



COLUMNS

A PUBLICATION FOR THE RESIDENTS' COMMISSION HILLS

A Letter from Mayor Dickey



Fellow Residents,

I felt like our winter had been long enough when Phil saw his shadow and predicted 6 more weeks of winter. Who would have thought that meant yet another big snow and record low temperatures in February!

Wonderfully, however, the first signs of spring are upon us. Bulbs are peeking out of the ground in our wonderful public spaces and neighbors' yards!

There is much to update you on, but as always, I want to start with a summary of public safety for 2024. On balance, we had a better year again, so thank you. As I have said many times, deterring and stopping crime in our City relies on the partnership of residents, our Police and staff.

Burglary was down 46%, which is excellent progress. Thank you for closing garages at night, locking doors and setting your alarms!

Theft was OK except auto theft. Three times more vehicles were stolen in 2024 than in 2023. Unfortunately, once again, more than **80% of these auto thefts were vehicles that were UNLOCKED with KEYS INSIDE.** And of the thefts from autos, again, more than **80% of the cars broken into were UNLOCKED.**

	2023	2024	Change	% Change
Burglary	13	7	-6	-46.2%
Theft from Auto	24	24	0	0%
Auto Theft	7	21	14	200%
Other Theft	17	19	1	11.8%

The table above summarizes the most important of our crime statistics - burglary and theft.

Please help all of us by making sure you lock your cars, take the keys, and don't leave valuables in plain sight. Bad guys know we are tough on crime, but they also like "easy", and when they can pull a few door handles and just press a start button, they will do so.

Also on the public safety front, we continue to expand our camera and license plate reader (LPR) systems with a goal of having them at every ingress/egress point in the City by the end of 2026. These systems have proven incredibly valuable in deterring, and more importantly catching several criminals. They have also provided key evidence in scenarios such as the car that sped from 63rd and Mission Road to 63rd and State Line in 37 seconds. Yes, 37 seconds.

I am occasionally brought concerns about privacy and tracking with the proliferation of cameras and LPRs. These are good questions and let me remind everyone of three key things; The LPRs are looking for stolen plates and plates associated with violent felons or arrest warrants, nothing more. The cameras provide key visual evidence used to investigate and solve crime. The Police have a very clear set of policies regarding data usage and retention.

Perhaps more relevant, if you carry a smartphone you are being tracked by dozens of apps at all times! Our Police command staff and I are always happy to discuss this with you should you have additional questions. Speaking of our Police command staff, with Byron Roberson's election to Johnson County Sheriff I am pleased that Eric McCullough was named as the new Chief of Police. Eric is a great leader and many of you know him from his many years of service in the department. We are in good hands!

Another pillar of our City strategy is maintaining our infrastructure in top shape. We have a busy capital plan this year that will include fully paving Belinder.



Continued...

A Letter from Mayor Dickey, *Continued*

Whenever we do work to one of our thoroughfares, we know it creates inconvenience, so we thank you in advance for your patience! In addition to Belinder, we have work scheduled for 70th Terrace and a wide variety of patching after a tough winter.

Additionally, we will begin work on an Eisenhower Pond master plan that will help inform some of the needed immediate work (unfortunately it must be dredged again) and give us a path to the pond's long-term health.

Finally on the capital front, we have entered into a **letter of intent with the First Lutheran Church** at Tomahawk and State Line Road to **purchase the building and property**. This is a unique opportunity for an inner-ring suburb to acquire property adjacent to City Hall. The City plans on leasing back the building to the church for a period of time, which we will use for full public input on what might come next for the property. More to come on this!

Financially, the City continues to be in good health. Our reserve balances are healthy, and we continue to maintain a **AAA bond rating**, which will be key as we finalize the purchase of the church property. As I mentioned in the fall newsletter, the Council passed a budget that keeps the mil levy flat again this year, but maintains the quality of services we all expect.



Italian Carved Limestone of Bacchante

With better weather on the horizon, we have a wonderful slate of community engagement events on the calendar for 2025. The full list is later in the newsletter and I hope to see many of you throughout the year at these wonderful public gatherings!

A few final items.

First, a big thank you to our 6 boards and committees. These residents give of their most valuable asset – time – to help make our City the very best suburb in the metro and maybe the country. Thank you to all who volunteer!

Second, our Planning Commission has begun the periodic **review of the City's Comprehensive Plan**. The Comprehensive Plan is our guiding strategic document and we do a full update every 10 years. Please feel free to join any of the public meetings on this topic over the next few months!

2025 Comprehensive Plan Workshop

Help Determine the **Future** of Mission Hills!

Thursday, March 27th
6:30-8:00 PM
Mission Hills Country Club
5400 Mission Drive

Finally, I want to congratulate and acknowledge the 20-year service anniversaries of our City Planner, Jill Clifton, and our City Administrator, Jennifer Lee! Thanks to both of them for all the work they have done and continue to do for our City!

