



# THE COLUMNS

A Publication for the Residents of Mission Hills

**March 2021**

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See page 2 for information on the June 5th Community Engagement Event.

## Contents

Socially Distanced Community Engagement Event p. 2

Out on a Limb p.3

Spring Tree Checklist p.4

2021 Capital Improvement Projects p. 5

Seasonal Animal Safety Tips p. 6

## A Letter from Mayor Dickey



Fellow Residents:

What a topsy-turvy winter we have experienced! The Chiefs loss was the first day of the coldest February on record and as I write this, snow still covers most of our City. But there are wonderful signs of Spring if you look closely. More birds are out and about in our City. Some of the heartier plants have the tiniest of buds. And the days are noticeably longer. Within weeks the tree canopy will begin to turn green and the beauty of flowers across our City will be everywhere!

As we head into Spring, I have six updates for you.

First, in December following a national search, we named Jennifer Lee, our long-time Assistant City Administrator, to the Mission Hills City Administrator position. We are thrilled she has jumped into the role and I want to thank the search committee for their time and dedication to our City.

With Jennifer's move, we have found a new Assistant City Administrator, Justin Carroll. Justin comes to us from Johnson County and prior to that, a stint in state government in Topeka. We are excited to have Justin on board and learning about our community. We are confident he will be an excellent addition to the team.

In the spirit of even more change, Police Chief Tim Schwarzkopf retired after more than 25 years of service on December 31st, and our new Chief, Byron Roberson took over on January 1st. Byron has also been with the Mission Hills/Prairie Village PD for 25+ years and I assure you we are in great hands.

Our final change is the retirement of Tony Lopez as Chief of our fire department. Tony will be succeeded by Steve Chick who will begin as Chief on April 1st.

Whew!

Second, I want to thank all of our Boards and the volunteers who dedicate their time to making them work so well. Whether it is the BZA standing firm on variances, the Planning Commission shepherding our Comprehensive Plan, the Crime and Safety Committee partnering with the police to keep us safe, the Park Board enhancing the beauty of the City, or the ARB balancing what makes our City great with what people expect in a new home, they all do a fabulous job. Thank you.

**letter continued on page 2**

## Letter from the Mayor (continued)

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Third, I am hugely and genuinely optimistic that we are emerging from the pandemic. Please make no mistake, we must still be vigilant, but in addition to the ramp-up of vaccinations, the case trends, positivity rate and hospitalizations have been falling dramatically since mid-January and are at their lowest levels since June.

Please continue the protective measures we have all been practicing for almost a year, and importantly, stay in touch with your personal health care provider and the County information on vaccine availability:

<https://www.jocogov.org/covid-19-vaccine>

I cannot encourage you more to get a vaccine when it is your turn, please!

Fourth, with the progress being made on the pandemic, our Community Engagement Committee is looking out into the summer and fall to start bringing us safely back together again. Please see the quick article below and be on the lookout for more information this Spring.

Fifth, the Council continues to work toward final decisions on the plans for Tomahawk Road (being fully redone in 2022) and with the Planning Commission on next steps to comprehensively deal with water in our City. Final decisions on both should be forthcoming in the late Spring.

Finally, I want to let you know that the City remains safe and fiscally sound. We finished 2020 with the lowest crime rate in several years. Our revenues have held up well and Moody's (a credit rating firm) renewed our AAA bond rating, which very few cities hold.

Thank you for all of the support you have given each other this winter. As always, please continue to provide us feedback on how and where we can do better. You are welcome to call City Hall at 913-362-9620 or email [info@missionhillsks.gov](mailto:info@missionhillsks.gov). You are always welcome to email me directly at [mayor@missionhillsks.gov](mailto:mayor@missionhillsks.gov).

Have a safe and healthy Spring!

### **Save the Date!** **June 5, 2021, 6:00-8:30pm**

The Community Engagement Committee has been working diligently to put together a plan to bring Mission Hills residents back together for a (safe) social event this summer. The Committee has scheduled an early summer event that will include live music at City Hall Park. Residents are encouraged to bring a picnic dinner to enjoy the evening.

In the case of rain, the summer social will be moved to Sunday, June 6, 2021.

More information will be provided as planning continues!

## Out on a Limb; Tree Talk

By: Jesse Kirk, City Arborist

After a rough 2020 we're moving full steam ahead into 2021. Early in 2020 the economic scare associated with the pandemic initially seemed like a real threat to both the arboriculture industry as well as landscaping in general. As the year progressed I think many companies were surprised when work didn't drop off but actually increased. As we spent more time at home in our own outdoor spaces and nearby parks, people realized how important these spaces are to our wellbeing. I know the companies that we routinely work with have thankfully managed to stay very busy through 2020. Routine maintenance on your trees while not glamorous, can increase safety and aesthetics, increase longevity of trees and shrubs and ultimately decrease overall costs by reducing the likelihood of tree failures that would ultimately end in the removal of the tree. If you've been putting off routine or even hazard tree work give me a call to schedule a time to come and look and I can give you an unbiased professional opinion to help prioritize the necessary maintenance that fits your budget.

