

**HOUSTON
CITY
COUNCIL
DISTRICT
G**



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District G

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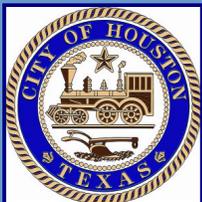
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News From District G

May-June 2012

To The Residents of District G:

City Council Approves Audit of City Departments, Pension Systems and Health Care Benefit Systems

On June 20, the Mayor and City Council approved the Fiscal Year 2013 budget for the City of Houston. During the 8 hour debate, council members discussed 105 amendments offered by various members. One of Council Member Pennington's amendments which was approved by the Council requires an independent private firm or firms to review and audit the City's pension systems, health care benefits system, and all City departments as soon as possible. Council Members Costello and Brown offered amendments similar to Council Member Pennington's. The three related amendments were ultimately combined into one and approved by Council.

Last year, Council Member Pennington was one of the co-authors of the amendment creating the Long Range Financial Management Task Force. This volunteer task force held many public meetings and spent several months discussing ideas before presenting a report to the Administration offering a broad range of options to reduce costs and possibly to raise revenue. One of the major findings of the report was that over the next twenty years, pension costs will increase from 9% of the general fund budget to 12.24%; that healthcare benefit costs will increase from 8.2% to 16.26%; and that personnel salaries will decrease from 41.34% to 26.58% of the budget as the result of those and other increases.

These conclusions mandate that City leaders take action to better control the increasing expenses to keep money available to pay the current work force. One of the ideas offered in the Long Range Financial Management Task Force report was to have independent audits performed on City departments and programs, including our pension and health benefits programs. Council Member Pennington's amendment requires these audits. Hopefully after these audits are performed, the Administration and Council will receive information along with a wide-range of recommendations on how to make the city perform more efficiently with its limited resources.

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Out and About in District G



During the last couple of months, Council Member Pennington was busy attending City Council Meetings and Committee Meetings. In addition, Council Member Pennington and/or District G staff attended the following meetings/events outside the office:

- Meeting with Houston Parks Board
- Meeting with Houston Municipal Employees Pension System
- HPD Central Division Positive Interaction Program
- Meeting with and Tour of the Houston Ballet
- Meeting with Midwest HPD Captain Evans
- Rebuild Houston Oversight Committee Meetings
- Briarbend Homeowners' Association Annual Meeting
- Eldridge/West Oaks Super Neighborhood
- Houston Realty Business Coalition Breakfast
- State of the City Luncheon
- Briar Forest Super Neighborhood
- Houston-Galveston Area Council Budget and Board of Directors Meetings
- HPD Midwest Positive Interaction Program
- HPD Westside Positive Interaction Program
- Houston West Chamber of Commerce GAC Annual Luncheon
- International Festival Eternal Tango Demonstration
- Broad Oaks Area Civic Association Annual Meeting
- Feeding Ordinance Townhall Meeting
- Memorial Super Neighborhood
- Making it Better Donor Appreciation Event
- Sino-US Petroleum Industry Forum
- West Lane Place Civic Association Annual Meeting
- Houston Arts Foundation Ceremony
- Boys & Girls Club Great Futures Dinner
- Art Car Parade
- Charnwood NSR Meeting
- Storm Water Enhanced Evaluation Tool Demonstration
- Meeting with Representatives of Memorial Thicket re: 15375 Memorial
- Greater Houston Builders' Association Mid-Year Forecast Luncheon
- Meeting with the Energy Corridor
- Preconstruction Meeting for N. Eldridge Parkway Reconstruction
- Proclamation Presentation to Students at Holy Spirit School
- Chapter 42 Presentation from Weekley Homes
- Briarhills Neighborhood Traffic Management Program Public Meeting
- Bunker Hill Area Flooding Solutions Workshop

If you wish Council Member Pennington to attend your HOA/POA/Civic Club meeting, please contact our office at: Districtg@houstontx.gov.

Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Approved

On June 20, Houston City Council approved the FY2013 budget.

