



CITY OF HEATH UPDATE

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NOVEMBER
2020



CHRISTMAS 2020: CARRIAGE RIDES AND MORE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN THE PARK

Like so many other things, the City of Heath's Annual Holiday in the Park celebration is on hiatus this year due to COVID-19.

But there will still be Christmas joy in Towne Center Park, thanks to some creativity by the Special Events Board displayed on July 4 with a re-imagined event featuring ice cream trucks delivering free popsicles throughout Heath and a home decorating contest.

"This is a great time to invest what would normally be spent on Holiday in the Park, our most expensive event of the year, into expanding and enhancing the Christmas lights and decor in Towne Center Park," said Jenni Knox, Special Events Board Chairman since 2014. "It's an investment that will be enjoyed this year, and in the years to come."

Residents can stroll through the park anytime during the season, or take in the lights from a horse-drawn carriage, Thursdays to Sundays, beginning at 6 p.m., December 3 to December 27. Rides are \$50, and reservations must be booked online at heathtx.com to avoid waiting lines and ensure social distancing. There will be plexiglass between the driver and passengers, and the carriages

will be cleaned between each ride. Carriages hold four normal-sized adults, or two adults with children.

The new lights will be unveiled on December 1, during a Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony featuring fireworks and a Christmas movie on a 50' screen.

Limited seating spots in the park for the kick-off will be available to Heath residents only on a first come, first served basis. Reservations open on November 1 at heathtx.com. (Have your Heath utility account number handy when you make your reservation.)

Each seating spot holds up to six people, and will be arranged more than 6 feet apart. Entry and seating will follow CDC guidelines. This includes wearing masks until seated in your spot. Attendees can bring their own treats and non-alcoholic drinks, blankets or lawn chairs. There will not be food or drink available onsite.

"Usually we're striving to draw a "bigger than ever" crowd at our gatherings," said Jenni. "But, safety for the citizens attending and the many City staff members, DPS officers and volunteers it takes to present a large event continues to be a top priority."



Q & A WITH CITY MANAGER **ARETHA ADAMS**

Aretha Adams was hired by the Heath City Council in May 2019. In a council-manager government such as Heath, the elected city council serves as the City's primary legislative body and appoints a chief executive officer called a city manager to oversee day-to-day municipal operations, to draft a budget, and to implement and enforce the council's policy and legislative initiatives.

Now with two annual budgets, navigating a pandemic and more under her belt, learn about Aretha's perspective on the City of Heath's operations and opportunities.



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FY 2020-2021 BUDGET FOR THE CITY?

This is the third consecutive year the Heath City Council has voted to decrease the property tax rate, resulting in a total reduction of 4.0742 cents since 2018. The budget reflects the Council's continued commitment to a secure future by funding pay-as-go accounts. This action ensures that less debt will be necessary to fund large expenditures in future years.

Council also remains committed to maintaining safe, quality streets with a Street Repair Fund once again included in the budget, and the City was able to expand the Department of Public Safety leadership structure mid-year in 2020 to include two new captain positions.

Additionally, the Council adopted within its budget the Heath Economic Development Corporation/Heath Benefits Corporation Budget that demonstrates its commitment to procuring a vision for the "Heart of Heath" by funding a master plan for the Town Center Overlay District and a master plan for Towne Center Park.

WHAT ARE KEY COUNCIL GOALS FOR THIS BUDGET YEAR?

The Council's goals remain consistent and are:

- Cost Containment – Operating at high efficiency;
- Maintaining a stable and low property tax rate;
- Planning for the future of infrastructure and asset management;
- Accounting for high levels of quality of life;
- Maintaining healthy fund balances and reserves; and
- The hiring and retention of highly qualified City staff.



WHAT ARE YOUR OWN GOALS AS CITY MANAGER FOR THE YEAR AHEAD?

My primary goal is always to make sure that the City is providing excellent customer service, quality of life programs, and a beautiful and well-maintained community while being good stewards of our citizens' tax dollars.

However, I have some focus on other areas of our City, including recruiting a new permanent DPS Chief, working with the community to create a vision for the future of Heath's Towne Center and Towne Center Park, and working with private residents to see forward movement on an all-abilities park in our community.

It is also important to welcome our new businesses and reassure our established ones that we are here as trusted partners, while establishing "new normals" to move our staff forward in what is surely the most unprecedented time of our lives.



HOW HAS COVID-19 AFFECTED CITY OPERATIONS?

While Covid-19 has been one of the most unexpected happenings of 2020, there has been no pause in Heath. I am proud of our community on so many levels, including our wonderful staff. They have continued to provide top-notch customer service to our residential, business, and development stakeholders throughout these unprecedented times.

Our triple certified DPS officers have continued to protect the community, while also maintaining new safety protocols to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Equally essential is each member of the Public Works Department, who never missed a beat in all that they do to ensure water and sewer services, and critical infrastructure maintenance and repair.

Our Council, Boards and Commissions have embraced the virtual realm in order to continue moving our City forward. This includes a phenomenal Local Business Stimulus program quickly developed by the HEDC/HMBC and approved by Council that brought immediate assistance to our local businesses and bridged the gap between the first devastating and disruptive weeks of COVID-19 to navigating a new way of serving customers safely.

We even celebrated freedom as our events team re-imagined the traditional July 4 parade “where half the town is marching and half is watching” into activities that touched every neighborhood. And now as you read on page 1, they are working to bring joy to Towne Center Park throughout the entire holiday season.

Yes. COVID-19 has impacted the City in difficult ways. It’s also made us all stronger, smarter, more resilient and more creative. We don’t expect COVID-19 to magically disappear from our lives when the calendar ushers in 2021, but we do look forward with hope and excitement for all that Heath is now, and can be in the future.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE SOME OF HEATH'S GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES?

One of our greatest opportunities moving forward is to make sure that the inevitable growth throughout our community is strategic and thoughtful. Council’s goal, and one that I share, is to maintain the charm and identity of our great community. Or, in other words, as we grow, we must also strike the balance of *Keeping Heath, Heath*.

That means as the City expands with more residential and commercial projects, we want to make sure that the City provides opportunity and space to foster a real connection and a spirit of community between neighbors and businesses.

My greatest hope for next year is that we can bring back our wonderful events at a full-scale level to provide those important opportunities that bring the community together and highlight what makes us so special – the people.

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PARKS AND TRAILS OF HEATH (PATH) UPDATE

The first project of the new Parks And Trails of Heath (PATH) fund raising program to increase shade in Towne Center Park is underway. More than 25 shade trees will be planted this fall, and new park benches and a water bottle filler and pet water bowl will also be installed. You can be a part of this progress by simply signing up to donate \$5 or \$10 to PATH each month with your utility bill. Several support levels are also available for one-time donations. Learn more at heathtx.com/PATH.



CHARTER PATH DONORS AS OF OCTOBER 14, 2020

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\$10,000 Donation



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PATH MAKER - \$5 per Month

Gary & Kellie Anderson
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Candee Smith

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SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION
Tom & Charlene Norris (\$250)
Gary & Tracy Allen (\$100)

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