

Nethery

to build in as much flexibility as possible so that by shopping around we can get the most for your money. By going out and researching and getting the best deal on equipment we are able to allocate more on other critical areas such as street repair.

Candy: What's going on with the municipal building? Some people want to tear it down, some to totally renovate it and others want to leave it alone.

Eric: The municipal building is pushing 50 years old and is in need of repair. The roof leaks. Water comes in between the blue panels and the windows. Plus, the offices are small and they are lacking in security and lacking in privacy. In my opinion, we definitely need to do something to remedy these problems. We have a lot of computer equipment that we need to protect and I would not really want to be working at my computer during a rainstorm and have water seeping in right next to me. The ladies in the office have to deal with that kind of thing and I don't think it is right. I also don't like the fact that space is so limited for our customers who are waiting in line to pay bills. Number one, this is a security problem and number two, I personally would want more privacy if I was trying to talk about my bill or work out payment arrangements and things like that. That's private stuff that I don't want the 10 people squeezed in behind me to hear. We need to do a better job of customer-service-type functions by making our city buildings more secure and more convenient for everyone. I don't know exactly what we're going to do with the building. Some of us on council don't agree on what to do. I think that we'll agree we need to do something... we just can't agree on what or how much to spend.

Candy: What about the model of City Hall that was in the paper? The way the article read, this was pretty much a done deal.

Eric: The model was just that—a model. It was one proposal or suggestion of what could be done with the building. It was designed to complement the police station and mimic the

old bank building. This wasn't and never has been a done deal. Again, it was one idea. We're looking at many other options and welcome everyone's input. Ideally, we want to have a municipal building that is attractive and functional. Right now, I want the roof fixed and more security and convenience for customers and employees.

Candy: Back to streets... you say streets are the number one priority. Is the City going to fix all the streets or some and if so where?

Eric: To redo every street in town would probably cost upwards of \$8 million. That's just not feasible and not a reasonable expectation. We're in the process of identifying streets that need the most work. Some will require a complete overhaul and we'll need to contract for those. Others need substantial patch jobs; some need an overlay. Jobs like these can be done in-house by our people. Some of the equipment we want to get is to be used for a street maintenance program. I feel like once we get the equipment in hand, we can do a better job of maintaining the streets so they don't deteriorate and get to the point where they must be totally replaced. Streets are an investment like anything else. We have got to do a better job of caring for our investment through maintenance. This will save us money in the long run.

Candy: Another question people want to know is how is the bond going to be paid for?

Eric: When we originally approached Mr. Holland about the feasibility of issuing a bond to get the funds to address some of the concerns people have, we had one very strict condition: we won't raise taxes to pay for it. We asked that it be structured in such a way so we can do the most without increasing the tax burden on people. Over the course of several months, the budget committee looked at five or six different proposals before settling on the current plan. This plan uses revenue from several sources to offset any tax increase. We also built in flexibility by using extremely conservative estimates for our growth rate. As a matter of fact,

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based on our figures and data our finance company provided, over time, the tax rate actually decreases, as does the contribution from revenue sources.

Candy: How do you feel about putting money into the airport? Not everyone flies a plane. How will the general public benefit from this?

Eric: I view the airport as an investment much like I do streets. We can let it deteriorate or we can care for it. The difference between the airport and other assets such as streets is that we can earn a measurable return on our investment. True, not everyone flies a plane but if you think about it, quite a few jobs are created by operations at the airport right now. There a lot of folks that earn a living either directly or indirectly from the rice industry. The success of the rice industry in our immediate area is very closely tied to the aerial fertilizing, herbicide and pesticide application businesses out there. Also, there are a large number of small airports near Houston being forced to close for various reasons. This forces plane owners to look for new hangar space. In fact, we have a waiting list for hangars at our airport right now. The people who rent them may not live here but they will buy gas here, eat here, maybe hunt and even play a little golf here, so there will be some trickle down economic effect. Another thing to think about is, as I understand it, the Wal-Mart distribution center project is on track and, according to airport officials in New Braunfels where they have a Wal-Mart distribution center, there's a lot of corporate air traffic associated with that facility. Demonstrating we can support an entity like that can only help us in our effort attract more production and distribution firms to our area and thus create more jobs.