Below are a few of the highlights:

- NO TAX INCREASES (remains at 63.875 cents/\$100 value)
- No service cuts or layoffs (swimming pools, community centers, health clinics, libraries all will remain open as usual)
- No pension obligation bonds or other long term debt will be issued to meet current expenses
- \$4.2 billion in total citywide spending, including the self-supported Houston Airport System and Combined Utility System
- \$2.1 billion in General Fund spending (largely supported by property and sales tax revenues)
- The budget projects a 4.3 percent increase in property tax revenues and a 5.9 percent increase in sales tax revenues
- Overall spending in the General Fund is up \$110 million over last year primarily due to increased health care costs and contractual



**A LOOK
at the
BUDGET**

obligations related to pension benefits, together with rising fuel, electricity and IT costs

- \$1.1 billion in public safety spending (Fire, Houston Emergency Center, Municipal Courts, Police, Forensic Services)
- \$5 million to the Rainy Day Fund bringing it to \$10 million (reserve fund for unexpected expenses)
- \$5 million in contingent funding for the proposed independent Houston Forensics Science Center
- \$2 million in funding for the new sobering center
- Expansion of curbside, single stream recycling (green 96 gallon toter) to 30,000 additional homes
- General Fund Revenues:
 - 71.37% property and sales tax
 - 28.63% other (franchise, charges, fines, etc.)
- General Fund Expenditures:
 - 59.94% public safety
 - 5.07% administrative services

- 12.38% debt service
- 8.3% development & maintenance services
- 6.46% general government
- 7.85% human & cultural services

- Health Care (\$169,813,850):
 - Health Insurance/Active Civilian: \$37,628,050
 - Health Insurance/Retired Civilian: \$12,050,921
 - Health Insurance/Active Classified: \$104,073,877
 - Health Insurance/Retired Classified: \$16,061,002
- Pensions (\$191,614,419):
 - Police: \$84,050,000
 - Fire: \$61,475,030
 - Civilian: \$46,089,389



Revisions to Houston Code of Ordinances Chapter 47: Water Conservation

The provisions of the current water conservation ordinance were problematic during last summer's drought, when the City experienced lack of rainfall, high temperatures, an unusually high number of waterline breaks, dropping lake levels, and usage of groundwater above projections.

Ordinance issues included:

- Schedules for restricted irrigation were in some cases misunderstood
- Schedules for restricted irrigation resulted in peak demands on the water system
- While not required during the course of the 2011 drought, further measures appeared to be ineffective or ambiguous

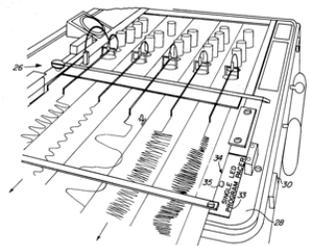
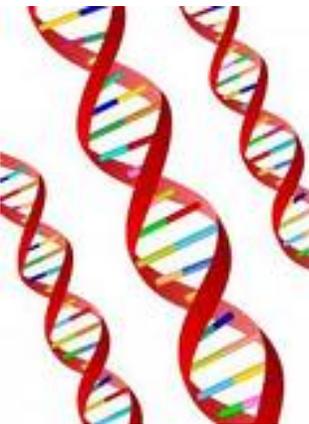
Proposed revisions to this Ordinance provide a more effective frame of temporary measures to manage a water shortage situation to include specific prohibitions, restrictions, encouraged actions and enforcement that address immediate, short and mid-term needs for water supply based on the demands of the existing population. Particular emphasis is placed on reductions in demand to ensure that existing water supply sources are sufficient to meet essential needs.

To read the proposed new ordinance, visit: http://documents.publicworks.houstontx.gov/documents/divisions/utilities/47_7cleandraft11.pdf

To read the current ordinance, visit: http://documents.publicworks.houstontx.gov/documents/divisions/utilities/municode_chapter_47_water_shortages.pdf



Council Approves a New Independent Crime Lab



Houston City Council recently approved the creation of the Forensic Science Local Government Corporation (LGC) and confirmed the nine-member Board of Directors to oversee the LGC.

