

THE COLUMNS

A Publication for the Residents of Mission Hills

July 2020

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www.missionhillssks.gov



Bulky item trash pickup is scheduled for Saturday September 12th. Please see the Trash & Recycling page on the City website for details

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A Letter from Mayor Dickey



Fellow Residents:

I can hardly believe we are more than halfway through the year, with the 4th of July behind us. It seems like a lifetime ago that our community was celebrating the first Chiefs Super Bowl win in 50 years!

I have several messages to convey in this letter, ranging from somber to hopeful and optimistic.

On a somber note, the events in Minneapolis in late May have forced communities, institutions and people to take a very hard look at discrimination, racism, diversity, inclusion and policing. What we saw in that 8 minutes and 46 seconds was awful, horrible and wrong. My sincere hope is that spark, and the subsequent fire it has started, can be channeled to lasting, meaningful, positive advancement at the local, state and national level on these topics.

We must do our part. As a City, including our Police Department, we strive to get better every day. We seek to treat everyone with respect and humility. Mayor Eric Mikkelson of Prairie Village wrote a powerful statement on this topic, a portion of which I will quote here:

“But like most American cities, Prairie Village has racism in its past (such as in our historic deed restriction covenants) and thus, in my view, we have an obligation to be vigilant and proactive to stamp out racism everywhere it might emerge.”

Unfortunately, the first portion of the statement above applies just as much to Mission Hills as our neighbor to the west. I also passionately believe that Mission Hills residents have the obligation Mayor Mikkelson notes as well. I would encourage every resident in Mission Hills to find the opportunities in their personal and professional lives to make us better in this cause daily.

As a final note on this subject, I am also proud of our Police. The Department that protects us has for decades been proactive in training, supervision and hiring practices, as well as at the forefront of using de-escalation, eliminating choke holds and so on. Our Police have more than 21,000 citizen encounters annually between our two Cities and average fewer than 10 complaints a year.

Letter continued on page 2

Letter from the Mayor (continued)

I also know that Chief Schwartzkopf and his command staff take these issues very seriously and are continuously looking to improve and be leaders in this area.

Changing gears, the pandemic is still with us and we are continuing to operate the City in a way that maximizes the health and safety of residents and staff, while allowing us to maintain the high quality of City services you expect.

We continue to split City Hall staff to minimize transmission risk (and maximize social distancing!) and hold Board and Council meetings virtually. That will continue for the foreseeable future.

The pandemic has also forced us to make substantial changes to our Community Engagement calendar. New dates for 2020 events will be reevaluated in August and will be coming soon in a City-wide postcard, and barring any substantial setbacks, we plan on having a great and safe end-of-summer and fall in Mission Hills.

Two final notes.

First, the Council held a budgetary strategic planning session last month to take a first pass at our situation for the upcoming year. I am pleased to let you know that due to the conservative approach of the Council and staff, as well as actions taken in the prior year, we anticipate holding the mil levy flat again and making essentially no changes to service levels.

Second, the search committee for the new City Administrator has now met twice. We have engaged a nationally known recruitment firm to help the committee find that replacement. We anticipate naming a new City Administrator in the early fall, which will give her/him almost three months of overlap with Courtney prior to her retirement December 31st.

Thank you all for your feedback, resilience, tolerance, leadership and open mindedness. We are living in challenging times, but I could not be more humbled or proud to lead our City.

As always, if you have feedback or questions, please feel free to call City Hall at 913-362-9620 or email info@missionhillsks.gov. You are also welcome to email me directly at mayor@missionhillsks.gov.

Have a safe, healthy and happy rest of the summer.

P.S. For those interested, the full (and very well written) joint statement by Chief Schwartzkopf and Mayor Mikkelson can be found here:

<https://www.pvkansas.com/Home/Components/News/News/3961/31>

The “Roly-Poly” Garden Friend or Foe?

