

City of Copperas Cove Information Item

OCTOBER 22, 2014

Report on the 2014 AUSA Conference

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SUBJECT: Association of United States Army Conference and Legislative Meetings

1. BACKGROUND/HISTORY

Each year, the City sends representatives to the annual AUSA Conference. Legislative meetings with the U.S. Senators and House Representatives are typically scheduled while in Washington, D.C. to review the City's Legislative Agenda.

FINDINGS/CURRENT ACTIVITY

The 2014 AUSA Conference was attend by City Manager, Andrea Gardner and Council Members, Mark Peterson, Marty Smith and Gary Kent. Prior to the first official day of the conference, the Central Texas AUSA Chapter schedules various events for the delegates to attend. The events include the Army 10-Miler Hooah Tent for the ten-mile race on Sunday morning and the Army Vice-Chief of Staff reception held later that afternoon. The race tent is setup to show all runners that Central Texas is present to support them and cheer them on to complete the race. The reception provides a networking atmosphere that is more relaxed. The 2014 reception was hosted by General Dan Allyn and the discussions provided an opportunity to express concerns with the next round of sequestration and the impacts such action will have on the Central Texas economy. Discussions regarding maintaining troop levels at Fort Hood ensued and led to the importance of Fort Hood and its economic impact of \$16.6 Billion to the Central Texas region.

Day one of the conference began with an Opening Ceremony that lasted several hours and included a speech by the Secretary of the Army, a presentation on the Army titled "Trusted Professionals – Today and Tomorrow". The presentation highlighted the warrior transition battalion, stewardship of the Army profession, military expertise and ended with "Trusted Professionals – Today and Tomorrow" video to highlight many of the soldiers serving the Nation.

The Honorable John McHugh, Secretary of the Army, highlighted the importance of removing gridlock from Washington and the various deployments of soldiers

(ebola outbreak, Syrian crisis, the ISIS terror threat and general humanitarian efforts). He discussed the need for the U.S. Army to remain robust since the country is called upon so often to keep the peace across the globe. The complications of training soldiers in our country's time of diminished budgets was addressed.

The Central Texas AUSA Chapter was recognized during the awards portion of the Opening Ceremony.

A Corporate Member Luncheon was hosted by MG Patricia Hickerson with guest speaker, General Dennis Via. General Via discussed many of the points made by the Secretary of the Army in greater detail and provided many examples of the Army's trusted professionals. The luncheon concluded with the issuance of various awards.

The majority of the day on Tuesday, October 14, 2014, was spent on "the Hill" meeting with the U.S. Senators and Representatives addressing the City's Legislative Agenda (see attached) and attending the Dwight D. Eisenhower Luncheon with guest speaker, Raymond Odierno. The day ended with a "Texas Friendly Spoken Here" Reception that allowed City delegates to complete additional networking and say "Thank You" to all of those in attendance and serving at Fort Hood.

A written report provided by Council Member Mark Peterson is also attached.

Association United States Army
11 – 15 October 2014

We attended a reception at the home of **Army Vice Chief of Staff, General Dan Allyn** where we were able to voice our concerns with the next round of sequestration and how this would really affect our economy here in the Central Texas area. We discussed how to keep our troop levels up which supports our local community. This economic impact to the Central Texas Area is \$16.6 billion, according to the Army.

We were able to hear **The Secretary of the Army, Honorable John McHugh** talk about the future of the Army with deployments of soldiers to help with Ebola outbreak, Syria, ISIS and general humanitarian efforts. He explained the need to remain robust since we are called upon so often to keep the peace across the globe. Having to train soldiers with diminished budgets has been a challenging but we press on. The tough choices we have already made will be eroded if sequestration returns. It will require the army to slash forces well below 450k soldiers. Officers & NCO's have bent over backwards and lived with the cuts. This made it look easy and made those outside the military think we can absorb more. It is our job to continue to tell the story.

