

NEWS

Church plans

homecoming May 25

Homecoming activities are planned for 10 a.m. Sunday, May 25 at the Salem Missionary Baptist Church. An offering will be taken at the conclusion of the service for the maintenance of the cemetery.

A covered dish luncheon will be served at noon in the church fellowship hall.

CITY OF ALTO

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inspect them and tell you what needs to be done to maintain them, if anything."

Mr. Carman told the council he has worked on the city's water tanks before and has been inspecting and cleaning tanks since 1979. The council voted 4-0 to have him clean the tanks.

The council voted to contract with Tiger Creek for the repair of leaks in Alto's gas system and for the replacement of gas lines at the Alto Housing Authority. The city received two bids on the Alto Housing Authority, with Duplichain Contractors bidding \$60,200 and Tiger Creek bidding \$285 per hour. The lack of a bottom line estimate bothered some council members, but Tiger Creek's recommendation from the Texas Railroad Commission turned out to be the deciding factor.

"The railroad commission wants us to show we used people with certain qualifications," Councilman Robert

Gospel singing is May 16

A gospel singing featuring the Relations Quartet is planned for 7 p.m. Friday, May 16 at the Salem Missionary Baptist Church.

Hadacall will sing at Ponta

The Ponta Baptist Church will host a concert by Hadacall, a southern gospel quartet from Alto. The concert will be at 6:30 p.m. Sunday, May 18.

Pearman said. "That will weigh heavily on our decision."

In other action, the council voted to purchase a new door that will be installed in the hallway between the front office and police department from Lowes at a cost of \$1,299.93 and install a lock on that door at a cost of \$300.

The door is to prevent people from entering the front office from the rear of the building by entering through the police department and municipal court offices.

The council voted to pass a one-time 50 cent charge from the Texas Railroad Commission down to its gas customers to fund the railroad commission's pipeline safety program, approved a bid from George Wallace to mow city property at a rate of \$27.50 per hour, voted to auction off a 1995 red Dodge pick-up truck that is no longer being used by the utilities department and approved accounts payable.

REDCO

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accompanied to the meeting by Lindsay Sneed, finance director for the company.

Lon Morris College has received a \$250,000 work force grant to train employees.

When he found out the firm was looking for another site, Greg James suggested they look at Rusk.

Employees will be trained for a week. A full-time week is 30 hours and company benefits including retirement and insurance will be provided. The starting payroll will be in excess of \$1 million.

"This company is expected to create 40-60 new jobs in Rusk immediately. And, this can turn into 600," Greg James said.

The firm employs college students and persons who work other jobs.

Bob Goldsberry said, "We had heard about the economic impact this company could make to an area."

The \$350,000 incentive package will include \$200,000 in loans and \$150,000 in grant funds.

Etech, Inc. is expected to hire 50 persons the first year; 150, the second year; and 200 the third year.

In addition to the payroll, the city will benefit from sales tax collected from the collections.

A building belonging to Jim Perkins at the southeast corner of the square will be used for the call center. Equip-

ment will be purchased for \$25,000 from Alliance Data in Jacksonville. Break-room equipment can be purchased for another \$30,500. The loan for the equipment will be repaid at a rate of \$5,000 per month.

City council approves Etech, Inc. incentives

Mr. James made the presentation at the 3:30 p.m. city council meeting.

"This new telemarketing company came to Nacogdoches nine years ago. I was involved in helping to bring them there. This business was just what we were looking for. It is clean and would not overtax our resources. They employed 40-60 persons in 1999. The firm was a part of Bell South. In 2003, Etech, Inc. was spun off. The company is active in the United Way and community festivities.

In addition to retirement and insurance, the company provides a tuition reimbursement program.

Starting pay will range between \$20,000 and \$24,000. Supervisors make between \$40,000 and \$65,000.

By locating downtown, local restaurants can feel the impact of the company being in Rusk.

Plans are for the call center to open as early as June. "It will take 60-90 days to get the building started," Mr. James said.

ELECTION

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four established a quorum as the majority of the members of the council and establishes the fact that an affirmative vote of the majority present will be required to pass any order of business. This proposition passed by a vote of 88-7.

City elections

Jacksonville city voters approved all seven charter revisions. The last change to the charter was made in 2002. Propositions one, six and seven involve verbiage changes. Proposition three deals with candidate filing times. Proposition four sets candidates requirements. Proposition five authorizes the council to appoint persons to fill vacancies.

In the Rusk city election three incumbents were re-elected unopposed. Don Jones received 33 votes; Donald Woodard, 23; and Sam Florian, 21 votes.

In the Jacksonville city election, Jeff Smith, unopposed for District 2 received 27 votes. Rob Beall was elected to the District 4 position. Votes received were Beall 133; incumbent Phyllis Wilburn, 50; and James Huggins, 3.

School board elections

In the Rusk school board election, Dr. Anthony Holcomb received 152 votes; Frances Long, 142 votes;

Oliver Sturns, 40; and Terry Downs, 36 votes. Incumbents Dr. Holcomb and Mrs. Long were re-elected.

