

Burton Matters – December 2025

We have had an incredible year here in the City of Burton! Lots of work was done on behalf of the city and its residents. Let's take a look at four items that I want to highlight –

Item 1 – Water. Yes, water remains the first and foremost topic here in the City of Burton. We remain grateful for the grant money the city received from the Texas Governor's Land Office. However, it was not enough to fully fund the drilling of Water Well #5. Per advice and counsel from both a Financial Advisor and Bond Counsel, the City Council voted to issue a \$675,000 Certificate of Obligation (COO). This COO was secured by Citizens State Bank, our local bank here in town. Eventually, we moved to the bid process and awarded the project to C. Miller Drilling. Final engineering and electrical work is scheduled to be completed by December 31, 2025. Then, the city is on TCEQ's timeline for water testing before Water Well #5 can be put into service for the city.

Secondary to the drilling of this water well, the city's ONLY working water well went down in February due to a short in the electrical system in the pump...way down in the water well itself. It was a frantic day for ALL of Burton, including those being served by the school district, as we had no water services here in town. However, by the end of the day, water had been restored as J&S Water Well Services was able to have a team onsite to get the job done as fast as humanly possible!

Another water challenge for our city was encountered in July and August as testing on WW#5 was done over 24-hour and 36-hour periods. It took the entire community working together to be mindful of water usage so that businesses could remain open AND residents could maintain a quality of life with water services. This was the biggest group project of the year! And the community was amazing through it all!

The City of Burton also applied for a grant with the Texas Water Development Board to address a main water line downtown serving businesses and the school district as well as over mile of service line for residential customers that has documented breaks dating back to 2008. While we did not receive funding this round, the city will be applying again in 2026.

Item 2 – Land Division & Development Ordinance – While the city staff and councilmembers spent 6 months in workshops and working with legal counsel and engineers on a "Subdivision Ordinance" (SDO) for land within the city limits of Burton, in the end, this ordinance failed in January. When 2 of the 3 councilmembers who voted "no" on the SDO questioned what they voted on, the SDO was brought back to Council in February for a second vote. Again, it was voted down. However, after receiving feedback from residents stating the need for a subdivision/land division ordinance, one councilmember asked to form an advisory committee of residents to assist with re-working this ordinance. At this point, this new SDO/Land Division Ordinance has been reviewed by legal and is in process of being reviewed by an engineering firm who specializes in these types of ordinances.

Per the advice and counsel from multiple vendors, engineers, legal counsel, those who specialize in economic development and/or urban planning, and even residents themselves, it is imperative that the City of Burton have a SDO/Land Division Ordinance in place to protect the city's infrastructure as well as current and future residents and businesses. This ordinance will be in front of Council in a workshop early next year.

Item 3 – Economic Development – Since taking office as mayor, the focus has been on water – water well, water loss, water lines, water meters, water planning, etc. Water and other infrastructure like wastewater, roads, and drainage are the backbone of our city. Without them, especially water services, we would not have one of the most basic building blocks of life and community needs. No water = No economic development possibilities.

As we have moved forward in dealing with water issues and other infrastructure needs, the focus shifted to “actual” economic development conversations. In July (shortly after the position was staffed), I met with John Huang who is the Economic & Development liaison with the Brazos Valley Council of Governments (BVCOG). He shared with me ALL of the things that had to offer. Then, I shared with him where the City of Burton was in regards to water, no SDO/land division ordinance, no planning & zoning ordinance (fyi – the SDP/land division one must be passed first). He commented that he was “too soon” for the City of Burton. I agreed and told him that we should meet again in 1 year.

Then in August, I was made aware of the County's Inter Local Agreement (ILA) with the City of Brenham regarding Economic Development. In short, ILAs are the “red tape”/paperwork that allows different municipalities or government entities to work together. After multiple conversations, historical research, emails, and reading the ILA for myself, I learned that the City of Burton was not present “at the table” when the ILA was written AND was neither included nor excluded in this economic development ILA. As Mayor, I have asked on behalf of the City of Burton for the County to AMEND the ILA to include the “other” incorporated city within the County. As it currently stands, the incorporated City of Burton and its elected leadership are locked out of access to Economic Development within this ILA and any partnerships in that endeavor in the County.

Recently, the Economic & Development arm of the BVCOG held a “SWOT” here in Washington County. “SWOT” stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. I could not attend due to travel plans, but I did my “mayor homework” and sent a full SWOT report for the City of Burton. Additionally, I wrote a review for the City of Burton regarding our activities as they line up with the BVCOG's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2021). All of these documents will be found in the section titled “Mayor's Reports” on the City of Burton's website *after* the next council meeting in January.

Item 4 – Texas Target Communities. The City of Burton's application and acceptance into this program sponsored by Texas A&M has been an incredible investment of time and resources for the good of the city! After a competitive selection process to be chosen as a

“project” for graduating seniors in the Biological and Agricultural Engineering Department, the City of Burton was teamed up with a professional group of students. Their project extends over 2 semesters and will involve mapping the wastewater system, identifying problem-solving solution(s) for areas in need, as well as evaluating our system for growth.

In January 2026, a second team of A&M students majoring in Urban Planning will assess the City of Burton for areas that include but are not limited to mixed use development, housing, and real estate innovation; streetscapes and connectivity for multimodal transportation, public spaces and cultural placemaking, and studies that might include population, housing, and other city infrastructures.

On our own, the City of Burton could never accomplish all of this without the support of our residents, elected leadership, vendors, engineers, legal counsel, contractors, and of course, city staff!

Whew! It is an exciting time here in town. Why? Well, because...Burton Matters!!!

Thank you for allowing me to serve the City of Burton a second term. I remain committed to protecting the City of Burton and its infrastructure and continue to seek ways to improve our lives together as residents here in town.

Mayor Karen