The LGC's board of directors will set policy for the new crime lab, balance the interests of the public and law enforcement with the rights of the accused, and help ensure the integrity of operation and sound financial management. Although there will not be any immediate change, the creation of this new LGC is the first step in moving the crime lab outside of HPD and placing it under independent civilian control.

The LGC board's first tasks will include:

- Scheduling an organizational meeting (**accomplished**)
- Approving bylaws (**accomplished**)
- Learning about open meetings and public information laws
- Developing goals for the next 60 days and determining a tentative schedule for future meetings
- Meeting with the current crime lab director and touring the lab

The chair of the nine-member board is District 137 Texas State Representative **Scott Hochberg** (pictured below):



The rest of the panel is comprised of the following:

Enrique V. Barrera, Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science, Rice University

Willie E. B. Blackmon, retired Judge Advocate, United States Air Force

Nicole B. Ca'sarez, Professor, Communication Department, University of St. Thomas

Donna Fujimoto Cole, Founder, Cole Chemical and Distributing, Inc.

Art Contreras, retired United States Marshal, Southern District of Texas

Marcia Johnson, Professor, Thurgood Marshall School of Law

Catherine Lamboley, retired, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Shell Oil Company

Sandra Guerra Thompson, Professor, University of Houston Law Center

The crime lab is responsible for such services as identification of controlled substances, DNA testing, serology, firearms & ballistics, toxicology, fingerprint identification, photo lab, polygraph unit, examining questioned documents, etc.

The plan approved by City Council does not preclude future expansion of the LGC to accommodate Harris County's participation. Mayor Parker says that talks with the county will continue.

City Council Approves Creation of a Sobering Center

Council recently approved the establishment of a sobering center and the expenditure of \$2,000,000 to build out such a facility. The new center will be an alternative to jail for people detained simply for public intoxication, allowing the opportunity to regain sobriety in a safe, medically-monitored environment. The center is slated to free up jail space for more serious offenders and streamline and reduce processing times. The new center is also expected to significantly cut the time Police Officers spend processing paperwork for such cases, and return them to the streets quicker.

Ultimately, it is anticipated that the center will result in savings in jail operations (the city's annual cost to maintain and staff the new center is estimated to be \$1.5 million, whereas the City is currently spending \$4-6 million a year to process public intoxication cases at the city jail).

The new center will operate out of an existing two-story building located behind the Star of

Hope Men's Development Center on Ruiz Street in north downtown. Council also approved including the Houston Police Department's Mental Health Unit in the same building, bringing together staff dispersed throughout the city into one location.

Those who choose the Sobering Center will be observed and given necessary outpatient services to manage various intoxication levels. Once sober, detainees will meet with recovery specialists and Star of Hope referral staff who will offer opportunities for long-term treatment with appropriate social service agencies. In addition, HPD, Houston Department of Health and Human Services, and the Houston Fire Department will provide city services at the site.

A 501(c)(3) foundation will also be created to aid in future fundraising for operations and possible future expansion.



Do You Know Your Hurricane Threat? Check the Storm Risk Calculator

Following hurricanes Rita and Ike, the City of Houston and Rice University developed the Storm Risk Calculator to help Houston residents have a better understanding of the threat they might face from the various effects of hurricanes and tropical storms. The calculator is aimed at helping Houstonians make informed decisions about evacuating prior to or after a hurricane.

The calculator shows threat levels throughout the city in an easy-to-understand, color-coded map. Put in a Houston address at <http://risk.rtsnets.com> and find out your risk level for:

- Flooding from rainfall
- Power outages
- Storm surge
- Wind damage

This hurricane season, Houstonians are encouraged to develop their emergency plans based on the threats for the area in which they live. Only those residents who live in an area with a risk of storm surge should plan to evacuate before a storm. Those with no risk of storm surge are

encouraged to plan to shelter-in-place during a hurricane or tropical storm impact, and evacuate after if necessary (run from the water, hide from the wind).