Happy springtime – enjoy the weather and our beautiful public spaces! As always, please continue to provide us feedback on how and where we can do better. You are welcome to call City Hall at 913-362-9620 or email info@missionhillsks.gov. You are always welcome to email me directly at mayor@missionhillsks.gov.

Thank you!

Contain the Rain

The City of Mission Hills participates in Johnson County's *Contain the Rain* program. This program was created to encourage individual homeowners and businesses to incorporate **sustainable landscape solutions** on their property to aid in the improvement of local and regional water quality.

The **reimbursement program** will pay applicants up to **50% of eligible expenses**, not to exceed a project reimbursement cap for the proper installation of the following: Pollinator/native gardens, rain barrels, native trees or rain gardens.

If you are interested please call City Hall at 913-362-9620 or visit www.missionhillsks.gov/354/Contain-the-Rain for more information.



Out on a Limb; Tree Talk

In January, we began our annual pruning cycle in the Tomahawk Road Homes Association. As you read this, Wellnitz Tree Care and VanBooven Tree Care are completing work across the association. This year, we focused on addressing major concerns, including deadwood over sidewalks and streets, as well as longer limbs overextending into roadways. Some trees may have larger cuts, but rest assured, trimming during the dormant season allows trees to recover efficiently and send nutrients to the wounds as spring and summer arrive.

Throughout our maintenance work, we have observed that many trees in Mission Hills are under significant stress. My predecessor likely mentioned this issue, which primarily results from environmental and abiotic changes. Factors such as irregular rainfall, severe windstorms, extreme temperature fluctuations, increased construction, and other stressors create opportunities for vectors and pathogens to weaken our tree populations.

If your private trees require trimming, please refer to the Mission Hills website for a list of licensed Urban Forestry professionals. These vetted companies meet city standards for proper tree care and carry the necessary insurance coverage. Companies without a license are subject to citation, so be sure to hire a qualified provider.

To help maintain the health of your private trees, I recommend an annual or bi-annual check-up for signs of insects, fungi, and storm damage. Here are some key preventive measures:

•**Inspect your trees regularly.** *Walk around your trees to check for girdling roots and fungal growth at the base. Look up into the canopy—binoculars can help spot potential issues.*

•**Mulch appropriately.** *Applying mulch around the base of trees helps prevent mechanical injuries from lawnmowers and weed eaters.*

•**Water deeply and infrequently.** *Irrigation alone may not be sufficient. Watering around the drip line (the outer edge of the canopy) will help distribute nutrients through the tree's vascular system, especially during hot weather. You can hire a professional or use hose attachments available at local hardware stores.*

Cole Carmack, City Arborist

BULKY ITEM
PICK UP

2025

MARCH 29 &
SEPTEMBER 13

A New Chief in Town



The Prairie Village/Mission Hills community is pleased to introduce **Eric McCullough** as its new **Chief of Police**. Chief McCullough brings over two decades of dedicated service to the Prairie Village Police Department, and his deep roots in our community make him a *natural fit* for this leadership role.

Chief McCullough's journey with the Prairie Village Police Department began in January 2003, and he has steadily risen through the ranks, demonstrating his commitment to our city's safety and well-being. His extensive experience includes serving as a Field Training Officer, Detective, Honor Guard member, CIRT Team member, Corporal, SIU Corporal, Patrol Sergeant, Traffic Unit Sergeant, Captain, Staff Services Division Commander, Patrol Division Commander, Investigations Division Commander, and Deputy Chief of Police/Major. This breadth of experience has provided him with a comprehensive understanding of the department and the needs of our community.

Chief McCullough's commitment to professional development is evident in his educational background. He holds a bachelor's degree in exercise science and a minor in biology from Truman State University, an MBA in strategic management from Baker University (2022), and is a graduate of the prestigious Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Chief McCullough is a dedicated family man. He and his wife, Suzanne, have been married for over 22 years and are proud parents of two children who attended local schools, Indian Hills Middle School and Shawnee Mission East High School. In his leisure time, he enjoys spending time with his family, reading, and staying active at the gym.



Chief McCullough is honored to serve as Prairie Village's Chief of Police and deeply values the talented and dedicated men and women of the Police Department. He is committed to building upon the strong foundation laid by his predecessors, working collaboratively with city leadership and the community to ensure the continued safety and well-being of all residents. His vision is for the Prairie Village Police Department to be a model of excellence, not just in Johnson County, but throughout the state of Kansas.

Chief McCullough is eager to connect with the community. If you are part of a group or organization, he would welcome the opportunity to meet with you. To schedule a meeting with the Chief, please contact his Executive Assistant, Erica Wilson, at ewilson@pvkansas.com.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

SAVE THE DATE

MAY 17 MAY 31 JUNE 12 & JUNE 26



CONCERT IN THE PARK STREET FAIR POPUP FOOD TRUCKS

POSTCARD ARRIVING SOON!

