

Happy Independence Day! One of the things that we enjoyed seeing when looking for a home here was the streets lined with US Flags on certain holidays. One can feel the patriotism and pride of our community! We are fortunate to have the Kiwana's Club doing this. I often remind myself of where I moved from, and where I live now, and am thankful.

It's been a busy month since I took office. Since my last article, we have had the sworn in the last Alderman, Jim Caldwell, by our local Justice of the Peace Danny Brown, who I reached out too, and he agreed to come and do that! I am happy to report that we have appointed Joann Messina as our Emergency Response Coordinator also, as she is already heading up the CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) and is working closely with Smith County Emergency Response Director Brandon Moore. We are also in the process of finding a certified auditing firm to get us caught up with end-of-year audit reporting requirements.

The Lindale Volunteer Fire Department swore in a new Chief, Jeremy Larue, and I have been talking with him as well. For those who don't know, Smith County is divided into two ESD (Emergency Services Districts) 1 & 2. ESD 1 services our area, and when it was created some years ago, the residents of Hideaway voted not to include themselves in that taxing entity. Other communities in ESD 1 voted to pay ESD taxes for fire department protection, and that is based on a tax rate which is applied through property taxes. Our Fire Protection is calculated by ESD 1 in the same manner as others, but it's the cumulative value of our property in the community as a whole, which is then billed and divided by the number of properties we have. We are still paying the same "rate" as others outside of Hideaway, we just do it in a different manner. So whether your home is \$150,000 or \$1.5 million, your bill is the same. The only way to change this process would be to vote ourselves into the ESD 1, (and they would have to vote to allow us to do so) and then it would put it on your property tax bill as another taxing entity and removed from your dues. Currently, each membership is paying less than \$15 a month to have a fire department respond to your home. That's about the price of an average meal these days, two movie theater tickets or two drinks from a coffee shop. Not having this in place can affect your homeowner's insurance rates.

I spoke with TXDOT and the FM 16 project is supposed to be finished in February of 2027

Lastly, the proposed Fair Foundation Expansion Project. There are many moving parts to this. I am asking you to pay attention and ask questions. It will change a lot of things here and I want you to be aware of that. Reach out to your Board of Directors and General Manager with your thoughts either way. There is a component of this that the City will have to make some decisions about as well. Please give me and the Aldermen your thoughts. We need to make the best decisions we can for our community as a whole.