

From the Mayor's Desk - 12/20/24:

Happy Friday!

This will be the last update for the year, as Stephanie and I will be spending time with our families in upper Michigan until after the New Year.

Here is a Christmas present to everyone from City Hall...

All the Grant Projects update, including the Groins Project:

As promised, I have a better update on this project after a couple of great meetings this week. Thanks for the patience on this important update, and understand that I've only been closely involved in the details for a few months, so excuse any discrepancies in the historical facts vs. what I have attached from my meeting notes below. It should be directionally correct and provide everyone with a decent update on the projects.

On Monday we hosted a large group of representatives from multiple groups at City Hall. Included were TX GLO Community Development, Grant Management, Coastal Division, and Government Relations. Nine total from the TX GLO. Also in attendance were three total members of the office of Congressman Weber, Senator Huffman, and Representative Vasut. In addition, two from the Houston Galveston Area Council and one from Brazoria County Community Development. Including myself, Amanda, Josh, and Jennie, we had 19 total people in attendance. I'm a firm believer that actions speak louder than word, and the actions taken by these agency representatives to meet face to face in Surfside Beach is a big step. More words were traded on Monday, so we will be measuring success of the meeting by future actions taken.

First on the agenda was the CDBG project to replace one of the three vacuum sewer lines with a gravity system. We received confirmation that the final contract between GLO and HGAC was to be concluded shortly (in weeks), and that next steps would be to have HGAC enter into agreement with the Village of Surfside Beach. These was exactly the same update received from our meeting with HGAC, and it was good to see the GLO acknowledge and confirm actions and due dates. Positive progress here. I expect this project to start in early 2025.

Next was an update on a project from Brazoria County on Harvey reallocation funds. This project is for water lines and street improvements on Pompano and Swordfish. Brazoria county does the construction and our local match would be \$21,155 & \$3,975 respectively. This project package is currently in review from GLO grant management, and they confirmed that 4-6 is still required for completion. Upon completion, this would be then amended into the Brazoria contract that exists

currently. This project was admittedly new to me, so I will have to do my homework in order to share more details in future communications.

Third on the agenda was the big dog...the Groins Project (SWG-1998-02508). This project is funded by the Restore Funds, of which the TCEQ & Restore council manages. The project includes, phase one, the installation of two groins. The West Groin starting near Texas Street and extending diagonally into the water towards the jetty (7,500 tons of stone), and the East Groin starting just west of 332 and extending perpendicular and further into the water (8,500 tons of stone). The second phase of the project is to build the beach back by adding 411,000 cubic yards of sand to the areas between the groins & jetty. The science at play here is that the currents and eddies that naturally lift and displace sand will be redirected and force sand to deposit between the jetty and groins, thus at a minimum maintaining what had been added as renourishment from this project, and as best case creating a buildup of more sand up in that area. Below is the anticipated project performance:



This project was applied for in 2018 and in July of 2019 it was granted. In order to avoid reimbursement we transferred the project to the GLO for management of the front end planning. The project took very long to progress, and as a result at the end of 2023, the permit expired that existed with the US Army Corp of Engineers. No extension was issued. Now, we (GLO & Surfside) must obtain a new permit from USACE. As part of that new permit, the USACE in conjunction with US Fish & Wildlife Service and National Marine & Fisheries Service have to re-evaluate the permit as it relates to Federally threatened and endangered species based on 2024 data. This evaluation has completed, and the one animal that has been added to the endangered list is the green sea turtle. As a result, a biological survey and protection plan must be completed by both Federal Services. These new amendments to the permit would need to be made and then the USACE would review and approve the new permit. This is the current hold on groin project progress. As an action item, we agreed to meet with GLO, Coast & Harbor Engineering, and the USACE to discuss status of this hold (more to come on this!). When the two Federal Services complete their work required to amend the permit, then the USACE would require a review period of 4-6 weeks before approving the permit. Once the permit is issued, then the GLO and Coast & Harbor Engineering can begin to move forward with construction plans. This is estimated to begin in fall of 2025. Again, actions vs. words...we had been given a start date of August 2024 in the past that was missed, fyi.

Two days later, on Wednesday this week, Amanda set up a follow up meeting for us, the GLO (2), Coast & Harbor Engineering (2) and the US Army Corp of Engineers (2). During this meeting we focused specifically on the biological survey and protection plans required to move the permit process forward. The USACE representative working directly with the two Federal Services provided an update on progress. Her assessment was that the work was progressing and should be completed early in 2025. We requested a follow up meetings every 4 weeks to include the two Federal Services to get direct updates, but after some convincing on their end we agreed to receive updates from USACE every 4 weeks, starting January 22nd until the permit is issued. I commit to providing updates to everyone from these meetings going forward.

I feel like we made some significant progress, if only in momentum this week. A meeting held at our “home field” with 15 members of multiple groups attending, followed up just two days later with direct conversations with two other groups, just feels like great progress. Again, words vs actions. We will be measuring the say/do ratio of these groups and ourselves as we continue to push all these important projects forward.

Other Items of Interest:

Another reminder that the Early Bird beach pass will be available on January 2nd – 31st at City Hall for the discounted rate of \$15. This is limited to one per person, with a valid drivers license. After January, they go up to the full price of \$30. Act fast!

City Hall will be closing up at noon on both Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve upcoming.

Here’s hoping that everyone has a wonderful holiday season. Merry Christmas and Happy New Years to all!

As always, take care of yourself and each other. See you in a few weeks.

Zach