

City manager impressed with ‘engaged community focused on making a difference’



The passage of a half-cent sales tax by Stigler voters on Feb. 9 was not the most important thing that happened this year, according to Stigler City Manager Bobby Mouser.

It is important and “will allow us to do many of the things that we need to – both short and long term – that probably never would have been an option without this source of revenue,” he said. “But I think the biggest win this year is the re-engaged community.” Mouser said Stigler is benefiting from the number of people who turned out to vote (for the sales tax increase), are getting involved, volunteering for projects and to serving on various committees.

“That’s what I’m encouraged by. We’ve got a new interest,” he added, referring to increased interest in Stigler-Haskell County Chamber of Commerce, volunteer organizations and church groups. He also mentioned a new initiative which is focused on raising funds to make improvements to Roye Park, which is near

the high school and middle school. (Information regarding this initiative is included in this publication.)

He added that while there have been community projects in Stigler in the past, it has been several years. “I think we are at a stage now where every year we’ll be ready to take on something else, because we see improvement and we see what value it brings to the community,” he said.

“Sales tax is important,” he continued, but what I’m most impressed with is the involvement and engagement of community and the commitment to doing your part, whatever that is, to make it a better place.”

In 2016, the city of Stigler will continue to work with the Burns Consulting Group in developing an economic plan. The city benefited from private partners who provided the funds to hire the group, and is working with consultants as they prepare the formal consulting proposal.

The initial work includes four tasks:

- ▶ Identify the community’s economic development strengths and weaknesses. (85 percent complete)

- ▶ Propose recommendations for industry sectors that are the best fit for the community. (Complete)

- ▶ Conduct a review of the current prospect recruitment and marketing process including messages, practices, and materials used and develop a revised marketing and recruitment strategy with competitive advantages identified and guidance on developing and compiling support materials. (75 percent complete)

- ▶ Conduct a critique of the industrial park and select other sites suited for development. (Complete.)

Mouser explained that the tasks must be completed before the city can have an economic development plan, which he compared to a job resume. The information listed above – the “before tasks” must be ready so that the city can respond immediately when businesses request information, he said.

“We’re not prepared as a community to be competitive and responsible in today’s marketplace,” he said. “The community’s goal is to get there within the next year to a year and a half.”

Funds from the recently approved sales tax increase will be used for capital projects only, and will benefit the city’s economic and community development efforts, Mouser said. City officials expect to receive an additional \$320,000-\$340,000 in sales taxes from the additional half cent.

He added that economic development for Stigler is a process and “we are well on the way.”

City representatives have and will continue to address other issues, including a new hospital facility, wastewater treatment plant, water treatment plant, pipes, hospital, new ideas and focus from the Industrial Trust and Airport Commission members.

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