



Second Quarter 2023

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PHOTO CREDIT KEVIN RUSSBACH

A LETTER FROM YOUR MAYOR

Dear Fellow Citizens,

I am pleased to announce that the Town of Hickory Creek has once again received an excellent audit by Carl Deaton of Hankins, Eastup, Deaton, Tonn and Seay Accounting Firm. The town's financial statements of governmental activities and all accounting activities are audited annually to ensure compliance with standards contained in the Governmental Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. The following statements can be found in the 2022 Town of Hickory Creek Financial Statements and Accountant's Opinion:

Financial Highlights

The assets and deferred outflows of resources of the Town of Hickory Creek exceeded its liabilities and deferred inflows at September 30, 2022, by \$18,278,264. Of this amount, \$6,501,816 may be used to meet the government's ongoing obligations to citizens and creditors.

The Town's total net position increased by \$1,792,957 during the fiscal year from the results of current year operations.

As of September 30, 2022, the Town of Hickory Creek's governmental funds reported combined ending fund balances of \$10,708,279, an increase of \$519,915 in comparison with the beginning of the period. Approximately 56 percent of this total amount, \$6,054,388, is available for spending at the government's discretion (*unassigned fund balance*).

At the end of the current period, unassigned fund balance for the general fund of \$6,054,388 was 113.97 percent of total general fund expenditures

The fund balance of the Town's general fund increased by \$951,261 during the current year compared to a \$913,513 decrease in the prior year. Key factors are as follows:

Revenues increased \$571,699 or 9.72% from the previous year, primarily due to a \$457,551 increase in sales tax revenues. This was the result of a successful sales tax election that increased the local rate from 1.25% to 1.50%.

Expenditures increased \$413,718 or 8.45% from the previous year, primarily due to \$359,059 additional contracted fire costs.

The fund balance of the capital projects decreased \$674,430 during the current year primarily due \$704,506 in construction costs.

With the passage of the Denton County TRIP'22 Road Bond, Hickory Creek will be responsible for \$2.2 million on four road projects, with the County providing \$10.2 million. We are well positioned financially to meet this obligation, and we look forward to working with Denton County. Our Precinct 3 Denton County Commissioner Bobbie J. Mitchell is a tremendous partner to Hickory Creek, and I appreciate the way she represents us!

Hickory Creek's annual budget and full audit report can be found on our town website, www.hickorycreek-tx.gov > Departments & Services > Administration and Finance > Audits (or Budgets).

Town Councilman Ian Theodore and Town Administrator John Smith were recently selected to serve on the Texas Municipal League Broadband Advisory Committee. This committee will participate in weekly or bi-weekly conference/video calls during the 88th Legislative Session, where they will monitor the latest broadband development, and the committee will inform TML staff of local broadband concerns and initiatives. Please join me in congratulating these two gentlemen for being selected, and for representing our community on this important committee. Their experience with our local broadband initiative will bring valuable insight to this state-wide committee.

It's my privilege to serve as your Mayor, and I look forward to seeing you around town!

Best regards,

Lynn Clark
Mayor



HICKORY CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Get Involved! Shape the Future Direction of Hickory Creek!

The Town of Hickory Creek is currently in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan. This comprehensive plan looks 20 years ahead to establish a vision for the community. It will include the steps that are needed to make that vision a reality.

The Town would like to thank those who have already participated in previous outreach opportunities! Be sure to join us at our second Community Workshop to weigh in on the ***Town's Vision and Plan Direction***.

Learn about outreach findings before the Workshop here:



<https://www.hickorycreek-tx.gov/community/page/2023-comprehensive-plan-update>

Community Workshop #2: Plan Vision & Direction

Wednesday, June 7th, 2023 | 6– 8 PM | Town Hall

Don't miss your last opportunity to share your vision! Participate in engagement activities to provide feedback on the Future Land Use Map, Plan Direction, and Themes during the 2nd Workshop. This event is come and go.

Adoption Hearings –Fall 2023

Planning and Zoning Public Hearing

Town Council Public Hearing

Stay tuned for more details about each of these events. We hope you join us in this important process of preparing the future of Hickory Creek!



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAMMIE SAVIDGE PHOTOGRAPHY

COUNCIL RECOGNITIONS

MAYORS RED KETTLE CHALLENGE

Mary Freeman, Director of Community relations Collin & Denton Counties and Captain Whitney Houston of the Salvation Army, presented Mayor Clark with a Certificate of Appreciation for First Place in the 2022 Denton Area Mayors Red Kettle Challenge.