For more information on how to develop an emergency plan, visit the Office of Emergency Management website at www.houstonoem.net as well as www.readyhouston.tx.gov



UPDATE: District G Construction Projects



N-000795

North Eldridge Parkway Paving and Drainage (from Memorial to I-10)

This project provides for the design and construction of a six-lane divided concrete roadway with storm drainage, curbs, sidewalks, driveways, street lighting, traffic control, and necessary underground utilities. Project will add capacity with an additional lane in the existing right-of-way.

- Update: Construction began on June 4, 2012. Substantial Completion is expected by December 1, 2012. During the pendency of this project, expect MAJOR TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND DELAYS. We have received a number of complaints about the timing of the traffic lights, have forwarded those to the project manager, and the timing has been adjusted to provide the best possible cycling of traffic through the Eldridge/Memorial intersection.

N-001037-0065-4

Rehabilitation Project Dairy Ashford Road (from Westheimer Road to Buffalo Bayou)

This project consists of targeted concrete panel replacement, base repair, pavement markings, and the repair and improvement of curbs and accessible ramps.

- Update: The construction contract with Total Contracting Limited was approved by City Council on June 20, 2012 (total = \$1,657,816.57). Once it begins, the contract duration will be 180 days.

N-000780

Hayes Street Paving and Drainage (Sub-Project II = Briar Forest to Wilcrest)

This project includes right-of-way acquisition, design and construction of four-lane undivided concrete roadway with storm drainage, curbs, gutter, sidewalks, street lighting, improved drainage storm sewer system on Hayes Road and Wilcrest Drive and upgraded necessary underground utilities.

- Update: the Construction Contract with Triple B Services L.L.P. was approved by City Council on June 13 (total = \$6,720,300.00). Once it begins, the contract duration will be 400 days.

S-000035-0125-4

Water Line Replacement in Shadywood Area

This project consists of the construction of new water lines in several neighborhoods.

- Update: The pre-construction meeting was held June 26. Construction is scheduled to commence on July 9, 2012, and end by February 14, 2013.

S-000035-0184-3 & S-000035-0185-3

Water Line Replacement in Sherwood Forest & Kickerillo Areas

This project consists of the construction of new water lines in several neighborhoods.

- Update: The Technical Review Committee Meeting was held on July 3, 2012.

F-000770

Briar Meadow Park

This project consists of the demolition of the playground, tennis courts and walkway; the construction of a new concrete sidewalk, a concrete plaza, a decomposed granite trail, new tennis courts, and a new playground, as well as the overlay of the existing parking lot, new entry fencing, new picnic shelter, site furniture, site grading and drainage, irrigation and tree planting. While this project has moved to District F effective on January 1, 2012, many former District G constituents are interested in this project.

- Update: The construction contract with Times Construction, Inc. and the allocation of \$891,336 in funding were approved by City Council on July 3. Once it begins, the contract duration will be 150 days.

M-000126-0071-4

Local Drainage Project in Briar Grove Park (Drainage Improvements)

This project to resolve existing localized storm water drainage problems due to insufficient pipe capacity along Briar Drive; drainage improvements consist of the installation of approximately 1522 feet of 24-inch concrete pipe and 873 feet of 36-inch concrete pipe, pavement repair and site restoration.

- Update: The construction contract with Metro City Construction, L.P. was approved by City Council on June 20. Once it begins, the contract duration will be 180 days.

M-000126-0074-4

Local Drainage Project in Briar Grove Park (Outfall Improvements)

This project to repair a cave-in, institute erosion control measures, and improve the outfall to Buffalo Bayou; includes the construction of 93 feet of 24-inch pipe; the removal of 12 feet of 4-inch PVC and 4 feet of 21-inch pipe at the existing manhole; the connection of an existing 18 feet of 4-inch PVC pipe into the existing manhole; the removal and replacement of a wrought iron fence and gate; the placement of over 2,000 cubic yards of embankment backfill; the placement of 850 square yards of rip rap at the outfall; site grading and site restoration.