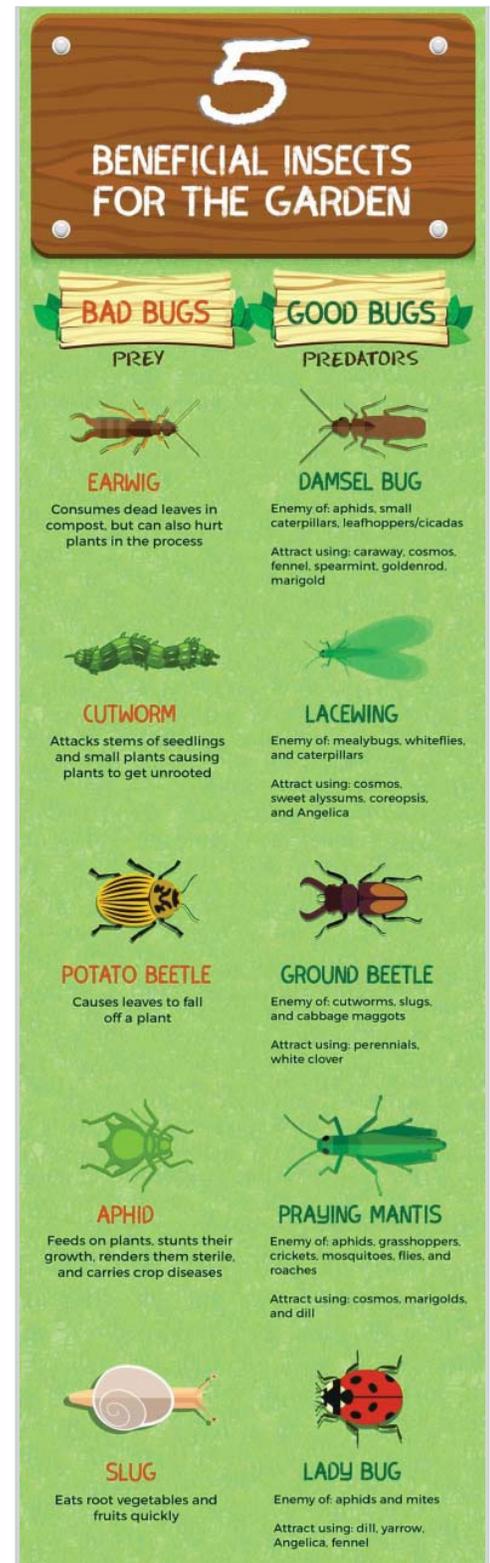
If you’ve ever picked up a brick or piece of wood that’s been in the dirt for a while, you’re probably familiar with the tiny bugs with a hard grey shell you found underneath. These little guys may seem insignificant, but they are actually the heroes of your garden and have a greater environmental role than you might think.

These animals are referred to as a Pill Bug, or more affectionately as a Roly-Poly due to their ability to roll up into a ball when threatened. Most people think of them as a bug, but they are actually crustaceans and more closely related to crabs and shrimp than insects, and the only crustaceans that have adapted completely to living on land.

The reason they are so helpful in your garden is because they are what’s called a detritivore, meaning they feed on dead organic material such as plant debris. Not only do they feed on dead organic matter, they also remove metal and heavy metal ions from your soil. Their ability to take up soil pollutants like lead, cadmium, arsenic, copper and zinc, and crystalize them in their bodies, makes them able to survive in environments where no other species can live. Their ability to reestablish healthy soil means they could have a protective effect on groundwater, since chemical contaminants in soil have the potential to leach into groundwater. They can even play a tiny role in slowing climate change by eating fungus, which decreases the amount of carbon dioxide that is released into the atmosphere.

How to Work with Pill Bugs in Your Garden.

These creatures are a helpful addition to your garden, but it is important that you create a good environment for them to do their work. Because they mostly eat the dead organic matter, you don’t have to worry about them eating your plants, but only if you remember to add organic matter to your soil regularly to keep them busy and compost your plants. Keep in mind, any “garden helper” bugs that aren’t provided with enough nutrients or water from compost can occasionally look to your seedlings or living root systems to meet their needs. Mulching with organic matter and providing an inviting habitat for all manner of garden fauna ultimately results in a thriving, healthy garden. Any garden that is too damp or provides excessive dead organic matter from fallen plants and leaves can result in an exploding roly-poly population. A healthy garden is a balanced garden.



Solicitor Do's and Don'ts

We've received several calls lately from residents about pushy solicitors and what homeowners are allowed to do to remove them from the property. Here are a few tips to help you.

If someone is at your door and you do not want to talk with them, you do not have to answer the door. You can talk with them through the door, decline any of their services and ask them to leave. If they persist in knocking on the door, call the non-emergency police to respond.

Some of these solicitors are professional sales people and their job is to get you to buy whatever they have. It can be difficult to tell somebody no, but if the story seems too rehearsed or unbelievable, it's probably too good to be true and you should ask them to leave. If you ever feel uncomfortable with the solicitor, do not give them any money. Never let a solicitor inside your home. Even in bad weather, keep the solicitor outside your home. If you would like to have the door closed while you talk, step outside and close the door behind you.

As stated in City ordinance, Mission Hills does not require solicitors to register or acquire a permit before knocking on your door. Solicitors may only solicit between the hours of 10 am to 9 pm April 1 through September 1, and 10 am to 7 pm the remainder of the year. **Solicitors cannot knock on any door displaying a "No Solicitation" decal or sign posted on the door. Decals are available free of charge at City Hall.** No solicitor may stay on your property after being asked to leave, and they must solicit at the front door only.

