

Alto ISD

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In other action, trustees approved the minutes from the Jan. 21 and Feb. 4 meetings, accounts payable, transferring funds from the Lone Star investment pool to pay for projects such as gymnasium and parking lot improvements, funding an agreement to use the services of SECCA State Compensatory Consulting and ordering an election for May 10 for the seats currently held by Board President Freddy Johnson and the seat left vacant by the passing of Boardmember G.L. Skinner. The board also approved the appointment of Alfred Danheim as the school board election judge, accepted state policy updates, approved Claims Administrative Services as the sponsor for the worker compensation joint fund and took the first steps toward selecting the textbooks selected by the State of Texas. The board voted to continue contracts for Mr. Patton, Mrs. West, Mrs. Witt, Administrative Assistant Sherry Dover, High School Coun-

selor Barbara Brown, Middle School and Elementary School Counselor Deanna Griffith and Athletic Director Keith Gardner.

The board accepted the resignation of First Grade Aide Crystal Phillips. The board ratified the reassignment of Fay Hudson from superintendent's secretary to first grade aide.

Allison Threadgill was moved from the middle school computer lab to the superintendent's secretary position. Donna Chometa was moved from the fifth/sixth grade special education to the middle school computer lab.

Bakaya Poole was moved from the Alternative Education Program (AEP) aide to the fifth and sixth grade special education aide.

The AEP aide position was eliminated as there are currently no students in alternative education in the Alto ISD.

"We went from having 12 students to none," Dr. DeSpain said.

All board members were present for the meeting.

Astro Air

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He added that the community's offer of assistance would not change Luvata's decision.

"It will have a ripple effect in our economy," Mr. Prcin said. "It will affect banking and retail. When a community loses 390 jobs, it will have a ripple effect throughout the county."

Mr. Prcin said JEDCO remains optimistic.

"We're working with Texas Workforce Commission on a job fair scheduled for late March," he said. "We'll hold a second one a couple of months later."

Mr. Prcin said the closing date in August gives Jacksonville time to address the economic impact.

"It gives us time to bring in other businesses who will be able to utilize the available labor force in Jacksonville," he said. "For so long, unemployment has been so low. We remain optimistic."

As for the Luvata Electrofin plant, Mr. Prcin said JEDCO is still working with Luvata.

"They've assured us they plan on growing that business here," he said.

The announcement of Astro Air's closing marks the second major Jacksonville employer to announce a plant closing in two months. Jan. 31, Alliance Data Systems announced they will close their call center in April, impacting 230 jobs.

Scene in Passing

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street. He enjoys estate sales and the historical "stuff" he finds. Bless his heart, he returned to me the original copy of a statement sent by this newspaper to the Texas Cafe. Now. Do you remember this business on the west side of the square? It occupied the space later to become the second half of Mathews-Miller. Now who owned and operated the Texas Cafe? I believe it was Polly Guynn and her husband, Ben. But I am always open to the possibility of needing correction. There was only one charge on the bill. It was for a six-inch advertisement on Dec. 20. But how do we know when? My Better Half had marked the bottom, "Paid, 2-1-63, EHW." Well, it probably was a Christmas greeting ad, thus the 12/20, and the cost factors out to 60 cents per column inch. And 45 years

later, we have tangible evidence that something really happened on Feb. 1, 1963. That was the year our Child No. 2 celebrated her fifth birthday. That was also the year of one of the saddest days in the entire history of our nation--Nov. 22, 1963--Dallas, Texas.

It bothers me to ponder the mystery of memories stored in my head. Next week we're going to observe the 158th birthday of this newspaper. Everyone is invited to join us from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please come and add your "John Henry" to our guest register. Some historians may find your name on the list and discover a missing link in a family genealogy search. Who knows.

Thanks so much to each of you who read this space. Words without readers have no value. Think about it... and keep smiling.

Clinton

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the war in Iraq has caused the nation. "You must decide how you want us to change. You have a choice of two immensely popular candidates (Clinton and Obama)."

