

HOMEOWNERS WHO ARE PLANNING TO REBUILD THEIR HOMES TO PRE-HARVEY STATUS WILL NEED A PERMIT TO DO SO. THIS PERMIT IS \$75 AND SIMPLY COVERS THE COST OF THE INSPECTORS FEES. IF YOU PLAN TO CHANGE ANY FLOOR PLANS OR KNOCK OUT WALLS, THAT MAY FALL UNDER A DIFFERENT PERMIT AND COULD HAVE A DIFFERENT PRICE.

Becky Ford, Mayor	781-4440
Danny Fruge, Mayor Pro-Tem Roads & Drainage, & Grounds	880-9840
Council Members:	
Martha Vautrot, Ward 1 Secretary	363-4168
Michelle Nelson Community Development	753-1475
Doug Emmons, Ward 2 Buildings	880-5205
Mark Theobald, Ward 1	753-1475
OPEN, Ward 3	

Next City Council Meeting: Tuesday, January 16, 2018
February's Council Meeting: Thursday, February 15, 2018



January 2018

Welcome (once again) to the City of Bevil Oaks Newsletter. This newsletter is one of the best ways to share important information with our community. We are nothing if not resilient. Together we can make Bevil Oaks the strong, family oriented, beautiful community it once was!

WARD 3 OPENING:

Currently, there is an available seat on the City Council for Ward 3. This position will be voted on at the next City Council meeting on January 16, 2018. If you are interested in filling this position please stop by City Hall and fill out an application form by January 10, 2018, as stated in the city-wide callout and posted on the City's Facebook page.

** UPDATE ON SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Per the attorney, the judge ruled in our favor against BISD's motion for summary judgement. Otherwise stated, we won the tax ratios hearing and will now move on to the hearing on the merits in February.

CONTACT US

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OUR HOURS OF OPERATION HAVE CHANGED:

MONDAY—THURSDAY
7:00-5:00

FRIDAY
8:00-5:00

CLOSED 12:00-1:00
EACH DAY FOR LUNCH

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- UPDATE ON RIGHT OF WAY CLEAN UP
- UPDATE ON CITY RECOVERY EFFORT
- REPORT ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT LOAN GRANT
- RESUMPTION OF NORMAL UTILTY OPERATIONS FROM A BILLING

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UPDATE ON CITY RECOVERY EFFORT

The City continues to work with our insurance carrier, TML (Texas Municipal League) on our insurance claims for City Hall, as well as our sewer and water facilities. There has been much back and forth on request for additional information by TML in order to ensure that we receive all that we are entitled to receive for our loss. We hope to know more about these claims by mid-January but there are no guarantees. We have received a partial payment on our claim for the Civic Center with an additional supplement of additional loss coming in the next few weeks.

On November 2, three of us met with 13 FEMA officials at the gutted out Civic Center for a “Scoping” meeting. At this meeting that lasted

almost 4 hours, FEMA asked about and catalogued all of our damages and explained in normal confusing “FEMA speak” as to how the process would work. At this meeting, they set a date of January 8, 2018 to return for site visits to view all our loss sites, (buildings, roads, sewer & water plants).

On December 8, FEMA noticed we had had a “boil water notice” posted and called to say they would be in Bevil Oaks on Tuesday, December 12 for an expedited site visit for the water and sewer plants. During this site visit, FEMA listed and photographed every damaged component, nut and bolt as well as how many feet of wiring needed to be replaced at each facility. This meeting lasted 6.5 hours and

RESUMPTION OF NORMAL UTILTY OPERATIONS FROM A BILLING STANDPOINT

Under normal operating circumstances, if a homeowner calls about a problem with their sewer or water service, they are told that if the problem is found to exist on the city’s side of the meter, the city will take care of the problem and if it’s on the homeowners side, they will have to bear the cost of repair, whatever that might be, and will be billed accordingly in the next billing cycle. Since Harvey, this has not been the case. With all of the problems caused by tear out and gutting of houses and busted water lines from this effort, no one has been charged for a call out from the utility department to turn off the water or any other type of utility issue. Normal operations of this nature has resumed however, on January 1, 2018. As before, if a homeowner calls in for certain types of service, they may be subject to potential charges if it turns out the problem is their responsibly just as

before the storm. If a cost is known for the service requested, it will be shared with the homeowner before sending out a technician or if not, it will be noted that they will be responsible for whatever the city is charged by our utility contractor. If the homeowner tampers with meter and causes damage they will be held financially responsible for those repairs as well. Also, if a homeowner cuts the water off via the shut off valve on their side it DOES NOT mean that the user fee will not be charged. As long as the homeowner has an account set up with the city they will continue to be charged the \$23.50 user fee each month with any minimum charge. The next water bills that are sent out this month be for November and December and therefore this bill will have 2 user fees. The previous bill was for August—October, and therefore had 3 user fees listed. The billing cycles will return to normal when the January bills are sent out the first week of February.

