

MEMORANDUM

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF OWASSO

FROM: RODNEY J. RAY
CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

DATE: April 13, 2012

“Don’t be afraid to go out on a limb. That is where the fruit is.”

~ H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT:

VOLUNTEERISM - In recent years, sales tax revenue to fund the operations of the City has not been as robust, however the population continues to increase. The volatile nature of sales tax creates challenges for many City departments in terms of how to continue providing services at a high level, without additional funding. As an alternative to increased funding, City staff has started looking to volunteers to help fill the gap.

The Police Department has long recognized the value of volunteers. Currently 23 people serve as Reserve Officers for the City. These dedicated volunteers work side-by-side with full time officers each day to protect residents. The Reserve Officers are well trained and serve as a valuable resource to the department. It is no accident that Owasso is one of the safest communities in the state. The department has strategically leveraged the use of Reserve Officers when it was unable to fund additional positions. In fact, one of the current K-9 Officers for the department is a highly trained Reserve Officer committed to respond whenever needed. The department also utilizes volunteers in Animal Control, and other divisions of the department.

Nearly a year ago, the City began a volunteer program where citizens could access the city's website to view a listing of volunteer opportunities and register their contact information and expertise in order to be matched with projects that would allow them to give back to the community. In this first year, the City has been able to place 622 volunteers for a total of 2,080 hours of service to complete projects that in turn, has saved the taxpayers approximately \$35,000. Community volunteers range from 7 to 70 years of age. The most pleasantly surprising statistic is the number of youth who have responded to the City's call for volunteers. More than 400 youth have given their time to make a difference in the lives of others.

The projects range as widely as the ages of the volunteers. The volunteer hours have benefited the City in the areas of landscaping, litter pickup in parks and public areas, cleaning, painting, organizing, clerical, and even graphic design and technology assistance. Volunteers have also joined together with the Strong Neighborhood Program to positively impact the appearance of neighborhoods by assisting with cleanup efforts, removing trash, and painting fire hydrants. Volunteers have become a

valuable resource to the City, especially in lean economic times, helping Owasso go the extra mile to provide a high level of service for Owasso residents.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT:

PAPERLESS BILLING – In the spirit of the City's "Go Green" Initiative, the Finance Department is working to develop programs aimed to conserve resources and reduce waste. In the next few weeks, the Finance Department will roll out a paperless billing alternative for utility customers that will decrease the city's use of paper products as well as reduce costs associated with the production and distribution of utility bills. Customers choosing to register for paperless billing will no longer receive a paper statement through the mail. Instead, an email notification will be sent to their designated email account when the bill is ready to be viewed. In addition, the paperless billing alternative will also provide quick and easy access to the City of Owasso's free on-line e-Gov bill pay system. The staff will utilize the City's website, Facebook, and Twitter accounts in the coming weeks to notify customers when the E-Statement Program is fully functional and ready to begin accepting registrations.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT:

NEW TECHNOLOGY - The Information Technology Department is working on launching a new technology that will enable persons using a smart phone to interact with the City. The IT Department is working with the Parks Department and Bailey Ranch Golf Club to develop practical applications for QR Codes. QR stands for Quick Response and is similar to a bar code. Many new smart phones come equipped with a QR reader, or one can be downloaded to the phone from an app store, such as Google Market or iTunes. The phone uses the app to scan the QR code which can launch a website, display text, or perform other functions. For example, staff is working to develop mobile pages in conjunction with the QR codes that will allow a park user to immediately report a problem with parks or playground equipment using their phone, as well as display park and shelter information. There are many uses for QR codes, and staff will continue to look at cost effective ways to incorporate their use in the efficient delivery of services to residents and visitors.

