



# ARANSAS PASS CITY NEWS

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## CITY COUNCIL APPROVES HISTORIC HURRICANE BUDGET

On September 24th during a Special Council Meeting, the Aransas Pass City Council unanimously approved the FY19 Operating Budget. It totals \$18,054,513. Overall, the long-term economic picture for Aransas Pass is bright. The Fiscal Year 2019 Budget is the first such document completely prepared after Hurricane Harvey. It will reflect many of the problems caused by Harvey, as well as some of the opportunities that have resulted. A major challenge for this budget is to begin turning around a multi-year tradition of having a General Fund balance below the minimum 25%. This year we are above that minimum figure.

Some of the problems from Harvey that impact the this budget include a weakened property tax caused by damaged or destroyed apartments and homes. The property tax is our major source of revenue, as is the case with cities throughout Texas. Also, a weakened water/sewer fund caused by fewer occupied residences.

Some of the opportunities include a strong sales tax performance due to rebuilding throughout the City. The sales tax is our second strongest source of revenue. Also, the economic projections locally, regionally, statewide and nationally, are all strong. In order to begin turning around a multi-year weak fund balance, expenditures must continue to decrease and more revenue sources must be found. One source is economic development. We anticipate progress in this area during FY19.

## TAX RATE IS ADOPTED

After weeks of discussion and public input, the City Council approved an FY19 property tax rate of \$0.77. The Effective Rate was \$0.73, which is virtually the same as FY18's tax rate. The Council could have increased it to \$0.80, however, after listening to citizens who said that was too high, they decided on 0.77. The higher rate is necessary to meet the expenses created by Hurricane Harvey.



## THE FY19 BUDGET IS STRONGER

During a special meeting on September 24th (see pic to left) the City Council took action to approve a budget with the strongest General Fund balance in years (27.71%). Although this is a step in the right direction, there still is a long way to go to reach a self-imposed goal of 35% to 40%.



## City Works On Demolitions

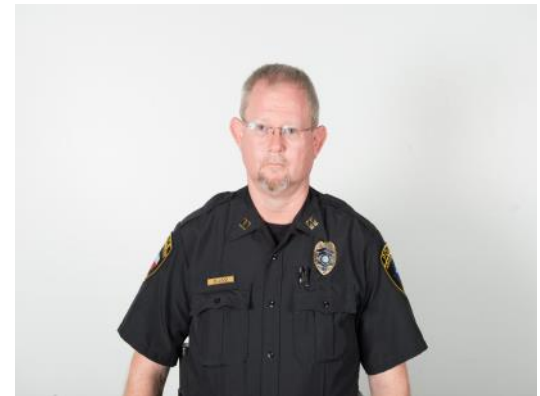
Following Hurricane Harvey the City began seeing a large number of dilapidated homes and businesses. Added to the abandoned structures that were in place prior to Harvey, these structures created a poor impression of our City. Pictured above are staff members working on the problem of dangerous homes in need of demolition. (L-R) Burl Smith, Chief Building Inspector; Roxann Cotroneo, City Attorney; Melinda Cook, of the Building Department; and Corey Elrod, Code Enforcement Officer. This part of cleaning-up the City is spearheaded by City Attorney Cotroneo. The most severely damaged structures cost the City \$67,000 for total costs associated with Police and EMS calls to the sites.

The four methods available for addressing this problem are (1) meet and greet (trying to work out an amicable solution. (2) Notice of violation and citation (3) The Building and Standards Commission, a citizens committee that reviews the buildings slated for demolition, (4) A civil lawsuit. City Attorney Cotroneo recently gave a presentation to the City Council on the need for a strong Demolition program. For an explanation of the City's demolition plan see "dilapidated buildings" at the City's webpage under informational videos.

## Wood Named Assistant Chief

Police Chief Eric Blanchard has named David Wood as Assistant Police Chief.. He replaces David Perkins who resigned to become the Police Chief in George West, Tx. Assistant Chief Wood began his career in law enforcement by attending the San Antonio College Law Enforcement Academy in 1991. His first law enforcement position began with the Taft Police Department. He also has served with the San Patricio County Sheriff's Department.

During his time in law enforcement, Captain Wood's duties have included a strong focus on leadership and supervision.





## REBUILD TEXAS FUND

The City of Aransas Pass has been awarded a \$533,000 grant from the Rebuild Texas Fund to assist with the renovation of a relocated City Hall in the downtown area. This project will address two issues. It will allow the current City Hall to be converted to a much needed Emergency Operations Center and allow for an expanded Public Safety Department. The project also will assist with the economic strength of the downtown area. Having City Hall there will bring much needed traffic to this part of the City. The City is very thankful to Rebuild Texas for its generous grant. It will serve an important community purpose.



## City Prepares for Heavy Rain

From about September 12th until the 16th the City of Aransas Pass received over 20 inches of rain. That amount, over the 4-5 day period, is about what we received during Hurricane Harvey. Leading up to the extraordinary rainstorm, City Staff met two to three times daily in order to be prepared for the storm. The above picture was taken during one of the daily briefings. Mayor Ram Gomez is seen at the Dais during a weekday session. The meetings were conducted by Emergency Operations Coordinator, Capt. Lynn Pierce, with Police Chief Eric Blanchard in attendance. Members of the Aransas Pass ISD also participated. Video teleconferencing reports from the National Weather Service were a part of the meetings. In attendance at each meeting were members of the Public Works Staff who worked around the clock and oversaw the City's pumping/drainage system during heavy rains and resulting floods. The pumps worked exceptionally well during this storm resulting in much less damage than in years past. For an explanation of how the City's drainage system works, access the "informational videos" on the City's webpage. **UPDATE: The City experienced another significant rain overnight on September 26th-27th with more in the forecast. Because the ground was saturated from the earlier rain, this approximately 2" to 3" storm created widespread flooding in Aransas Pass. Steps are being taken to purchase more pumps to meet the growing challenge of an increased number of large rain events.**



## CIVIC CENTER REPAIR WORK UNDERWAY

Civic Center Repair work from Hurricane Harvey is well underway. See above picture. The contractor for the nearly \$900,000 project is Largin Construction services of Corpus Christi. The Aransas Pass Civic Center, a major meeting and banquet destination for the Coastal Bent region, was damaged during Hurricane Harvey. The reservation schedule for the Civic Center has been adjusted since Harvey because of building damages and because of the need to avoid interfering with the repair schedule. On the other hand, when the reservation requests can be accommodated, every effort is being made to work with customers.

## Contact Us

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## State of the city speech

On September 5th, City Manager Gary Edwards gave the State of the City address before the Aransas Pass Chamber of Commerce (see above picture). Edwards pointed out that recovery from a major disaster such as a category 4 hurricane is a marathon and not a 100 yard sprint. He also said that the state of the City is good. The recovery is progressing well and economic development opportunities are strong.