

Boom Town

Harrah population, business opportunities expand



One of the historical landmarks for the City of Harrah is the towering grain elevator located in the heart of downtown Harrah. (Photo provided)

By John Martin
Staff Writer

Nestled comfortably along the Eastern edge of Oklahoma County, the city of Harrah continues to be more than just a bedroom community for Shawnee or Midwest City.

City Manager Earl Burson reports that the current population of Harrah is just over 5,200 with 2,137 utility customers. Growth in the school system, which is set to enjoy the results of a \$16.7 million school construction bond for the district. Enrollment includes 2,140 students in Pre-K through 12th grades.

When the current expansion is complete, every student in the district will have easy access to a safe room, four new buses have arrived in time for the beginning of school, roof and air conditioning projects will be added, eight new classrooms will be added to the high school and an additional 10 to the middle school.

Contracts last week were signed to provide thorough video safety camera coverage for all five campuses.

Burson reported that the Harrah Chamber of Commerce and city officials have welcomed 13 new businesses in the past year. Included are: Dollar General, The State Theatre, Rusty Gin, Harrah Dentistry and Braces, Station Grill, Lake Pointe Dental Clinic of Harrah, JJ Nails, The Vapor Place, 4 Whiz Up Towing, JB's Grill, Action Physical Therapy, and Sports, Ken's Automotive, Memory Care Unit, and Harrah Nursing Center

"Sales tax for the city of Harrah for FY 2016 was \$2,183,948.47 which reflects the gradual increase of

the past few years," Burson said. "Our operating budget for 2016 is \$7.4 million, an excellent level for a city this size."

"There were 70 building permits issued in 2015 and already 66 for the current year, which includes a new gated community at Triple X and SE 15. New houses stay on the market an average of three to six weeks, while rental units have a turn-around time of 60 days in home is in good condition and the price is right," he added.

Other signs of progress in Harrah include:

- Harrah has a 160-acre Certified Industrial Park
- Harrah is drilling two new water wells
- Harrah Wastewater Treatment plant has a capacity to serve a population of 15,000 residents.
- Two new all-concrete, regulation basketball courts have been completed and are a welcome destination for residents of all ages. (Thanks to Midwest Quality Builders for donating materials for the courts. City staff completed the installation.)
- The City of Harrah has a summer concert season at Heritage Park entitled Harrah Live! that includes free performances during the summer months beginning in May and concluding in August.

These concerts are performed in the Amp in the Park which contains state of the art sound and lighting with the pond providing a serene setting for the background.

The Park also has Movies in the Park on select Friday nights during summer. These are shown in the Amp in the Park and are free of charge, beginning at dusk.

One of the most popular and widely used attractions in Harrah is the Splash Pad that is available to residents of Harrah and surrounding areas from 10 a.m. to 8 p. m.

It will be open through Labor Day. The nearby Splash Pad Grille has a complete menu of snacks and drinks, featuring the popular snow cones and their hours reflect the Splash Pad, except for Sunday and Monday.

Turnpike is Coming

Much speculation concerning its exact route and much controversy was reflected in wide-spread opposition to the very idea of the East Bypass Turnpike, which was always coming in spite of threats, promises, demonstrations and unrest by many.

The connecting link between existing I-40 and I-44 (Turner Turnpike) will travel the length of the western edge of Harrah City limits. The \$300 million, 21-mile toll way loop will provide an alternative route to Tulsa that will ease congestion on busy Interstate 35.

In addition to the interchanges at I-40 and I-44, frontage roads with interchanges will be located at Britton Road, NE 23, Reno and SE 29, all of which will have direct effects on business and commercial expansion in Harrah.

The South end of the toll road will originate about halfway between Luther and Dobbs Road on I-40 between existing exits at Harrah Road and Peebly. It will then veer off to the west side of Luther Road and continue through interchanges at SE 29 and Reno before crossing over to the east side of Luther Road for the NE 23 interchange.

It will continue adjacent to Luther Road on the east across NE 50 and NE 63 before again moving to the West of Luther Road, continuing through interchange at Britton Road and continuing north until veering back to the east to connect with I-44 between Luther and Dobbs Road, east of the existing Luther/Jones exit.