Candy: One last question... have you enjoyed your time on Council so far?

Eric: Yes, I have. My philosophy is to try to do what I believe is right and try to do the most for the greatest number of people. It can be frustrating at times, though. People get irritated and become adversarial sometimes when it appears things are not getting done and I understand that. It's important to realize the nature and design of government. I don't care if you are talking about the federal, state or local government, it's incremental. That means change moves slowly. Sometimes so slow that it looks like nothing is getting done but that's the nature of the process; it's deliberate. There are certain mechanisms and processes in place that we must follow and that's why we elect councils and mayors or governors and a legislature to represent us. If we want a one-man show, then move to Cuba. Things may get done faster down there but not through debate and discourse of a democratic procedure.

When I was in Austin at a conference for mayors and council members, I was talking to this fellow from Palestine who had served on council there for, like, 10 years and he told me you might as well forget trying to make everybody happy. He said, "You just do what you think is right. There'll always be people who agree with you; there'll always be people who disagree and there will be people who actually hate you for no other reason than you are on the city council."

He was right. I just try and keep focused on doing what's best for the city. My job is not to micro-manage the city or its employees. My job and Council's job is to set policy. That means having a vision of where we want to go and strengthening that vision with clear goals and objectives.

It's the job of the city employees, from the department heads on down, to implement those policies and take our goals from principle to practice. My long-term goal for Eagle Lake is for us to emerge as the premier city in this county.

We have a lot to do but with good planning, leadership, perseverance and a little time, I think we can reach that goal.

Council

do I need to point out you were very brave to film City workers trimming that tree when they probably knew you weren't happy with the job they were doing. You're lucky wood chips were the only things flying your way!)

Denice Janow said she was not against the bond issue, but the citizens wanted to know where the money was being spent.

Mayor René Cooper-Scott said she would like everyone to stay after the meeting so she could personally explain the facts of the bond issue. She had heard so much misinformation during the night that she wanted to get the rumors straightened out with facts.

City Manager Ron Holland said the City would monitor the budget and spending very closely as in the past.

The Mayor explained the raise given to the City workers was the first in a long time. They were receiving poverty level pay and it was impossible to bring the pay scale up to speed all in one year. Eagle Lake can't compete with the surrounding areas, but at least we can pay them a decent wage.

Holland said the recent wage change for City workers. You can't just hire someone off the street. They have to have commercial driving licenses, herbicide licenses, water licenses and many more. The workers have to attend class and take tests to be issued these licenses from the State.

Councilman Eric Nethery said the current pay scale is based on merit and job performance-not just seniority. People would come here, the City would pay for their training and then they would leave for twice the pay somewhere else. Now they have to stay a certain amount of time or pay the City back for their training. (Nethery had said at the time of the pay raises that it's cheaper to pay a worker a decent wage and keep that worker than it is to continue to run want ads, do background checks and drug testing every few weeks for new workers.)

The Mayor added that you have to invest in your people (employees).

She also said the reason the bond issue didn't come up for a vote is because the taxes are NOT being raised. If there is no tax increase, then it doesn't have to go up for vote.

Holland reminded everyone we have a bond that is coming due and the tax rate will continue as before if not go down slightly.

For about the 100th time, Nethery reiterated the reason they haven't said so much would be spent for roads and so much for a dump truck, etc. (LISTEN PEOPLE!) If you state in a bond that you are going spend \$1,000 for a dump truck, but you find a really good deal on one for \$500, then you can't spend the "extra" \$500 elsewhere. You will have lost that \$500! THAT is why there's no itemized list of things the bond issue will be used for!

Nethery reminded everyone that each department had come before Council with a list of their most pressing needs. Council has taken all of this into consideration to determine the best way use of the money.

He said the members of Council are good stewards of the public's money and they'll continue to practice good stewardship. Council wants to get the biggest bang for the buck!

Councilman Larry Contreras said the sewerage truck shouldn't even be drivable after 30 years, but City workers are keeping it on the road.

