

MUD NEWS

Municipal Utility District # 61

Volume II, Issue II

President's Corner

In spite of some really wonderful spring weather that would make any Chamber of Commerce proud, summertime is now upon us with our typical southeast Texas heat. In addition, the drought that has gripped our state for months now is continuing with no relief in sight as yet.

As the "dog days" of summer wear on, many municipalities will likely be forced to take steps to conserve water; some have already begun to ration usage. As I am sure you are aware, H.C.M.U.D. 61 has not been required to implement such measures thus far this year. While it is obviously not possible to forecast what the future may bring, several years ago your board took advantage of an opportunity to purchase additional production capacity in our water plant which has helped to mitigate the need for such measures in the past and we will continue to do everything feasible to make sure our property owners have an adequate supply of quality water. We also wish to say "Thank you" for helping us with this effort through wise, conservative practices.

On another front, your board is very pleased to announce that for the second year in a row, H.C.M.U.D. 61 has been selected to receive the *Gold Leadership Circle Award* from the Texas State Comptroller of Public Accounts in Austin. This program is open not only to water districts, but to all municipalities across the state. It was created to encourage and to recognize transparency in municipal government operations. Last year your district was one of only three municipal utility districts in the State of Texas to earn this award.

This year, despite an increase in the requirements established by the state to merit the top award, H.C.M.U.D. 61 met nineteen out of twenty of those requirements. Our website continues to receive frequent "hits" from other municipalities searching for ways to improve their operations in attempts to qualify for these awards.

If you have not visited your district's website, please do so. The URL is <http://www.hcmud61.org/>. It remains your board's objective that our residents and property owners are as fully informed as possible as to the operation of the district.



MUD #61 is a GOLD Leadership Circle Award Member. One of only three MUDs in the State of Texas to achieve this status.

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State of Texas Leadership Circle

For the second year in a row, Harris County Municipal Utility District # 61 has been awarded the Gold Leadership award from the Comptroller's Office of the State of Texas. This award is based on information that is posted on the District's website. The Comptroller's website has published details and background and is reprinted below:

The Comptroller of Public Accounts launched the Texas Comptroller Leadership Circle program in December 2009 to recognize local governments across Texas striving to meet a high standard for financial transparency online. We are spotlighting those local governments that are:

- opening their books to the public
- providing clear, consistent pictures of spending
- sharing information in a user-friendly format that lets taxpayers easily drill down for more information.

We are renewing this award program, effective Jan. 1, 2011, with improved award criteria. All nominations submitted after Dec. 20, 2010, must use the new award criteria available in this packet. The new criteria clarifies the definitions and adds a few new criteria to offer more options and reward those local governments that go beyond the basics of posting three recommended documents — the Budget, the Annual Financial Report (or Comprehensive Annual Financial Report) and the Check Register — in a user friendly manner. It retains the key qualities which have made the first year of this program so successful — simplicity, fairness to all applicants, the free, self-scoring nomination system and ease of use for both applicants and our staff.

We will award Leadership Circle designees with a certificate reflecting their Circle Award level: Gold, Silver or Bronze.



“Gold” highlights those entities that are setting the bar with their transparency efforts.



“Silver” encourages those who are making progress.



“Bronze” inspires those who are just beginning their transparency efforts.

Financial transparency is an ongoing goal for any government entity. We encourage and applaud local governments across Texas that

are stepping up efforts to give taxpayers a transparent look at where their money goes.

Criteria going into scoring are:

Major Criteria *(Max 8 points)*

- Adopted budget** *(2 points)*
- Annual financial report** *(2 points)*
- Check/expense register** *(2 points)*
- Financial transparency Web page** *(2 points)*

Minor Criteria *(Max 12 points)*

- Local government contact information** *(1 point)*
- Contact information for elected official** *(1 point)*
- Public information request** *(1 point)*
- Easy access to financial document** *(1 point)*
- Budgets for three fiscal years** *(1 point)*
- Annual financial reports for three years** *(1 point)*
- Check registers for three fiscal years** *(1 point)*
- Searchable check/expense registers** *(1 point)*
- Descriptive check/expense registers** *(1 point)*
- Visual representation of financial data** *(1 point)*
- Current tax rates** *(1 point)*
- Raw format budget** *(1 point)*

Total Points Received *(Max 20 points)*

In a letter to MUD 61, Michelle Luera, Local Government Assistance and Economic Analysis, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts said; “Congratulations on your success in implementing financial transparency and receiving a Leadership Circle Award for a second year in a row.

As the regional representative for your region, I am pleased to inform you that Harris County Municipal Utility District #61 has earned a GOLD Leadership Circle Award by scoring 19 of twenty possible points on our ratings criteria.”

Construction at Earl of Dunmore and Mason Road

For approximately the last two years your District’s engineer has been working with Harris County to resolve an issue that was first brought to light during the flooding study done after the extremely heavy rainfall in 2009. Mason Road was developed at a higher elevation than Earl of Dunmore, resulting in water flowing from Mason Road, down Earl of Dunmore and then much of it winding up on Abby Aldrich and flowing south.

Harris County, recognized the extensive work on the flooding study done by the District in coming to the decision to begin this work. Harris County reported that during the 2009 storm over 2200 subdivisions reported flooding, making it impossible for the County to address most of these issues.

Before the work began, the District had to relocate a water main and install a valve in the main. Once that was done, Harris County could begin its work. As of this writing, Earl of Dunmore has been opened and the new drainage has been installed. This new drainage should intercept much of the water flowing off of Mason Road before it can travel down Earl of Dunmore.

Update on Sanitary Sewer Inspection & Repairs

In the last newsletter (still available on the website; <http://www.hcmud61.org>) we talked about the sewer inspection going on in the neighborhood. That inspection has been completed and the results are available on the website under the Important Information & Notices tab. Many sections of the sewer system date back to the origins of the

subdivision, making them over 40 years old. The district now has a complete survey of the condition of the sanitary sewer lines and are able to understand what is required to correct the issues discovered. Looking at the survey on the website, one can see that the project was broken into three priorities. The priorities are listed in rank order. The total repairs exceed \$1 million dollars, money that the district will have to finance to complete repairs. In the May 2011 meeting, the directors voted to sell municipal bonds to pay for the repairs. Selling bonds for each priority would raise the cost of sales significantly and the district determined that the best course of action would be to affect all of the three priorities at this time. The district’s financial advisors have determined that the bonds can be sold and the debt paid with no increases in taxes. As of this writing, the bond sale proposals are being developed for submittal to the state and other regulating bodies. By early 2012, we can expect to see contractors in the subdivision relining the sanitary sewer lines. The district does not expect any disruption of service to the residents.

Suggestions for topics that you would like to see in the newsletter are welcome. Send your comments or suggestions to HCMUD61@gmail.com

Please visit our website at:

<http://www.hcmud61.org>