



**CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***Dripping Springs is awarded \$500,000 Texas Parks and Wildlife Grant***

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**Editors Note:** If you have any questions regarding this press release, please call City Administrator Michelle Fischer or Deputy City Administrator Ginger Faught at 512-858-4725.

DRIPPING SPRINGS, TEXAS – The City of Dripping Springs application for an Outdoor Recreation Grant of \$500,000 for park improvements at Harrison Ranch Park was approved by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Commission at their public hearing on Thursday, January 22 in Austin. As a result of action by the TPWD Commission, only six communities across the State of Texas will receive park acquisition and development funding which total \$2,999,981.

Dripping Springs City Council, staff, volunteers and community members have much reason to celebrate because their project was chosen out of 26 statewide applications requesting \$10,981,571 in matching funds.

Gandolf Burrus, President of Grant Development Services, said his company assisted the City with writing their grant proposal in 2008 to transform the newly acquired Harrison Ranch Park, which consists of 64 rolling acres located just north of the City on Ranch Road 12 across from Dripping Springs Elementary School, into an equestrian themed park with facilities for horse riding and other activities reflecting the area’s cultural and historical significance. Commenting on what a tremendous success it was for the City to secure the grant, Burrus said “this was an incredibly intense competition.”

The \$500,000 TPWD grant funding will allow for more than six acres of the Harrison Ranch Park property surrounding Little Barton Creek to be set aside for dedication as a wildlife preservation and conservation area. Other park developments will include an open air pavilion suited for equestrian events, a play ground, primitive tent campsites, a crushed granite pedestrian trail for walkers, hikers and runners, a path which will support bicycles and wheelchairs, open play area, equestrian trails, an 18-hole course for disk (Frisbee) golf, two regulation horseshoe and washer courts and designated picnic areas.

Deputy City Administrator Ginger Faught said the vision for the agricultural focus of the park originally came from Mayor Todd Purcell. “Mayor Purcell’s own positive experiences with 4-H Club and other related affiliations as a youth in Dripping Springs made him want to keep that spirit alive for future generations to enjoy,” Faught said.

After conducting meetings to determine priorities for a multi-use public park with diverse recreational opportunities, Mayor Purcell found that many community members shared his sentiment to preserve as much of that small town country feel as possible.

Wayne Burkland, Lion's Club Treasurer and Harrison Ranch Park Steering Committee Member, said one reason he became involved in the project was because he loved the idea of a park that could preserve the feel of the Old West. "Grant funding will open up a whole lot of possibilities of how we can use the property," he said.

Mayor Todd Purcell said his dream for the park would never have been realized without the assistance of Hays County, the Harrison Ranch Park Steering Committee, RVI Planning + Landscape Architecture, Grant Development Services and many volunteers and community organizations including the Boy Scouts, Lions Club, Dripping Springs Youth Sports Association, DSISD, Ag Boosters, 4-H Club, D Bar S and the local VFW.

"When the Harrison Ranch became available, we could not have purchased this park without the help from Hays County," Mayor Purcell said.

The transaction for the acreage, which also contained a number of structures including a large ranch house, a barn, an arena, and other outbuildings, totaled \$1.6 million. With Hays County partnering in \$775,000 and the City of Dripping Springs contributing the difference, the deal was consummated.

Hays County Precinct 4 Commissioner Karen Ford said "this is a perfect example of a multi-public entity partnership between a city, county and state that will ensure we have a great park for our citizens to use for years to come."

City Administrator Michelle Fischer said one special real estate broker Michael Luigs certainly deserves recognition for his part in the project. When the Harrison property was first listed for sale, the City could not move quickly enough without the partnerships in place to put a contract on the land. "Michael put the property under contract himself which gave us the time we needed and option to buy," Fischer said. "After everything came together, Michael then even made a generous donation of \$5,000 to use toward land planning for the new park."

Area agricultural groups were also thrilled to hear of the news regarding the grant award.

Terry Polk, President of Ag-Boosters, said the grant is a real positive step forward for our youth. "When our kids have horse projects, they will have a place to practice even in inclement weather," Polk said.

Bryan Schwiening, Executive Committee Member of the D-Bar-S Arena Association said having a covered arena within the park will open the door to many different horse related events being hosted right here in northern Hays County. "This provides two benefits to Dripping Springs," Schwiening added, "families don't have to travel to Gonzales or Salado for these events and it brings many other families into the City on the weekends."

Mayor Todd Purcell said the park really is a special gift to the region because the family-owned ranch had been preserved in such an environmentally responsible manner. “The Harrisons were excellent stewards of the land and have done much to maintain its natural state,” he said.

Nina Harrison, speaking for her husband Steve and her family, said “you can’t imagine how gratified and inspired we are that the place is being used to such great advantage by the community. We love Dripping Springs and the old ranch is central in our memories of wonderful experiences,” she said.

Looking eagerly ahead to the future and the park’s completion, Mayor Todd Purcell said “with assistance from Texas Parks and Wildlife, Hays County and so many others, we will build a park of beauty and utility, one that will bring our residents together with much needed opportunities for recreation.”