

City Message
State of the City
11.13.2020

The 2020 State of the City report started off with a big headline – in a difficult year, and among much good that was accomplished, the city of Belton added three major employers and 2,000 new jobs.

Mayor Jeff Davis gave the report virtually out of an abundance of caution due to an escalating positive infection rate of the coronavirus COVID-19. The report walked viewers through the significant outcomes for Parks & Recreation, Public Works, Public Safety, Planning & Building and Economic Development. There were some standout results in each. The byword for many – adapt.

The city of Belton was one of the few metro communities to safely open their city pool, host Theater in the Park presentations (two!) and offer fall youth sports this year. Eagles' Landing had a record year, not surprisingly. One of the few more COVID-safe sporting activities, golf rounds were up 15 percent over the previous year. Even more impressive, its collaboration with Youth on Course, a national foundation that makes golf affordable for youth ages 7 - 16, saw a 400 percent increase in participation.

In addition to the daily responsibilities of maintaining the city's infrastructure, Public Works completed Phase Two of Belton's Street Preservation Project, reconstructing and resurfacing 7 miles of residential streets, replacing 3.25 miles of curbs and bringing into ADA compliance 45 sidewalk ramps. Thirteen miles of road have been replaced since residents passed Proposition R in late 2018. Phase Three of the project is anticipated to get underway spring 2021.

Water line breaks continue to plague the city with more than 21 year-to-date. These breaks redirect personnel and budget from their planned purposes and result from generations of "kicking the can down the road." Even so, the city carefully planned the use of resident-approved Proposition S storm water bonds and this year is set to complete the Cherry Hill and Allen Avenue projects. The Hargis Lake project is in the design phase with construction slated for 2021. So, while the department fixed water line breaks as they occurred, it also carried out these planned projects as well as completing the scheduled replacement of one mile of the old and corroded cast iron water line pipes.

Police Chief James Person has been a steady hand in his role as the city's Emergency Management Director, helping steer our community through this sometimes rocky COVID-19 era. The department has produced great results in several of their programs including its Hotel Tier program which has made our local hotels and motels safer for their guests and our residents. The city truly appreciates the more than 40 years of service by Chief Person.

If you can imagine it, our fire department has answered more than 5,000 calls in 2020 and the year is not yet over – 114 fires, 296 vehicle crashes and 4,658 medical calls. Our police and fire crews are on the front lines in this pandemic. Mayor Davis asked the public to keep our first responders in their prayers.

It was doubly gratifying to be able to deliver to our public safety crews essential equipment funded by the citizen-approved Public Safety Sales Tax – bullet proof vests for fire fighters, automatic CPR machines, auto-defibrillators, an up-to-date ambulance, computer equipment for police and four patrol cars.

A well-maintained and safe community, diverse housing choice, amenities that elevate the quality of life for residents – these are among the requirements looked for by site selection consultants and their national brand clients. It is crushingly competitive to successfully attract employers offering high-value jobs and Belton hit the trifecta in 2020. The city secured three major employers who are now recruiting to fill nearly 2,000 jobs. Just one of them, Chewy.com, a national brand pet food supplier, is anticipated to bring the city an additional \$2.6 million in sales tax annually.

Even though the pandemic has been tough on the commercial sector, Belton added nearly a dozen businesses building new locations or breathing new life into old ones such as Broken Hatch Brewing, Marcellas home décor and Meet Me on Main event space already open or soon to be on Main Street.

There will be more people to work in, be served by or shop at all Belton businesses due to the more than \$108 million in capital investment in the nearly 250,000 square feet of recently approved residential developments scheduled or under construction in the city. The diversity of housing will serve young professionals, families and active seniors as the high-end apartments, single-family homes and senior residences are added to the city's inventory.

Looking ahead, the city is committed to good government and staff is ready to work with the office of the Missouri State Auditor on the state audit brought on by a citizens' petition. The city continues its due diligence in applying for grants. The most recent example being a Surface Transportation Project grant application which if approved will improve the transportation infrastructure along the North Scott corridor; the application for it scored high and looks favorable for approval. The city was successful and was awarded a grant to begin alleviating congestion near the 58 Interchange by realigning the existing Peculiar Drive. The city teamed up with Raymore and Cass County in pursuit of a grant to widen I-49 but was unsuccessful. Yet the municipalities are not giving up, Belton, Raymore and Cass County will continue to pursue this much-needed infrastructure upgrade.

There will be much to do in absorbing all the new development while keeping up city services, planned maintenance, approved projects and more as the city continues to seek fresh investment. We look forward to a healthy 2021 and building a better Belton.

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