



CITY OF BALCONES HEIGHTS
March 2023 Newsletter-Text Only



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MAYORS UPDATE

Suzanne de Leon

I am sure you can all remember the extreme fireworks that occurred last New Year's Eve and would agree with others when they said, "it was over the top!" Your Council members and Staff discussed this topic in January and Council took action at the February 27th City Council Meeting to revise the City's original Ordinance dated May 1953 about the use of fireworks in our City. The updated City Ordinance:

Section 92.35 Sale, possession, transport, or discharge

- (a) It shall be unlawful for any person to sell, offer for sale, barter, exchange, or give away fireworks of any kind, in any quantity, within the corporate limits of the City.
- (b) It shall be unlawful for any person to have, keep, transport, discharge, or otherwise use fireworks of any kind, in any quantity, within the corporate limits of the City, except as provided section 92-35, and subsection (c) hereof.
- (c) a person may temporarily possess and transport fireworks for personal use during a period not to exceed seventy-two (72) hours immediately preceding and including Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and the Fourth of July provided that:
 - i.* The fireworks are possessed in a motor vehicle while being transported for discharge outside the municipal city limits of Balcones Heights; and
 - ii.* The fireworks not exceeding in quantity two vendors' bags, or two sealed display packages are kept in such bag or sealed display package with a receipt displaying the date of purchase securely attached to one of the vendor bags or sealed display packages; and
 - iii.* The fireworks must be inaccessible to children under the age of eighteen years; unopened and in their original sealed manufacturer's packaging and stored in:
 - (A) a glove compartment or similar storage container that is locked and out of the passenger area of a motor vehicle;
 - (B) the trunk of a vehicle; or

(C) the area behind the last upright seat of the vehicle, if the vehicle does not have a trunk.

Section 92.36 Penalty.

Each violation of this article shall be punished by a penalty of a fine of not less than \$100.00 nor more than \$2000.00.

While we definitely don't intend to reduce or control our residents' joy celebrating a New Year,

During fireworks events, we hear of children and many elderly whose sleep and rest are disturbed, pets are frightened and may run away from their home in fear, and people with PTSD are often triggered with the noise of fireworks. Going forward, during these holidays we will have more first responders from the police and fire departments active in the neighborhoods. Warnings and/or tickets will be given to anyone displaying any type of fireworks. However, I expect it will still be very noisy because we will still hear them because of our close borders with the city of San Antonio.

If anyone has any questions or would like to discuss this, please do not hesitate to contact me at (210) 825-2018 or sdeleon@bhtx.gov.

Peace and Blessings,

Suzanne

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Lamar Gillian, City Council Place 4

DEVELOP OR DECLINE: A Look at Our Future Economic Challenges

Keeping pace with the resource needs of the city has two distinct challenges. Our first challenge is meeting our recurring expenses: employee salaries, building leases, maintenance and repairs, supplies, etc. The City is in good shape to meet these expenses with good annual revenue sources such as sales tax, property tax, fines, and forfeitures.

Likewise, our City faces a second challenge: financing long-term expenses such as major reconstruction of our streets. Currently, we are rebuilding Hillcrest Drive from Fredericksburg Road to Babcock Road. This project is estimated to exceed \$9 million. Fortunately, we have received substantial support from the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) of about \$5 million. However, depending on others to take care of our needs is not a healthy or sustainable financial strategy.

The two major revenue generators for our city are sales tax and property tax. Sales tax in the 1960s to the early 1980s not only allowed the City to meet its recurring operating expenses but also to build the infrastructure that we citizens enjoyed over the years. When Wonderland Mall opened in 1961, it immediately began generating large amounts of revenue. With that influx of cash, the city was transformed! The property that had once been such a great revenue source began to lose its luster in the mid-eighties. Even with a major renovation effort, it continued to lose major retailers that were the original anchor stores. The once prominent sales tax machine never returned to its days of glory.

Will sales tax return to what it once was? I believe it can, but we must also pursue a strategic plan that would increase the property tax base. This requires economic development that seeks to expand the commercial and multi-family housing with new construction. We have seen strides in that area in recent years with the launch of Target, Methodist Hospital Texasan, Wells Fargo Bank, Office Depot, Peter Piper Pizza, and most recently Chick-Fil-A. The need to continue in this direction is essential in moving our city forward.

Last year Balcones Heights purchased a 45.7 percent ownership interest in Wonderland of the Americas to gain a seat at the table deciding the future of property. We see great potential in redeveloping this prime real estate parcel into a place where people will want to live, work, and play. You may have noticed a difference in recent years as much retail space has been replaced by medical and dental offices. This is known as repurposing and must be done to make the best use of this prime real estate and provide the future resources for our City not only to survive but to thrive. **We must develop or we will most certainly decline.** I choose to develop and hope you do also.