The Mayor said Eagle Lake is over regulated just like all other small towns. The State says the City must do this and do that, but gives no financial assistance to carry out anything. City government is not simple anymore.

"We're trying to do the best we can with what we have and all of you need to help us. You need to know the history to understand why current decisions are being made. Get all your facts before you come here to lambaste us," she added.

Struss said he did want to know the facts. He said Council had to let the people know. Council had to educate

the public. He added that this was the first time he had been educated at Council on some of the issues.

The Mayor replied that there is a staff meeting every Monday at 10 a.m. "No one has even come to me to see what's going on," she said.

Nethery agreed with Struss that they needed to educate the public. He referred to an interview about his thoughts on some of the issues. (Look for it in this week's paper.)

Meinecke asked Councilman Dave Curry if he had misunderstood Curry when at Candidate's Night Curry said he wasn't in favor of the airport and that "through the fence" revenues would be used for the airport. Was Curry going back on what he had said during the campaign?

Curry said, at that time, he was sitting where Meinecke is sitting now - across from the table. Since he's been sitting on the other side of the table, he's gotten the facts and sees how things really work.

Nethery agreed the City should get the airport up to standard. He said they had not just come up with these ideas out of thin air. He informed everyone at Council that there is an airport committee made up of dedicated men who have spent a lot of time doing research.

We want to put Eagle Lake on the map and a viable way to do it is to have an airport.

The Mayor reiterated that, "Yes, the public needs to be informed, but we can't go door to door. That's why we post meetings.

"It's the citizens' responsibility to be informed. Everyone is invited to Council meetings and to all of our other meetings. Call one of us.

"My phone number is 234-5151! CALL CALL CALL ME!" (I think the Mayor wants you to call her if you have any questions.)

Struss said every small town had a focal point. Eagle Lake needed one and the airport would be a good one. He has been studying airports and feels the project should be finished.

He added that he hoped the City could support it better than it had supported other entities in the past.

Councilman Mike Morales said he hadn't voted for the airport, but it was passed and they're going unite and press on with it.

Morales reminded everyone of the old saying, "If you don't have something good to say, you probably shouldn't say anything." Morales said he knows the saying, but he just can't always follow it! He knows its not about Mike Morales-it's about the Council and Eagle Lake.

Morales asked Holland to look at him; then told Holland he had really impressed him.

Morales said all the other Council members say they'll spend the City's money as carefully as they do their own. Morales promised he wouldn't do that, because sometimes he doesn't spend wisely. He said he would take extra care in spending the public's money because he feels the responsibility.

Morales continued by saying he can't imagine all the hours some of these people have put in just to make Eagle Lake a better place.

Struss asked why all the areas in Eagle Lake were not curbed and guttered

Holland replied that Eagle Lake was piece-mealed and that's what they're trying to avoid in the future.

Doug Schwemm spoke up and said he had visited with a developer at Sportsman's. Schwemm related that the developer said there was nothing Eagle Lake could do but grow.

Schwemm applauded the Mayor and Council for their vision and dedication.

Contreras said a lot of people were concerned about Council spending a lot of money on City Hall.

Curry said he thinks Council is in agreement... they won't be spending a million dollars on the City Hall!

Melvin Stancik told Council he hoped the road construction would be better supervised than the last time.

Councilman John Young said he probably still has 50¢ of the first \$1 he ever earned. He admitted to being "tight" with money.

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He said he makes over 700 stops a day delivering mail and no one ever asks him about the bond issue. We have nothing to hide!

Young said he thought this had been one of the best meetings they'd ever had and hoped it continued. He hopes they have more meetings like this one.

To all readers, take a break. Go get something to drink or take out the trash. You have just finished reading item number seven on an agenda of 21 in all!

It's 1 o'clock in the morning, my dinner (a bowl of grits) is stone cold and I am going to bed!

OK, I'm back! Let's wrap it up!

Moss Fetzter was present with the information about issuing the bonds. Several companies were interested in holding the bond.

The ordinance authorizing the issuance of \$2million was passed.

Someone commented that Lake Avenue could now be repaired. The Mayor reminded them that she lives on Lake and doesn't want people to think it's being repaired just because she lives there. She said they could repair all of Lake except beside her house if they wanted to do so.