Calling the economy a big mess, he said the nation must work to avoid a recession.

He said under his administration, 7.7 million people worked their way from poverty to the middle class and the median income jumped \$6,000; the number living below the poverty line has increased.

Under the Bush administration, health care costs have doubled, energy prices and food costs have jumped, and people are living on maxed out credit cards, he said. "New jobs are paying 20 percent less than they used to."

He predicted that another one million "of your fellow citizens" are facing foreclosures on homes because of the current mortgage meltdown.

Mr. Clinton called his wife's plan the most aggressive of any of the candidates running for president. "She wants to freeze monthly payments for 90 days, and give \$30 million to states," in order to implement a bailout plan.

"We'll tell the mortgage companies: you eat 20 percent, we (the government) will eat 20 percent, you won't foreclose on these people," he said. "When you're in a hole, you quit digging."

Addressing the job market,

Mr. Clinton said that one strategy is guaranteed to create new jobs, and that is a serious commitment to a green energy future.

He leveled harsh criticism against the Bush administration for giving large tax credits to oil and gas companies. "They used that money to buy back their own stock and increase profits. Hillary will remove the tax cuts and encourage energy development."

He suggested that if the nation closed all its landfills and built biofuel plants in every populated region, more jobs would be created locally. "You can't put these jobs into a pipeline," he said.

Regarding health care, he said that the nation has a simple, moral obligation to provide medical coverage, and he said the current administration is allowing the tail to wag the dog. "It's a disgrace and it's bankrupting families."

The audience interrupted the speech with cheers when Mr. Clinton suggested that every American should have the opportunity to buy into the same health care plan that is made available to Congress. "There are 250 choices. You buy what fits your family."

Paying for expanded universal health will be easy by eliminating tax cuts for the wealthiest one percent, he said. "This nation has the

Water dispute

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he said.

In a hypothetical scenario, he asked if someone who wanted to build a small lake in 25-30 years would be allowed to do so under the proposed language.

He said he understands LNVA's desire to make its water rights secure and dependable for its customers in the Beaumont area, but he insists that these changes should be included in the regional and state water plan.

Mr. Renneau said the time clock started all over again with TCEQ when the new draft was presented last month. "They published legal notices in the Beaumont and Nacogdoches papers at the end of January, and people have 30 days to file letters of protest."

ANRA's letter will likely be the first submitted to TCEQ. But it will

City of Rusk

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special election May 4, 1996.

One of the proposed propositions deals with this matter, which would limit the mayor's vote to only break a tie.

Another of the propositions establishes a quorum as a majority of the council and a majority of the members present required to pass any order of business.

Proposals to be submitted to voters will ask for the establishment of positions for alternate municipal court judges to serve in the absence of the presiding judge.

Voters will be asked to clarify existing wording concerning the removal or discharge of city employees in general and the future establishment of a municipal court-of-record.

Voters will be asked to take out the cap on city spending without the approval of the council. This will allow the council to set the cap by ordinance, which can be changed

from year to year.

Kris Morgan, District 1, said, "I still maintain that the mayor should vote. However I am not in a position to play God with the citizens of Rusk. I think they should have the opportunity to vote on the matter."

"I agree with you. There is no ground swell to take the mayor's vote away. I took a poll of District 3 and found 50 percent said the mayor should vote and 50 percent said no," said Mr. Jones.

"I think the mayor should have the right to vote," Walter Session, District 2, said.

Mr. Woodard, District 4, said he thought citizens should vote on the matter.

Mr. Florian, District 5 said, "You all know how I feel, but in the spirit of unity, I say we should ask voters to decide on the matter."

In another matter the council approved the location of a mobile home

in the amendment process. "We want to be involved in protecting the interests of the people in the middle and upper parts of the river basin."

When the initial dispute between LNVA and ANRA erupted last fall, ANRA threatened legal action because LNVA would have had the autonomy to pump water from the watershed above Lake Sam Rayburn, which includes Lake Columbia.