“The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

Nelson Mandela

WATER APPLICATIONS/ AUTO DRAFT FORMS

If you have not done so already, please come by City Hall to fill out a new application form. There will not be a new deposit required. You will need to just simply fill out the application form.

Also, If you were signed up for auto draft for your water bill prior to the hurricane and wish to continue to be auto drafted please come by and fill out a new form.

Unfortunately, we lost the prior forms in the hurricane. Thank you so much for your cooperation in this matter.

FEMA brought along 7 individuals for this meeting. We were disappointed when FEMA called on the morning of January 8 to inform us they would only be inspecting the Civic Center and the old City Hall and not the roads as we have previously been told. This site inspection has been put off to a later date. At present, they have not given us that date.

If FEMA approves our grant request for funds to repair Harvey damage, whatever amount they agree to fund to us will be a 90/10 grant, meaning we will be responsible for 10% of the cost. If we have an insured loss, FEMA will deduct the amount that TML pays and then grant us 90% of the balance, however, FEMA will determine how much our grant will be based on either competitive quotes for the work or an amount based on their estimates for the work. While this may sound simple in theory, it is not as the City will have to jump thru hoops to comply with all of the FEMA regulations in order to qualify for this grant money and then there is always the possibility that when they audit the projects after they are done, they may disallow some things and request that some money be returned that did not “qualify” under the terms of FEMA rules. These are referred to in FEMA parlance as “claw backs”. This whole process is very complicated, confusing, very frustrating and very time consuming for us as we have no experience in these matters and there is no “playbook” to go by. This grant process will not play out for several months or a year or more and then the audit process for the grant expenditures will take place after the work is all completed. As time goes by and we have more definitive information to share with you on these topics, we will. At present, we only have questions with very few responses. FEMA called on the morning of January 8, they inspected the Civic Center as well as the old City Hall saying they would return at a later date to inspect the roads.

IN CLOSING.....

As many of you can see, our City is in a bad financial situation; some might say dire. However, the road to recovery is always long and arduous with many twists and turns. Hopefully, as in past storm situations, as time goes by, more funding and grant opportunities will present themselves to help out Texas communities get back on their feet. Everyone has told us that the rules for each storm change somewhat from the last one and this has certainly been the case thus far with not only FEMA but the STATES role as well. We can only hold out hope that in time we, the citizens of Bevil Oaks, can put our community back together again along with the help from others.

From comments posted on social media from time to time, it would appear that nothing is being done, when quite the opposite is true. There are many things in the works, however, government as well as insurance companies are not known for moving quickly. We are trying to supply all of the required and requested information necessary for answers and as mentioned, this takes time. And remember, your City Officials, all volunteers, experienced the same devastating loss and are going thru the same experiences that you are, we just don’t have as much time to deal with our personal endeavors at present as most of you do.

If you have questions about anything related to water, city or storm related issues, please do not turn to social media for the answer as they are rarely correct. The city does not perform business functions

on social media nor does it have any plans to. We do post certain items of importance on the City’s Facebook page ONLY: Bevil Oaks City. If you have a question, contact Aimee or Kimberely at City Hall during business hours and if they don’t have the correct answer, they know where to get it. The staff at City Hall are more than happy to answer any questions. However, please remember these women have families and lives too, and do not get paid after hours, weekends or any other time when people are calling them on their off hours for answers. This includes all the Facebook messages, tags, calls, etc. IF they choose to answer those questions, they are doing so while still trying to take care of their own families and lives. Please respect them and their family time too. They have also put everything on hold for months to help get Bevil Oaks back up and running again and each one have a heart for our city, even while none live here. So please, contact them during normal business hours, through normal channels, email, phone etc. And make sure to leave a message of what you are needing. Kimberely has been working hard to train the rest of the girls to make sure they can answer many of your questions so you don’t have to wait until she is available or back in the office.

