



CITY OF JERSEY VILLAGE, TEXAS

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Mayor's Newsletter April 2008

YOU CAN'T HAVE IT BOTH WAYS

When I assumed the role of Mayor almost a year ago, I knew that the phone would soon start ringing and I would hear from the good citizens of Jersey Village on a regular basis. I have not been disappointed in that regard. I am not complaining; on the contrary, I welcome comments about all aspects of Village life and local government.

Numerous people have communicated with me about codes that need to be enforced or violations that need to be fixed in the Village. Half of the calls range from speeders to noise to complaints about code violations, and the calls come in with regularity. Citizens let me know that too many people are speeding through the Village, not stopping at stop signs, not keeping up their houses properly or parking in illegally.

The other calls are complaints about how the city government is doing its job or in regards to complaints that were filed on the callers. People are calling because they received a ticket for speeding or turning left in front of the high school; others have received tickets or warnings by the police or code enforcement officers about violations of which they were unaware or with which they disagree.

What I find interesting is that some of the citizens complaining about speeders are the same ones that are upset when their children or friends get tickets. That is when the situation is no-win: when we are asked by Village residents to enforce the laws and codes, as long as it doesn't affect our friends, family and neighbors.

The first thing to consider is whether or not these traffic laws and codes are valid and consistent with what the residents want to have in the city. Traffic laws are enacted to keep the citizens safe; speed limits are set in consideration of pedestrians and children who are playing in the neighborhood. If these traffic laws are not established properly, then City Council needs to re-visit them. I think most people would agree that we need to enforce them, and that includes everyone. We cannot just enforce the laws for selected people.

The issue of code enforcement is a little gray, however. One of the reasons Jersey Village is a great place to live is that we have a good set of codes and we enforce them. You do not have to go far to look at other neighborhoods that do not enforce their codes. Those neighborhoods have deteriorating property values, are havens for the bad elements of society and are not pleasant places to live.

In Jersey Village, the codes cover almost everything from how houses are built to where and when vehicles can be parked to leaving trash at the curb. Most of us do not really know most of the codes. What one person considers a violation may not be a violation to another. For example, do you know that trash cannot be left at the curb until 5 PM on Monday? If you have a pile of trash from weekend yard work, you must keep it out of sight until Monday evening. Commercial vehicles and boats are not allowed to be parked in sight of the street overnight.

The issue of codes certainly has two sides. While they are written in plain English, the interpretations can vary from person to person. Most people want the codes enforced, but most people do not want the codes enforced against them personally. Again, that is an impossible situation. We are fortunate to have citizens that care about the upkeep of the neighborhood and regularly let city personnel know about violations in the neighborhood. Based on how the code is written, however, some of these reports aren't actually violations. Another problem is that our code enforcement officers cannot be everywhere all the time. When it became apparent that some of the reported violations only occur at night, the City added an after-hours/weekend shift for code enforcement.

The City Council will have a workshop on Monday, April 21 at 6:00 pm with the Planning and Zoning Commission to discuss which codes should be written differently. If you have input on that subject, please take the opportunity to come to the workshop.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Samuel A. Hinkle". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the page.