

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Paul A. Hofmann, City Manager
Date: August 20, 2021
Subject: Weekly Memo, August 16-20, 2021



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Gold Scenic City Designation

The Scenic City Certification Program provides a tool to assess, evaluate, and recognize high-quality scenic standards for public roadways, spaces, and infrastructure. As a result of the most recent annually required recertification review, the City of Bastrop has been designated as Gold. The first Scenic City designation of Bronze was awarded 2015. An invitation to the Scenic City Awards Ceremony, held in Houston on October 7th or 8th will be sent later this month.

Boards and Commissions

- Board and Commission Interviews – Monday, August 23, 2021, and Wednesday, August 25, 2021
- Board Appointments will be announced at the September 14, 2021, Council meeting
- Boards and Commissions Orientation will be held Thursday, September 16, 2021, 5:30 p.m. at Bastrop City Hall
- Boards and Commissions Appreciation Banquet will be held on Thursday October 14, 2021, at 6:00 PM at the Bastrop Convention Center.

Status of Improvements at Wheeled Sports Plaza

A water fountain, trash cans, and benches are in stock or have been ordered and will be installed in the next 30 days.

Upcoming Events

Boogie Back to Bastrop

Each year, the City of Bastrop Convention & Exhibit Center hosts this 2-day cultural event, celebrating and preserving Texas Country & Western Swing music and dance. Dance lovers from across the state (and beyond) travel to Bastrop annually to enjoy the sounds of authentic, live Texas music. The event features a lineup of top-notch entertainment, 1,600 square-foot dancefloor, on-site food and alcohol concessions, retail/craft vendors, and more. This is scheduled August 27-28, 2021, at the Bastrop Convention Center. More information can be found at BoogieBackToBastrop.com

Backin' the Badges Rally

The Thin Blue Line Foundation has organized this motorcycle rally event that will bring an estimated 1,200 attendees to Bastrop for live music, an organized motorcycle ride through town, and “the promotion of camaraderie between all Law Enforcement Officers, First Responders, and Civilian Supporters.” The event is September 3-4th and is located in Fisherman’s Park. A ride will take place starting at Spiderwood

Studios on Saturday and end in Downtown Bastrop. The Park and boat ramp will be closed to the public as this is a ticketed event.

Bastrop County Complex Fire 10 Year Anniversary Commemoration

On September 4th, 2021, at the Bastrop Convention Center, the Perseverance in the Pines event will take place to commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the Bastrop County Complex Fire. The City of Bastrop will have a booth in the foyer of the Convention Center that will be full of resources, giveaways, and free items related to household emergency preparedness.

At the commemorative event, a Perseverance in the Pines magazine is being distributed and the city has purchased space to be included in the publication. Our space will feature a letter written by Mayor Schroeder and a layout that focuses on restoration and future progress.

The city is also holding a commemorative tree planting ceremony where three pine trees will be planted to honor the first responders, community, and victims of the Complex Fire. More details about location, date, and time will be shared once confirmed.

Overheard at City Hall Podcast

Episode 10 of the Official City of Bastrop podcast will be released today and features a bit of a “takeover” – Assistant City Manager for Community Engagement Rebecca Gleason assumes the role of host and puts City Manager Hofmann in the hot seat. Visit <https://www.cityofbastrop.org/page/city.podcast> where the video will be uploaded and placed at the top of the page later today. It is a great conversation and a lot of fun.

Sign Code Updates Awareness & Education

The Sign Code Update Awareness & Education campaign has completed updates to the Signs webpage (found here: <https://www.cityofbastrop.org/page/plan.signs>) which contains the latest updates to Chapter 8 of the B³ Codes, an interactive map, a frequently asked questions section, quick links to each section of the sign code for easy reference, and the announcement that enforcement of all new code violations will begin on March 1, 2022. Next week, a one-page informational document will go out to Downtown Bastrop businesses in an email and the first postcard will go out to all business addresses on September 1st. From there we will begin sharing the one-page informational document will be available at our front desks and pushed through several channels.

Bastrop Public Library

A new air conditioning unit was installed this week at the library. We now have two working units cooling the building. The remaining two units have been ordered and will be installed soon. Thank you to David Juarez of Public Works, for getting this done so quickly.

The Library September newsletter will be available on Tuesday, August 24. We have attached a copy to this memo.

Quarterly Report follow-up on plats

In the Quarterly Council Report presented on August 10th, there was a question about the 11 plats that were reported as submitted for review during the third quarter on page 52. In the table below are the 11 plats broken down by the type of plat review process, the description of the plat and the current status.

Plat Process	Plat Name	Plat Status
Final Plat	The Colony MUD 1C Section 2 Final Plat	In Review
Final Plat	The Colony MUD 1C Section 3 Final Plat	Approved
Final Plat	The Colony MUD 1C Section 4 Final Plat	Approved
Final Plat	The Colony MUD 1C Section 5 Final Plat	Approved
Minor Plat	Minor Plat - Hardee Maynard Subdivision	Approved with conditions
Minor Plat	Minor Plat - Hubert Subdivision	Approved
Minor Plat	Minor Plat - Sayers & Main Subdivision	Requested - needs additional development processes
Minor Plat	Sneed Acres Minor Plat	In Review
Amended Plat	Amended Plat - Keawakapu Drive	On hold per customer request so survey work can be completed
Amended Plat	Amended Plat on Lamaloa Lane	Approved
Preliminary Plat	Preliminary Plat - Hawthorne Street	Requested - needs additional development processes

Upcoming Training

Below are future training opportunities through the calendar year. If you are interested in attending any of the training, please notify the City Secretary and she will take care of the registration for you.

- **TML Economic Development Conference**

Date: November 11, 2021 – November 12, 2021

Time: All Day

Location: Bastrop

- **Career Suicide?! Social Media Dos & Don'ts for City Officials**

Presenters: Alan Bojorquez, Bojorquez Law Firm & Lora-Marie Bernard, Muni Media

When: Thursday, September 9, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm CDT

Where: GoTo Platform

Employee Benefit Fair

The Employee Benefit Fair was held at the Convention Center on Wednesday, August 18. The employees were notified of the changes to their benefits. We heard many positive comments regarding the City's 35% contribution to the dependent health coverage as approved by Council.

Safety Concerns at Rodeo Arena

During The August 17 budget workshop, Council Member Jackson mentioned safety concerns at the rodeo arena. The arena was inspected by the Public Works Department prior to the recent Homecoming festivities, and no safety concerns were noted. I inspected the arena personally and see no safety issues. The box seats are old and weathered, and we should consider removing them completely and using portable folding chairs in that area of the arena for the annual Homecoming events.

In preparation for Homecoming 2021 the Public Works Department cleaned and prepped the concession stand, announcer's booth, and restrooms at Mayfest park for the event. Public Works staff also re-painted arena railing near the concession stand and around all box seating areas, and treated the park grounds for ants and wasps.

Kudos for Public Works

Sandy Holder of Public Works received a call from a resident complimenting the Street and Drainage Crew on the great work they did in Tahitian. They fixed the potholes and then came back and mowed everything! She just wanted us to know how good everything looked and how much she appreciated our crews out working in the heat repairing and taking care of the road.

Police Department Removing Drugs from Community

On August 18th, Officer McClain seized just over 60 grams of methamphetamine valued at about \$7,000 during a theft/drug investigation.

Arena Drive Improvements

Attached is information distributed to neighboring properties regarding improvements to Arena Drive. The project has also been publicized on social media.