Also, if you have a utility issue after hours, please contact the utility contractors’ after hours answering service at 409- 755- 7377 for help. But remember, you may be charged for any callout fees when doing so. These fees are not kept by the city, but rather used to pay the invoice of the utility contractor. Thank you.

CITIZEN'S CITY CLEANUP DAY

A group of citizens with the contact being Doug Mullins (409-893-1920 to compile the list of people willing to help) has organized with the intent to complete the job that the FEMA debris contractors left unfinished when they pulled out on December 15. At present, their mission is to gather at the Baptist Church at 8 AM on February 3 to clean up as much as possible of the debris left along the Right of Way along Sweetgum as possible. A volunteer with a rake mounted on a piece of equipment will start the weekend before raking the debris out of the ditches up to the edge of the road and then on the morning of the 3rd, volunteers with tractors with a front bucket and volunteers with shovels and rakes will make an effort to load this debris where it will be deposited into hopefully some **donated** dumpsters to be hauled away.

If you have a tractor with a front bucket or a strong back and a good work ethic, please try to donate your time and effort to helping make Bevil Oaks a clean and proud community again. One last planning meeting will be held a 3:30 PM on January 20 at Doug Clarks Home at 13495 Moss Hill to finalize the details, all are welcome to attend. This information will also be posted on social media. If you can attend the cleanup day but not the meeting, please contact Doug to let him know you will be able to help. Let's pitch in and help put Bevil Oaks back together again!

We are very proud of our residents for stepping up and helping make our city beautiful again! We always need and welcome citizen participation.

2015 Hazard Mitigation Grant Application

In July 2015 the City made application with FEMA for a Hazard Mitigation Grant to purchase and demolish four homes that had been determined to be repetitive losses and were eligible for this grant program. The grant application was formally approved by FEMA on March 15, 2016. From that date forward, the process has been moving forward at a very slow pace as is typical with grant programs. To date, the four homes have been appraised and offers made to the property owners. Three of the four homeowners have accepted the offers and the City has closed on two properties and is working towards closing the third property. The fourth offer is still pending. The City obtained asbestos surveys on the closed properties and is working on the demolition bids.

Once this process is completed in its entirety, the City will own these four pieces of cleared land. They will be removed from the tax rolls and no permanent structure can ever be built on this land. The City will be responsible for maintaining (cutting the grass at a minimum) these lots forever.

2017 HAZARD MITIGATION GRANT

The City has been working on every possible avenue we can find to help our citizens. This includes applying for the Hazard Mitigation Grant recently. In previous council meetings and information that has gone out, it was explained that the city still had approximately 44 homes that were below BFE (Base Flood Elevation) as set forth by FEMA. A few homes were very close to the BFE, and had new elevation certificates shot, or conducted other methods of bringing their homes into compliance. Of the remaining homes, there were 31 that were eligible to apply for the Hazard Mitigation Grant. While there are several things a homeowner has to have to qualify, the first and main thing is the home had to have flood insurance at the time of the flood. The homeowner must also continually maintain flood insurance throughout the entire process. With that in mind, calls and letters went out to those who qualified, and Jeff Ward, our grant writer for many years, has submitted the application on the city's behalf for these 31 homes. Currently, the grant has already passed the state level of approval, and is now sitting at the national level waiting the outcome of if we will be awarded such a grant. If the city is given this grant, which we will know in the next few months, those 31 homes that were eligible will be given the opportunity to have their homes raised with the money used from the grant. A few other requirements are the homes must be in zone AE, and the home must be below BFE.

UPDATE ON RIGHT OF WAY CLEAN UP

As most everyone is aware, FEMA funded debris pick up ended at the close of work on December 15, 2017. The City has contacted the County twice to inquire about cleaning up the debris and small piles of trash left behind. On both occasions, we have been told that the remainder of the cleanup would be at the property owner's expense due to a lack of funds for this effort as well as the fact that now all debris will now have to be hauled to a landfill and a disposal fee paid for each load. And while on the topic of debris pickup, the City "piggybacked" on the Counties' contract with FEMA for debris pickup and will be responsible for 10% of the cost of debris pickup related to Bevil Oaks. So far **example**, if the cost to the county is \$500,000 for Bevil Oaks, then the City will owe Jefferson County \$50,000 at some point for its share.

