

Meet Your Fire Chief Ted Stephens



Chief Ted Stephens has been with the City of Lucas Fire-Rescue since 2007. He started his career with Lucas Fire-Rescue as a volunteer emergency responder in 2017. He was hired full-time in 2013, and promoted to Fire Chief in 2016. He has more than 20 years in the fire service serving in two other volunteer fire departments, one as the Fire Chief. Ted graduated from West Texas State University with a Bachelor of Business Administration in 1990. He is a member of the State Firemen and Fire Marshal's

Association, North Texas Public Information Officers, and Texas Fire Chiefs Association. He holds various Texas Commission on Fire Protection certifications that include: Head of Department, Master Firefighter, Master Instructor, Officer 4, Incident Safety Officer, Wildland Firefighter, and the Texas Department of State Health Services Licensed Paramedic certification.

Chief Stephens leads the fire department for the City of Lucas with 15 full-time employees and 12 volunteer emergency responders. He is responsible for all operational, administrative, executive, and educational aspects of the department and is the Chief Executive Officer of the department. His philosophy is to hire the best person for the job and then give them ownership of that job.

Chief Stephens responsibilities include:

- Incorporates best practices as it relates to emergency medical services, fire prevention and suppression activities and emergency management programs to meet the goals and objectives of the City.
- Responsible for developing the Lucas Fire-Rescue strategic plan in order to provide comprehensive emergency services to the residents and visitors to the City of Lucas.
- Responds to alarms and directs activities at the scene of major emergencies.
- Supervises departmental staff, either directly or indirectly through Fire-Rescue staff, and ensures the appropriate assignment of personnel and equipment to meet the needs of the community.
- Coordinates automatic and mutual aid fire protection plans and the provision of emergency medical services and other department activities with surrounding jurisdictions and other agencies.
- Ensures that local, state, and national standards for emergency management services, fire suppression operations, fire prevention and education programs are met.

Chief Stephens leads an exceptional staff with the assistance of Assistant Chief/Emergency Management Coordinator Lance Gant, EMS Officer Aaron Alderdice, Fire Captain Ethan Carver, Fire Captain Jonathan Haynes, and Fire Captain John Ricker.

In addition to the responsibilities listed above, the Fire-Rescue Department also leads the City's Firewise Certification, the StormReady Certification through the National Weather Service, and all fire and EMS community education programs.

How to Maintain Your Septic System

Part 3 of a 3-part Series
by Development Services Director Joe Hilbourn

How often should a septic tank be pumped out?

Have the septic tank cleaned before sludge accumulates to the bottom of the tank's outlet device (about every 3 to 5 years). If too much sludge accumulates, solids will leave the tank with the liquid and possibly clog the soil. Sewage will then surface or back up into the house through the plumbing fixtures.

Septic Tank Pumping Frequency

Septic tank pumpers are equipped to clean septic tanks. Only registered technicians with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality may pump and transport septic tank sludge.

Do cleaning products affect my system?

Cleaning products may alter the treatment process. When choosing a cleaning product, read the label: Danger means that the chemical will kill the microbes; use it rarely or never. Warning means that limited use should not affect the system much. Caution typically means that the product will have little effect on the system.

How does a garbage disposal impact my septic system?

Do not use in-sink garbage grinders excessively or discard too much grease. Garbage grinders can cause sludge to build up quickly, making it necessary to clean the septic system more frequently and possibly causing it to malfunction because the wastewater is too strong for the system to handle.

My toilets do not flush during periods of heavy rain, and my spray heads spray when it rains. How do I correct this?

Divert any rainwater running off driveways, roofs, and other hard surfaces away from your septic tank and cleanouts. The septic tank is designed to manage a specific amount of water and rainwater could fill the system, leaving no room for wastewater. Landscaping should be designed to carry water runoff around the septic tank and cleanouts. Water collecting over these components can leak into the system and overload the treatment components. Evaluate the color and growth of grass around the tank. Excessive grass with a darker green color indicates that the tank or piping is broken. If the tank has a riser, verify it's in good condition and sealed to prevent infiltration. Lastly, evaluate the system performance during rainy periods. Rainwater may be infiltrating the system if there is an unexplained number of dosing cycles and/or if the spray distribution system is spraying during a rain shower.

Are vehicles, decks, sheds, or livestock allowed over the soil treatment area?

Do not build driveways, storage buildings, or other structures over the pretreatment or final treatment and dispersal components. These solid surfaces prevent access to the system for maintenance and reduce the ability of water to evaporate from the soil and restrict air movement into the soil.