Sister Cities

Council Member Crouch recently asked about the sister cities program. Attached is a memorandum provided in response.

Scheduled Time Out of Office

I plan vacation time Thursday October 21st thru Monday October 25th for a trip to Kansas to visit our son and daughter in law.

Future Agenda Items

August 30, 2021

- Joint Meeting with Visit Bastrop at 5:00 PM in council chambers

September 14, 2021

- Public hearing and first reading to adopt budget for fiscal year 2021-2022
- Public hearing and first reading to adopt tax rates for fiscal year 2021-2022
- Foundry Art Immersion Project
- BEDC Main Street Funding Agreement

September 21, 2021

- Action to approve budget for fiscal year 2021-2022
- Action to ratify the vote on Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Budget
- Action to approve tax rates for fiscal year 2021-2022
- Consider action on Water and Wastewater rates

Attachments

- Waste Connection Extension Letter
- Boogie back to Bastrop flyer
- Arena drive flyer
- Sister Cities Memo
- Bond Election Timeline (corrected)
- Bastrop State Park Prescribed Burns
- Bastrop Library Newsletter
- TML Legislative Update Number 32



August 17, 2021

John Harris
District Manager
Waste Connections of Texas - Austin
9904 FM 812, Austin, TX 78719

Regarding: Solid Waste and Recycling Service Contract

Mr. Harris:

Please accept this notification regarding the Solid Waste and Recycling Service Contract entered on July 1, 2015, between the City of Bastrop and Progressive Waste Solutions of TX, Inc. (now Waste Connections Lone Star, Inc.).

I received your correspondence regarding the possible renewal of the above-referenced contract (via letters dated July 30, 2021, and August 4, 2021).

In accordance with Section 3.2 of the contract [Optional Renewal Terms], the City of Bastrop acting by and through my office as the City's duly authorized City Manager hereby exercises its contractual option to renew the term of the agreement for an additional one (1) year period.

Sincerely,

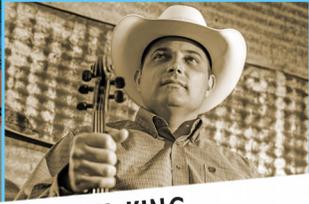

Paul A. Hofmann
City Manager

City of Bastrop, Texas Proudly Presents

BOOGIE BACK TO BASTROP

Country & Western Swing Festival 2021

FRI.



ROCKY KING BAND



BRADY HONEYCUTT

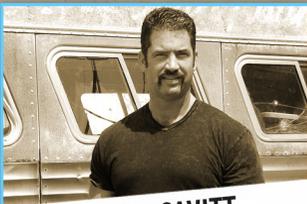


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SAT.



COBY CARTER BAND



FRANK CAVITT
& THE HONKY TONK DOCTORS

BASTROP
CITY LIMITS

AUG.
27-28

FRI & SAT
1:00 - 11:00 PM



1408 Chestnut Street
Bastrop, Texas 78602

bastropconventioncenter.com

Tickets

\$35 ONE-DAY

\$60 TWO-DAY

VIP PACKAGE \$650

WWW.BOOGIEBACKTOBASTROP.COM





NOTICE: Arena Dr-Street & Drainage Improvements

Date: 08/19/2021

To All Residents,

The City of Bastrop Public Works, Streets and Drainage division will be scheduling Street and Drainage construction of Arena Dr. from Hwy 71 to American Legion Dr. on **August 23rd-September 3rd between the hours of approximately 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM. Weather permitting.**

This notice is provided to you in advance to assist us in getting these improvements completed. Please help us by complying with this request so that the project is not delayed.

This section of the street will be closed until construction is completed, and closed to thru traffic, but please follow all signage and crew members instructions for safety.

We understand that this may be an inconvenience and apologize in advance for any this may cause. Please be assured we will work as quickly and efficiently as possible to get this work complete. Completion of this work within the planned time frame is weather permitting.

If you have any questions, please contact our Public Works office at (512) 332-8920 between the office hours of 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM. After hours calls will be routed to the answering service and routine calls will be returned the following workday.

TO: Paul A. Hofmann, City Manager
From: Candice Butts, Community Impact Manager
Via: Rebecca Gleason, Assistant City Manager for Community Engagement
Date: August 19, 2021
Subject: Sister City Relationships



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A Sister City is “Broad-based, long-term partnership between two communities in two countries” (Sister Cities International, 2019). These cities pursue “activities and thematic areas that are important to their community including municipal, business, trade, educational and cultural exchanges” (2019).

Sister City partnerships expanded after World War II as world leaders hoped to avoid international conflict in the future. In 1957, President Eisenhower formalized the development of sister cities by creating Sister Cities International which is not a governmental entity. In 2015, Sister Cities International reported over 15,000 cities in a sisterhood relationship. The states with the most Sister City relationships: California (450), Florida (282), and Texas (158).

Sister cities are now geared toward economic development through increased tourism and trade rather than keeping the peace. For example, Charleston, South Carolina, generates \$30 million a year from the Spoleto Festival USA, a festival focused on the performing arts of their Sister City, Spoleto, Italy.

Advantages of Sister City partnerships (Sister Cities International, 2018):

- global integration
- using new technologies and techniques to support trade
- health care advancement
- Democratization
- cross-cultural expertise
- foreign language skills
- knowledge for foreign lands and cultures.

Disadvantages of Sister City partnerships (Llyod, 2010):

- Sometimes sister cities exist as a “only-on-paper” relationship.
- Sometimes it’s difficult or there is no way to define the relationship.
- Sometimes sister cities go dormant, especially during new administration changes or if there is no defined purpose.
- Sister City relationships have a limited and possibly declining capacity to serve as a vehicle for achieving the goal of a peaceful and interconnected world.
- If your Sister City’s goals, actions, and policies don’t align with your city’s goals, actions, and polices, it can become a public image issue.

- Stakeholders can be unsure as to the limits of the Sister City's peace relationship or of their own capabilities and obligations in relation to them.

Citations:

Franco, Mario, and Elsa Marmelo. "Sister-City Relationships as A Form of Inter-Organizational Cooperation: Exploratory Case Studies in The Portuguese Context." *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 41, 2014, pp. 75–89., doi:https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260145071_Sister-City_Relationships_As_a_Form_of_Inter-Organizational_Cooperation_Exploratory_Case_Studies_in_the_Portuguese_Context.

Kopf, Dan. "Why Do We Have 'Sister Cities'?" *Priceconomics*, 3 Dec. 2015, priceconomics.com/why-do-we-have-sister-cities/.