We also visited our representatives in Washington:

Congressman John Carter
(Grady Borne, Legislative Aide)

Congressman Roger Williams
(Madison Smith, Legislative Aide)

Senator Ted Cruz
(Samantha Leahy, Legislative Aide)

Senator John Cornyn
(Lauren Canfield, Legislative Aide)

The following issues were discussed with all of the offices mentioned above:

- Requested assistance from the Federal Government to authorize a proposed **land swap**. We have already received a letter of support from Congressman Williams's office since our visit to his office. This will give us more land for commercial development space in the future.
- Requested assistance with the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (**SAFER**) **Grant**. As we look at the construction of Fire Station number 4, we will need additional firefighters. We requested that a city, such as Copperas Cove, which is heavily impacted by the 100% disabled tax exemption, receive additional scoring criteria on their grant application to help with funding for the additional firefighters.
- Requested assistance with the Community Oriented Policing Services (**COPS**) **Grant**. We requested that a city, such as Copperas Cove, which is heavily impacted by the 100% disabled tax exemption, receive additional scoring criteria on their grant application to help with funding for the additional firefighters.
- Requested assistance in the interpretation of the ambiguous **Affordable Care Act of 2010**. The language in Notice 2013-54 from the Internal Revenue Service regarding Flexible Spending Accounts has been interpreted differently by experts. The City has chosen the most conservative approach by limiting the City's FSA contributions to an employee to \$ 500.00 whereas before the City paid \$ 2,500.00 yearly, which is a significant impact to our employees. The substantial reduction is now causing personnel recruitment and retention issues.
- Requested support to maintain the troop levels currently authorized to Fort Hood. We informed our representatives that we support a Base Realignment and Closure (**BRAC**) in 2017 for the Army to help reduce the impact of sequestration and the impact to the regional and state economy. Keeping Fort Hood at current or higher troop strengths would positively impact our community.

The knowledge that we bring back to our community includes issues that save the city money or bring the city money, in the case of grants that we are able to learn about and receive. Networking at the AUSA convention is invaluable. In a short amount of time, we are able to meet with legislators, military officials, government officials, contractors who work in our area or may want to move to our area, as well as officials from other states and cities. We are able to compare what works for communities, gather new ideas, learn about upcoming legislation that will affect our area, and work on grants that save our communities significant amounts of money.

Legislative Agenda



Request

Fort Hood Land Swap
SAFER Grant Program
COPS Grant Program

Position

Transportation Funding—MAP 21 and Public Transit

Impact

Clean Water Act
Affordable Care Act

Other Matters of Interest to the City of Copperas Cove

Request

Title XVI Water Reclamation and
Reuse Program

Position

Assistance to Firefighters Grant
Community Development Block Grant Program
Community Services Block Grant Program

Impact

EPA Mandated Nutrient Criteria
Endangered Species Act (ESA)
National Invasive Species Act (NISA)

Disabled Veterans Exemption
Fort Hood Troop Levels
Department of the Army Fair Market
Value Policy



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Request

FORT HOOD LAND SWAP

The City of Copperas Cove requests assistance from the Federal Government to authorize a proposed land exchange with Fort Hood.

- The City requests a land exchange with Fort Hood for approximately 300 acres from U.S. Highway 190 to Farm-to-Market Road (FM) 116 which will become separated for the rest of Fort Hood upon completion of State Highway 9.
- Approximately 800 acres of City/Economic Development Corporation land along FM 116 adjacent to Fort Hood's northwestern maneuver area will be considered in the land exchange to expand the current training area of the installation.
- Fort Hood Garrison Commander Colonel Matthew Elledge supports the exchange and has requested conceptual approval.
- A letter dated December 4, 2013 responds to requests from Installation Management Command detailing the proposed commercial use of the exchanged land to complement current commercial development in close proximity.
- H.R. 4297 was introduced March 25, 2014 and was referred to the House Subcommittee on Readiness on July 1, 2014.
- General Milley sent a memo dated June 4, 2014 to Army head quarters providing preliminary approval of the land exchange.

SAFER GRANT FUNDING PROGRAM

The City of Copperas Cove supports funding for the SAFER Grant Program and requests the grant program add criteria for local benefits provided to 100% disabled veterans.

- City has benefited from the grant in the past with 6 firefighters employed today that otherwise would not have been hired.
- Increased protection services for our City that otherwise would not have happened if not for the grant – more firefighters allows for a higher level of service and quicker response.
- The City submitted grant applications in August 2012 and 2013 and subsequently notified we were not awarded the grant.
- The City will submit a grant application in 2014 and that will provide for 24 months of funding for approved positions. This recovery of expenses is a great benefit to smaller communities especially during strained economic times.
- The City request additional scoring criteria be added to the grant application for local benefits provided to 100% disabled veterans.

COPS GRANT PROGRAM

The City of Copperas Cove supports funding for the COPS Grant Program and the grant program add criteria for local benefits provided to 100% disabled veterans.

