

**TEXARKANA — Finances on both sides of town have weathered the pandemic and are on solid footings, the mayors here told the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday.**

**"Because of tax collection from online sales, among other things, we are in good shape," said Texarkana, Arkansas, Mayor Allen Brown. "When various items ran low on local store shelves, shoppers went online to get them. All that helped out city coffers early."**

**Bob Bruggeman, Texarkana, Texas, mayor, echoed Brown, speaking confidently about city finances.**

**"Sales tax revenue has rebounded nicely," he said.**

**"July was up 14% compared to same time one year ago," he added.**

**Brown said the city staff is putting together the city budget.**

**"Among the things we are directing attention to are areas with drainage issues discovered during the recent flooding," he said. "Work is being done to address it. No plan will ever be perfect but we are being proactive."**

**Brown said city officials, most notably Kristi Bennett, are identifying upcoming budget needs. Bennett is the interim chief of the Texarkana Arkansas Police Department.**

**Bruggeman talked about the expansion of I-30 now underway in the city.**

**"The work is primarily being done at night," he said. "Also, right now, they are focusing on shoulder work."**

**Bruggeman pointed to several other items of note.**

**"We passed the city budget at our last council meeting," he said. "Our tax rate is remaining the same, the courthouse square project and other downtown construction continues. Overall, things are going well."**

**In other chamber news, plans for Taste of Texarkana are moving forward, including a name change to Destination Downtown. The reason for the name change? More organizations than restaurants will be involved — though local restaurants will be well represented.**

**Also, the Small Business Expo is coming Oct. 15. Among the events featured will be a showdown between the city mayors, who face off in a series of competitions for the honor of their city, including a cornhole competition as well as a pie eating contest.**