What plants are appropriate for the soil treatment area?

Maintain a grass cover over the final treatment and dispersal component. Plant grasses that use more water and remove a significant portion of the water from a system. Trees also remove water and can be planted around the system perimeter. However, roots from trees planted too close to the soil treatment area can clog distribution pipes.

What should not be flushed down the drain?

Do not dispose of cleaning tissues, wet wipes, cigarette butts, diapers, or other trash in the toilet. These items do not degrade and result in a faster accumulation of solids that must be removed by a pump truck.

LUCAS LEADER



A publication of the City of Lucas

www.lucastexas.us

August 2020



Mayor's Message

I wanted to provide a short COVID-19 update for the City of Lucas... at the time of writing this we have had 16 total cases test positive, with 12 of those confirmed recovered. We sat with eight cases for a while then in about the last three weeks we doubled to 16. Overall, that is not a bad number it is right at two cases per 1000 residents. You certainly

can't miss the local County's numbers, State numbers or national numbers, they are posted several times a day in the news, but even though our numbers percentage-wise are lower, we still are seeing a similar climb or spike. I personally feel the rings of this illness getting closer and closer every day. The numbers in Lucas are growing, people in our neighborhood are impacted, people at work are impacted and family members of friends are impacted. Please take every precaution that you feel is appropriate to keep yourselves safe.

On a different note. You will find an article in this newsletter about broadband fiber network in the City of Lucas written by Councilmember Wayne Millsap. This is currently being debated by the City Council. What is up for debate is if the City should borrow money to develop a fiber network and provide broadband access through the fiber as a utility. The City Council will end up voting whether this should be put on the ballot for the voters to decide or to scrap the issue. The Council is in agreement that a decision this large should have voter consent.

That is why, if the City Council can agree this issue could be on an upcoming election. You can read the article for a little more detailed information, but all of the detailed financials are still being ironed out. Even without all of the exact financials yet to be published, I would still encourage you to let the City Council know where you stand. **Put it up for a vote or drop the project.** When (or if) we put it up for a vote, it will be to issue General Obligation Bonds (borrow the money). If it is decided to put it on the ballot, the City will publish every bit of information that we can to help you decide if this is a good thing or not such a good thing and give you the opportunity to

cast your vote for or against. But before that we need to know if this is something that should be considered. Please feel free to email any individual City Council member or all of us as a group to let us know if we should put this on the ballot. Thanks again for allowing me to serve as your Mayor.

What's on the Ballot for November 3

While the November 3, 2020 ballot will be a busy one with the Presidential Election and Statewide office elections, local elections including the City of Lucas will also be on the ballot that were postponed from May due to COVID-19. The Lucas Community Center will once again be a voting location and early voting will be held from October 19 through October 30. The last day to register to vote for the November 3 election is October 5 and if you would like to receive an application for ballot by mail, the deadline to request an application is October 23. On the ballot in the City of Lucas General Election will be City Council Seat 1 and City Council Seat 2. Candidates running for office include:

City Council, Seat 1

Tim Johnson
Wayne Millsap

City Council Seat 2

Tim Baney (running unopposed)

On the Special Election ballot is the renewal of the City's .50% street maintenance sales tax dedication. Sales tax is levied by the City on all goods sold within the city limits. The City has adopted a dedicated purpose sales tax that allocates .50% of the 2% sales tax collected for street maintenance. These dedicated funds will be spent to repair and maintain existing city streets. This dedicated revenue source for street maintenance will discontinue in December 2020 unless the voters approve its continuation. This represents approximately \$387,000 annually. The City budgets \$750,000 annually for street maintenance activities and the street maintenance sales tax funds over 50%.

The City Council will be making a decision at their July 30 City Council meeting if they will be placing an item on the ballot to call for a bond election for the implementation of a broadband fiber project.



MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Meetings will be available through a video conferencing webinar link on the City's website at <https://www.lucastexas.us/download-a-meeting-video-conference-link/>.

July 30	Fire District Budget Workshop Video Conference 6:00 pm
July 30	City Council Budget Workshop Video Conference 6:05 pm
August 6	City Council Meeting Video Conference 7 pm
August 8	Lucas Farmers Market Community Park 8 am - 12 pm <i>(This event is tentative based on Governors guidelines)</i>
August 13	Planning and Zoning Meeting Video Conference 7 pm
August 20	City Council Meeting Video Conference 7 pm
August 22	Lucas Farmers Market Community Park 8 am - 12 pm <i>(This event is tentative based on Governors guidelines)</i>

Currently, meetings at City Hall are not open to on-site visitors. Check the City's website for the latest information. It is the goal of the City Council to encourage public participation while maintaining practices to safeguard public health.