For 2021 we were able to continue on with our three year pruning cycle, meaning for the last several years we've been able (budget dependent) to prune one homes association in its entirety each year. This year we will complete the Indian Hills Homes Association. In 2022 we hope to prune all of Tomahawk Roads Homes Association. We have a very comprehensive pruning specification to ensure that quality tree work is done across the board regardless of which contractor is awarded the contract. We focus on establishing good tree structure at maturity to reduce the likelihood of failure and extend the life of these urban trees. We also remove all deadwood over an inch and raise and balance canopies to reduce vehicle conflicts and create more attractive trees.

Our goal is to plant 50-60 new trees this spring. We strive to replant every tree we remove however we've tightened up our planting guidelines to lessen future line of sight or utility conflicts. One of our primary goals through the planting program is to diversify the tree species lining our streets. In the past communities have relied on one to a few species to plant entire streets or sometimes even entire communities. With increased globalization comes increased invasive species, we've learned the hard way through several rounds of introduced species of insects or fungi wiping out millions of trees (chestnut blight, Dutch elm disease, emerald ash borer) that the uniform aesthetic of a single species has a significant downfall. When a pest species is introduced that can feed or live on these host species but the hosts haven't evolved defenses alongside them, they can wreak havoc, costing cities millions of dollars and completely eliminating certain plant species from the area. For Mission Hills this mostly means that we aren't planting any more red or sugar maples at this time, as they already make up such a large percentage of our canopy, and there are introduced insects from Asia that prefer maples already introduced into the eastern U.S. We also aren't planting anymore little leaf linden due to Japanese Beetles and are planting limited oaks from the white oak group versus the traditional pin and red oaks due to the threat of oak wilt.

From late summer through spring every year I receive numerous calls about what turns out to be squirrel damage. Usually it's about pin or red oaks dropping clumps of leaves. You can tell it's a squirrel by looking at where the cut took place, it will be a 45 degree ragged, almost serrated cut. This damage is usually relatively minor and has little impact on healthy trees. The second form of damage comes from bark stripping, mostly seen on red and sugar maples. It's worse in dry years with limited food and water as they're drinking the sugary sap that weeps from these wounds. For this reason, Kansas State University recommends feeding and watering the squirrels to reduce damage. This bark stripping can cause significant damage to canopies as limbs stripped around the entirety of their circumference will die. I recommend waiting until spring to see how these small diameter stripped limbs leaf out before removing. We have several sugar maples along the street that if we removed all the squirrel damaged limbs there would be almost no canopy left at all.

## Out on a Limb; Tree Talk (continued)

By: Jesse Kirk, City Arborist

The City will observe Arbor Day on June 14th at 6:00 pm prior to the City Council meeting. We are hopeful that we'll be able to gather as we dedicate a tree at Nature Island (Brookwood Rd. between State Line Rd. and Mission Dr.). This will be the 29th year for Mission Hills to be certified as a "Tree City USA" by the National Arbor Day Foundation.

Johnson County offers free soil testing for residents through the Kansas State Research and Extension office. If you wish to take advantage of this program more information is available at

<http://www.johnson.k-state.edu/lawn-garden/soil-testing/index.html>

### Spring and Summer Checklist by: George L. Eib, Posthumously

- Water the spring blooming bulbs that you planted last fall during dry periods.
- It is best not to cut back ornamental grasses or liriopie until the end of March or April.
- April is the perfect month to apply a pre-emergent on your lawn to reduce spring germinating weeds.
- I recommend spraying Austrian and Scotch pines for tip blight and spruce for needle cast. This requires two applications. First, when candles begin to elongate (March-April) and the second approximately four weeks later.
- Spray Junipers for spider mites and bagworms. This requires two applications starting with the first around mid-June, with the second application towards the end of July.
- In spring, spray crabapple and hawthorns for rust and scab diseases. This requires two applications, first when leaves begin to emerge (April-May), and an additional application 3-4 weeks later.
- Do not be alarmed if spring pruned trees weep sap as this is common this time of year especially on maples.
- If you plan to plant dogwoods, redbuds, oaks, beech or bald cypress, they are best transplanted in the spring.
- Do not allow vines and ivy to grow up into the interiors of plants as they can be damaging.