On December 21, 2017, Governor Abbot blew in to town for a hastily arranged press conference with Mayor Ames of Beaumont, Mayor Derrick Freeman of Port Arthur and County Judge Jeff Branick in attendance. At this news conference, the Governor announced that funding could be made available by the State to cities to complete the cleanup of debris left behind by the FEMA contractors. Mayor Ford contacted Judge Branick who called the Governor's office and called her back the next morning to explain to her that we needed to put together an estimate of the cost involved to complete cleanup operations of our City and submit this estimate to his office for possible funding. Judge Branick also offered the services of County Auditor, Patrick Swain, to assist us with this project. Apparently, they did not realize that Bevil Oaks had already applied for debris removal funding through the county and were part of the aforementioned "piggyback" plan. It was a huge disappointment to learn that there is no additional funding we can apply for to remove the rest of our debris. But, the good news that the Governor was trying to impart is that the State is paying that 10% and relieving the County and the cities involved in the "piggybacking" from owing anything further for the debris clean-up that has already taken place. Bad news is that we still have a considerable amount of small debris scattered throughout our city that has been left for us, as individuals to deal with. As we continue to pick up and bag the trash, it should be noted that certain items will not be eligible to go to the landfill. Tires are accepted; however, they charge per the size of the tire and they must be separated from the rest of the trash. The cost ranges from \$3/tire to \$25/tire. Flammable items, paints and other flammable liquids are **not** accepted. Appliances are accepted as long as there is no food or other items contained inside of the appliance, regardless of whether the Freon is still in the appliance or not. It will be the homeowner's responsibility to dispose of these items properly on their own.

In addition, as was spelled out in a "Blackboard" message via phone text, email, posting on the City's website as well as Facebook page on November 29, vegetative debris will NOT be picked up by any methods or means by anyone but the homeowner. Tree limbs and tree trunks were picked up in the first round of debris removal but this was discontinued later in the process. TCEQ allows all property owners to burn vegetative debris that was generated **ON THEIR** property at their property. This rule is clearly explained in *Texas Administrative Code, Title 30, Part 1, Chapter 111, Subchapter B, Rule §111.209*. If you have placed vegetative debris in the Right of Way for pick up and you need help getting it back onto your property to burn or otherwise dispose of, please contact City Hall for help from a list of volunteers with tractors and a grapple that will assist you in returning this material onto your property. Please keep in mind that the ground in your yard will have to be dry enough to support the weight of the tractor and the debris. All new construction debris will need to be hauled away in dumpsters at the property owner's expense. Burning of any items, other than vegetation, that causes black smoke is not allowed in accordance with the Texas Administrative Code/TCEQ Regulation. If you can find a location outside of Bevil Oaks to haul your vegetative debris to for disposal, then that is an option also.

Also, it has been suggested that a city wide burn location be established and this vegetative debris be hauled there to be stacked and burned. Again, this is not permissible under TCEQ rules. Under Rule 111.209, item no. (4) "outdoor burning is authorized for the on-site burning of trees, brush, grass. Leaves, branch, trimmings, or other plant growth, by the owner of the property or any person authorized by the owner, and when the material is generated **only from that property**. Item B (5) goes on to say burning can be allowed at a site designed for consolidated burning of waste generated from specific residential properties. A designated site must be located outside of a municipality and within a county with a population of less than 50,000. Bevil Oaks is located in Jefferson County with a population of approx. 660,000, so that a consolidated burn location within the City limits of Bevil Oaks nor Jefferson County is allowed. This information was supplied to as well as explained to us by the folks at the TCEQ office in Beaumont located on Eastex Freeway.



SANTA CLAUS CAME TO BEVILS

And, he brought a lot more with him than just lots of toys for boys and girls! For the parents and volunteers, he brought a much-needed break from the grief and worries that we have all been living with thanks to Hurricane Harvey. For a couple of hours, we were able to forget about all of that and enjoy the laughter and pure joy the little ones brought as they took their turn getting their faces painted; sitting on Santa's lap and telling him what they wanted him to bring them for Christmas; and, receiving a toy from him along with a bag of cookies and some punch.

