

## City of Willcox Newsletter February 2012

### **Gas, Water, Sewer, and Solid Waste Rates**

Pat McCourt, Willcox City Manager

I hope the headline got your attention – that is what headlines are intended to do. I want to get your attention on this topic and let you know what is going on concerning the rates we all pay for Gas, Water, Sewer, and Solid Waste (garbage).

The City of Willcox operates these utilities within the City. Each of these four (4) Funds is kept separate and operates like an independent business (actually, like a Cooperative similar to SSVEC). The money to operate each of these Utilities is received from the users of the service. The City Council is the “Board of Directors” of each of these businesses and has to take steps to make sure each of these businesses is operating in a proper manner. What that means is the Council has to look at the operations each year and decide how much money will be required to operate the Business and how that amount will be generated from the users of the service.

One question that is frequently asked is: how much of the money is used to pay Police Officers? The answer is none. The City does maintain only one finance office, one administrative office, one legal, and one operational office for ALL Funds of the City; including the four utility Funds, this is much more cost efficient than establishing separate offices for each Utility. The four utilities are required to pay their share of these offices. Their share does not include Parks, Police, Fire, Library, Streets, or any other City Operational Funds.

The City Council is required by City Code to review each of the Utility Funds by April of each year and set a rate for the next Fiscal Year (the upcoming July 1 through June 30<sup>th</sup>). The review includes: how much money is on hand and available for use to pay bills and handle any emergencies which might occur; what are the estimated operating costs for the next year (personnel, electric, supplies, vehicle maintenance, etc.); what are the necessary capital costs (replacement or extension of the lines buried in the ground, construction of an updated Waste Water Treatment Plant, new wells, or new gas pressure stations); what sources of money are available (are there any grants or low cost loans to pay for the capital costs); when will the money have to be available; how much will be necessary to have the users pay; and how to distribute the cost fairly among the users.

The City Council has established a system to automatically adjust the rates to keep even with inflation. The goal is to keep the necessary rate change below inflation.

The City Council also knows that it is necessary to plan for major capital costs and avoid “rate shock” of a large disruptive rate increase.

This is a “snapshot” of what the City Council has to struggle with on these portions of the entire City Budget. The Rate hearings will be taking place in March. You are invited to attend and provide your input.

## **LIBRARY TO CLOSE FOR 10 DAYS!**

Tom Miner, Library Director

The Elsie S. Hogan Community Library is scheduled to close **Monday, Feb 27, 2012 through Wed, Mar 7, 2012**, for a very important part of the current phase of our renovation project ~ **carpet replacement** on the main floor of the Library, as well as the staff work areas and offices. We plan to reopen on Mar 8<sup>th</sup>. As one can imagine, it will require removal of a lot of shelving (368), furniture and equipment, and afterwards, reassembling and realigning everything once again. We are asking the public for their patience, cooperation, and understanding during this time as we work through this major project.

Overdue fines will be waived for all items which become due *during* this closure period, however, if fines began accruing *before* the closure, they will continue. To minimize the cost to you, the outdoor bookdrop will still be available for your use, and we will continue to collect those items daily and discharge them. We strongly encourage all patrons to return their items on time, before the closure period, and avoid any issues later. Thank you all in advance, for your patience, understanding, and cooperation. Your local Library will look so much better inside when this important task is done!

On another note, we have experienced a setback on the Espresso Coffee Bar for the Solarium, and will entertain alternative offers and suggestions, but we are moving forward working with the Master Gardeners on the Landscaping element of the Grant.

### **From the Office of the City Clerk...**

Cristina G. Whelan, CMC

### **City Council Meetings**

Monday  
Mar 5, 2012

&

Monday  
Mar 19, 2012

7:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers  
300 W. Rex Allen Drive

The following have submitted the paperwork for Candidate and whose names will appear on the Primary Ballot on Tuesday, March 13, 2012 as listed:

Earl B. Goolsby  
Elwood "Woody" Johnson  
William "Bill" Nigh

Los siguientes han sometido papeleo para Candidato y cuales nombres aparecerán en la Balota Primaria el Martes, día 13 de Marzo, 2012 según lo enumerado:

Earl B. Goolsby  
Elwood "Woody" Johnson  
William "Bill" Nigh