

LOOKING FORWARD

NOTE: The city manager's comments below were made in his 2019 report. The report will be updated in March 2020.

The City of Stigler, the county seat, is focused on numerous activities and issues as government leaders and residents continue to prepare for the future, according to City Manager Bobby Mouser.

New sports complex

The new sports complex is scheduled to be completed and ready to use by June 1.

"We've just had so many rain days," which delayed construction of the new facility, Mouser explained.

"We're really disappointed that we won't get to start our league play on the new facilities," he said, and added that the facility will be ready to use by June 1 unless the area receives significant more rainfall.

"The excitement is building," he said. "I know young and old alike are anxious to see it, anxious to use it, anxious for it to be another place for the community to go and participate in sports events."

"It is going to be an extremely nice facility," he said.

It would not be possible without the support of the Choctaw Nation, which provided a grant to help fund the project, he said.

"The new sports complex will be a tremendous venue for all who use it. We are very fortunate to have a partner like the Choctaw Nation and Councilman (Ron) Perry support this extremely ambitious project for Stigler," Mouser said.

The city manager also referenced grants the Choctaw Nation provided for the water tower and a new water

meter system and said the personal efforts of councilman Perry "made these grants possible."

Taxes

"So far, 2019 from a fiscal year perspective, has been good for tax," he said.

The city has seen an approximate four percent tax increase over last year, which is approximately \$85,000 to \$90,000 in increases in tax collections, Mouser explained, adding that the city has outpaced the national growth this year.

More and more vendors on the Internet are collecting sales tax, which positively affects Stigler.

"I think we can continue to see some growth from Internet revenue as people start collecting sales tax," Mouser said.

Stigler-Haskell County Chamber of Commerce

"Janice (Williams), as an executive director, has done a tremendous job of supporting the city's direction and promoting Stigler and what it has to offer, through our shop local programs.

She has a very engaged board of directors. All of the events that are sponsored by the chamber are well done. I really feel blessed as a city manager to have a chamber director, a chamber leadership group and a group of volunteers that really sets us apart. I think that's another reason that we have seen some economic improvement as well."

Business development

Mouser stressed the importance of the county's partnership with the Small Business Development Council, which provides a specialist, Dana Hugle, to work with prospective and

existing business owners.

He credited the county's partnership with the council with the opening of several new businesses and continued operation of other business.

New businesses

"I'm also excited about the continued investment in Stigler," Mouser said. A new strip center on the west end of town is completely occupied. Another building near that center is being remodeled and will soon open as a restaurant.

The additions to the west end of town will have a positive effect – aesthetically and economically - on the town, he said.

Hospital

Haskell County Community Hospital has faced numerous, and what appeared to be insurmountable, obstacles recently. However, hospital employees, the City of Stigler, Haskell County and community volunteers are working together to overcome those obstacles and make sure the county continues to offer hospital services. "The hospital is critical, vital to Stigler and the entire area," Mouser said.

Airport

"The weather has delayed the completion of the pad site expansion project," Mouser said. "We have been trying since December to install the electrical and water infrastructure so that people can lease and build hangars." Mouser said the project, which will provide several pad sites, will be completed as soon as weather permits. "As soon as that's done, people can start building," he said.

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Volunteers

Mouser said he is appreciative of the volunteers in the community. He thanked the members of civic organizations, clubs and other volunteers "for their generosity in terms of time and financial gifts for projects in and around Stigler,"

"We have one of the most caring, volunteer attitudes of any community," he said. "They just do so much to

improve the quality of life for all of our citizens."

Roye Park

"Roye Park is again continuing to play a big part in making Stigler a destination," he said.

Mouser said he wanted to thank Flo Conklin for everything she does in organizing volunteer efforts to raise money that's needed for park upgrades and ongoing maintenance.

"We have raised and reinvested a tremendous amount of financial and human resources in the park over the past three years," he said. Significant ongoing maintenance is required, he added "The city will do its role. The school will do its role. Of course, it's really going to be up to the volunteers to find ways to raise money and help us out," Mouser said.

City continues focus on infrastructure

One of the focus points for the city continues to be infrastructure. Water, sewer, roads – those things that are essential to people being able to live safely, comfortably and affordably within the city," Mouser said.

Wastewater plant

"We're real pleased with the operation of the new wastewater plant – both its effectiveness and its cost." Mouser added that the new plant is much more efficient than the old one and has less negative effect on the environment.

Water plant

The city's new water plant, which Mouser describes as "one of the most important undertakings in recent years," will be completed this summer.

The record wet winter has delayed the project, but Mouser said it

should be completed by June.

"It will provide safe, clean, reliable and affordable water for the next 40 or 50 years," he said.

Water tower

The city's water tower on the west side of the city was refurbished in 2018 with funds from a grant from the Choctaw Nation.

"I want to thank Councilman (Ron) Perry and the Nation for their generosity to Stigler," Mouser said.

The water tower is "brightly lit and Stigler's new beacon as you drive in from either direction, freshly painted with the new logo," he said.

With the grant, the city was able to complete a rehabilitation project on the water tower for approximately \$180,000.

A new tower would have cost approximately \$1.5 million.

The tower will provide the city

with "basically the same life extension" as a new one, he added.

Water meter system

The city is preparing to replace the city's entire water meter system and install an automatic meter infrastructure, Mouser explained.

The city is looking to start the project as soon as the water treatment plant is completed.

Once installed, the city's new water meter system will be much more efficient.

The project will be funded by the remaining funds from the Choctaw Nation's water improvement grant.

Water customers can expect a modest increase in water and sewer rates going forward, because the city's expenses to provide the services will continue to increase, Mouser added.