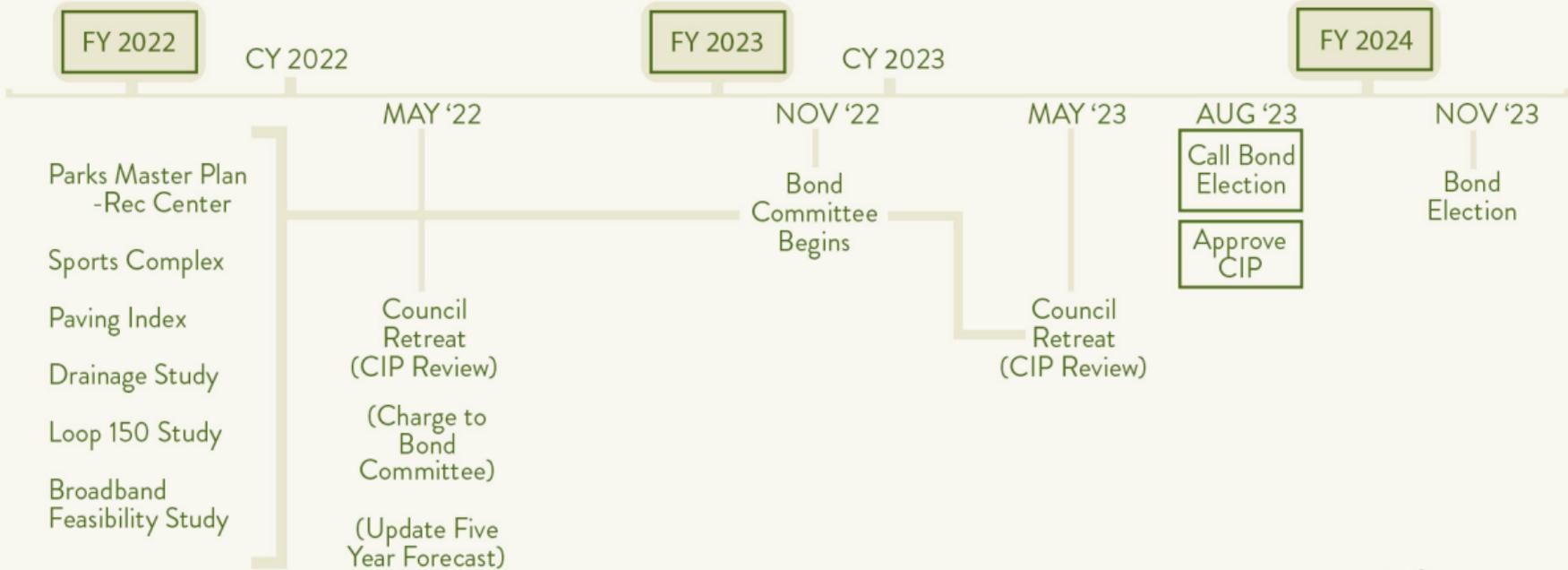
Lloyd, Barbara Theresa. "Safe Sisters: Limitations of Sister City Relationships for International Peace Building." *University of Tasmania*, 2010.

"Measures That Matter." Sister Cities International, Sister Cities International, 2015, socalisterscities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Measures_that_Matter_002.pdf.

"Member Toolkit: Building Your Sister Cities Program." Sister Cities International, Sister Cities International, 2018, sistercities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Building-Your-Local-Program.pdf.

"What Is a Sister City?" *Sister Cities International (SCI)*, 26 June 2019, sistercities.org/about-us/what-is-a-sister-city-3/.

Bond Election Timeline



RECEIVED
8-16-21

8/15/21



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Paul Hofmann
City Manager
PO Box 427
Bastrop, Texas 78602

Dear Mr. Hofmann:

As part of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's efforts to ensure good communications with our constituents and neighbors, and in compliance with §11.353 Parks and Wildlife Code, I want to inform you of the Department's intent to conduct one or more prescribed burns at **Bastrop State Park sometime between October 2021 and December 2021.**

Our primary target timeframe for these burns is sometime between **October 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021.** Burn opportunities are dependent on weather, vegetation conditions, current and expected fire danger, and many other considerations. **If we are unable to conduct these burns within this target timeframe we will contact you again with the next potential timeframe.**

A site-specific fire management plan for prescribed burning operations at Bastrop State Park is in place and we will be happy to share a copy with your office if you desire. In addition, neighboring landowners have been notified of the Department's intentions with the attached letter and map. In order to reach the community at large, a public notice will be published in the Bastrop Advertiser and Smithville Times prior to this burn period.

Additional community outreach on the upcoming burn may include information posted on the Department's website, social media outlets, and through a group text messaging application. If you or members of your staff would also like to receive these text message notifications prior to the burn, text this message: **@bsp01** to the number 81010.

Advance notifications have also been made to Judge Paul Pape, Commissioner Mel Hamner, Commissioner Clara Beckett, Commissioner Mark Meuth, Commissioner Donna Snowden, Senator Sarah Eckhardt, Representative John Cyrier, nearby water utility officials, and owners of any utility infrastructure within the prescribed burn area. Prior to ignition of any fires, city or county emergency services dispatch center, local area fire departments and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality will be notified to ensure they are aware of these actions.

If you have any questions please contact Jamie Creacy at (512) 308-7148 or Jamie.creacy@tpwd.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

Jamie Creacy
Park Superintendent
Lost Pines Complex – Bastrop and Buescher State Parks
PO Box 518
Bastrop, Texas 78602
Office - (512) 321-1673 Cell – (512) 308-7148

Attachment: Landowner Notification Letter
Landowner Notification Map

To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Commissioners

Arch "Beaver" Aplin, III
Chairman
Lake Jackson

James E. Abell
Kilgore

Oliver J. Bell
Cleveland

Paul L. Foster
El Paso

Anna B. Galo
Laredo

Jeffery D. Hildebrand
Houston

Robert L. "Bobby" Patton, Jr.
Fort Worth

Travis B. "Blake" Rowling
Dallas

Dick Scott
Wimberley

Lee M. Bass
Chairman-Emeritus
Fort Worth

T. Dan Friedkin
Chairman-Emeritus
Houston

Carter P. Smith
Executive Director

4200 SMITH SCHOOL ROAD
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744-3291
512.389.4800
www.tpwd.texas.gov

8/15/21



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Dear Bastrop State Park Neighbor:

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is planning to conduct prescribed burns in **Bastrop State Park** at 100 Park Road 1A, Bastrop, Texas 78602. The prescribed burns will take place in multiple areas: within the Park Road 1A Loop Road; the area north of Park Road 1A and Park Road 1C and southeast of Highway 21 East to Gotier Trace; the area south of Park Road 1C and north of Highway 71 between Harmon Road and Alum Creek; and the area north of Park Road 1C / Gotier Trace and south of Highway 21 East sometime between October 2021 and December 2021.

Our primary target timeframe for these burns is sometime between **October 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021**. Burn opportunities are dependent on weather, vegetation conditions, current and expected fire danger, and many other considerations. **If we are unable to conduct these burns within this target timeframe we will contact you again with the next potential timeframe.**

During the burn, you may see smoke in your neighborhood or on nearby roads. We caution you to reduce your speed and use your low-beam headlights when smoke is present. Other recommended precautions prior to the burn include relocating hay, pets, livestock, and equipment away from park boundary fences and providing defensible space around structures adjacent to park property.

Prescribed burns are a management tool used to restore forest and prairie habitats that were periodically burned by natural fires. Prescribed burns also reduce the potential damage a wildfire could cause by reducing available fuels such as dead trees, leaf litter, and other flammable vegetation on the landscape. Prescribed fires on state parks are conducted by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department personnel who have undergone extensive fire training and meet national wildland firefighting and incident management standards. Additionally, the State Park staff will work with local fire and emergency management officials to plan and conduct the prescribed fire.

Each prescribed fire plan defines the local weather and other conditions under which a prescribed burn may be conducted, the personnel and equipment required, and fire-break locations. Most importantly, the fire plan prioritizes public and firefighter safety. The plan reduces the risk of fire escaping onto adjacent properties and minimizes the effect of smoke in nearby residential and smoke sensitive areas. The plan also establishes contingency measures to protect adjacent properties if the fire were to escape established boundaries. The prescribed burns are ignited by hand in predetermined patterns that insure the best measures for containment.