James Houser, Place 4 incumbent, was re-elected to the Jacksonville ISD board with a vote of 411 compared to 172 for challenger Ken Smith. Incumbent Jimmy Brown Place 3, received 318 votes to guarantee his reelection. Others receiving votes were Belinda Sims, 66 votes; and Sarah Jane Robinson, 224.

Other elections

Elected at Wells for two full-terms on the city council were Roy White, incumbent, and Robert Kalka; Chris Pounds for an unexpired term. Mr. White received 75 votes and Mr. Kalka, 37. The other candidate on the ballot, Joe Hedgepath received 31 votes. Incumbent Mayor James Maddox was defeated in his bid for re-election by challenger Corbett Doss. Mr. Maddox received 38 votes and Mr. Doss, 70 votes.

Two incumbents Sheri Solomon and Karie Bolton were re-elected to the New Summerfield city council. Ms. Solomon received 19 votes; Ms. Bolton, 16 votes; and challenger Don Williams, 4 votes.

Elections were cancelled at Alto city, Wells ISD, Reklaw city, Gallatin city and New Summerfield ISD.

CITY OF RUSK

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A small portion of the property is zoned B-2 for general business and the major portion is zoned residential one family.

This is the second request made by the Daniels. The first request asked that the entire tract be zoned light industrial to allow for the location of an oil company.

This time they had asked that the property be zoned B-2.

City Manager Mike Murray said the zone line is under the building. Those in the delegation were asked if they would object to setting a line for the B-2 zoning and then leave the remainder zoned residential one family. Some indicated they would be willing to meet with the Daniels.

James Holcomb, home owner in the area, said, "We went through this not too long ago. Considering one lot would be spot zone. If you do this we will see people taking one lot and zoning it commercial. I don't think there would be any reason to deny anyone. That

action would put Highway 69 onto the residential property on Fifth Street. If the property line came to the back of my property, it would not interfere with the back of my home. But, I am interested in keeping the line where it is."

Mary Holcomb, Mr. Holcomb's wife, said, "The Becks would be the most affected. My home would be affected if the property is rezoned."

Mike Kesler, representing Eldridge Moak attorney for the Holcombs, said a letter from Mr. Moak to the council said, "As it stands, this would constitute spot zoning."

No action was taken by the council concerning the matter.

Make Rusk Beautiful

Teresa Langley, Rusk Chamber of Commerce president, asked the council to collect a voluntary fee on the monthly water bills. The fee will be used to finance a "Keep Rusk Beautiful" program. Cards will be sent to local residents asking them to request the

city to bill them.

A committee composed of Mrs. Langley, Maxine Session and Neal Holcomb will coordinate the program. The committee will serve for two years.

"We don't want this to continue under the umbrella of the chamber, but to be a separate organization. We will get the Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, garden club and others to help us," she said. "We want the entire community to be involved. In two to five years, we will look like Nacogdoches and Athens," she said.

Cemetery maintenance bids

No action was taken concerning the acceptance of a bid for cemetery maintenance. Bids were sought for maintenance of Cedar Hill Cemetery and Rusk Memorial Park.

Bidders were Randy King and Antonio's (Enriquez) Lawn Care Service, both of Rusk and Tony Rollins of Jacksonville.

Mr. Murray said, "When I

got here (city employment) we had nothing but trouble. Antonio has done a fantastic job. However, there is a gap of approximately \$5,000 in the bids. It looks like if we accept a bid we will have to go with the low bid."

"I am concerned about the ad, when it stated mowing three times per month or as needed," Mayor Angela Raiborn said. "The bahai grass grows so fast that it takes more than mowing three times a month."

Tommie Franks spoke on behalf of Mr. Enriquez's service. "He has worked for me for 10 years. He is gifted with a lot of talent. He always wants the cemetery to look beautiful and he will go at almost a moment's notice to correct a problem," she said.

Mr. Enriquez started with the city 12 years ago. He came on the recommendation of the late Judge J.W. Summers. Judge Summers helped him with his bid, which was \$21,540. Mr. Enriquez said he had to increase his prices be-

cause of the increase of fuel. "We always sweep the markers after we mow," he said. "And, we are mowing every week, sometimes more often."

Councilman Walter Session also praised Mr. Enriquez.

Mr. King asked why the city advertised for bids if the council wanted to keep Mr. Enriquez?

Councilman Don Jones said, "I like Antonio but we have a bid for \$21,800. I think it would not be proper to refuse it."

Councilman Donald Woodard said he was not going to vote as one of the bidders works for him.

Articles of incorporation for 4-B sales tax status

The council approved articles of incorporation and by-laws for a new 4-B sales tax economic development corporation. Voters approved a change from a 4-A corporation to a 4-B corporation at a special election Nov. 6, 2007.

The articles of incorporation and by-laws will be forwarded to the secretary of state. Then a meeting of the corporation board will be called and an organizational meeting held.

A bid from Marks Lanham for \$24,000 to manage the swimming pool was accepted.

A contract for management services with Gary R. Traylor & Associates Inc. for a HOME program with the Texas Department of Housing and community affairs was approved.

Funds from the asset forfeiture account were allocated to purchase equipment totaling approximately \$10,000.