Face Mask Donation

On July 7 Aarin Mhashelkar, a high school student donated 350 disposable face masks to the City of Lucas Fire-Rescue for our first responders. Mr. Mhashelkar created the Calm COVID Initiative based on his passion to keep communities safe and helping others during this crisis. The City is incredibly blessed by this act of kindness from this young man. His selfless dedication to the cause of keeping first responders safe during this pandemic is an amazing testimony of Aarin's character.

LUCAS FARMERS MARKET UPDATE

Join the Fun of a Drive Through Market!
Saturday, July 25 at City Hall



The Lucas Farmers Market Committee (LFMC) meeting was held on Tuesday, July 14 to discuss the possibilities for the next market and with proactive safety guidelines in place. The Lucas City Council directed the LFMC to proceed with their recommendation of providing a drive through market on Saturday, July 25 from 8 am until Noon. If all goes smoothly, the LFMC hopes to be able to continue this drive through concept for the August markets. This drive through market will be located at City Hall (665 Country Club Road) and customers will enter through the north driveway into the City Hall parking lot and be guided by market personnel to the vendor area. As you leave the market, you will exit through the south driveway. Vendors will be located in the back gravel parking lot and along the concrete parking area next to the community park. The layout allows approximately 15 feet of space between vendors and customers would be required to stay in their vehicles. To view a layout of this drive through market, go to www.lucastexas.us/farmers-market.

In light of public health concerns associated with COVID-19, the City of Lucas cancelled the Farmers Market scheduled for the months of April and May and revised the 2020 schedule. As the State of Texas began to reopen, the City of Lucas proceeded with holding the Lucas Farmers Market on Saturday, June 13 with modification to the layout to encourage social distancing. With over 40 vendors in attendance, the Market was well attended. As COVID-19 numbers began to rise, the Governor issued subsequent guidelines and the City of Lucas cancelled the June 27 market based on concerns for public health. At the June 30, 2020 LFMC meeting, the Mayor requested that the LFMC develop strategies to help us navigate the difficulties associated with COVID-19. This was completed and the draft was discussed at the July 2 City Council meeting. However, due to the continued concern regarding the increase in COVID-19 cases, the City Council decided to cancel the July 11 market. Below is the market schedule for the remaining 2020 season:

- July 25 (Fourth Saturday)
- August 8 (Second Saturday) and August 22 (Fourth Saturday)
- September 12 (Second Saturday) and September 26 (Fourth Saturday)
- October 10 (Second Saturday)
- November (no market scheduled)
- December 4 (First Friday indoor Holiday Farmers Market at Country Christmas)

As previously mentioned, the LFMC developed multiple market scenarios to meet changing safety requirements due to the COVID-19 related health concerns. The scenarios are described in phases and the described details will be adjusted as needed to stay in line with evolving state and local requirements. Below is a summary of the stages:

- Stage I - normal operations
- Stage II - minor adjustments needed for public safety - vendors required to wear masks, max of 2 people running each vendor booth, no samples, increased space between booths, wash stations provided, pedestrian flow in one direction, a pre-order pre-paid pick-up station will be available for vendors wanting to use this service. Control access to the park to 2 families per vendor booth. Estimate the max would be 120 families in the park at a time.
- Stage III - significant adjustments needed - drive through market. Customers browse and purchase as they drive by the vendor booths. Vendors wear masks and sampling will not be available. A pre-order pre-paid pick-up station will be available for vendors wanting to use this service. The number of booth locations will be limited along the perimeter of the gravel parking lot and along the paved parking lot adjacent to the park. Food suppliers will be prioritized if demand exceeds availability.
- Stage IV - significant concern for public safety - a drive through pre-order pre-paid pick-up market only. During this stage, vendor participation will be limited to agricultural producers and value-added vendors that provide primarily food items.
- Stage V - extreme concern for public safety - market operations closed

We understand this has been a difficult time for everyone and we hope that you will continue to support the Lucas Farmers Market.

City Council Considering Bond Election to Provide Internet Service

By Councilmember Wayne Millsap

As many of you have experienced, access to broadband internet is very limited in our City. This is most evident north of Lucas Road. In 2018, the City conducted a technology and communication survey and found that 55% of the respondents had less than 20 MBPS service and were dissatisfied (the FCC considers less than 25 MBPS to be inadequate). Based on survey feedback the City Council appointed a Technology Committee to research internet solutions and provide recommendations to improve internet service.