Texas has a history of naturally occurring wildfires, making prescribed burns very important to maintaining habitats on State Parks. Private landowners should consider implementing wildfire mitigation efforts on their lands as well in order to preserve their property and way of life before a wildfire event starts. Information on how to be prepared can be found at: www.FIREWISE.org.

If you have any questions, please contact **Jamie Creacy** at **512-321-1673** or email at jamie.creacy@tpwd.texas.gov. If you would like to receive text message notifications prior to the burn, text 81010 with this message “@bsp01”. Thank you for your support and understanding of this valuable and necessary habitat management and fuel reduction tool.

Sincerely,

Jamie Creacy

**Park Superintendent
Bastrop and Buescher State Parks
100 Park Road 1A, Bastrop, Texas 78602
512-321-1673**

To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Commissioners

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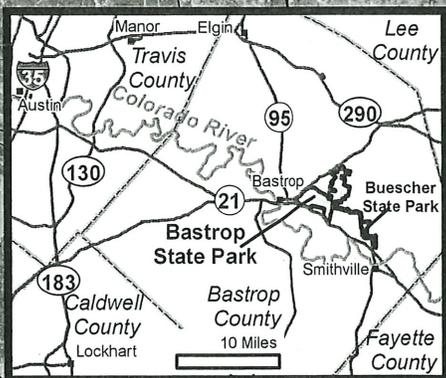
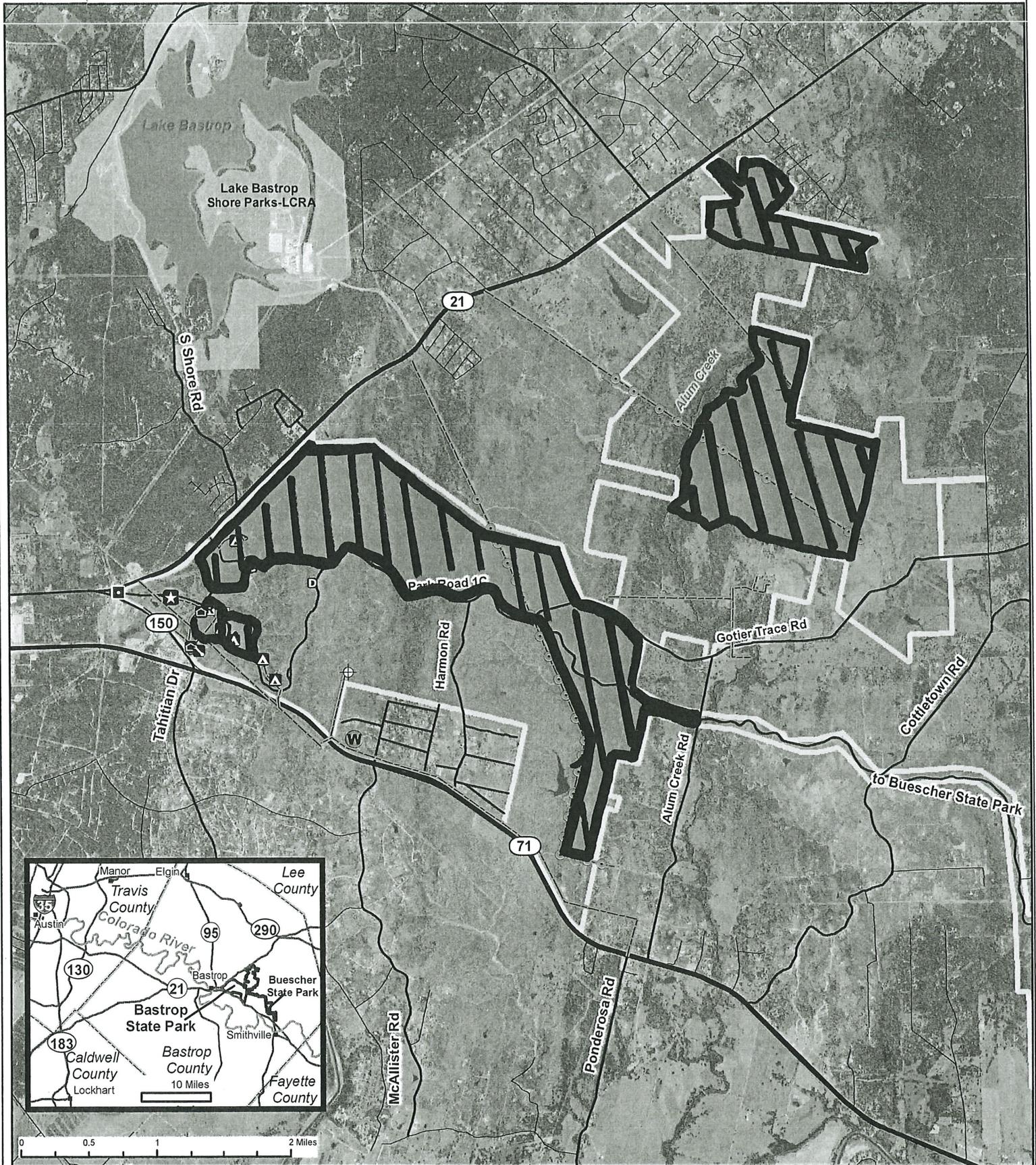
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www.tpwd.texas.gov

Bastrop SP, Bastrop County: Prescribed Fire Notice - Fall 2021 - Spring 2022



Park Headquarters	Radio Tower	Electric-Overhead Line
Park Entrance	Electric Line Tower	Bastrop State Park
Park Residence (2)	Water Tower	Proposed Prescribed Fire Area
Park Maintenance/Sign Shop	Day Use Area (3)	Lake Bastrop Shore Parks-LCRA
Park Office/Group Barracks/Swimming Pool	Camping Area (5)	
Refractory		

Maps are for planning purposes only. No claims to accuracy are made or implied.



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MAP ID: Bastrop RX Public-FY21
 Notice Fall 2019/Spring 2020; 20200806
 UTM z14; imagery: NAIP 2016
 TPWD: SP:NR:PGR:J Estes
 Pipeline data from Railroad Commission



IN THIS ISSUE

Summer Reading 2021
Wrap-Up

LEGO Club Back In-
Person

Bag o' Books for Fall

Closed 9/6 for Labor Day

Book and Plant Sale

Hotspots Now Available!

Do you have a Bastrop Public Library story to share? Email it to us at info@bastroplibrary.org!

Stay up-to-date with everything happening at the library by following us on Facebook and Instagram!

Have you checked the bottom of your receipt to see how much money you've saved by using the library? January through July 2021, patrons saved over \$611,000!

Summer Reading 2021 Wrap-up

Hippo-hippo-hooray! Everyone had a WHALEY great Summer Reading Program!

This summer, 812 kids, tweens, teens, and adults registered for Tails & Tales and logged 1,334,723 minutes! Those minutes resulted in 437 youth and adults completing the program by reading 500 minutes for youth or 1,000 minutes for adults. That means 54% of people completed the program! Hippo-hippo-hooray! That's awesome, y'all! This is the highest completion percentage ever in the history of Bastrop Public Library! Give yourselves a pat on the back!

Youth readers received more than 400 books as prizes and nearly 100 adults earned \$1 Book Nook coupons! Thank you to the Friends of Bastrop Public Library and Lost Pines Garden Club for making these prizes available to our readers!

Highlights from this summer included Storytime with Ms. Carmen. Enthusiasm for the return of in-person storytime was overwhelming. It was a joy to reconnect with returning kids and parents and meet new families. An especially hilarious moment was when Bastrop Police Officers participated in singing "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" at the June Storytime with a Cop!

