

September 2015 Column

It's that time of year again. No, not the opening of dove season, and not the beginning of football season, and no, not back-to-school either. It's that wonderful time of year called Budget Season.

By the time this is published, we should have passed our city's budget for the coming year. The budget is a 2 inch thick monster that outlines how every dollar is received by the city, and how it is to be spent. The budget is influenced by many factors, but the main influence is property values.

Property values are a funny thing. Whenever a certain kind of project is built, or a certain kind of entity comes to town, and it is perceived as being odious in some way, people complain their property values are under assault, and will drop like a rock. On the other hand, when good things are happening and property values increase, they complain that their property has been way over-valued... until they try to sell it, of course.

I'm guilty of feeling that way myself. Nobody, including me, wants to pay more taxes every year. However, we'd all like to be able to sell our house for 3 times what we paid for it – or more.

So what I am about to say is either good news, or bad news, depending on how you perceive your present situation.

Here it is - property values in Seguin are increasing. The average home in Seguin is now valued at \$129,000. This is up from \$122,000 last year, and \$115,000 in 2013. That's almost a 10% gain in only 2 years. I know commercial real estate has experienced a similar increase as well.

Frankly, I think it is good news for many reasons. It means that we are building wealth among our population. The value of an individual homeowner's net-worth is on the rise in Seguin. It means that we are doing good things here, and creating jobs that are attracting people. It means that we live in an attractive, desirable place for families to call home. Our average home value is still below some neighboring communities, but we are starting to catch up.

More good news is that the tax rate charged per \$100 valuation went from \$.5244 to \$.5256. Virtually unchanged. However, I'm not going to give you the old saw about not raising your taxes. It's obvious that if your value goes up, your taxes go up. That is how we are able to pay for all the new streets, drainage and parks, and more police and fire personnel and everything else it takes to improve life in our city. If we weren't building the wealth with property values, we could not do all these improvements at the same tax rate.

Speaking of improvements, here are some quick answers to some frequently asked questions:

-Yes, the repairs on E. Court St. should be done in the next few weeks. We had to resolve some engineering issues with TxDot regarding stabilization of the roadside shoulder over the creek. Those issues have been resolved, and a crew will be on site as soon as they are available, and finish the job. The bad news is that we will have to perform similar repairs across the east fork of the creek (King's Branch) in the next few months. However, TxDot has approved a much swifter method of repair for that procedure.

-No, there is no real historical value, per se, to the "tunnels" we discovered under E. Court St. They were merely culverts originally built under the road to channel the creek. Yes, it was interesting to see them, but they are completely inaccessible to the public, 20 feet underground, and beneath a major roadway. We had to fill them in.

-Yes, the new WalMart is still planned for the I10/SH46 intersection. Construction begins next spring.

- Yes, there will be street construction going on all over town for as long as I am around. That will take another whole column to explain.

Don't forget the grand opening of Park West on Sept. 30th at 5:00 pm!

Gosh, I love this town!