If you see or experience any violations call the Police Department at (913) 642-5151. If you have any questions, please call or e-mail Crime Prevention Officer Caroline Van Cil at (913) 385-4012 or cvancil@pvkansas.com

Virtual Board Meetings

All City Board meetings are being held virtually on a GoToMeeting platform through the end of summer 2020. Login information for each meeting can be found in the calendar event for the meeting on our City website at www.missionhillskansas.gov

All residents are welcome to attend any public meetings by joining on their computer or phone.

2020 Mission Hills Community Engagement

This year we've had to postpone or cancel many Community Engagement events due to the COVID-19 virus and the State of Kansas's requirements for social distancing. The City Council and Community Engagement Committee continue to monitor the COVID guidance as we receive updates from the State. At this time, we are planning on hosting the annual tree lighting ceremony on November 29th. Next month we will revisit whether the City will be able to offer any additional community events in 2020 so we can safely gather as a community.

2020 City Events Calendar

September 12th - Bulky item trash pickup

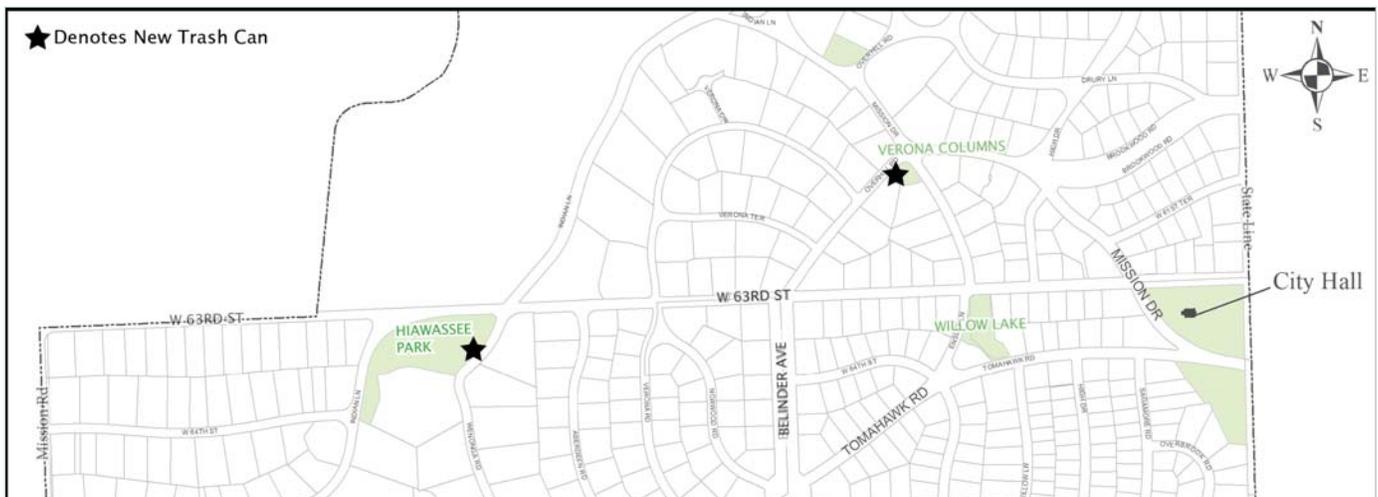
November 29th - Annual Holiday Tree Lighting at City Hall Park at 5:30pm

An updated City-wide postcard will be mailed out this summer for updates on events that were cancelled or postponed due to the COVID-19 virus. You can also sign up for text notifications at www.notifyjoco.org

New Trash Cans

With increased foot traffic this spring and summer, we've seen the need to add two new trash cans to be installed at Verona Columns and Hiawasee Park to help keep our beautiful City clean. The Park Board has approved the locations of the two cans to be installed, shown on the map below.

- Verona Columns will get an in-ground trash can installed near the street, next to the sidewalk on the west side of the Columns.
- Hiawasee Park will have a new above-ground trash can installed on the east side of the park, close to Wenonga Road but screened from the street by bushes.





6300 State Line Road
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The Columns is published three times a year for the residents of Mission Hills.

Mayor:

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City Council:

Bill Bruning
Barbara Nelson
Braden Perry
Eden Thorne
Andy Weed

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Final Building Inspections

Home projects can seem overwhelming and it can be difficult to remember to schedule your final inspection at the end of each project. Final inspections are very important in the building process to ensure that your home meets all City building codes. To ensure your safety through code compliance by your contractor, you should request a copy of the final inspection sheet signed by the City Inspector before remitting your final payment for services. Your homeowner's insurance will only cover projects that have received satisfactory final inspections, and can also jeopardize the sale of your house. If you're looking at buying a property, always look into any open or unresolved building permits to make sure additions and renovations were properly permitted and inspected by the City. Inspections should be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance by calling City Hall at 913-362-9620.

If you're thinking about starting a building project, or not sure if your work will require a permit, please call City Hall at 913-362-9620 to discuss your scope of work. Some small repairs can be done without a permit, but it's always best to check before starting any work.