Teen programs also enjoyed a return to in-person programming. It was wonderful to experience the teens' unfettered enthusiasm at being able to spend time with friends and just have fun after the isolation and stress of the past year. Some of their favorite programs were Messy Mayhem, Wet'n'Wild Water Games, Gravity Art, and a scavenger hunt in Fisherman's Park.

CONTINUED ON PG. 2

Summer Reading Wrap-up Con't

The new program Coffee with Catherine has been a huge success! Catherine Lombardo has worked so hard to make connections with her participants, and their joy is infectious on Wednesday afternoons! It really improves the whole atmosphere in the library! They cherish the opportunity to connect with one another in a supportive environment.

The last program of the summer was A Whale of a Scavenger Hunt. It was great to interact with kids and families as they stopped in to get the instructions and so rewarding to see the smiles on their faces after completing the challenge. The best part of the day was when they found out their prize for participating in the scavenger hunt was an ice cream sandwich!

It was a terrific summer and all of us at the library say "thank you!" for making it a WHALEY good summer!

Closed for Labor Day

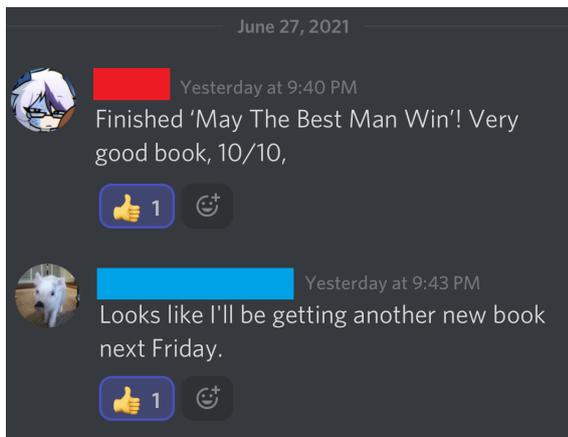


The library will be closed for Labor Day on Monday, September 6, 2021. We will re-open on Tuesday, September 7th at 1:00pm.

Teen Bag o' Books for Fall

Fifteen teens signed up to receive three librarian-chosen YA books and goodies each month this summer, and it was a smashing success!

One teen talked about one of their choices on the Teen Discord:



And one parent is jealous that their teen gets this service:



Isabel Ford ▶ **Bastrop Public Library**

2h · 🌐

Loving my teen's bag of books!! Makes me want one, too. Thank you for offering this cool option.

Your teen can also get this great service in September, October, and November by filling out the online survey. The pick-up dates will be September 15th, October 15th, and November 15th.

If you have questions, please email Bethany at bdietrich@bastroplibrary.org. Happy reading!

LEGO Club Is Back In-Person!

In September, LEGO Club will be back in-person in the Pressley Meeting Room on third Tuesdays from 3:00-4:30pm. Ms. Carmen has fun activities and challenges planned, so mark your calendars because you won't want to miss out on any of the fun.

If you would like to receive a reminder about upcoming LEGO Club programs, sign-up for emails on our [website](https://www.bastroplibrary.org) (BastropLibrary.org, then click on the About the Library tab on the left, and choose Subscribe to the Newsletter).



1100 CHURCH ST.
BASTROP, TX 78602

Wifi on the Go: Hotspots Now Available for Checkout!

Do you struggle to get internet access at home? Checkout a hotspot from the Bastrop Public Library and surf the web to your heart's content for two whole weeks!

Frequently asked questions:

Q: What is a hotspot?

A: A hotspot is a small device that connects your personal device such as a tablet or laptop to the internet. The hotspot uses T-Mobile data to bring you the internet.

Q: How do I checkout a hotspot?

A: Stop at the Circulation Desk and let library staff know that you'd like to checkout a hotspot. If they are all checked out at that time, we will put you on hold for one to checkout when one becomes available.

Q: What do I need to checkout a hotspot?

A: You must be at least 18 years old with a valid picture ID and current address. Your Bastrop Public Library card must be current and active for at least two weeks with no fines or fees on the account. Additionally, you must read and sign the Hotspot Lending Guidelines and Agreement [link]. A Hotspot Borrowing Agreement must be signed each time a hotspot is checked out to indicate the device is not damaged and all parts are included.

Q: How do I return the hotspot once my two weeks are up?

A: Hotspots must be returned to the Circulation Desk. We want to check the device, with you, at the Circulation Desk to ensure it is not damaged and you are not unfairly charged. Hotspots returned in the bookdrop will be charged a \$5 fee.

Q: How long do I get to keep the hotspot?

A: Checkout time for hotspots is two weeks. Any device kept over that time period will be charged \$1/day in fines, and there is no grace period. After 48 hours past the due date, service to the hotspot will be turned off.

This exciting new service is made possible by a grant from the Ladd and Katherine Hancher Library Foundation. Stop by the library today to checkout a hotspot and take the internet home!



Book and Plant Sale



The Friends of Bastrop Public Library and the Lost Pines Garden Club are teaming up this month to bring you the Book and Plant Sale on Friday, September 24th and Saturday, September 25th!

Current Friends of the Library will have a special first-access on Friday, September 24th from 9:00-10:00am. You can be a part of this great group by getting a membership form at the Circulation Desk. Friends annual dues are \$15.00.

The Book and Plant Sale is open to the public Friday, September 24th from 10:00-5:00 and Saturday, September 25th from 10:00-3:00.

Books of all genres and for all ages will be available in the Pressley Meeting Room and plants for fall planting will be available in the library parking lot. All proceeds support the programs and collections of Bastrop Public Library.

Bring your bags, because there will be too many deals for you to want to pass up!

Any changes to the Book and Plant Sale due to the spread of the Delta Variant of COVID-19 will be available on our website and on our Facebook page.



We Suggest!

We're expanding who is writing newsletter reviews so that we can get a variety of genre suggestions for all types of readers! If you've read a book and want to write a positive review for the newsletter, please email Bethany at bdietrich@bastroplibrary.org.

Staff

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Ashley Guerrero,
Technical Services
Supervisor

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Assistant

Bethany Dietrich, Public
Services Librarian

Sheila Bowman,
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Library Associate,
Circulation, & Volunteer
Services

Terry Carwell, Library
Associate, Circulation
Services

Hours

Mon. Wed. Fri.
10:00 am – 6:00 pm

Tues. & Thurs.
1:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Sat.
10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Closed Sunday

Contact Us

(512) 332-8880
1100 Church St.
Bastrop, TX 78602

bastroplibrary.org
info@bastroplibrary.org



A service of the
City of Bastrop

Brenda Smith, library volunteer

The Guest List by Lucy Foley

A beautifully written mystery reminiscent of Agatha Christie. I promise this isn't a spoiler, but someone dies. Who? Someone ELSE on the guest list has a true motive for revenge. As you try to solve the mystery, the POV changes by chapter to a different guest, so pay close attention to the clues... The characters are richly drawn and the island wedding sets the stage for tension. Can you guess the victim and the killer? This is true page turner to keep you up all night! Loved it!

Find it: MYS Fol + CD Book F Fol (New) + Libby ebooks

Dianne Tripp, Friend of the Library

The Daughters of Kobani by Gayle Tzemach Lemmon

This nonfiction work is the unforgettable and unusual story of the women soldiers in the Kurdish Militia. These women not only helped defeat ISIS in Syria, but they changed the perception of women's equality in a very male dominated and traditional Middle East. Recommended for those who want to read about courage, sacrifice, heroism, and the real meaning of sisterhood.