- The COPS Hiring Program (CHP) is designed to increase the capacity of law enforcement agencies to implement community policing strategies that strengthen partnerships for safer communities and enhance law enforcement's capacity to prevent, solve, and control crime through funding for additional officers.
- The City submitted grant applications in May 2011, March 2012, and June 2014 and subsequently notified we were not awarded the grant.
- The City request additional scoring criteria be added to the grant application for local benefits provided to 100% disabled veterans.

Other Matters of Interest to the City of Copperas Cove

Request

TITLE XVI WATER RECLAMATION AND REUSE PROGRAM

The City of Copperas Cove requests an extension to the grant application deadline in order to apply for funding to complete a water reuse feasibility study and opposes any reduction in funding or elimination of the grant program.

- The City requests the opportunity to submit a grant application to fund a feasibility study that would allow the use of reclaimed water from the City's Northwest Wastewater Treatment Plant to irrigate the sports fields at a City Park and the sports fields for nearby schools.

- The City collaborates with the Copperas Cove Independent School District (CCISD) to develop cost efficient methods and projects for the benefit of the City residents and CCISD's students and programs.
- The City submitted a grant application in February 2012 and subsequently notified we were not awarded the grant.
- A grant of this nature will allow the City to determine the cost/benefit of utilizing reclaimed water for irrigation purposes, thus saving funds on the use of potable water and improving the water availability for the future. The ultimate goal is to complete reclaimed water projects in support of the Cen-Tex Sustainable Communities Partnership with Fort Hood.

Position

ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT

The City of Copperas Cove supports funding for the AFG Grant Program and opposes any reduction in funding or elimination of the grant program.

- The City received reduced grant funding to assist with P25 compliance for radio communications. With the reduced award, the City will be required to cover approximately \$600,000 to ensure P25 compliance.
- Need the radios to meet unfunded federal mandate on radios – January 2015 deadline unrealistic set by FCC.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

The City of Copperas Cove supports increased funding for the CDBG Grant Program and opposes any reduction in funding or elimination of the grant program.

- The City benefited from the grant program in past years with funding received for upgrades to sewer lines and upsizing of sub-standard waterlines.

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

The City of Copperas Cove supports funding for the CSBG Grant Program and opposes any reduction in funding or elimination of the grant program.

- CSBG Case managers assist families in transitioning out of poverty by providing information and referral, consultation, counseling and follow-up visits.

Impact

EPA MANDATED NUTRIENT CRITERIA

The City of Copperas Cove opposes legislation that would authorize EPA mandated nutrient criteria.

- If cities are required to remove phosphorus or other nutrients from its wastewater the cost will increase significantly, both the capital cost of building more treatment capacity required for these processes and the operational cost for continual removal.
- Predictions indicate the percentage of contaminants removed would be less than 3-5% but the cost can approach twice as much as conventional treatment.
- The nutrient removal treatment process is more complicated and subjects the City to upsets. Thus, the City would be subject to enforcement if those upsets occur.
- Copperas Cove has concerns that if the EPA is authorized to mandate nutrient criteria for phosphorus, other nutrients would then be added to the criteria. Such criteria could increase costs up to 50%. It is likely those costs will be passed on the citizens of the local communities.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA)

The City of Copperas Cove supports efforts to prevent the overuse and misuse of the ESA.

- The City supports Senate Bill 19 sponsored by Senator Cornyn amending the Endangered Species Act of 1973 establishing a procedure for approval of settlements.
- The ESA in recent years had a major impact on water projects, including the construction of new pipelines and other infrastructure in the often poorly defined habitat areas of potentially "endangered" (listed) species.
- The City of Copperas Cove is concerned over the number of fresh water mussels in Texas, some in Central Texas that may cause problems with future infrastructure projects.

Impact (cont.)

NATIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL (NISC)

The City of Copperas Cove supports efforts to prevent invasive species from causing environmental and economic damage.

- The NISC coordinates budgetary priorities, grants and goals with local organizations such as County Extension Offices.
- The City of Copperas Cove is concerned over the infestation of Zebra Mussels and Quagga Mussels in Central Texas at Lake Belton and the potential problems caused by these species.
- The City of Copperas Cove supports the recognition of water supply as an "extraordinary circumstance" in the enforcement of National Environmental Policy Act regulations.

DISABLED VETERANS EXEMPTION

The City is requesting assistance from the Federal Government to help offset the financial impacts of legislation passed by the Texas 81st Legislature and 82nd Legislature.

