fair already owns but needs some land swaps from the Club to the Fair group and vice versa. More development means more initiation fees and more people paying monthly dues, plus an agreement to get Lindale sewer to the Clubhouse and Lodge to rid ourselves of the septic issues. That is all up to the Club’s Board of Directors, and they have already signed off on the agreement. The City portion of this puzzle is a bit of land that Fair already owns adjacent to FM 849 that Fair is requesting we de-annex so that sewer can be brought into the new Fair developments, and that Lindale could annex as commercial property and possibly receive the property and sales tax that follows. Fair group made their request on December 16 at the City meeting, and we will be reviewing that request and making a decision sometime in 2026.

“The City has all that money.” Before I took office, I had heard this phrase used by folks when talking about paying for this and that. And why doesn’t the City pay for this or that? I’ve now been in office for about seven months, and I have looked into it. The City has less than \$400k in operating capital that it has saved up over its 24 years of existence. As we do not have city sales or property taxes, that figure doesn’t increase except for the investments. The City has operating costs, attorney fees, and election fees that it pays annually from those funds. The income received through Franchise Fees are used to subsidize members’ fire protection plan. In other words, you truly aren’t paying the full costs. Now this is like those irritating math word problems from school: As franchise fees paid to the City become less and less over the years for various reasons (mainly because power usage is becoming more efficient), and the fire protection costs more over the years, the City goes in the hole using those saved up funds to cover the difference. This isn’t sustainable for the long haul because the City will run out of funds. If we did expend those funds on a one-time project, that would be it. The City would have no way to fund anything. These monies are keeping us going without having to do a city or property or sales tax.

Which takes us to the Emergency Services District (ESD) that every other entity is a member (of except the City of Tyler with its own fire department and the City of Whitehouse with their own). I’ve had discussions with the ESD about the possible benefits of getting the fire protection removed from our dues and joining the process that all other communities use in Smith County for Emergency Services. There are pros and cons to doing so, one being we must be accepted (It has to be approved by a vote of ESD members and then a vote of our residents. So, it’s a process, but it’s something we need to at least consider. Fortunately, you will get to decide by a vote if it comes to it.

Lastly, 2026 is the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the formation of the City of Hideaway, and a celebration of all the hard work over the years by previous mayors, aldermen, city secretaries, and others to get us where we are today. I’m not sure what color rose Paul Harvey would give for 25 years, but we definitely deserve one for such a unique city.

And now you know... (say it with me) “The Rest of the Story.”