

By Kenneth Welch, Founder, Open Government in Blanco County TX,
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REAL PROGRESS ON CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Blanco City Council has approved a very important step toward infrastructure improvement in the City of Blanco.

On November 1, 2021 the City Council established a CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CIAMAC) made up of community members. The committee was asked to address infrastructure needs which have become increasingly apparent during recent years. Since the committee's inception the group of dedicated community members have worked diligently to document the existence and condition of the infrastructure components. The location, size, type, and condition of water lines and sewer lines were not mapped and documented when the effort started.

Committee members that have walked the streets, gathered the data, done the research and all of the other detailed work necessary to develop short and long range plans are:

- Mike Rieken, former Chair
- O. J. Anderson, Chair
- Frank Leblanc
- Christine Anderson
- Steve Scheffe
- Pamela Capps
- Heinz Roesch
- David Behrends
- George Vaverek
- Brandon Carlson

One of the objectives of the committee was to ensure alignment of the plans developed with the City's annual budget. Considering the financial challenges the City has faced over recent years, that has been a significant hurdle. However, with the strong support of the previous and current Mayors and all City Council members, the committee has continued to work toward a financially viable solution for the first major step.

The committee has identified significant loss of City revenue due to a difference in the volume and cost of water purchased, versus revenue from water charges based on water distributed. Much of the difference is due to leaks in the water pipes. However, some of the difference can only be explained by errant readings from faulty water meters. These losses and the proposed solution are very well explained in the City's [recent announcement](#).

The creative solution developed will provide for the replacement of the water meters, and upgrading them to new electronic versions, with payment derived of increased revenue and savings from reduced leakage. The first step is to complete a detailed audit of the system. If the City decides not to replace the meters after the audit, then the City would be required to pay \$43,800 for the audit. However, the contractor and

the CIAMAC team feel strongly that the audit will reveal significant savings for the City. They consider it unlikely that the direct payment for the audit will be necessary. Upon completion of the audit, the meters will be replaced and the cost of the material and labor will be paid from the savings the City realizes.

This is a great example of open and transparent government at work. The CIAMAC team has been meeting regularly for nearly two years. Each of the meetings has been open to the public and routine updates have been given to the City Council over those two years. I heartily support this very significant first step toward the upgrade of Blanco's infrastructure. More importantly, this shows how effective leadership in an open and cooperative work environment can reap tangible results. Each of the CIAMAC team members and all of the City leadership who have supported this effort should be congratulated on this first major step.

You may read more about Open Government concerning all Blanco County governmental entities at my website: <https://www.opengovernmentinblancocountytx.org>