EAGLE SCOUT CANDIDATE JOHN ANDERSON

On October 2, 2022, Eagle Scout Candidate John Anderson, along with members from Boy Scout Troop 191 in Denton, remodeled the existing gardens surrounding the Hickory Creek Veteran's memorial. The Scouts replaced old plants and gravel and added new flowers and mulch. Two new benches have been added on the site. One bench will feature a commemorative plaque dedicated to Specialist Payton Bachinski of the US Army 101st Airborne Division, who passed away due to medical complications while on active duty.

LAKE DALLAS HIGH SCHOOL FIRE ACADEMY AND EMT PROGRAM

There was a time when little boys dreamed of being firemen. Thousands of toy firetrucks and mini replicas of helmets and badges found a spot underneath Christmas trees across the country.

Today's little boys, however, dream a bit differently. Anything that doesn't require batteries or a USB port doesn't hold the promise of much excitement, even for toddlers who seem born with an innate computer sense. And it's true that technology blesses and benefits every man, woman, and child on the planet again and again every day of their lives; but flesh and blood men and women are needed when a wall of flames is determined to reduce a family's home to nothing but a memory. And real, breathing men and women are needed as quickly as possible when there's a multi-car pile-up in a fog bank on the Interstate, with lives hanging in the balance beneath the wreckage. These are the jobs computers can't handle.

A group of forward-looking people in the Lake Cities could see a near-future time with a frightening shortage of firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs).



"It was August 2016 when the local fire academy was created in conjunction with Lake Dallas High School (LDHS) and North Central Texas College (NCTC)," explained John Bryant, a member of the Lake Cities Fire Department (LCFD) since 2006, a Fire Academy instructor, and a faculty member with NCTC since 2007.

"It's a two-year, dual credit, collegiate program that begins in a student's junior year and concludes as a graduating senior."

Mollie Avelino, LDHS Principal, gives the program her full support and enthusiasm.

"Our attendance varies from year to year," she said, "but very seldom do we not

have a full class of 15 to 20 students. Not only is the course part of the high school program, but these kids can also earn up to 24 hours of college credit."

Classes are taught on the NCTC campus, which creates an outstanding transition experience for those students who will continue their education after high school. The instructors are NCTC faculty members as well as trained and licensed firefighters.

Students who meet all of the program's academic and physical requirements then take the Texas Commission on Fire Protection Certification exam, as well as the National Registry EMT Certification exam.

"The training is comprehensive," Avelino said, "from managing hoses and ladders to going into an actual burning building. The program has gone beyond our expectations in so many ways and, of course, one of the most rewarding aspects is watching many of our students, male *and* female, do so well."

Sometimes, people fail to consider the gravity of the jobs performed by both firefighters and EMTs. Specifically: *They both save lives while risking their own.* Both careers are physically and emotionally draining.

The Lake Cities Fire Department protects Hickory Creek, Corinth, Lake Dallas, and Shady Shores in a fire district of approximately 30 square miles with fire, rescue, and emergency medical services. The department's mission is stated as, "We'll be there, ready to respond, compassionate in our care, and safe in our work." Included under that banner are the core values of loyalty, respect, and courage.

In 2022, LCFD received the Best Practices designation, one of only 27 Texas fire departments to earn the distinction. In 2020, the department was recognized at the Gold Level for pediatric care readiness. It's the highest level available from the Baylor College of Medicine. And, in 2019, LCFD was awarded the Texas Masonry Council Golden Trowel Award for the design of Fire House No. 3.

It's obvious the LCFD firefighters contribute a wealth of experience and recognition to the Fire Academy program.

"One of the additional beauties of the program," Bryant said, "is that it allows a student to go to work straight after high school graduation if that's what he or she prefers.

Any way you slice this one, you walk away with a winner.

For more information:

jdbryant@ldisd.net

mavelino@ldisd.net



HICKORY CREEK'S BEST FRIEND

Everybody knows “a dog is man’s best friend,” but how many people know a dog who is an entire town’s best friend?

Meet HCPD’s K9 Bear, the official guardian of Hickory Creek.

The world of K9 cops is serious business. Dogs such as Bear are trained in a variety of specialized disciplines including narcotics, bombs, tracking, search and rescue, and more. They are on duty to serve and to protect and, if necessary, to lay down their lives which, sadly, happens approximately 20 times each year.