- In 2009 the Texas Legislature adopted H.B. 3613, a statute that adds Property Tax Code Section 11.131 that creates a new exemption that provides 100 percent exemption of the appraised value of certain veterans' residence homesteads, and in 2011 extended the same benefit to the spouses of disabled veterans in 2011.
- The financial impacts of the current economy and troop deployments are magnified for Copperas Cove with this legislation due to the close proximity to Fort Hood.
- The City requests legislation to provide additional scoring criteria on the SAFER and COPS Grant applications submitted by cities desperately impacted by the 100% disabled veterans exemption.

FORT HOOD TROOP LEVELS

The City of Copperas Cove supports maintaining the troop levels currently authorized to Fort Hood.

- Fort Hood is the largest military installation in the "free world".
- As of June 2014, the assigned strength at Fort Hood is 41,400 Active Duty Service Members and 19,250 civilians employees/contractors.
- Congressional sequestration will require assigned strength at Fort Hood to reduce to 38,000 in 2015.
- 98% of Fort Hood Soldiers live within 10 miles of the installation, which includes Copperas Cove.
- Fort Hood Soldiers and employees support 71,100 family members, over 75% living off Post.
- The economic impact for Central Texas by Fort Hood and the Soldiers in 2012 was \$16.6 billion according to the Army.
- The City supports Base Realignment and Closure authority in 2017 for the Army to help reduce the impact of sequestration and the impact to the regional and state economy.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY FAIR MARKET VALUE POLICY

The City has received assistance from Senator Cornyn's Office and Congressman Carter's Office on various easements required for City infrastructure projects. The City requests support for the Department of the Army's review of its current FMV Policy and application to other governmental entities.



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Position

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS

The City of Copperas Cove supports funding for the MAP-21 and public transit programs and providing local governments a set timeframe to adjust to loss in federal funding due to census data.

- Modify Title 23, U.S.C. Section 134(d)(2) to allow elected officials to appoint city administrators to the Metropolitan Planning Organization.
- Allow roadways connected to state/federal highways to be eligible for the Surface Transportation Program.
- The Metropolitan Planning Organization was designated as a Transportation Management Area in 2012. Funding and reporting requirements became immediately effective. The City's contribution to the transit district would have increased from \$17,242 up to \$170,000 had the transit district not utilized reserves to allow the cities to phase into the increased cost.
- Consider providing new Transportation Management Areas with a 24 month delay in funding requirements to allow local governments to prepare for the significant loss of federal funding.

Impact

CLEAN WATER ACT

The City of Copperas Cove opposes EPA proposed rule changes and requests appropriate steps be taken to prevent the use of an Executive Order to expand federal jurisdiction over waterways.

- The City supports allowing States to retain regulatory authority over waterways.
- The City supports efforts that would prevent the use of an Executive Order to expand regulation without the exclusive approval of Congress.
- The City does not support the expansion of Environmental Protection Agency jurisdiction released April 21, 2014 in Federal Register Vol. 79, No. 76.
- The City also opposes Section 2014 in S. 601 in the proposed Water Resources Development Act giving unprecedented discretion to adjust reservoir operations without Congressional authorization or the involvement of the non-federal sponsor.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA)

The City of Copperas Cove opposes the ambiguous Affordable Care Act of 2010.

- As healthcare reform mandates become effective over the next several years, many mandates remain in question. Healthcare reform is now law and many implementation details and portions of this law still remain unanswered. As discussions of governmental piecemeal amendments and repeals of this law are occurring, the City will do its best at compliance, awaiting clarification by future regulations and guidance.
- Regulations published to comply with the law are ambiguous and convoluted. The City expends tax payer dollars for interpretation of the law and guidance on decisions related to healthcare.
- The ambiguous language in Notice 2013-54 from the Internal Revenue Service regarding Flexible Spending Accounts has been interpreted differently by experts. The City has chosen the most conservative approach by limiting the City's FSA contribution to an employee (who provides documentation of current health insurance through alternate sources such as spouse or prior military service) to \$500, whereas before the City paid \$2,500 yearly. The substantial reduction is now causing personnel recruitment and retention issues.
- National experts estimate 1.3 to 1.8 million uninsured US Citizen adults and all children enrolled in CHIIP in Texas will be eligible for Medicaid in 2014. This eligibility alone will flood the medical care industry.
- As more healthcare reform mandates become effective, there will be increased staff time and resources required to comply with the requirements. The administrative burden that will be levied on the City will increase tremendously. (health reporting requirements, W-2 reporting requirements, etc...)