Find it: 956.91 Lem (New)

Mary McCormick, library patron

The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek by Kim Michele Richardson

Cussy Mary, one of the last of the Blue People of Appalachian Kentucky, is a packhorse librarian in the early part of the 20th century. She delivers books over treacherous miles, mountains, and terrain on her route, but the treatment she receives for her inherited medical condition is just prejudiced. This book will keep you enthralled and give you insight into these humans-just-like-you-and-me people.

Find it: NOV Ric + Libby ebooks

Becky Bennett, library board member

The Midnight Library by Matt Haig

Nora Seed's life is full of regrets. One Tuesday, her cat dies, her boss fires her, and she runs into an old bandmate and he hates her. That night, Nora decides to end it all. But between life and death is the midnight library where she can try out any life that she didn't live. While trying to decide which life to choose forever, she learns about herself and what she really wants. This fast-paced, quick read is moving and entertaining. I stayed up way too late finishing it.

Find it: NOV Hai + CD Book F Hai (New) + Libby ebooks



Legislative UPDATE

August 20, 2021
Number 32

Sales Tax Sourcing Rules Effective October 1

City budget season is upon us, and as city officials deliberate their 2021-2022 budgets, it is important not to lose sight of potential changes looming on the sales tax front.

In May 2020, the comptroller adopted [amendments to Rule 3.334](#), making several modifications to local sales and use tax regulations. Most of the changes made by the rules when into effect immediately upon adoption. However, and of particular importance to many cities, the comptroller delayed the implementation of provisions affecting the sourcing of sales taxes on internet orders until October 1, 2021. This was done to specifically to give the Texas Legislature the ability to pass a law addressing local sales tax sourcing. Though several bills were filed addressing the issue in various ways, nothing ultimately passed. The sourcing rule on internet orders, as well as a change impacting the sourcing of local sales taxes orders received by salespersons while working away from their office, is set to go into effect on October 1.

The pending rule change impacting internet orders provides that orders received via a shopping website or software application are received at a location that is not a place of business in the state. The ultimate impact of this change is that, under the provisions governing where a sale is consummated, online purchases may change from being sourced to a seller's place of business in Texas to the delivery location. The new rule provides that orders received by a shopping website

or shopping application are sourced to the location where the order is fulfilled or the delivery location, depending on the exact circumstances.

In addition to the provision affecting internet orders, the other pending rule adds a new paragraph dealing with “orders received by sales personnel...including orders received by mail, telephone, including voice over internet protocol and cellular phone calls, facsimile, and email.” This section provides some clarification for cities with concerns about traveling salespersons and the treatment of orders received via email or voice over internet protocol, but not using an internet shopping website. Under the new rule, orders received by salespersons while working away from their office will be sourced to the location from where the salesperson works if the location meets the definition of a “place of business”.

Complicating matters a bit in terms of implementation is the fact that some Texas cities have filed suit against the comptroller to prevent the rule changes from going into effect. The City of Round Rock is [seeking a declaratory judgment](#) that portions of the comptroller’s rule are invalid. Similar arguments are being made in [a separate lawsuit](#) brought by Coppell, Carrollton, DeSoto, and Humble. Although the ongoing legal challenges could potentially impact the effective date of the rule changes, at this point the League encourages all cities to move forward as if the rules will go into effect as planned on October 1.

What can city officials do to get a better picture of how the new rules might affect their cities? The nature of the changes made by the rule make prognostication very difficult. That being said, city officials are encouraged to reach out to the top sales tax remitters in their city—both retail and business-to-business—to gain a better understanding of the scope of the impact.

Also, as a reminder, cities are legally authorized to request certain sales tax information from the comptroller pursuant to [Texas Tax Code Sec. 321.3022](#). This includes information on the amount of tax paid to the city during the preceding or current calendar year by each person doing business in the city. Any information received under this provision is confidential, and can only be used by the city for economic forecasting, internal auditing of a tax paid to the city, or to assist in determining revenue sharing under a revenue sharing agreement.

For more information about local sales and use tax, including the new rules, please see the following comptroller publication: [Local Sales and Use Tax Collection – A Guide for Sellers \(PDF\)](#).

Post-Session Update: Grounds for Zoning Variances Expanded

In cities with zoning regulations, the Board of Adjustment (“BOA”) serves as the appellate body for certain zoning-related decisions. BOAs are authorized by [state law](#) to hear appeals of administrative decisions, decide whether or not to grant special exceptions to terms of the zoning ordinance, authorize variances from the zoning ordinance, and hear and decide “other matters” authorized under the city’s zoning ordinance. [H.B. 1475](#) changes BOA authority related to variances and gives additional objective grounds for which a variance from a municipal zoning ordinance may be granted.

Zoning Variances: Then and Now

A BOA is authorized to grant a variance if, among other things, enforcing the ordinance as written would result in “unnecessary hardship.” The term, “unnecessary hardship” is not defined in state law, so over time courts have grappled with the sorts of facts that can constitute an “unnecessary hardship” and justify granting a variance. Until the passage of H.B. 1475, an unnecessary hardship would be one that was not self-imposed, personal in nature, related to the property for which the variance is sought, and not a solely financial hardship. The hardship needed to be a condition unique, oppressive, and not common to other property.

This changes the above analysis in a couple ways. It adds more objective criteria which a BOA can consider to determine whether compliance with a city’s zoning ordinance as applied to a structure would result in an unnecessary hardship. For the first time, purely financial considerations can qualify an applicant for a variance. Additionally, if the proposed structure would be considered a nonconforming structure, that could be grounds to grant a variance. Those are two significant shifts in variance analysis, which allow an applicant to get over the “unnecessary hardship” hurdle a little more easily. Under the new law, there might be an unnecessary hardship if:

1. the cost of compliance with the zoning ordinance is greater than 50 percent of the appraised value of the structure as shown on the most recent certified appraisal roll; or
2. compliance would result in a loss to the lot on which the structure is located of at least 25 percent of the area on which development may physically occur; or
3. compliance would result in the structure not in compliance with a requirement of another city ordinance, building code, or other requirement; or
4. compliance would result in the unreasonable encroachment on an adjacent property or easement; or
5. the city considers the structure to be a nonconforming structure.

Keep in mind that to grant a variance, the variance must not be contrary to the public interest, and the spirit of the zoning ordinance must be observed. So even if a proposed structure fits an “unnecessary hardship” category above, granting the variance is not automatic. The facts surrounding each variance request still have to be analyzed by the BOA, but starting September 1, 2021, H.B. 1475 changes part of the analysis. Cities and their BOAs should look at their zoning rules, policies, documentation, and electronic or printed materials to make sure they are updated to reflect this change in state law and be ready for new arguments from zoning applicants in the fall.

Post-Session Update: Eminent Domain Reporting

Legislation passed in 2015 requires cities to annually fill out a [web-based form](#) with the comptroller relating to each city’s statutory eminent domain authority. The three-month reporting period begins November 1 and ends February 1 the following year. (The failure to fill out the form could result in a \$1,000 per day penalty against a city.)

For most cities the report should simply be an update of previously-filed information, including whether the city exercised its eminent domain authority in the preceding calendar year by filing a condemnation petition under Section 21.012, Property Code.

[S.B. 157](#), which will be in effect for the upcoming reporting period, amended the reporting requirements for cities with populations under 25,000. For those cities, an annual report must be filed only if the city’s eminent domain authority information has changed from the previous year.