Critics claimed LNVA's request had less to do with Homeland Security and more to do with feeding a massive industrial complex in Beaumont and Port Arthur with water.

Mr. Chavira added, "If properly managed, conserved and apportioned, there is a sufficient supply for the human, industrial and environmental needs of the entire Angelina and Neches River basin well into the future."

on property located in the William Anderson survey for Mario Santiago, 3321 Loop 343, Rusk.

The council approved a contract with CKS Wireless and designated the city manager to sign it. The wireless company will place antennas on city towers and give the city one free internet service for every antenna. With the addition of CKS services in Rusk, there will be two high speed internet facilities. The other is SuddenLink.

During the city manager's report, Mike Murray, said there is water at the well location on FM 343. "They hit 50 feet of water at 600 feet and they will drill another 50 feet."

Congressman Jeb Hensarling will be in Rusk at 10:45 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 20, to present a Congressional Record document to Lewie Byers, Rusk Citizen of the Year. The presentation will be made in the county courtroom of the courthouse.

TxDOT

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federal government has been rescinding those allocations.

"The federal government is the biggest dog, it gets to determine how much it eats," Mr. Krantz said.

Due to the funding crunch, three major projects in Cherokee County have yet to be funded. Those projects are: U.S. Highway 79 between Jacksonville and New Summerfield, TxDOT plans to expand the highway to five lanes; U.S. 175 from the Neches river to Jacksonville, TxDOT plans to expand the highway to four lanes, making it a consistent width from Jacksonville to Dallas; and U.S. Highway 69 in Wells, TxDOT plans to expand the existing highway to four lanes to eliminate bottle-necking traffic during hurricane evacuations.

The U.S. Highway 69 project in Wells is a high-priority project for TxDOT due to its designation as an evacuation

route.

"We're hopeful (about the Wells project), but it's still up in the air," Mr. Krantz said.

Projects that will move forward are improvements to FM 347 between Jacksonville and Oakland and U.S. Highway 69 in Rusk.

The project in Rusk calls for the repair of the outside lanes and a "hot-mix" overlay of the entire highway.

"We have a lot to maintain," Mr. Krantz said. "Our Farm-to-Market road system is bigger than California's entire highway system. We have 80,000 miles of center-lined highways, it's far and away the biggest highway system (in the country). So, we've had to pull our resources out of construction and put them toward highway maintenance (as a result of the funding crunch). We're having to focus on maintaining what we have."

"Plus, the dollar doesn't go as far as it used to."

The shift from construction to maintenance creates problems, as Mr. Krantz explained that TxDOT wants to expand the current highway system to accommodate future growth.

According to TxDOT's 2007 strategic plan, Texas population increased 57 percent in the last 25 years, increasing road usage by 95 percent, all while state road capacity grew by eight percent. TxDOT projects that the population will grow by 64 percent in the next 25 years, bringing a 214 percent increase in road usage. Without a comprehensive plan, TxDOT's 2007 strategic plan says state road capacity will only grow six percent.

"Texas is fortunate to have growth," Mr. Krantz said. "As the state's transportation authority, we have to plan for that growth. We're not the only state experiencing rescissions

by the federal government, and we're not the only one feeling a financial crunch."

Mr. Krantz said the Texas Legislature asked TxDOT to find alternate ways to fund highway construction projects. Proposition 12, passed by voters as a result of legislation in the last session, authorized the state to pass \$5 billion in bonds to fund highway construction. Other plans call for the installation of toll roads. "We're not the only state having to look at toll roads and bonds," Mr. Krantz said. "It's pretty universal for states experiencing growth."

TxDOT will continue to maintain the highways in place. Mr. Krantz said the Tyler District will be seal coating many highways in East Texas, including U.S. Highway 69 in Bullard, U.S. Highway 79 between Jacksonville and New Summerfield and FM 343.

"You must decide how you want us to change. You have a choice of two immensely popular candidates."