The Technology Committee contacted the internet providers (AT&T, Frontier, Grande, Suddenlink) about expanding or improving internet service as well as exploring a potential partnership with GCEC and ONCOR, and none were interested in doing so due to our low density that would not generate the profit margin they needed.

The Technology Committee and City staff developed a city-wide internet speed test. With 514 households participating, 61 percent had a download speed of less than 25 MBPS and 58 percent had an upload speed of less than 5 MBPS. Most of us think of the download speed as the key factor for streaming video, but with more of us working or conducting remote schooling at home, the upload speed becomes important for video interaction.

With the major providers not interested in extending their service beyond what they have today, much of the City is left with mediocre to poor internet access. The Technology Committee investigated alternatives as well as broadband delivery technologies and found other cities faced with the same issues. They visited the City of Mont Belvieu which chose to develop its own fiber optic network. Based on their findings, the Technology Committee requested proposals for a feasibility study.

Magellan Advisors was selected and is now finalizing the study which contemplates a fiber optic network that would be capable of providing 1G service (up to 10 G) to every home and business in Lucas. Magellan has reviewed the financial model with the City Council and discussed metrics such as the capital costs, demand forecast, rates, capital plan, and staffing plan. The key question is will revenue from the services cover the operating costs and the capital cost to build out the network.

The total estimated cost for the fiber project is \$23.9 million which includes \$11.3 million for infrastructure, \$3.5 million for network

equipment and buildings, \$2.6 million for home equipment, and \$6.5 million for working capital. Most of the funding would come from General Obligation bonds which will need approval by the citizens of Lucas. Naturally you will have a lot of questions, so lets try to address a few:

How much is this going to raise my taxes?

Well, the answer is none. This would be a utility similar to our water service and is accounted for as a separate enterprise. That means the enterprise is funded based solely on the services provided to those that sign up. It would not be funded by property taxes.

Do I have to sign up for internet service?

No, if you are satisfied with your current internet service provider you do not have to sign up. The feasibility study assumes not everyone will want the service.

How much will the internet service cost?

The rates are determined similar to how we establish the water rate – it is set to cover the cost of the service, the infrastructure and the operating costs. Since it is a municipal utility it is not set up to make a profit since there are no shareholders. The recommended service costs and options will be outlined in the completed feasibility study provided by Magellan Advisors.

So what is the next step?

The City Council must decide whether or not to call for a bond election and if so when – November 2020 or May 2021. If we call for the election, the City will prepare information about the project including cost, financial projections, and the feasibility study. We will find ways to hold public meetings, probably on-line, to discuss the project so you can make an informed decision. Ultimately, the citizens of Lucas will make the decision, **so we need your feedback**. Our contact information is on the City website at www.lucastexas.us/departments/city-council/ or you can send an email to all City Councilmembers at CityCouncil@lucastexas.us. The Council and City staff want to express our thanks to the Technology Committee: Paul Rathgeb, Chairman, Jamie Gibson, Vice Chairman and members George Brody, Troy Dechant, Dennis Scully along with Kent Souriyasak, Assistant to the City Manager and Bill Baxter, the City's IT consultant.



On June 18, 2020, the Lucas City Council approved the traffic studies conducted by Lee Engineering for the Blondy Jhune and Winningkoff Road intersection as well as Estelle Lane between Country Club Road and Winningkoff Road. The final report for each study can be found on the City's website at <https://www.lucastexas.us/traffic-studies/>.

Public Lands Trail Cleanup

September 26, 2020 | 9 am to 1 pm

National Public Lands Day is the largest single-day volunteer effort to protect and preserve U.S. public lands. In 2019, the City partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Trinity Trail Preservation Association to hold the Public Lands Trail Cleanup to remove trash and debris along the Trinity Trail at Lavon Lake. We hope to continue this joint effort again this year to celebrate National Public Lands Day and to "Keep Lucas Beautiful." More information on the event details will be available on the City's website in early August. As the City continues to monitor public health safety and restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will provide updates regarding the status of the cleanup event.



Making the Switch to Zoom

Ensuring the most efficient technology is being used for Lucas City meetings, and a software that most everyone is familiar with, the City will be switching to Zoom video conferencing beginning with the August 6 City Council meeting. The location to find all meeting video links can be found at <https://www.lucastexas.us/download-a-meeting-video-conference-link/>.