

MAYOR'S MESSAGE – March 2021

A year has passed since the beginning of the COVID pandemic and many changes have occurred since then and we will see more changes in 2021. A surge in the number of COVID cases occurred in the Fall with a corresponding number of fatalities here in the Texas Panhandle and throughout our Nation. Two vaccinations were developed and conditionally approved by the FDA at the end of 2020 and the push was on to get enough of the population vaccinated to the general population in order to slow the spread of this disease. There has been a decrease in the number of new COVID cases and hospitalizations in spite of the worries about news strains or COVID mutations. A one-shot vaccination was approved and hopefully will encourage more people to consider taking the immunization. Just as the disease was declining, Governor Abbot rescinded the mandatory mask order and has allowed businesses to reopen at 100% by March 10th. Time will tell how these changes will affect course of the COVID infections.

February was particularly difficult with a week of unprecedented cold temperatures and snow in the southern area of Texas. The panhandle of Texas is somewhat hardened to subfreezing temperatures but there were still reports of frozen and bursting water lines even in the areas around TimberCreek Canyon (TCC).

Texans are resilient to change; we don't particularly like change but we do adapt. Texans are optimistic and my hope is that 2021 will be a great year and there will be better days ahead.

Masks and Gatherings

Even though Governor Abbot has rescinded the mandatory mask order, I would encourage every to continue to use a mask especially when in groups greater than 10 or when you are around unfamiliar people. Vaccinations seem to make a difference and the COVID virus infections appear to be decreasing but this pandemic is NOT over. Since there are no businesses in TCC the reopening of businesses to 100% has little effect with our community but I would encourage caution in attending events with large groups until we see how the course for this pandemic is going.

Fire Danger

February 27th marks 10 years from the fire that swept through TCC burning down one house and several barns and out buildings before crossing over into Palisades and Tanglewood communities where it burned over 20 homes and structures.

March and April normally pose higher risks for grass and structure fires due to high winds, increased temperatures and dry conditions. Be FireWise! Look for dangers around your home and property. Remove vegetation and trash around your home that would enhance a wildfire if it moved through your property. Be PROACTIVE, the reduction of combustible material might not only save your home but could reduce fire damage to you, your neighbors and the community.

Phishing and Other Scams

There has been an increase in the number of Emails informing residents that they can receive a \$75 – 100 gift card, prizes, special offers, etc. if they will just claim their gifts and furnish the company with a little information! The Emails look legit with company brands and logos, i.e. Lowe's®, Pfizer®, Geico®, and various Casinos to name a few. Most of these Emails are scams to get personal information, your money, or to sell you products that eventually end up being very over priced. Before you take advantage and send them money or release personal information, check them out! If they appear to be a reputable company, call the company and verify the offer using a phone number you looked up and not the one provided in the offer. Remember the old adage: *if it is too good to be true, it usually is (too good to be true)!*

Here are 11 scams to watch out for—and how to help prevent them.

