**July 14th Special Council Meeting**

*Submitted by Councilmember Debra Hines and approved by Mayor Jeff Rasco*

**Oak Wilt Workshop:**

Presenter, Karl Flocke, from Texas A&M Forest Service

Oak Wilt is a fungus that negatively affects the vascular system of oaks and it can impact healthy trees. The tree responds to the infection by plugging up the water system and thus dies by dehydration. All oaks are susceptible, but some experience a more significant impact. Oak Wilt is fatal to Red Oaks and they create the spore mat that can spread the disease to other trees. Live Oaks have some resistance, but due to their interconnected root systems they experience significant impact in large clusters. Live Oaks do not always die from the disease, but once infected they will fail to thrive.

There are two main ways Oak Wilt spreads: through interconnected root systems or through beetles that are attracted to the sweet scents coming from spore mats on Red Oaks and from live cuts on other trees. The beetles land on the fungus, get it on their bodies and then land on live cuts, thus transferring the fungus to healthy trees. This method of transfer is why it is necessary to spray all live cuts year-round with spray paint and it is important to NOT trim Oak trees between February through June as these are the times when both the beetles and fungal spore mats are most active.

There is NO cure for Oak Wilt, but there are relatively successful methods for containment and to help ward off contracting Oak Wilt if it is nearby. These methods are most effective as preventative measures and when used early on for trees prior to significant spread of the disease. It is important for residents to remove all diseased Red Oak wood as it can harbor the spore mat that attracts beetles, it is important not to keep firewood from diseased trees and to only purchase seasoned wood if buying from an outside source.

Please be vigilant about reporting Oak Wilt. As its symptoms can mimic drought, it is important that an Oak Wilt specialist take a sample and test to confirm Oak Wilt. The best months to do this are in late fall, as summer heat can result in a false negative. There are brochures at City Hall with more information and you can watch the workshop to learn more about identifying the symptoms of Oak Wilt or check out the Texas A&M Forest Service website. Oak wilt spreads quickly, advancing 50-75 feet per year, and it is already present in Woodcreek. The loss of mature trees can bring down the value of a property by an estimated 15-20%.

**Consent Agenda:**

Item 1 was moved to the Regular Agenda for discussion as requested by Councilmember Grummert and approved by Mayor Rasco.

Items 2 & 3 were unanimously approved by all present.

**Regular Agenda:**

Item 1: Minutes from the May 25th Council Meeting (moved from the consent agenda) Councilmember Grummert inquired as to what, if any, response was received by Jennifer O’Kane on the tax impacts of the proposed homestead exemption as mentioned in the minutes. City Staff replied that no response was ever received. Councilmember Hines asked about why this section was highlighted in the minutes. It was a simple editing oversight and held no significance.

Item 4: Finding solutions for Oak Wilt in Woodcreek. The discussion resulted in action taken to request that the Tree Board consider the following items and make recommendations for any necessary actions back to Council. These items include: Consider contracting with an arborist and writing code into ordinance for a position of City Arborist, Oak Wilt map updated with active cases, added incentives for residents to address Oak Wilt, educational mailers, and to consider other recommendations as they come up for the Tree Board as part of a comprehensive plan to address Oak Wilt. Councilmember Hines noted several actions Council has already taken to address this concern such as reinstating a stricter Tree Ordinance December 2021, creating an Oak Wilt specific page on the City website, directing staff to purchase and post signs for the months in with trimming oak trees is prohibited, creating a Tree Board, planning an Arbor Day event, and the creation of a proposed update to the Tree Ordinance with stronger regulations and an assistance program for residents impacted by Oak Wilt. This new Tree ordinance is currently in review and process between the Tree Board and City Council.

Item 5: Resignation of Judy Brizendine from Woodcreek City Council was unanimously accepted by all those present. Dr. Joseph Kotarba, current Chairperson of Planning and Zoning, was recommended by Mayor Rasco and unanimously approved by all those present on Council to serve the remainder of Mrs. Brizendine’s term. Dr. Kotarba is a Ph.D. who has been volunteering for the City since 2014 and continues to work as a University professor. He came highly recommended by the Mayor and his years of city service speak for themselves.

Item 6: Adding Alternates to the Parks & Recreation Board was tabled until the next Council meeting so that a full ordinance could be drafted. Mayor Rasco noted that the Parks Board was the only City group that lacked alternates and it would be beneficial for the Board to have them. Councilmember Grummert noted that the appointment of the Board could be brought into alignment with the other panels, commissions, and committees. Councilmember Hines noted that the placement of the Parks Board code could be moved to Chapter 30 with related items. Councilmembers Grummert and Hines will draft the ordinance to make these changes and present to Council in the next meeting.