The worldwide network making these dogs available to towns such as Hickory Creek can be complicated, requiring the expertise of someone well-versed in navigating the system. One of the reasons is because most of the dogs bred with the intelligence and temperament required for such rigorous training reside in European kennels.

This wasn’t always the case. There was a time when German Shepherds such as Bear hailed from the United States but, unfortunately, things changed when the Hollywood influence began spreading throughout our culture. This refers specifically to a heroic canine named Rin Tin Tin.

In real life, the German Shepherd Rin Tin Tin was born in France in a kennel that supplied German Shepherd dogs to the Imperial German Army. (Most of us can remember seeing snarling, lunging German Shepherds held on short, tight leashes by Nazi soldiers in old war movies.)

It was September 1918 when American Corporal Lee Duncan was sent to the village of Flirey, where he discovered a bombed out kennel. Instead of housing a battery of fat German Shepherds, however, there was only one occupied cage, housing a starving female with a litter of five nursing puppies.

Duncan rescued the six dogs, eventually smuggling one male (Rin Tin Tin) and one female (Nanette) to America, where he harbored dreams of making them, and him, rich and famous.

It was a long road, but Duncan did manage to guide Rin Tin Tin to stardom. The dog became so popular and loved so deeply that even the young, Jewish heroine Anne Frank mentioned him twice in her diary before she was captured by the Nazis.

The demand for German Shepherds as family dogs rose in almost direct proportion to Rin Tin Tin’s popularity. Supply and demand, augmented by greed, went into full swing. There was a scream for more puppies. Breeders rushed to answer. Breeding practices became indiscriminate. Meticulous breeding and lineage record-keeping fell by the wayside. Undesirable traits, rather than being eliminated through selective breeding, proliferated through breeding bad to bad. The end result was it became impossible to produce a dog such as Bear from that DNA mish-mash.

It wasn’t just German Shepherds who came under the destruction of Hollywood’s glitz. *Lady and the Tramp* took cheerful, sweet tempered, fun-loving American cocker spaniels and turned them into over-bred, nipping little monsters. *101 Dalmations* made a joke out of the spotted firehouse dogs, while Alicia Silverstone in *Clueless* (aided by Paris Hilton) contributed to filling southern California shelter cages with shivering, shaking chihuahuas.



All that is why today's K9s, for the most part, come from Europe where kennels strictly maintain breeding records from the 1800s. Bear, by the way, is from Slovakia but is fluent in English! He was originally destined as a member of the Slovakian National Team for the World Games, which were postponed in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID. His connections decided Bear was spending too much time without a clear purpose, which was detrimental to his development. Dogs of Bear's intelligence are far too valuable and too expensive to waste.

Officer Steven Antommarchi is Bear's handler, although the word "handler" sounds a bit sterile when used to describe their relationship.

Antommarchi was first exposed to dogs of Bear's level on 9/11 in 2001, when he watched canine teams push through their own injuries to find those caught in the rubble of the Twin Towers. From that point forward, Antommarchi focused on preparing to join that elite world of dogs and their trainers/handlers.

It was 15 years later, in Dallas, when he and his companion K-9 faced the task of clearing the city's downtown area of IEDs during a horrific attack on police officers.

Antommarchi remains dedicated to training, handling, and educating people and dogs across the world about the importance and use of these finely bred animals. He's the K-9 trainer for more than a dozen law enforcement agencies in Texas. He, and a team of K-9 instructors, conducts workshops and seminars across the United States. His expertise allows him to be a certifying official for the American Working Dog Association in narcotics, patrol, tracking, trailing, explosives, accelerant, and personal protection. He returned recently from South Africa, where he and wife Stephanie traveled as representatives of their own Next Level Canine Texas. Last, but far from least, the town of Hickory Creek is proud to say Antommarchi is a member of its own police department as the K-9 handler of Bear.

Regardless of Antommarchi's applause factors, he insists the focus of his story is Bear and the other K-9s out there who recently sniffed out a newborn baby and others from the rubble in Turkey, or captured a mountain of fentanyl, or found a lost and scared autistic teenager.

There is obvious passion and pride in Antommarchi's voice when he speaks about the dogs, and other connections in the K-9 world.

