Meeting Notes – Apr. 11, 2023

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, April 11, 2023. Rotarian Chris Busby invited as his guest speaker Mr. Louis Davidson, LaFayette City Clerk, who was accompanied by Rotarian Allen Tucker, the city's engineer, to talk about the storm event of March 26, 2023, and the city's response. The Rotary Club was shown a slide show depicting the extensive damage caused by the flooding, including the washing away of roads and bridges and the loss of water to the city due to the water pipes at the lake being washed away. The photographs showed the chronology of the damage and repairs beginning on March 27, 2023, and continuing for the next several days.

The photos taken on Monday, March 27, 2023, show that the spillway at the city lake worked as designed to protect the dam from the massive amount of water. Millions and millions of gallons of water poured over the spillway after the lake rose almost 12 feet due to the heavy rains. Had the water not hit some underground rock formations, the entire lake could have been drained. With the pipes washed away, the city had no water. By Tuesday, the city's water tanks held all the water that the city had. Thanks to the Huguley Water Authority, residents began to receive a trickle of water after the city was able to tie in to the Huguley pipes. On Wednesday, the city council approved various contracts needed for repair work to begin and within an hour of that approval, repairs actually began. Water was restored to the plant by late Thursday. The plant began testing the water on Friday and water was restored to the citizens through a temporary pipe. By Saturday, the boil water advisory was lifted.

Mr. Davidson and Mr. Tucker spoke of the heroic efforts of so many. Our own city employees, including at least one former employee, were instrumental in restoring the water supply. What was initially anticipated to take weeks or months to repair had a solution in less than a week. While it will take several more weeks to fully and permanently repair all of the damage, the water plant was made functional in a miraculously short amount of time. The response from neighboring communities and from across the nation resulted in a generous donation of supplies, including bottled water, so much so that some had to be turned down. While Mr. Davidson admitted this was the most stressful week of his career in LaFayette, he was most overwhelmed and amazed by how many people worked together to resolve the problem successfully.

Diane Sherriff