2025 Capital Improvement Plan

The City's major capital project for 2025 is Belinder Road south of Tomahawk to the City limit just south of 70th Terrace. There will be **major stormwater upgrades** south of 67th Street as well as replacements of the roadway, sidewalks, curbs and driveway approaches (as needed). The stormwater upgrades include pipes on 70th Terrace from Overhill east to Belinder. The stormwater system in this area of the City is undersized. The City recently learned that there will be significant work by the utility companies prior to the City's project. The City shares its capital improvement list with the utility companies so that they can make improvements in connection with City projects so that the project area is only disrupted once rather than multiple times for each of our projects. This coordination can extend the time it takes to complete the project, but in the long run it should limit future disruptions. **WaterOne and Kansas Gas are both planning to replace a large portion of their infrastructure along Belinder.** The City's portion of the project will likely not begin until the summer.

In addition to major capital projects, the City also has a robust annual capital maintenance program that includes asphalt and concrete patchwork. Staff rate each street in the City annually in the spring using a modified pavement condition index (PCI). The PCI helps the City identify needed patchwork in addition to helping the City prioritize its maintenance needs and fine tune its 5-year capital improvement plan.

Updated Flood Warning System

About 15 years ago, with partial funding from Johnson County, the City installed a flood warning system in areas where flood water can overtop roadways during intense rain events. A network of sensors in the creek monitor rainfall and water levels and trigger the flashing lights on the 13 stone pillars when there is a potential for roadway flooding.

After issues with reliability and functionality the hardware that runs the 13 locations was upgraded (again with funding from Johnson County). Additionally, the systems were converted to run on solar power and new identification and warning signs were recently installed. The pillars are part of a metro wide network of 108 sites called StormWatch that monitors rainfall and potential flooding. You can visit www.stormwatch.com to learn more about the system and review the full list of locations in the metro.

While the creeks in Mission Hills add to the City's charm and beauty, they can also become hazardous during storm events. Early detection of potential flooding and timely warnings are the goals of the flood warning system network, geared toward improving public safety and minimizing loss of life and property damage.



Inside:
Letter from the Mayor p. 1
Out on a Limb; Tree Talk p.3
A New Chief in Town p.4
Capital Improvement Plan / Updated Flood Warning System p.5
Included is flyer from the Prairie Village Police on tips to stay safe when buying and selling on Facebook marketplace

MISSION HILLS



SPRING 2025



**MISSION
HILLS**
KANSAS

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Mission Hills, KS 66208

The Columns is published three times a year for the residents of Mission Hills.

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HOW TO STAY SAFE

FACEBOOK MARKETPLACE & ONLINE SALES

Facebook Marketplace, among other platforms, has become a popular platform for buying and selling a wide range of items, from furniture to electronics, and even cars. However, with the convenience of online selling comes the **risk of potential scams, fraud, and even physical danger**. See back for some crime prevention tips to help you stay safe while using these sales platforms.



A message from the Prairie Village Police

1. Be Cautious with Payment Methods

When it comes to payment, it's important to be cautious. Avoid using wire transfers or apps that can't be reversed, like Western Union or MoneyGram. Instead, stick to trusted methods such as PayPal, Facebook's own payment system, or cash (for in-person exchanges).

Never accept personal checks and always verify the legitimacy of online payment methods before completing a transaction. Keep in mind that some scammers may try to convince you that a payment has been sent, but it's important to wait until funds are fully available in your account before shipping goods.

2. Trust Your Instincts

If something feels off about a transaction, trust your gut. If a buyer or seller is overly pushy or avoids answering simple questions, it's a red flag. Scammers may try to rush the transaction or offer to pay you more than the asking price in exchange for unusual conditions. Be wary of deals that seem "too good to be true." If you're not comfortable with the situation, don't hesitate to walk away.

3. Avoid Giving Out Personal Information

When communicating with potential buyers or sellers, avoid giving out personal information like your home address, phone number, or email. Use Facebook Messenger or the platform's built-in chat feature to communicate directly within the app. If you must provide contact information, consider using a temporary email or a phone number dedicated to online transactions.

4. Meet in Safe, Public Locations

Whenever possible, arrange to meet buyers or sellers in public, well-lit locations. Public spaces like coffee shops are excellent choices for completing the transaction. **The Prairie Village Police Department has two dedicated parking spaces that are painted bright green dedicated for the purpose of conducting sales exchanges and transactions. Additionally, these parking spaces are monitored by camera 24/7.** By using these, this will help you avoid meeting in secluded areas or private residences, as this increases the risk of robbery or physical harm.



Spaces in the Exchange Zone are monitored 24/7 by police



Clearly marked spots available at the PV Police Station