"Getting these dogs isn't easy," he said. "I had the world's best mentors in Tony Guzman and Bob Suarez. Tony was responsible for opening the world market's door to America. He's been in the industry since the 1980s and he knew we needed to build new relationships in Europe. He began traveling over there, learning foreign languages, and competing with them on their own turf. He formed the relationships we still use today to get dogs such as Bear.

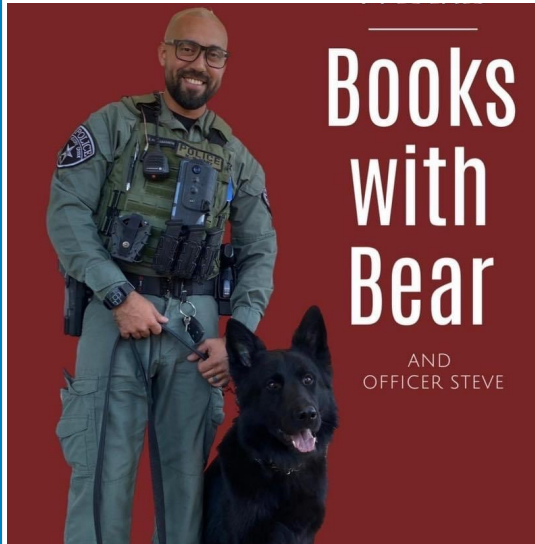
"The K-9 dog world we're talking about is in a tight spot in a lot of ways. No European countries, African, or South American countries will buy dogs from the United States because we allowed our breeding programs to go so far downhill. Then COVID hit the entire world and drove a lot of good European breeders out of business. Some of them literally gave away their dogs. These elite dogs are finite in number and I think, somehow, the United States must figure out how to rebuild our breeding programs.



Bear and Antommarchi at school



Bear's fourth birthday party



"Bear isn't a mindless, man-eating machine," Antommarchi added. "There must be a defined reason for him to attack. He's extremely approachable and he enjoys having kids, and adults, pet him. There's no way I can teach that."

Bear is special. Unique. Proof? Look into his eyes. The intelligence is obvious. Alert. Looking for the next horizon and what's on the other side. Antommarchi agrees.

"There are eleven other canine training units in our training group. I was the envy of everyone the first time they saw Bear," he said with pride. "They still feel that way about him. He's honestly a world class dog."

These dogs, their training, and their abilities are literally amazing. "They are critical thinkers," said Antommarchi, "with problem-solving ability. They can make inferences.

For instance, I can train a dog to recognize 200 (or more) toys. I add, let's say, a monkey and tell him to bring it to me. He goes out, checks all the toys he already knows, and then comes to the monkey. He knows he's never seen it before so he decides that must be the monkey. He brings it to me, solving the problem through critical thinking and inference." Amazing!

"The most dangerous situations for the K-9s are the ones with armed suspects. People don't realize it, but we face armed and dangerous individuals even more frequently than SWAT teams. The reason is we're called into active, ongoing events. The armed person knows where we are, but only our dogs know where he is. This is where we can easily lose a K-9 officer."

Bear received recently his \$5,000 protective vest from Spike's Canine Fund.

Antommarchi's life motto is "Faith, Family, Service." He carries it with him and lives by it regardless of the situation or location. He's proud of Hickory Creek and of Bear, and he encourages residents to meet the beautiful black dog with the mesmerizing eyes. He goes to schools and public events. He invites the public to attend the every-Tuesday training sessions, because training for these dogs and their handlers is a forever, ongoing practice.

Look for Officers Antommarchi and Bear when you're out and about in Hickory Creek. Give them a wave. If their light bar isn't flashing, they just may pull over for a meet and greet. After all, according to Antommarchi, his partner loves to give Bear hugs.



Bear, the Hickory Creek Defender. Photo by Bee Silva.

Appreciation for Bear and Antommarchi



DENTON COUNTY DAYS

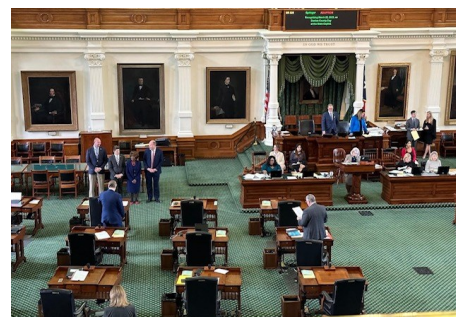
From Mayor Clark:

Town Administrator John Smith, Councilman Chris Gordon and I were proud to represent the Town of Hickory Creek at Denton County Days at the Capitol in Austin in late March! Thousands of bills have been filed in the 88th Legislative Session, which ends May 29, 2023, many of which will affect us at the local level. Joined by officials from Shady Shores and Corinth, we met with our legislators to share concerns on a wide range of topics and bills. On the final morning, our Denton County Commissioners were recognized in both the House and Senate Chambers, and over 200 officials from North Texas filled the galleries to show our support for Denton County.