- Update: the project commenced April 23 and was scheduled for completion on June 22.



UPDATE: Harris County Flood Control District W-129— Bridge Construction Delayed Until Fall 2012

As our area constituents are hopefully now well aware, Bridges at San Felipe Street and Westheimer Road that cross a drainage ditch formally identified as W129-00-00 are expected to be completely or partially closed temporarily to facilitate the construction of new bridges to replace the 50+ year old wooden bridges where Westheimer and San Felipe cross the drainage ditch.

The work at Westheimer is expected to begin in the fall of 2012 and the work at San Felipe is expected to begin in the spring of 2013. As soon as we learn a more specific date, we will provide another update. These dates are subject to change.



The two bridges will be reconstructed as part of the Flood Control District's W129-00-00 Conveyance Improvements Project. The bridge reconstruction projects will require all lanes on the San Felipe bridge to be closed for up to two weeks and traffic flow on the Westheimer bridge to be limited to one lane in each direction for up to a month.

EXPECT MAJOR TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND DELAYS WHILE THE WESTHEIMER AND SAN FELIPE BRIDGE WORK IS ONGOING!!!

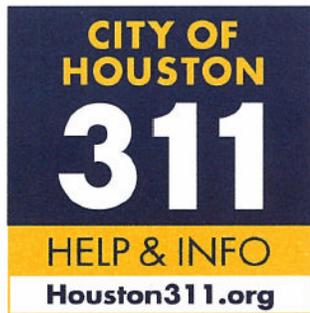
For more information about the project, visit the W129-00-00 Conveyance Improvements Project webpage at www.hcfcd.org/W129.

If you have questions or comments, please call the Flood Control District's Project and Study Information Line, which is monitored daily, at 713-684-4040.



For More Information:
www.hcfcd.org/W129

If you would like to receive periodic emails from Mayor Annise D. Parker and the City of Houston on topics of interest to you and your neighborhood, please go to <http://www.houstontx.gov> and register with CitizensNet



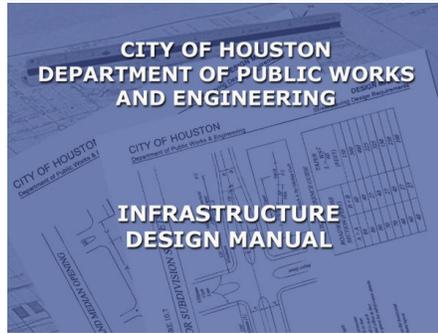
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Each year, a couple Chapters of the City's Infrastructure Design Manual ("IDM") are reviewed in great detail and revised according to new design standards and requests made by the public.

This year, the Standards Review Committee ("SRC") of the Public Works & Engineering Department will be reviewing and updating Chapter 9 (Storm Water Design Requirements) and Chapter 13 (Storm Water Quality Design Requirements) of the IDM.

Public input and participation is requested. The deadline for submitting comments is April 15, 2013. Please share this information with your flooding & drainage committees and experts as now is the time they can recommend changing the city's standards.

The SRC's draft versions of the recommendations can be found at the following link: http://documents.publicworks.houstontx.gov/document-center/cat_view/88-engineering-and-construction/181-standards-review-committee.html

The SRC is requesting all interested parties to review the recommended changes and provide comments for the final review by no later than **April 15, 2013**. After that time, the SRC will review all the final comments and authorize the City Engineer to publish the 2012-2013 version of the IDM by July 1, 2013.

The forms you need to use to submit comments can be found at: http://documents.publicworks.houstontx.gov/document-center/cat_view/88-engineering-and-construction/181-standards-review-committee.html

For additional information, please contact Rajiv Arya at (832) 394-9131 or by email: Rajiv.Arya@houstontx.gov



Automated Recycling Program Expanded

The approved FY 2013 Budget allows for the inclusion of 30,000 new residents into the City's automated, curbside, single-stream (96 gallon green toter) recycling program. If your neighborhood has City of Houston garbage service, and would like to be included in this program, please contact our office immediately.