



## Office of the Mayor

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### **New Harlingen Mayor Sets Goals and Deadlines** **Aggressive Harlingen 100 Plan Announced**

Within minutes of assuming the office of Mayor of Harlingen, Texas, The Honorable Chris Boswell last night announced an aggressive set of goals, strategies, and deadlines for his first months in office. In announcing what he terms the “Harlingen 100 Plan,” he invited community members to help set the stage for “where we want Harlingen to be as we near the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our founding” in 2010.

The mayor outlined several important goals and key strategies he will use to unite and lead the community. The first will be to set a definitive timetable for relocation of the switchyards just north of downtown Harlingen. By working closely with the Regional Mobility Authority, he hopes to quickly develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the railroad and bring it to the Commission for approval within the next 30 days.

Second, the new mayor invited the public to participate in public forums and a workshop on August 18 “to discuss and develop quality of life projects for the City.” Up for consideration, he suggested, should be downtown development projects, a birding center, an aquarium, and issues raised in the 2003 Tourism Plan, such as the need to improve the appearance of the community. He will be appointing committees to do advance planning prior to this workshop and invited candidates who were not elected to participate in these meetings.

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A third goal is, by August 18, to have presented to the City Commission the Articles of Incorporation and ByLaws for the new 4B Corporation approved by the voters in the recent election. This is critical, he said, so that the Board can “hear and respond to the ideas presented at this initial quality of life workshop.” The 4B Corporation will be the primary funding source for a coordinated strategy to develop these quality of life projects, he said.

The mayor announced additional public forums and a workshop on September 8 to focus on economic development issues. Topics will include job creation, retail development projects, and the TIF (Tax Increment Finance District), which recently was created. This workshop will focus on aspects of the *Harlingen First!* Plan for Economy Vitality, completed in 2006, and gather input from the community on how to best enhance and develop key assets such as Valley International Airport, Texas State Technical College, and the health centers in Harlingen (including Valley Baptist Health System, Harlingen Medical Center, and the Regional Academic Health Center).

A final workshop will be held on September 29 to report the results and assign action plans and responsible parties to develop and gain approval for an overall plan and strategy for the community, he said.

Mayor Boswell emphasized the need for more effective communication amongst and between community members and leaders. Toward this end, he announced the resumption of regular “Get-togethers with the Mayor” to report to the community on projects, field questions, and hear concerns. The first of these will be held in June. “I also will be inviting the leaders of what we use to call the ‘Partners in Progress’: the Airport, Waterworks, City Hall, RAHC, TSTC, the School District, the Chambers, and others to meet quarterly for the purpose of sharing progress on projects,” he said. “It is my hope that regular dialogue will lead to fewer missed opportunities and a better expression of concerns for future development.”

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Other plans in the immediate future include meetings with elected officials in Austin on Friday, May 18, and with Cameron County Judge Carlos Cascos next week. Mayor Boswell also said he would soon be scheduling meetings with mayors of neighboring communities.

“We are like a family here in Harlingen,” Mayor Boswell observed. “We may have disagreements on how to do something, but we all want the same things: good jobs, a safe community, a future for our children.” In closing, he vowed to carry on with the vision of growth and development set by his predecessors and to rely on the direction, consensus, and support of those currently serving on the City Commission.

For more information or interviews, contact Mayor Chris Boswell at (956) 428-9191 (office) or (956) 498-3676 (mobile).