We spent time with fellow elected officials and staff from across Denton County, discussing the collective needs of our region, along with the needs of each municipality. Many of the issues centered around the need to keep decision-making "local." One size doesn't always fit all, and a bill that focuses on a large municipality doesn't necessarily fit a smaller municipality. With any legislation, there are always "unintended consequences." We had some excellent discussions with our fellow officials and our Legislators, and we are monitoring many bills as they work their way through the Senate & House of Representatives.

Special thanks to Denton County Commissioners Court & staff, Representative Richard Hayes (a proud citizen of Hickory Creek!), Representative Dr. Lynn Stucky, Senator Tan Parker and all our Denton County representatives for their leadership and for working tirelessly to ensure our concerns are heard at the state level! Also, thanks to all the local area Chambers of Commerce and businesses who sponsored the event in Austin.

What a joy & privilege it is to live in Denton County and represent our beautiful Town of Hickory Creek!



ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION NAMES HICKORY CREEK TREE CITY USA® FOR 15TH YEAR

On March 3, 2023, Hickory Creek Texas was named a 15th year Tree City USA® by the Arbor Day Foundation in honor of its commitment to effective urban forest management.

The Tree City USA program is sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters.

Hickory Creek achieved Tree City USA recognition by meeting the program's four requirements: a tree board or department, a tree-care ordinance, an annual community forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita and an Arbor Day observance and proclamation.

"Everyone benefits when elected officials, volunteers and committed citizens in communities like Hickory Creek make smart investments in urban forests," said Matt Harris, chief executive of the Arbor Day Foundation. "Trees bring shade to our homes and beauty to our neighborhood, increase property values, reduce home cooling costs, remove air pollutants and provide wildlife habitat, among many other benefits."

About the Arbor Day Foundation: The Arbor Day Foundation is a million-member nonprofit conservation and education organization with the mission to inspire people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees. More information on the program is available at [**arborday.org/TreeCityUSA**](https://arborday.org/TreeCityUSA).



COMMUNITY REMINDERS



ANIMAL REGISTRATION

Residents are required to register all cats and dogs with Animal Services. There is no charge to register but you must have a valid copy of their rabies vaccination certificate. Residents may register animals at the animal shelter, town hall or online.

ALARM PERMITS

All commercial and residential alarm systems are required to register every January. Renewals are free. Applications may be found online or at Town Hall.

BOAT RAMP & DAY USE PASSES

Boat ramp and day use passes for 2023 are now available at Town Hall. Hickory Creek residents receive a FREE day use and boat ramp pass. Residents must come by Town Hall to pick up the passes. Passes are good in all Hickory Creek town parks -Arrowhead, Leg 1 and Leg 2, Point Vista and Sycamore Bend. Please place all passes in the front windshield by the registration sticker so they may be seen easily by an officer. Failure to properly display passes may result in a citation. Nonresidents may purchase boat ramp and day use passes at Town Hall, online or at pay stations located in Arrowhead, Point Vista, and Sycamore Bend.

**HICKORY CREEK
TOWN HALL**

1075 Ronald Reagan
Avenue

940-497-2528

Monday - Thursday

7:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Friday

7:00 AM - 11:00 AM

POLICE DEPARTMENT

1075 Ronald Reagan
Avenue

940-497-3520

Police/Fire Emergency 911

Non Emergency

940-349-1600

**HICKORY CREEK
ANIMAL SHELTER**

970 Main Street

940-349-1600

Monday - Friday

7 AM - 6 PM

Friday

Saturday - Sunday

7:00 AM - 11:00 AM

VISIT YOUR TOWN HALL

Parks & Recreation Board—Third Monday

Planning & Zoning Commission—Third Tuesday

Town Council—Fourth Monday

Economic Development Corporation—Third Thursday

ALL MEETINGS BEGIN AT 6:00 PM



UPCOMING TOWN CLOSURES

Monday, May 29

Memorial Day

Tuesday, July 4

Fourth of July

City-close, lakeside living!