Item 7: Appointing members to the Ordinance Review Committee resulted in Randy Renter and Donna Hector appointed as full members and Steve Passalacqua was named alternate. All votes were unanimous by those present.

Item 8: Appointing members to the Platinum Panel removed by Mayor Rasco.

Item 9: Report by Mayor Pro Tem LeBrun on the Platinum Panel was provided. Details can be found in the agenda packet on page 49 here: <https://mccmeetings.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/woodcreek-pubu/MEET-Packet-221c850604494f609f249760c6d9de21.pdf> It was determined that Chairperson Bailey of the Panel had new financial information to share with the Panel and that some of their recommendations might change after the next meeting of the Platinum Panel to be held Thursday, July 21st 2022. The packet for that meeting can be found here: <https://mccmeetings.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/woodcreek-pubu/MEET-Packet-01dbb2fc8b164411a34631cfbf5b248b.pdf> Panel member Cody Abney was present at the Council meeting and spoke to the benefits of a method the City of San Marcos uses as described by fellow Panel member Green to create a long-term road improvement and maintenance plan by dividing the City into quadrants and having scheduled repairs planned years in advance. Officials continue to advance towards the goal of a “master plan” to fund road improvements and maintenance for the City of Woodcreek. Mayor Pro Tem LeBrun noted that the soonest Bond Election time that could be considered is May 2023. No action was taken.

Item 10: Parks Board items from the June 1st meeting included approving the Spooktacular event location, time, and budget. Council unanimously approved the Spooktacular event to be held on Sunday, October 30th 2022 at Quicksand Golf Course from 4:30 – 7PM with a budget of $1000. The Creekside Park name was already approved at a previous meeting, and so no further action was needed on that portion of the agenda.

Parks Board Chair Pat Rawlings was recognized for his winning entry for the Safe Driving Woodcreek Sticker Contest, and Mayor Rasco thanked Mayor Pro Tem Aurora LeBrun for providing a gift card as the prize. The stickers and information about the program should be distributed soon.

Item 11: Parks Board LCRA grant proposal to repair Memorial Park and make the Augusta Park Bocci Ball Court ADA compliant passed unanimously. The Parks Board can now move forward with that application. Mayor Rasco noted that all grant application matches need to be planned for in the upcoming budget process as a reminder to liaisons that they need to keep this in mind when helping to coordinate budget requests.

Item 12: Creation of Wildlife Habitats in Woodcreek passed unanimously. It has been recommended that the Parks Board research and consider the creation of wildlife habitats in existing Woodcreek parks. An example would be a butterfly garden. Councilmember Grummert spoke to the educational and interactive benefit of such areas for the community.

Item 13: Setting time and place for regular Council meetings resulted in a small edit to Resolution 2021-12-22-1 to state that Regular Council Meetings can be held at either City Hall or Camp Young Judea as stated in the public notice. There was no change made to the time of the Regular meetings. Some discussion was held about concerns over the length of the meetings by Councilmember Pulley and the late hour at which they conclude. Councilmember Hines suggested that other solutions could be found to help reduce this concern and that Councilmembers can help to anticipate this issue by working with Mayor Rasco closely on the agenda and being flexible about items being bumped to the next meeting as needed. Councilmember Grummert stressed the importance of the public approval response to the time of the meetings being later in the evening allowing for more accessibility for a greater number of residents.

Item 14: Report on Traffic Enforcement Activities by Councilmember Pulley showed an efficient and effective system for traffic enforcement in Woodcreek as part of the larger plan to help promote safety in Woodcreek. The citizen committee working with Councilmember Pulley to coordinate with Hays County officers have done an excellent job of keeping records and leading this effort. Enforcing the law is only one component in promoting safe driving in our community. It takes everyone being aware and involved while driving to reduce speeds and keep our neighbors safe.

Item 15: Setting the date for the first budget workshop for fiscal year 2022-23 occurred. It will be held, Monday July 25th at 2pm at City Hall. Please plan to attend, view, and/or provide public comments. Mayor Rasco gave a brief overview of expected end-of-year expenses and revenue. The City is set to end the year with a surplus of over $200,000 in un-spent budget funds. Councilmember Hines confirmed that the homestead exemption for 65+ or disabled was enacted by the City in time for the deadline. Mayor Rasco gave the reminder that this would take effect for citizens the following year. Please remember that this is something you need to apply for if interested. Some discussion was held about the POSAC grant that is pending with the County and it was stated that Commissioner Lon Shell is intending to help the City reach the full goal amount requested.

Item 16: Executive Session concerning real property in the City of Woodcreek. No action was taken and no further discussion on the item occurred outside of the executive session.