

...RL City

Council minutes

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The Robert Lee Housing Authority would like to request that the City waive the PILOT fees that the Housing Authority has to pay in lieu of property tax. They would like to redirect the money saved to maintenance for the properties. The Council requested a figure reflecting the amount the City receives from the PILOT fees. A motion was made by Daniel Jasso to table until more information is available regarding the waiver. He was seconded by Josh Tennison and the motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

The option was given to staff to replace HPS streetlights with LED lights. This option would allow lights to last longer and save more electricity per year. The total cost to replace all 160 streetlights in Robert Lee will cost approximately \$22,217.60. The project will be proposed to EDC during the annual meeting scheduled for February 10. A motion was made by Jonathan Torres to table this item until the annual meeting with EDC. He was seconded by Daniel Jasso and the motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

Discussion was held to consider accepting bids for the upgrades to the Animal Control Facility. A motion was made by Tracy Grantham to approve the request to start accepting bids for the improvements to the facility. She was seconded by Jonathan Torres and the motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

The job description for the Code Enforcement position, approved by the City Attorney, was presented to the Council at their request during a previous meeting. A motion was made by Tracy Grantham to table the item and was seconded by Jonathan Torres. The motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

Coke County Sheriff and deputies were present to dispute the termination of the current agreement with the City to enforce City Ordinances that will end in April. This agreement was terminated with the intention to write a new agreement that would benefit both parties. A meeting will be scheduled with the City Attorney, the Mayor, and the deputies to discuss a new agreement. A motion was made by Jonathan Torres to allow the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and City Attorney to discuss a new agreement with the Coke County Sheriff's Office. He was seconded by Josh Tennison and the motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

The 2022 City Hall Holiday Schedule was discussed. The Christmas holidays were missed, added to the calendar, and presented to the Council. A motion was made by Josh Tennison to approve the adjusted Holiday Schedule for 2022 and was seconded by Daniel Jasso. The motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

Secretary's Report

The Worker's Comp Audit was completed. The yearly audit is scheduled for March 7-9. The annual meeting with EDC is scheduled for February

10 at Noel & Co.

Superintendent's Report

There were 45 work orders, 4 minor water leaks, 0 sewer stops, and 1 sewer main broke due to the construction at Allsup's. Tank inspections were completed with no issues. TCEQ scheduled wastewater and reclaim water inspection. There were few minor issues, all resolved within the week. There is an opening for an operator position, as a hand is leaving.

Future agenda items include potentially replacing Dale Wojtek's battery since it was stolen.

A motion was made by Josh Tennison to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 pm. He was seconded by David Lewis and the motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.



Town Hall! Congressman August Pfluger was in Robert Lee on Friday, February 25, 2022, to visit with Coke County residents. He is shown here speaking with Coke County Judge Hal Spain.



The Course of Local History

By James M. Decker

Do you ever look around the world and feel helpless to change things? Greed and malevolence run amok. Strong, compassionate leadership is lacking. Sadness and despair seem to engulf those who least deserve it. It feels like the machinery of history lumbers forward, regardless of our individual lives and sometimes over the top of our lives. I get it. I battle those feelings myself.

As logical as those feelings might be, they are not really accurate. Yes, the machinery of history is massive and complex. But why does it move? What changes history and alters the course of world events? It's not controlled by some mysterious keymaster in a secret fortress. History and world events exist as a consequence and as a cumulative result of all the decisions, actions, and activities of each individual and in each community around the world.

In his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. objected to the idea that civil rights leaders should be more patient and let equality come to them over time. Dr. King

described as "strangely irrational" the idea that the passage of time alone would cure ills and solve problems. He wrote that progress was not inevitable with time. Time itself is neutral and can be used destructively or constructively. The words of Dr. King are worth considering when we feel helpless to improve the world. There is no inevitability in world events. There is a long and distinguished list of inevitabilities that were disrupted by world events and by the actions of people who greatly altered outcomes. Empires that would never fall, wunderkinds who were a shoo-in for elected office, ships that would never sink, and more...they were inevitable until they weren't.

Certainly, we cannot change history alone. We CAN and DO collectively create the outcomes of history. We can and do change the outcomes of our local places through our local culture. The outcomes of local places, for better or worse, collectively become the outcomes of regions, nations, and the world. Wendell Berry wrote in "The Work of Local Culture" that "the only true and effective operator's manual for spaceship earth is not a book that any human will ever write; it is hundreds of thousands of local cultures."

How does a wildfire begin? It does not spontaneously exist as a massive conflagration. It begins with a single spark that catches and carries through forests and fields. So goes the impact of local culture on the course of history. Wherever you are reading this, your local culture matters to

history and the course of world events. Stamford, Texas, alone will not change the course of world events. Neither will Graham, Texas; Texhoma, Oklahoma; or Odebolt, Iowa (just to name a few places with regular readers of these essays). But when the people in each place strengthen their local culture, they collectively impact far more than just the people inside their city limits. Local lives, businesses, and organizations are strengthened. The effects cascade outward. For example, when one local small business hires additional workers or pays a higher wage, how many people does that affect? The workers, their families, the businesses that are patronized by the employees, the employees and owners of THOSE businesses, and so on. What happens when success in those communities starts to influence neighboring cities or inspire leaders in another region or inspire leaders at higher levels of government? Sparks

turn to wildfires. Local leaders have a tangible impact on the course of history.

Let us not feel helpless in the world. There is no inevitability in history. There is only time to be used destructively or constructively. The use of that time accumulates and creates the outcomes that shape history and world events. Wendell Berry said that a place lacking local culture was ripe to be exploited and destroyed from outside. He's right. Communities without strong local culture are helplessly carried away by the forces of history. Communities with strong local culture find ways to alter the very outcomes of local history and ultimately world history.

Maybe, just maybe, we should not feel so helpless after all.

James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the West of 98 website and podcast. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com and subscribe to West of 98 wherever podcasts are found.

Spring Break: Arrive Alive, Don't Drink and Drive

Spring Break can be a particularly dangerous and deadly time on Texas roadways. Each Spring Break, too many young, promising lives are cut short due to the fateful and regrettable decision to get behind the wheel and drive drunk.

In an effort to stop this deadly trend, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's *Watch UR BAC* program and The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) are partnering to raise awareness on impaired driving during the Spring Break holiday.

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