

## FROM THE MAYOR – JULY 2016

I'm supposing that most of you were just as shocked as I was when I opened up my notice from the Dallas County Central Appraisal District (DCAD) to find their valuation of our home for the next year. Actually, shocked understates my reaction.

As we've done in the past, Cindy and I challenged the valuation and prepared the supporting materials with which to present our case when our hearing came. I journeyed to the DCAD hearing with high hopes of convincing the panel that the new valuation was grossly overstated and that we were being wronged. I can proudly report that the panel accepted my argument and agreed to reduce our valuation – by a whopping 2%. My reaction can best be described by using another word ... which I won't.

Whether we like it or not, the simple fact is that the DFW-area is 'hot'. People want to be here. Available homes and commercial sites are turning over with great momentum. In Sunnyvale, we are blessed and burdened by our successes. We've created and supported a community and school district which people want to be part of. Our strategies of lower density ultimately create a situation where there are fewer properties for people to consider when they want to move to our community and this 'demand vs supply' situation drives market prices and property values upward.

And so, late this month, the Town will receive the 'certified' property values for Sunnyvale. The Council, staff and I will use these values as the basis for planning the Town's tax rate and operating budgets for the next fiscal year which begins on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

This is where you come in.

Our challenge as your elected representatives is to consider and deploy the best strategies for setting that tax rate and confirming our highest budget priorities for next year. Rising values automatically mean rising taxes for all of us even if the tax rates remain the same. We've already heard from some of you that this burden is too much and that we should consider giving back some of the valuation increase by lowering the Town tax rate. Others are saying that we need to keep expanding Town services and capabilities by using the incremental tax monies that will come our way by keeping the tax rate as is.

This is where I rant a bit about local control. I'm not certain if you observed the actions (or inactions) of the Texas Senate during their last session. There were several bills presented to limit the capabilities of local governments – cities, towns and school districts – to decide their own tax rates. The presumption by many in this august body was that they knew better how the finances of our community should be set up than those of us who actually live here. In other words, local control as dictated by Austin.

Perhaps you see it differently, but, to me, it's a dangerous situation when the State wants to take more control of our community and that's why we need to be as inclusive and transparent as possible as we move through our tax and budget processes. Your voice is best heard directly and not through a third party who represents dozens of cities and Towns that he or she knows very little about. That's what we intend to do.

We will publish the budget calendar on the Town website in the coming weeks and the Minutes/Agendas section will contain supporting materials for the tax rate and budget as part of the Council packet which you can review as we prepare for our meetings. We encourage you to remain updated and to give us your ideas and comments. It's this sort of involvement that helps us represent you better.

That's what local control is really all about.

**MEET THE MAYOR FOR MAY (held at Town Hall)**

- Thursday, May 5 – 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
- Saturday, May 14 – 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
- Saturday, May 28 – 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

I welcome the opportunity to meet with individual citizens or groups at other times more convenient to you. To schedule time, call me at home at 972-226-3757.