If the city’s eminent domain authority information has not changed from a previous year’s filing, the city must only confirm the accuracy of the previously-filed information by the February 1st deadline.

A city that never filled out the required form should do so now. City officials with questions about the new requirements can also contact the comptroller’s transparency team by email at transparency@cpa.texas.gov or (844) 519-5676.

General Land Office Opens Applications for Local Hazard Mitigation Plans

As a part of the state action plan for [Community Development Block Grant Mitigation](#) (CDBG-MIT) funding, applications for the Local Hazard Mitigation Plans Program (LHMPP) opened on July 28, 2021. [Eligible entities](#) can now apply for grants to develop or update local hazard mitigation plans, or to provide cost share for hazard mitigation planning activities funded through other federal sources. These CDBG-MIT funds are administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and implemented through the Texas General Land Office. Grant awards will range from \$20,000 to \$100,000. Applications will be processed for eligibility on a first come, first served basis until July 2027 or until funding is exhausted, whichever is first.

More information on the program can be found [here](#).

ARPA and Cybersecurity Challenges: Government Technology Hosts Webinar

[Government Technology](#) will host a free webinar titled “ARPA for Texas Counties & Cities: Your Community’s Future” on August 26. The webinar will focus on using the American Recovery Plan Act funds to tackle critical connectivity needs, cybersecurity challenges, and the digital divide. The conversation will provide insight on how to use stimulus funds to expand broadband programs and reduce barriers to access and to strengthen cybersecurity protections for local government infrastructure and information. Registration and more information can be found [here](#).

COVID-19 Update (No. 199)

All pandemic-related updates, including information about the American Rescue Plan's city-related provisions, will be in the [Legislative Update Newsletter](#) from now on.

- **Mask Mandate Update: Legal Battles Over Local Control**

- **Texas Supreme Court Action:** In last week's COVID-19 Update, we reported that district court judges in Dallas and Bexar counties issued temporary restraining orders ("TROs") temporarily blocking enforcement of mask mandates in [Governor Abbott's most recent Executive Order](#). On Friday, the attorney general filed petitions for writs of mandamus with the Texas Supreme Court requesting that the Court block the effect of the two TROs. You can find those petitions [here](#) and [here](#). On Saturday, the Supreme Court ordered all proceedings in both cases [stayed](#), which blocks the effect of the TROs, pending full hearings on the merits of the cases in the trial courts.

Further Proceedings: Bexar County

On Monday, ruling again in favor of local control, the trial court in Bexar County granted Bexar County and the City of San Antonio a temporary injunction against the governor's executive order. That decision has been appealed, and a trial of the case has been set for December 13, 2021.

Further Proceedings: Dallas County

The case in Dallas County is open and set for a hearing on the temporary injunction on August 24.

- **Travis County:** On the same day the Supreme Court issued stays of the Dallas and Bexar County TROs, a district court in Travis County issued three additional TROs blocking the governor's anti-masking order. On Tuesday, the attorney general filed a [petition for a writ of mandamus](#) in the Texas Supreme Court seeking to stay these additional TROs. As of the printing of this article, the Supreme Court had not taken any action.
 - **School Districts:** Additionally, a number of large school districts ("ISDs") across the state, including [Dallas ISD](#), [Houston ISD](#), [Austin ISD](#), [Fort Worth ISD](#), and [San Antonio ISD](#), are requiring masks on school property. The Paris Independent School District has taken the approach of [modifying the district dress code](#) to require masks rather than adopting a stand-alone policy. The list of ISDs across the state implementing masking requirements changes almost daily, but there are news outlets attempting to [compile the information](#).
- **Counties Across Texas Seeing Rise in COVID-19 Threat Levels:** Over the last few weeks, we have reported on the rise in COVID-19 threat levels in counties and cities across the state. Data indicates that the current surge of cases across the state could surpass previous records. As this rise continues, Travis, Harris, Dallas, and Williamson counties,

among others, are back at the highest threat levels as the Delta variant spreads across the state and [ICU bed availability drops](#). Please stay safe out there.

- **American Rescue Plan Act Funds ACT NOW!**: The state of Texas received the first tranche of ARPA funds from the U.S. Treasury this week. “Non-entitlement units of local government” (NEUs are generally cities under 50,000 population) must register with the [Texas Division of Emergency Management](#) (“TDEM”) to receive ARPA funds. TDEM recently updated its [Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund FAQ](#). NEUs should pay special attention to *Question 13: How does my NEU receive funding?* The answer includes a link to the [CLFRF Timeline Check-in document](#) with step-by-step instructions on registering your city with the [TDEM Grant Management System](#), which is a critical step to receiving funds.

TDEM has reported that approximately 2/3 of eligible entities have completed certification, leaving nearly one third of NEUs unregistered. If your city does not register, your city risks losing this funding. Even though TDEM indicated that August 2, 2021 was a deadline to register with the GMS system, if your city missed that deadline but still wants to participate in the funding, register with GMS ASAP.

- **ARPA FAQs**: The U.S. Treasury Department’s Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds FAQ contains a number of questions and answers related to eligibility for recovery funds and eligible uses of recovery funds. The entire FAQ can be accessed [here](#).

The National League of Cities also maintains an ARPA-related FAQ which can be found [here](#).

- **Rental Assistance Call to Action**: The federal Consumer Finance Protection Bureau (CFPB) has put out a Call to Action to raise awareness about federal rental assistance programs. Among other things, the CFPB has developed a new [Rental Assistance Look Up Tool](#) that allows renters to find information on rental assistance in their area as well as [sample messages and graphics](#) that could be used by interested entities looking to spread the word. Please visit the [CFPB’s housing assistance page](#) for more information.
- **Open Meetings Act Reminder**: In March 2020, as Texans worked to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, Governor Abbott’s office granted the attorney general’s request to suspend certain open-meeting statutes. The temporary suspension allows, among other things, for telephonic or videoconference meetings of governmental bodies that are accessible to the public in an effort to reduce in-person meetings that assemble large groups of people.

On June 30, 2021, [the governor’s office approved a request by the attorney general to lift those suspensions](#). The suspensions will lift at 12:01 a.m. on September 1, 2021. Thus, as of September 1, 2021, all provisions of the Open Meetings Act will be effective and all Texas governmental bodies subject to the Open Meetings Act must conduct their meetings in full compliance with the Open Meetings Act as written in state law.

This could change, given the rising numbers of COVID-19 cases across the state, but as of now, plan for the September 1 expiration.

Reminder: TML Coronavirus materials are archived by date [here](#) and by subject [here](#).

City-Related Bills Filed

Property Tax

2H.B. 157 (Allison) – Appraisal Cap and Homestead Exemption: would, among other things: (1) establish a five percent appraisal cap on all residential real property; (2) generally provide that if an individual qualifies property as the individual's residence homestead for at least 25 consecutive tax years, a taxing unit may not impose taxes on that residence homestead in a subsequent tax year in an amount that exceeds the lesser of: (a) the amount of taxes calculated for the taxing unit for the current tax year; or (b) the amount of taxes imposed by the taxing unit for the 25th tax year; and (3) provide that an individual who purchases property and qualifies the property as the individual's residence homestead is entitled to a property tax exemption of the total appraised value of the property for the first tax year the individual qualifies the property as the individual's residence homestead if the property: (a) is the first property the individual has ever qualified as the individual's residence homestead; and (b) has an appraised value of less than \$300,000 for the first tax year. (See **2H.J.R. 20**, below.)