We were fortunate to have toys leftover from last year's Christmas-in-the Park to start with along with an outpouring of generosity from so many others. This made it possible for every child to get a toy from Santa and to choose a gift from those donated as well. Our contributors were: Judge Leanne Johnson, another large contribution of toys; Nancy Larousse brought in two loads of toys that were donated by Rex Harris, Harris Jewelers in Kountze, and John Rollins of United Way; 2 Boys bicycles donated by Mr. & Mrs. Ched Engelhardt; 2 Girls bicycles donated by Mr. & Mrs. Paul Ford; 2 Rocking Toys and 2 Tents donated by Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Chandler and, \$200 from an anonymous donor used to purchase toys. Our Santa was Mr. Rick Winger and his beautiful elf was our own Kourtney Kirkendall. Jane Hebert photographed the children and Charlotte Fruge recorded their names. Mayor Ford registered children for the drawing. Mary Kay Prevost served cookies and punch and helped with registration while faces were painted by Kim Vandver, Tory Hale and Ty Hale. A special "thank you" to Ryan Pelham/The Enterprise for his very nice front-page article in the Sunday Enterprise and to KFDM Channel 6 and KBMT Channel 12 for their excellent coverage of our event. It was so nice to have good positive news aired from Bevil Oaks!



The FEMA contractors are no longer working in this area.

Also, Rubicon and the other companies who were originally doing free demos for homeowners have left as well.

Any homeowner who is getting a FEMA trailer or RV will need a permit to do so. FEMA will either need to call us or come into the office to obtain this particular permit (it is SEPARATE from the Harvey rebuild permit—but is completely free of any charges). Once the permit has been obtained we can then send that permit number to Entergy. Entergy will then release that address for the electricity to be turned on at the address location.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT LOAN GRANT

As was reported at the last City Council meeting by Mayor Ford held in November, the City is planning to apply for a COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT LOAN that will provide funding to help pay for City and Utility operations for the next couple of years. The tremendous shortfall in operating capital for the next two or three years is the direct cause from the loss of approximately 60% to 70% in property taxes the City would have received in fiscal 2018, 2019, and 2020. The City's budget is funded by a combination of property taxes, sales taxes, and franchise taxes paid by entities such as Entergy, Republic Services, NuWave Cable, Entex and others. At present, we have no way to judge or predict what the shortfall will be from all sources other than property taxes. We have received some guidance from Angela Bellard, Chief Appraiser with the Jefferson County Appraisal District on property taxes for 2018.

The utility department is funded strictly by revenue from the sale of water and sewer to our customers and the bond payment (mortgage payment) for the sewer project and new water meters is funded solely by the "Debt Service Fee" of \$23.50/month on your water bill. In addition to the monthly expense of running the utility department along with all of the repairs necessary to keep our 37 year old system operating, we now have to pay the City of Beaumont to treat our waste water that we pump to them daily for treatment.

In addition to the lost revenue for both the City and the utilities, we have much added expense from Harvey as well. For example, prior to the storm, we had two employees that were able to take care of all items related to City business, such as permitting on a limited basis, billing for water and sewer services, day to day utility activities (not including major repairs) as well as the normal City wide operations. Today, we have had to hire three additional part time employees to help with all that is required to assist our two full time ladies. The amount of time and information required to deal with FEMA, insurance, other governmental agencies, answer citizens questions, permitting, and research on new topics of information that pop up from time to time goes on and on and is seemingly never ending.

The Mayor is concentrating on finding funding for all things that might be available for the City's use and Mayor Pro Tem Fruge is concentrating on utilities, FEMA, working with the newly hired engineering firm of LJA Engineers on a scoped bid proposal for the repair of the water and sewer facility as well as road funding from FEMA. The amount of information required to satisfy FEMA is overwhelming on its own and along with the other items just spelled out has become a full time job for a volunteer position.

We are still waiting on final financial information from our CPA firm to wrap up last year so that we can sit down with the council in workshop sessions to determine what our financial situation is as well as what to project it might be to determine how much money we need to ask for in the CDL loan program. This application starts off as a *loan*, however, if our tax base does not recover to within 95% of its pre hurricane value in three years, it can be turned into a *grant*. The City has no intention of making this loan, if eligible, without being convinced we have a very good chance that it will be turned into a *grant*. Also, the City will not be spending any monies on any items not related to keeping the City and the utility facilities operational in coming months and probably the next couple of years. No spending on community development, no spending on the ditch widening project with DD 6 that had started; nothing other than what is absolutely necessary to maintain City functions. We have no timetable for making application for this grant; however, we hope to have it ready in the next 60 days at most. It should also be noted that the long term viability of the City's operation bears directly on receiving an influx of operational capital thru either this funding opportunity or others that might present at a later date.