- 1. Contact tracing text scams.** Contact tracing is the important process of tracking down anyone who may have been exposed to the coronavirus, so they can take precautions against spreading it further. State health departments often initiate this process with a text to say that someone will be calling. Scammers have taken note and are sending similar messages, but their texts will ask for money or Social Security numbers, or include a link to a malicious website.
- 2. Test kit scams.** While the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized several in-home test kits for COVID-19, most [advertised kits](#) have not been approved (and aren't necessarily accurate). One particular target for this scam is [Medicare beneficiaries](#); crooks are offering tests in exchange for Medicare and other personal information. Be aware that there have also been reports of [fake testing sites](#), complete with tents and workers in hazmat suits.
- 3. Fake fed phishing scams.** Phone calls or emails may claim to be from the CDC (your caller ID may even display that name), offering information about the virus in exchange for personal information or a “donation”—a tipoff that you're not talking with a federal agency.
- 4. Medical scams.** Be wary of calls or emails from doctors or hospitals claiming to have treated a friend or relative for COVID-19 and demanding payment.
- 5. Stimulus scams.** Anyone due to receive a stimulus payment is bound to be anxiously awaiting it; some thieves are claiming they can speed up the process or offer new stimulus payments in exchange for a fee or personal information. Or, posing as IRS agents, they may say you were overpaid and have to “refund” some of the money.
- 6. Charity scams.** Taking advantage of peoples' goodwill, thieves are pretending to work for coronavirus-related charities (either real or made up) and asking for donations. Before you give any money, make sure it's a legitimate charity (check with a watchdog group like [Charity Navigator](#)), then call the organization directly or donate through its website.
- 7. Miracle cure scams.** There's no vaccine for COVID-19 yet, but that hasn't stopped crooks from pushing [fake products](#) that claim to prevent or cure the virus. Air purifiers? Essential oils? Herbal teas? Fake, fake and fake.
- 8. Shopping scams.** Nonexistent stores may claim to sell products in high demand, like masks and hand sanitizer. Since they're just fronts designed to fool consumers, the products never arrive and the website for the “company” eventually disappears.

9. **App scams.** Preying on fear and curiosity, scammers have created [mobile apps](#) they claim are designed to track the spread of COVID-19. While the app may appear legit—perhaps even using official data—there’s a chance it also includes malware, spyware or ransom ware.

10. **Get-rich-quick scams.** Buying the stock of a company that’s about to announce a cure for COVID-19 may sound too good to be true. It is. The big payoff promised by these [fake investment opportunities](#) will never come; the thieves will simply disappear with your cash.

11. **College student phishing scams.** Beware any email claiming to be from the “Financial Department” of a student’s university, with information about [stimulus checks](#). Links will take you to a site that may look like the university’s, but only exists to steal your login credentials.

Tips to Help Protect Yourself

Scams are always evolving; if you suspect a message or offer may be fraudulent, check the COVID-19 sections of government sites (like the [FTC](#), [FCC](#), [FDA](#), [HHS](#) and [FBI](#)), which are updated with the latest scams.

Those agencies suggest the following tips to help keep scammers at bay:

- **Avoid the unknown.** Filter and block text messages and calls from unknown numbers.
- **Research legitimacy.** If you receive an offer from a company you don’t recognize, do some research to make sure it’s legit before buying anything.
- **Keep your info close.** In the wrong hands, your credit card number can be used maliciously. Don’t give it out unless you’re sure you’re dealing with a real company or organization. Don’t give out your Social Security number or bank account information unless you absolutely know who you’re dealing with.
- **Never click on suspect links.** Open a new browser tab and type in the URL of the company or organization, or call/search for them directly.
- **Take your time.** Scammers will push you to buy immediately, so you won’t have time to figure out they’re phonies. Don’t play their game.
- **Compare prices before buying.** Crooks have been trying to gouge consumers by inflating the price of critical goods, like hand sanitizer or toilet paper.

If you suspect a scam, report it to the National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline: 1-866-720-5721 or [Justice.gov/DisasterComplaintForm](#).

Information by: Richard Beattie, SYNCHRONY

March Board Meeting

Items of interest:

1. RECEIVE PRESENTATION REGARDING COMMUNITY CENTER PROJECT
2. DISCUSS, CONSIDER, AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION ON CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES WITH MICHAEL GAMBLE DBA AAA INSPECTION SERVICES
3. DISCUSS PLANS FOR SPRING CLEANUP EVENT
4. EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO §551.074 PERSONNEL MATTERS (POLICE DEPARTMENT AND MUNICIPAL COURT)
5. CONSIDER AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION ON ITEMS DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

UPCOMING DATES 2021

Next Board Meeting: January 14, 2021
Spring Cleanup – April 24, 2021
TCC Village Day – June 26, 2021
Chile Cook-off- September 25, 2021
FireWise Picnic – TBA
Fall Village Clean Up – October 9, 2021