Respectfully,

Lamar Gillian

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GET INVOLVED

Thank you, residents who attended the February 11 informational presentation on volunteer opportunities with the City. Questions, comments and observations created great dialogue City Council will use to help plan the future of Balcones Heights!

Led by Councilmember Valverde, he has a special message for residents and business owners. Read his message below

Greetings

I want to personally thank concerned residents, Mrs. June Davis, Mrs. Agnes Lecea, Mr. Vince Gonzalez, Mr. Dean Nelson, Mr. Manuel Ayala, Mr. David Sellers, Mr. Lucio Nunez, and another young man who did not sign-in for taking time from their busy schedule to attend the meeting and showing interest in our community. Informative information was provided, and everyone present was given the opportunity to voice their concerns on issues in our community and to sign up for participation in one of the city's committees.

On the February newsletter I asked our city businesses owners/managers and residents to join me at the Justice Center on February 11, 2023, for coffee, donuts, and information I wanted to share information on the city's programs and committees with the intention of recruiting interested and concerned residents and businesses owner/managers to get involved.

Unfortunately, no business owner/manager attended. I understand that sometimes schedules will not allow you to take time away, but this community needs residents and business owners to get involved. Please consider volunteering for one of our programs.

I will provide another invite for another meeting soon, and hopefully more residents/business owners can attend. Please do not hesitate to contact me or any of the city's council members if you have a concern or question on why or how the city is handling an issue. My contact information is 210-508-7404 or mvalverde@bhtx.gov.

Respectfully Yours

Miguel C. Valverde

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME & TALENTS

Residents, do you have an hour or two each month to share your time and talents with the city?

The City has opportunities to serve on the following:

[Board of Adjustments & Planning & Zoning Commission](#)

The volunteer [application](#) is available on the City: bhtx.gov. Contact the [City Secretary's Office, Delia Sanchez](#), with any questions.

RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

It is with happy smiles we share the three abandoned dogs rescued in January have found forever homes.

This story, and the ensuing media coverage, serves as a reminder that when we bring a four-legged friend into our home, we must be committed to their care.

Balcones Heights Police, working with the Alamo City Pit Bull Rescue group and Becker Animal Hospital, utilized media resources in placing Hennesey, Goose and Jack with loving families.

SPRING BRUSH/BULK PICK-UP

Mark your calendars for the spring clean-up event, **APRIL 24-26, 2023**. For a list of items, please visit bhtx.gov.

CITY COUNCIL NEWS

February 27, 2023

- Action was taken to accept the FY 2021-2022 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

- Action was taken to adopt an ordinance amending Section 92.35 Sale and Use of Fireworks Prohibited.

- Action was taken to adopt an ordinance amending the FY 2022-2023 Schedule of Fees to adjust permit fees.

- Police Chief John Jahanara shared the promotion of Officer Chris Aguirre to CID Investigator and introduced personnel in the Police and Dispatch Departments. Joining City staff are Patrol Officer Stephen Ford, and Telecommunicators Juan Perez, Sabrina Gallardo, and Nolan Stevenson. Congratulations and Welcome to the City of Balcones Heights!

SHERIFF SALAZAR'S RODEO BREAKFAST

Held on Dave & Busters grounds, local and area businesses provided free breakfast items for attendees Saturday, February 11, 2023 at the 2nd Annual Sheriff Salazar's Rodeo Breakfast. The Cowboy spirit was all around with live music and sweet and savory offerings.

See you next year!

ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE?

You must be a registered voter to have your vote count. To register or CONFIRM you are eligible to vote, contact the Bexar County Elections Office, 210.335.8683.

To vote during the May 6 election, **you must be registered by Thursday, April 6, 2023.**

Save THE Date!

All events held at the Balcones Heights Justice Center/City Hall unless otherwise noted.

March 9	3:00 p.m.	Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Meeting
March 17		St. Patrick's Day
March 27	6:00 p.m.	City Council Meeting
April 9		Easter Sunday
April 13	3:00 p.m.	Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Meeting
April 24-26		Spring Brush/Bulk Clean Up (Republic Services)
April 24	6:00 p.m.	City Council Meeting

*[Wonderland of the Americas Event Calendar](#)

*[01 Farmers Market](#), every Saturday & Sunday

Wonderland of the Americas Parking Lot (near Denny's)

Dates and times are subject to change; updates will be posted at bhtx.gov and on the City Facebook page.

Updates will be posted to the City website, bhtx.gov and/or the City [Facebook page](#).

The Economic Development & Public Affairs Office is located at

4522 Fredericksburg Rd, Ste A-22.

Contact the office at 210.732.0055 or by email: lorenzo@bhtx.gov.