## Planting a Monarch Waystation

### Monarch Waystations



CREATE, CONSERVE, & PROTECT  
MONARCH HABITATS

We've all seen stunning images of Monarch Butterfly mass migrations that occur each year when millions of butterflies make the incredible trip from Canada and the United States to winter in the fir forests north of Mexico City. Did you know you can play a part in attracting these butterflies?

**Exposure:** Butterflies and the plants they love need lots of sunlight. Make sure your Waystation receives at least 6 hours of sun per day.

**Plant:** Monarch butterflies love Milkweed plants! Mix multiple species of flowering milkweed with other nectar providing flowers. Pick nectar sources that bloom sequentially or continuously throughout the season.

**Shelter:** Be sure to follow the instructions for each plant to be sure they have enough room, but remember, Monarch butterflies need plenty of shelter from predators and the elements.

# 2021 Capital Improvement Projects

## The Capital Improvement Program for 2021 includes:

- Rehabilitation of 67th Terrace from Belinder to Tomahawk with stormwater and street work.
- Rehabilitation of Arno Road and 69th Terrace with stormwater and street work.
- Mill and Pave of Mission Drive from 55th Street to State Line Road.

## Verona Columns Fountain Improvement Project to include:

- Removal and refurbishment of the sculpture from the oval basin, with restoration by statuary conservator.
- Exact replacement of the oval fountain basin.
- Removal of the existing black coating in the long rectangular basin, and installation of a new black coating.
- During this project, there will be no access to any portion of Verona Columns Park.

## BREAKING DOWN THE PROPERTY TAX DOLLAR

From police officers who protect and serve to overseeing snow removal on roads and bridges, property taxes are a necessary investment for all Kansas communities. Here's a breakdown of how property taxes are distributed in Mission Hills.



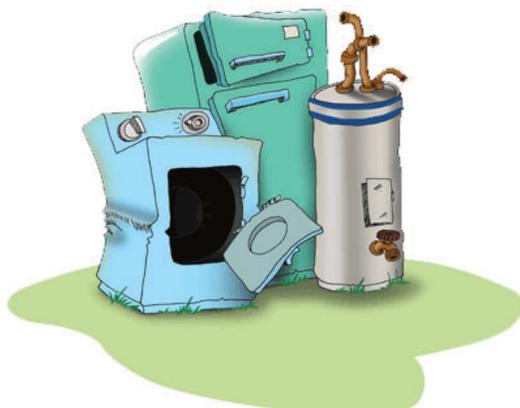
## Seasonal Reminders

### Bulky Item Pickup Days are Coming

Spring Bulky Item Pickup Day has been scheduled for Saturday, April 10th, 2021. Fall Bulky item Pickup Day is scheduled for Saturday, September 18, 2021. Items must be at the curb no later than 7am.

**Acceptable items:** Appliances, furniture, disassembled swing sets, carpet cut into 4'x4' sections, extra bags of trash that would normally require trash overage stickers. **Unacceptable items:** item or bag weighing more than 150lbs, yard waste, hazardous materials (paint, solvents, etc), construction demolition materials, compressed gas cylinders.

Call City Hall at (913) 362-9620 with any questions.



### Walking/Running Safety Tips

- Always walk or run against the flow of oncoming traffic. Facing a driver allows you a much faster response time to any wayward or distracted drivers.
- When possible, walk/run during daylight hours. For early morning/evening activity, stop by City Hall and pick up a free reflective vest for safety!
- Carry identification or include emergency information on the inside of your athletic shoe.
- Dress for the weather! Hot, cold, rain or shine, be sure you're dressed correctly for the elements.



# MISSION HILLS

KANSAS

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*The Columns* is published three times a year for the residents of Mission Hills.

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## Keeping Your Pets Safe: Spring Edition

After a long and cold winter, we're all eager to get outside and make the most of the weather in spring. You want to be out in the parks, gardening in your yard, and going on walks with your friends and family, both two legged and four legged. Knowing which plants and flowers that can be dangerous to your pet is crucial to avoid reactions to toxic plantings, ranging from skin rashes, to diarrhea and vomiting or even organ damage. Keep your animals out of the garden, and be sure any indoor floral arrangements are out of reach. Some of the common culprits are listed below:

- Amaryllis
- Azalea
- Buttercup
- Chrysanthemum
- Daffodil
- Gladiolus
- Hydrangea
- Iris
- Lilies\*
- Oleander
- Peony
- Rhododendron



Lilies deserve a special mention, as they are incredibly toxic to cats. In fact, a single nibble of any part of the plant, a sniff of pollen or even the water in a vase is all it can take for a lily to send a cat in to fatal kidney failure. If your pet begins exhibiting symptoms, call your vet immediately or visit a 24 hour emergency center.