

District Four Quarterl-E-News May/June 2006

Fourth Edition

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Debris Removal Information

For many months after Hurricane Rita, the Corps of Engineers worked as a contractor with FEMA to remove debris from city right-of-ways. This service is no longer available to us and we are back to following our regular debris/trash pick up ordinances. These ordinances are all available for view on the city's website at www.sulphur.org – go to the council page and click on "ordinances."

- 1) **BFI (now Allied) Can** – should be picked up at the scheduled time. Please put as much as possible in your can rather than separating.
- 2) **Bags** – extra bags, which will not fit in your can, may be placed in the right-of-way. Allied should pick up these bags the same day as your trash pick up or the work day immediately following regular trash pick up.
- 3) **Limbs** – four inches in diameter or smaller can be chipped by the city. These limbs should be cut into manageable sizes (five feet in length or less). They can not include any roots, bamboo or other materials, which could clog the chipper.
- 4) **Construction Debris:**
 - a. If you had a contractor conduct your work – that contractor should have removed your debris. If this was not done, you may choose to contact your contractor to have him fulfill his work.
 - b. If you conducted the work yourself and the debris is substantial, you may need to make arrangements to haul it to a local waste management facility.
 - c. If the debris is minimal – it may be collected as part of the Allied contract, however, it must meet the following requirements: Five feet in length or less, fifty pounds or less per bundle.
- 5) **White Goods** – Allied contract does allow for the collection of white goods (washers, refrigerators, etc).
 - a. However, these items are usually only picked up on Saturday and should be called in to the city's public works department to ensure that it is on the list for pick up. (527-4500)
 - b. All Freon should be safely vacated from refrigeration appliances and should be marked as "Freon removed."

If I can be of any assistance in this or other matters, please feel free to contact me. My home phone number is 625-7379, my cell is 842-7849 and my e-mail address is tower520@bellsouth.net.

Rita Recovery

The city is conducting a Post Incident Analysis of the city's response to Hurricane Rita. Although I have called for a public meeting to gather community input, there appears to be a great deal of apprehension to having such a meeting. As a result of the expressed concern the decision was made to have council members gather input from their constituents and share that information with the firefighter who is compiling the information for a report. I have already communicated a list of 14 items that I would like to have included in the report and addressed, however, you may have more that need to be added. If so, please share those comments and concerns with me as soon as possible so that I may have them included in the report.

Animal Ordinances (the Pit Bull discussion)

If you've watched the news lately you know that the City of Sulphur has been in the spotlight related to a proposed ordinance to ban pit bull dogs from the city.

At the April meeting this was placed on the agenda last minute. I believe the purpose was to allow for discussion, not necessarily to pass the ordinance. As a result, I must say that I learned a great deal about some of the problems that we are having in the city with dogs and how many of our ordinances are not as protective of our citizens as they should be.

Following a lengthy discussion, the council member who placed the item on the agenda then simply removed the item. I agreed with removing the item from the agenda because we hadn't had adequate time to study the issue and I am generally against breed bans anyway. However, the information that was shared by individuals, who have been victims of dog bites, did not fall on deaf ears. I began researching the web, engaging in e-mail discussions on the topic and studying our ordinances.

I learned that big dogs of all sorts – particularly Pit Bulls, Rottweiler, Chows, Huskies, and German Shepherds – were the dogs that caused the most serious injuries to people nationwide. I was also amazed at the number of bites inflicted on people by Labradors and even Great Danes. Small dogs are even more prone to bite, but the injuries are much less severe.

I also learned that responsible dog owners don't mind restrictions and want humane treatment for dogs. They hate dog fighting and neglect – things that can cause a dog to be more vicious.

However, no matter how well a dog is treated they can still be unpredictable and big dogs can be hard to handle – so I'm in the process of considering a few amendments to our laws that I hope will help make our city safer. Some of these changes include:

- 1) Redefining vicious – currently the law says “may be considered vicious if the animal has bitten a person on more than one occasion.” I think that even one unprovoked bite should suffice.
- 2) Leash law – there is no current requirement that the person holding the leash be of the necessary physical stature to control the animal. A small child should not/can not be responsible for restraining a 40 pound dog – as one example.
- 3) Fences – I think that staking and chaining of animals should be illegal in the city.
- 4) Victim's rights – I think that if you are the victim of a vicious dog bite, which results in medical treatment (stitches, etc) you should have some say in the decision as to whether or not the dog is put down or released to the owner under certain condition.
- 5) Insurance – should we have a requirement in the city that dog owners have home owners insurance, which would cover any damages to another person or property from the animal? I don't have enough information on this – but it sounds like a reasonable option.
- 6) Animal owners to be notified of ordinances – when an animal is taken to the vet for the first time or is picked up by animal control, etc. there should be a process in place to ensure that the owners are informed of the laws governing their animal.

If you have comments or suggestions on these items or others, please let me know. I truly appreciate the input and ideas.

Community Advisory Panel Meetings

At the May meeting we will continue the discussion of ordinance enforcement. As always, all CAP meetings are open to the public. The CAP meets on the third Tuesday of each month from 5:30 – 7:30 at Comfort Suites in the Conference Room.

District Four to pilot program Adopt-A-Spot

Susan Settoon, District Four CAP member, is coordinating the Adopt-A-Spot pilot program for District Four. Adopt-A-Spot is a program that empowers people, companies and organizations to help keep the area clean by adopting a certain stretch of road for monthly cleanup. Some groups that have participated in this program in other areas include: church groups, youth organizations, schools and other social/civic groups such as Kiwanis, Rotary, AARP, etc. By participating in Adopt-A-Spot, groups can help to beautify their area, enjoy productive fellowship and get some recognition for their efforts.

There is currently no program in place, but it should be official before the end of June. To begin, Susan would like to identify six groups of at least five people each to address the following locations:

- 1) Beglis from Maplewood south to just past the apartment complex (east side only)
- 2) Maplewood Drive from Hazel west to Shasta
- 3) Maplewood Drive from Shasta west to Beglis
- 4) Post Oak from Maplewood Drive south to I-10
- 5) Post Oak from Maplewood Drive north to Hwy 90
- 6) Hazel Street (west side only)

The beautification program will eventually include landscaping, neighborhood pride programs and voluntary recycling. However, we need to begin with the portion of the program that will have the greatest impact and ensure that it is successful before we move forward – so Adopt-A-Spot is the first step.

If you know of anyone who might be interested in coordinating an Adopt-A-Spot group or who would like to help organize the activities, please have them contact Susan Settoon by calling 626-1349 or by e-mail at kajunnascar248@aol.com.

Budget

The city charter outlines the duties of the city council. There are three duties listed: Approve and amend the budget, write legislation to benefit the citizens of Sulphur, direct the administration.

The approving of the annual budget and updated five-year capital outlay plan is one of the most important things that the council does each year. This year we have three new council members who will engage in this activity.

The public hearing for the budget will be held on Tuesday, May 23, at 5:00 p.m. If you have budget questions or concerns please let me know as soon as possible. I will be happy to discuss the budget with you and to ensure that your issues are addressed – or, as always, you are encouraged to come to the public meeting.

Swearing In of Mayor and Council

On Tuesday, May 9, at noon the mayor and city council will be sworn in. The event will take place next to the Henning House (where the old Hixon's Funeral Home was). Refreshments will be served. Please attend if you can.

Re-Building on our Community Strengths Post Rita