Former President Bill Clinton

lowest net worth in 100 years," he said.

The rising costs of obtaining a college education was a hot button topic for Friday's audience, and Mr. Clinton called the current administration's policies a disgrace.

He recommended raising the Pell grants every year, increasing the HOPE tax credit from \$1,650 to \$3,500 and expanding a youth AmeriCorp program where years of service can be applied to college debt.

Mr. Clinton said that his wife wants to see teachers, firemen and nurse graduates placed in areas where years of service will pay off your loan.

"This is the solutions business," he underscored.

Mr. Clinton recounted some of Mrs. Clinton's achievements as a New York senator and as a member of the armed forces committee.

She helped obtain body armor for troops, obtained better care for injured veterans and obtained child care for first responders. He said Mrs. Clinton was among the first to recognize that emergency responders in the aftermath of

9-11 were breathing asbestos and other carcinogens at the fallen twin towers.

Regarding the war in Iraq, Mr. Clinton said the real problems are how to divide the political power and split the oil money.

"The nearest example I can give you is this. Your neighbor's house burns, and you take him in. Whether it's one month or six months, even if you don't have a room for him, you let him sleep on the couch. But if he's still there after five years, it's not about the fire anymore."

He said that Iraq has become a stain on the nation's honor.

He said that if Mrs. Clinton is elected, she will be on the job "every single day."

And he said it's okay to keep score.

"A president should be judged by three things," he said. "Are the American people better off when you quit or when you started? Do your children and grandchildren have a brighter future? Is the world coming together or being torn apart?"

"This is all that really matters. Think about it."

Warm-up music mirrors candidate's message

NACOGDOCHES – The two hours preceding former President Bill Clinton's speech to students at Stephen F. Austin University sounded more like a rock concert warm-up than a political event.

Music selections were carefully choreographed and vetted to deliver a loud, high energy beat and a subliminal message in support of Sen. Hillary Clinton's presidential bid.

While the Grammy-winning Dixie Chicks may be blackballed on Clear Channel radio stations and considered "musicians-non-grata" at the Bush White House, they crooned and harmonized "We Can Change the World."

That message juxtaposed transparently against one of the campaign buzz phrases repeated often by the former president: "Hillary is an agent of change."

A popular band from the 1970s, Earth, Wind and Fire, blasted their hit song, "Do You Remember," with a probable subliminal message referencing the economic stability of the eight Clinton years in the White House.

And the highly-political Irish rock band U2, which has taken strong stances on apartheid, hunger and third world debt in Africa, filled the room with "The City of Blinding Lights." The song was written after Sept. 11, 2001, when songwriter Bono found hope and inspiration from New York's bright skyline in the tragedy's aftermath.

Some may have dismissed the Monkees and "I'm A Believer" as trite,

but bounce-back selections from Bruce Springsteen, Edgar Winter's "Lovely Day" and a cut from the Eagles' latest CD compensated for the playlist faux pas.

Too bad Mr. Clinton didn't take to heart the lyrics of "Taking Care of Business," the 1973 hit by Bachman Turner Overdrive – the last song played before he took the stage. Otherwise, he might not have arrived one hour late for his speech.

I browsed my iPod library to see if there were suitable selections to recommend to political campaigns. Here's a list, in no particular order, of songs that probably won't be heard on the campaign trail:

- The Beatles on the White Album. "Don't Pass Me By."
- 3 Doors Down, "Going Down in Flames"
- Pete Townsend, "A Little Is Enough"
- Stone Temple Pilots, "Big Empty"
- Stevie Ray Vaughn, "Ask Me No Questions"
- Sting, "I've Been Down So Long"

As the campaigns enter the final lap in the delegate race, candidates may need a personal playlist outside of stump speeches to relax while traveling. To avoid a "19th Nervous Breakdown" (The Rolling Stones), just remember to "Breathe" (Pink Floyd).

Rock on.

-Terrie Gonzalez