The Tree Ordinance was discussed. As it stands now, it only applies to power companies. Holland feels a need to give the ordinance more strength.

As a result of the ordinance, AEP is not trimming trees to keep them out of power lines-that now falls to City workers. Now people are complaining that AEP won't trim their trees from the power lines and City workers are being accused of violating the ordinance when they do trim for safety.

The City has to keep the rights-of-way visible.

Holland read part of Senate Bill 83 from the 78th Legislative session requiring schools to recite the Texas pledge after the pledge to the U.S. flag. Texas Government Code Chapter 3100 provides other occasions when the Texas pledge MAY be recited. He pointed out Council was not in violation of the law.

Steve Henderson was appointed to the Appraisal District and Len Matula was appointed to the Housing Board.

Everyone thought it was a productive meeting. All the Councilmen asked questions that concerned them or other citizens.

Curry reminded the audience they had elected Council to make decisions. He said President Bush hadn't called him up to ask him before he spent his tax to send troops to Iraq. He asked when the last time one of them had called up Robby Cook to see how he's spending their money. Curry said maybe he needed to call President Bush and ask him exactly where our tax dollars are going.

Curry added that they are all concerned with getting the best for the citizens at the best price.

The Mayor reiterated that they are (See Conclusion, Page 9)

Circus

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with elephant power! The tent raising is at 9 a.m. followed by the FREE Endangered Species Show at 10. The Endangered Species Show offers a unique face-to-face opportunity for families, schools and interested community members to meet and learn about Barbara, Connie and the rest of the animals in the circus family.

SAVE MONEY by purchasing your tickets in advance. Advance tickets are available at **Wiese Crop Insurance, First National Bank, Austin's BBQ, Eagle Lake Golf Course and B&B Foods**. Prices for advance tickets are \$5 for children 12 and younger, under two are always free; and \$7 for adults.

Tickets the day of the show will be \$2 more. Buy tickets early and save. For more information, call 866-BIG TOP 6.

Circus Day Schedule (times may vary): 9 a.m., Tent Raising; 10 a.m., Endangered Species Show (first day only); 4:30 p.m., Midway Opens (elephant and pony rides, moon bounce, titanic slide, concessions); 5-6:30 p.m., first show; 7:30-9 p.m., second show.

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Saliva is Essential to Good Health

Saliva is a liquid mixture in the mouth that can be difficult to live without. Recent estimates indicate that approximately 25 million people get dry mouth as a side effect of commonly used medications. Others who have received radiation therapy in the area of their mouths or develop a condition called Sjorgen's Syndrome often experience severe dry mouth. Saliva coats the teeth, stops teeth from dissolving, and helps heal mouth wounds. When there is not enough saliva, a host of problems can occur including excessive cavities in the teeth, a sore tongue that become fissured, and yeast infections.

A variety of artificial saliva products and mouth moisturizers are available over the counter. Such products include *Biotene* and *Salivart*. The prescription drug *pilocarpine* (Salagen) can help stimulate the active salivary glands to produce more saliva. Good dental hygiene is crucial because of the tendency for the mouth that is low in natural saliva to develop cavities. Brushing and flossing after every meal, and tooth-cleaning at the dentist's office are all essential to maintaining healthy teeth.

Views On Dental Health

DIABETICS AND GUM DISEASE

Almost 6 million Americans have diabetes and another 6 million have the disease but are undiagnosed. Gum disease can be both a result and a cause of poor diabetes control.

The elevated blood sugar of diabetics can cause an increase of sugar in saliva, allowing bacteria in plaque and at the base of gum pockets to run wild and cause severe periodontal disease. Once gum disease sets in, it overcomes the diabetic's poor resistance and healing ability and can worsen the diabetes. Perhaps that's why gum disease increases in severity with age and duration of diabetes.

Should teeth be lost, dentures may not be satisfactory because the size and form of the gum pad may be diminished and because of soreness and the need for frequent relines.

But teeth do not have to be lost and diabetics do not have to get gum disease if they practice good home care and see the dentist regularly. Instead of twice a year checkups and cleanings, consider getting in every two or three months.

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