2H.B. 158 (Allison) – Property Tax Commission: would: (1) create the Commission to Study Measures to Limit or Reduce Ad Valorem Taxes; and (2) provide that the commission shall conduct a study of the desirability, feasibility, and effects of various measures to limit or reduce the burden of property taxes on property owners, including: (a) limiting the appraised value of real property for property tax purposes to the value when the owner acquired the property and determining that value on the basis of the purchase price of the property, if applicable; (b) lowering the limitation in current law on annual increases in the appraised value of residence homesteads or expanding the applicability of the limitation to include a broader class of real property, such as residential real property generally; (c) providing for additional exemptions from property taxation of all or part of the appraised value of certain classes of property, including homes purchased by first-time homebuyers; (d) limiting the total amount of property taxes that a taxing unit may impose on property that an individual has owned for a specified period; and (e) increasing the state's share of the cost of funding public education.

2H.B. 160 (P. King) – Property Tax Appraisal: would repeal the additional property taxes imposed as a result of the sale or change in the use of land appraised as agricultural land, timber land, recreational, park, and scenic land, and public access airport property. (See **2H.J.R. 21**, below.)

2H.B. 161 (Cook) – Property Tax Appraisal: would provide that: (1) if the appraised value of a residence homestead in a tax year is lowered as a result of an agreement between the property owner and the appraisal district or as a result of a protest or appeal, the appraised value of the property as specified in the agreement or as finally determined in the protest or appeal is considered

to be the appraised value of the property for that tax year; and (2) if the appraised value of property in a tax year is lowered under the circumstances described in (1), above, the chief appraiser generally may not increase the appraised value of the property in the next tax year in which the property is appraised by an amount that exceeds the lesser of: (a) the market value of the property for the tax year; or (b) the sum of the appraised value of the property in the tax year in which the appraised value of the property is lowered and the market value of all new improvements to the property.

2H.B. 162 (Capriglione) – **Appraisal Cap**: would: (1) would reduce the property tax appraisal cap on residence homesteads from ten to five percent; and (2) impose a ten percent appraisal cap on the appraised value of a single-family residence other than a residence homestead. (See **2H.J.R. 22**, below.)

2H.J.R. 20 (Allison) – **Appraisal Cap and Homestead Exemption**: would amend the Texas Constitution to, among other things: (1) establish a five percent appraisal cap on all residential real property; (2) generally provide that if an individual qualifies property as the individual's residence homestead for at least 25 consecutive tax years, a taxing unit may not impose taxes on that residence homestead in a subsequent tax year in an amount that exceeds the lesser of: (a) the amount of taxes calculated for the taxing unit for the current tax year; or (b) the amount of taxes imposed by the taxing unit for the 25th tax year; and (3) provide that an individual who purchases property and qualifies the property as the individual's residence homestead is entitled to a property tax exemption of the total appraised value of the property for the first tax year the individual qualifies the property as the individual's residence homestead if the property: (a) is the first property the individual has ever qualified as the individual's residence homestead; and (b) has an appraised value of less than \$300,000 for the first tax year. (See **2H.B. 157**, above.)

2H.J.R. 21 (P. King) – **Property Tax Appraisal**: would amend the Texas Constitution to repeal the additional property taxes imposed as a result of the sale or change in the use of land appraised as agricultural land, timber land, recreational, park, and scenic land, and public access airport property. (See **2H.B. 160**, above.)

2H.J.R. 22 (Capriglione) – **Appraisal Cap**: would amend the Texas Constitution to authorize the legislature to: (1) reduce the property tax appraisal cap on residence homesteads from ten to five percent; and (2) impose a ten percent appraisal cap on the appraised value of a single-family residence other than a residence homestead. (See **2H.B. 162**, above.)

Public Safety

2H.B. 180 (White) – **Law Enforcement Grants**: would require the governor's criminal justice division to establish and administer a grant program to provide financial assistance to law enforcement agencies for purposes of equipping all motor vehicles used by officers of the agency in discharging the officers' official duties with bullet-resistant windshields.

Elections

2H.B. 156 (Patterson) – **Polling Place**: would provide that the prohibition against carrying a handgun at a polling place does not apply to a person who carries a handgun if the person is: (1) licensed to carry a handgun; and (2) engaged in the performance of the person’s duties as a presiding judge or alternate judge while early voting is in progress or on election day.

Open Government

2S.B. 79 (Hall) – **Anonymized Ballots**: would: (1) provide that a cast ballot that contains no specific individual voter identifying information is public information under the Public Information Act; (2) authorize the redaction of any individual voter identifying information contained on a cast ballot prior to a cast ballot being made available for inspection or copying; and (3) authorize a governmental body, in responding to a request under the Public Information Act, for portions of a ballot cast in a precinct containing five or fewer registered voters as of the date of the election, to take reasonable measures to ensure the release of the records does not have the effect of disclosing the votes taken by the voters in that precinct, including redacting precinct identifying information, modifying the request to include portions of ballots from additional precincts and aggregating responsive records from multiple precincts. (Companion bill is **2H.B. 131** by Swanson.)

Personnel

2H.B. 182 (Noble) – **Vaccination Discrimination**: would, among other things: (1) require an employer, labor organization, or employment agency to allow an individual to claim an exemption from a required COVID-19 vaccination based on a medical condition or reasons of conscience, including a religious belief; (2) provide that an employer commits an unlawful employment practice if the employer fails or refuses to hire, discharges, or otherwise discriminates against an individual with respect to the compensation or the terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because the individual claims an exemption described by (1), above; and (3) provide that an employee claiming an exemption from a required COVID-19 vaccination must complete and provide the employee’s employer an affidavit on a form developed by the Texas Workforce Commission stating the reason for the exemption. (Companion bill is **2S.B. 80** by Paxton.)

2S.B. 80 (Paxton) – **Vaccination Discrimination**: would, among other things: (1) require an employer, labor organization, or employment agency to allow an individual to claim an exemption from a required COVID-19 vaccination based on a medical condition or reasons of conscience, including a religious belief; (2) provide that an employer commits an unlawful employment practice if the employer fails or refuses to hire, discharges, or otherwise discriminates against an individual with respect to the compensation or the terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because the individual claims an exemption described by (1), above; and (3) provide that an employee claiming an exemption from a required COVID-19 vaccination must complete and provide the employee’s employer an affidavit on a form developed by the Texas Workforce Commission stating the reason for the exemption. (Companion bill is **2H.B. 182** by Noble.)

Utilities and Environment

2H.B. 181 (Huberty) – **Utility Reliability Funding:** would, among other things: (1) require the comptroller and State Energy Conservation Office to establish and administer a program that issues or guarantees loans to be used for improvements that increase the energy efficiency of an promote conservation of natural gas and water by residences and businesses that are not newly constructed; (2) establish the state utilities reliability fund in the state treasury to be used by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to: (a) enhance the reliability and resiliency of water, electric, and natural gas utilities, broadband providers, and power generation companies by supporting projects, including projects to weatherize facilities and reduce demand, in order to provide resilience and continuous service during periods of high demand; (b) pay the necessary and reasonable expenses of TWDB in administering the fund; and (c) transfer funds to other TWDB programs or funds; and (3) establish the state utilities reliability revenue fund in the state treasury to be used by TWDB to provide financial assistance for projects that enhance the reliability and resiliency of water, electric, natural gas, broadband, and power generation facilities, including: (a) projects that enhance the ability of facilities to withstand periods of high demand; (b) projects that reduce demand during periods of high demand; and (c) projects to weatherize facilities.

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