Money from the municipal court technology fund will be spent for computer hardware and software updating.

In his report to the council City Manager Murray reported cost of reroofing the library will be \$10,000.

Attending the meeting were Mayor Raiborn; councilmembers Session, Jones, Woodard and Kris Morgan.

ETECH

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- not compete with - SFA." Members of NEDCO, without the benefit of a dedicated sales tax, began doing their homework and learned that Bell South was considering a call center in either Tyler or Lufkin.

"We asked them to add Nacogdoches to the list of cities to investigate, and we developed a creative incentive package with the help of local business leaders," said Mr. James.

That business package consisted of offering them a facility at a nominal cost, along with free training at SFA, a job fair to recruit employees and a low-cost loan for start-up capital.

"Nacogdoches was not their first choice, because it was perceived as not having a sufficient number of potential employees in the labor force," said Mr. James. "When we explained to them about the student body, they became more receptive."

Bell South moved into the old Perry's building in 1998, and then relocated into a new, 30,000-square-foot building in an industrial park spear-headed by NEDCO. Mr. James served as chairman of NEDCO until 2000.

In 2003 Bell South spun off Etech as an independent operating company, but remained as the primary customer. And each year the company grew. The current list of accounts includes Fortune 500 giants like AT&T, Capital One Bank, XM Radio and others.

Chief Operating Officer Matt Rocco said that Etech soon saturated the workforce in Nacogdoches with more than 700 employees. He set his sights on Lufkin for a second base of operation to complement the

Nacogdoches location.

"Those 40 jobs they promised multiplied into 700," recalled Mr. James. "Their success greatly exceeded all our expectations."

Fast forward

With an 11-year track record and exponential growth, Etech sees an opportunity to expand again - this time in Cherokee County.

When Alliance Data announced that it was closing its Jacksonville call center on U.S. Highway 79 east and pink-slipping 290 employees, Mr. James began making some phone calls.

As a member of the Lon Morris board of trustees, he said his immediate reaction was to try and offer retraining assistance through the college to get the unemployed workers back in the work force.

Then he contacted Mr. Rocco to see if Etech might consider a Cherokee County location.

"The availability of some of Alliance Data's office furniture and equipment was a big incentive," said Mr. James. "Etech attended a job fair, and hired several of the Alliance Data employees."

With more phone calls and meetings involving the Rusk Economic Development Corporation and Etech, Mr. James helped negotiate a \$350,000 incentive package which could bring Etech to downtown Rusk.

The package includes a loan up to \$50,000 from REDCO for purchase of office equipment, a \$150,000 interim, interest-free loan and a \$150,000 grant that does not have to be repaid if performance and

employee goals are met.

The tentative location is "the train building," a 7,000-8,000 square-foot facility on the southwest corner of the square and named for its exterior wall mural. The last tenant was ETMC Olympic Center.

Jim Perkins, CEO of Citizens 1st Bank, agreed to lease the train building to Etech for \$1 per month.

REDCO members have worked fast behind the scenes to assemble the pieces of the incentive package. Complicating the negotiations was the change in REDCO's status from a 4A to a 4B charter.

While that transition caused minor time delays, the negotiations remain on track.

"It will be a big boost to this area if we can get them here," said Charles Hassell, who serves as president of REDCO.

Lewie Byers, president of Texas National Bank in Rusk, also serves on the REDCO board and he agrees.

Mr. Byers said, "I am really pleased with their plans to come to Rusk and be our good neighbor. Many of the people who worked at the call center in Jacksonville lived in Rusk and will benefit from this addition. And, too this will be a tremendous boost to Lon Morris College with the addition of a work force grant of \$250,000."

Robert Gonzalez, general manager of KWRW 97.7 FM, participated in early meetings, and he praised the speed and agility of community leaders.

"This was an opportunity with a window that was about to close," he said. "Charles Hassell, Lewie Byers

and Greg James demonstrated the community's desire to have a call center, and to create an innovative economic incentive package.

"Mr. Rocco called us 'Team Rusk' because he could see the collective desire to roll out a welcome mat. This would not have been possible without the support of Mayor Angela Raiborn, City Manager Mike Murray and of course Greg for bringing Rusk leaders and Etech, Inc. together."

Symbiotic relationships

"In connecting the dots, I see many similarities between Rusk and Nacogdoches," said Mr. James. While NEDCO relied on SFA to train employees at the call center, Cherokee County has Lon Morris College. Leaders hope to work through the Texas Workforce Commission to obtain state funding to underwrite training costs at LMC.

"SFA proved to be an asset in Nacogdoches because students applied for part-time and full-time work with Etech," he said. "Rusk has Rusk State Hospital and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. This could be a second job close to home."

The focus of Etech's operation in Rusk is going to differ slightly from the mission statement of Nacogdoches, Lufkin, Pasadena and India.

Nacogdoches and Lufkin have historically handled in-bound calls by customers activating credit card or cell phone accounts.

All Etech employees at the Pasadena location are fluent in Spanish and English, and they specialize in contracts requiring bilingual speaking, reading and writing skills.

The Rusk mission statement