

The City Council meets every 2nd Monday of the month for its Regular Scheduled Meeting as well as conducts Special meetings and workshops during the month as needed to discuss City issues. All of these meetings and workshops are subject to the Open Meetings Act and the dates and times are posted at City Hall as well as our website as required by law. The City Council also holds and have held Public Meetings to discuss many issues and have encouraged citizens to attend.

Our Council is comprised of five citizens who live in the City and who devote their time to serve in this capacity. They do not serve for any other reason other than to try and help our City improve and to provide great services to our community. Some of our council members have only lived in the City for ten or so years. Some have lived here longer and some most of their entire life. Our City Council works very hard for the City and I appreciate all of their dedication and time devoted to our City. City Council's intentions are not to cause problems, create problems, but to solve our City's problems.

I grew up outside the City limits all of my life until my family and I moved to the City in 2004. I ran for City Council in 2005 and have served as a Council member from 2005 until I ran for Mayor in 2012. In March of 2018, the City will hold its election for Mayor, and two council members for a two-year term. I have signed up to run another two-year term for Mayor. Both present City Council members up for election have also signed up. We do have one person sign up to run against one of the Council members. I will be asking for your vote to allow me to continue to represent the City of Anahuac and to continue to work hard to improve our City to provide great services to our citizens and to be the best little city to live.

I would like to try to explain without writing a book as to the situation our City is in, what got us here, what we have been facing and working on for the last six years I have been Mayor and why our water rates are what they are.

The City's infrastructure includes water lines, sewer lines, man holes, lift stations, sewer plant, water plant, ground storage tanks and two water towers. The City has some water lines that have been in the ground for over 50 years. Some of these water lines are so corroded and are iron pipes that only allow a small amount of water to go through them. Some of the lines are no longer the appropriate size for fire protection or are no longer adequate because of the number of homes on the line. Some of the lines have dead ends which cause water quality to be an issue.

Clay sewer lines have collapsed causing water infiltration to overflow our sewer plant which results in violations from TCEQ. Man holes and lift stations that are in need of repair or in need of replacement. Our ground storage tank needs to be replaced. Our water tower on Tower street is in need of repair as well. Previous City Council has done some repairs to our water and sewer lines. Most, if not all of these replacements have been in very small increments with grants the City has received over time. However, these repairs have not been enough.

This City Council did not cause these issues. We have inherited them. It has been years and years of kicking the can down the road. Many, if not all of these repairs have been presented to previous City Councils through Comprehensive Plans of 1968, 1970's and 2003. I nor the present Council can tell you why these repairs have not been done before now.

But what I can tell you is that WE HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO YOUR COMPLAINTS. Numerous complaints about the water quality as well as sewer line problems. Council has been working on these issues for several years. We have had many, many meetings with engineers, financial advisors, and attorneys. We have conducted rate studies, workshops, and PUBLIC HEARINGS to discuss the needs of the City's infrastructure and how we can fix them. I'm not sure if anyone else had been following in the newspapers or by attending Commissioners' Court regarding Chambers County considering building a new jail as well as a new Justice Center. BUT, the plan was not to build these in the City of Anahuac. The plan was to build the jail and Justice Center elsewhere due to the City's failing infrastructure. The City did not want this to happen as the repercussions of the County moving out of the City would be detrimental to the City. Loss of sales tax revenues would drop tremendously as approximately 300 people a day who come to our City to work or have business at the Courthouse as well as shop and dine in our stores and restaurants and other businesses would be lost.

In April of 2017, the Council voted to raise the City's water rates to pay for a \$16.6 million dollar loan they received from the Texas Water Development Board to repair its failing infrastructure. This loan is to make all of the necessary repairs needed to replace the water lines, sewer lines, repair man holes and lift stations, replace ground storage tank, repair the water tower as well as rehabbing our Sewer Plant that was built in the 1970's. This was a very difficult decision to be made as we understood that the implications of higher water rates would be required. But we could not sit back and continue to kick this down the road. We had to repair our infrastructure.

City Council met for numerous workshops as well as held several public hearings to discuss the rates. Several factors affected the City's rate structure. Some of these were that the City only has approximately 950 connections to share in the repayment; the amount of usage used by each of the connections; and 34% of our connections only use 1000-2000 gallon of water a month as well as many others. Also, the City's tax base is not adequate to pay these expenses.

The City's water plant was brought on line on February 7, 2018 after many years of being under construction to rehab the plant after being brought down after Hurricane Ike. The City is no longer purchasing treated water from Trinity Bay Conservation District. As a result of treating our own water, the cost will be less than purchasing treated water from Trinity Bay Conservation District. This cost savings will assist the City in repaying the loan to the Texas Water Development District.

The City has pledged our water/sewer revenue as repayment of our loan to the Texas Water Development District. As the City works on budgeting for next year, we will continue to review our water rates. If you would like more information, please come to our City Council meetings, review our City website with budget information or give me a call to discuss.

Thank you,

Mayor Cheryl Sanders