

Property tax values increase again this year

By GLORIA JENNINGS
STAFF WRITER

The 2008 Cherokee County property values have increased over values reported for last year, said Lee Flowers, chief appraiser.

"The biggest movement is in Wells ISD," said Lee Flowers, chief appraiser for CCAD. The tax base there increased 50 percent due to the expansion in production of natural gas. "Drilling activities continue to be aggressive on both sides of the county line for Wells ISD," Mr. Flowers said.

Timber values increased modestly county wide.

County school district values increased primarily on residential and rural land valuations.

There are still pieces of property under protest. Protest hearings are scheduled for Aug. 13. The finalized value for these accounts will be supplemented to the current certified values issued July 25.

A total of 25,000 notice of increased property values were mailed to taxpayers on June 3.

Values increased in the Maydelle, Gallatin, Ponta and Lake Jacksonville areas.

Certified values for Cherokee County General Fund increased 9.74 percent or \$175,997,602. The lateral road fund increased 9.59 percent or \$172,067,424.

Jacksonville ISD will see

Certified Taxable Values - Cherokee County

	2007	2008	Change	Percent
Cherokee County				
General Fund	1,806,862,999	1,982,860,601	175,997,602	9.74%
Lateral Road	1,797,848,204	1,966,915,628	172,067,424	9.59
Jacksonville				
School	832,061,578	875,318,901	43,257,323	5.20
City	511,021,355	534,590,671	23,569,316	4.61
Rusk				
School	318,287,134	329,653,636	11,366,502	3.57
City	93,323,860	98,925,793	5,601,933	6.00
Alto				
School	126,370,756	136,394,945	10,024,189	7.93
City	26,640,163	29,467,315	2,827,152	10.61
Wells				
School	44,308,629	65,971,562	21,662,933	48.89
City	11,494,375	12,000,124	505,749	4.40
New Summerfield				
School	35,874,642	38,291,252	2,416,610	6.74
Troup				
School	415,368,153	449,874,720	34,506,567	8.31

DATA: CHEROKEE COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT
GRAPHIC: CHEROKEEAN HERALD

a 5.2 percent increase and the City of Jacksonville, 4.61 percent.

Rusk ISD, located in both Cherokee and Rusk County will experience a 3.57 percent increase in values. The City of Rusk will see a 6 percent increase.

Values for Alto ISD will increase 7.93 percent and for the City of Alto, 10.61 percent.

Wells ISD will see a 48.89 percent increase and the City of Wells, 4.40 percent.

New Summerfield ISD will receive a 6.74 percent prop-

erty value increase.

Values for Troup ISD in Cherokee and Smith counties will see an 8.31 percent valuation increase.

Increases for borderline taxing entities not appraised by Cherokee County are not known.

Property values for these entities lying in Cherokee County include City of Troup, \$5,069,817; Bullard ISD, \$188,294,263; City of Bullard, \$5,835,776; and Carlisle ISD, \$23,141,148.

Values are under protest for Cherokee County General

Fund and Lateral Road Fund; Jacksonville ISD; City of Jacksonville; Alto ISD; Troup ISD and Bullard ISD.

County tax values lost to the homestead cap include \$55,581,959 for Cherokee County general and lateral road funds; \$18,743,269 for Jacksonville ISD; \$8,781,180 for City of Jacksonville; \$12,826,464 for Rusk ISD in both Cherokee and Rusk counties; \$1,465,034 for the City of Rusk; \$8,574,752 for Alto ISD; \$1,484,363 for the City of Alto; \$510,220 for Wells ISD in Cherokee

Review board hears 67 tax complaints

By GLORIA JENNINGS
STAFF WRITER

The Cherokee County Appraisal District's review board are continuing to hear complaints from area taxpayers. Complaints concerning 67 pieces of property will be heard Aug. 13 said Lee Flowers, chief appraiser.

The Appraisal Review Board (ARB) has received 1,699 protests from disheartened property owners. Many of these people filing protests talked with an appraiser and settled their problems without appearing before the review board. Appearing before the board were 110 taxpayers.

"It is a mixed bag as far as results are concerned. Some taxpayers won and the CCAD won other cases," Mr. Flowers said.

He said many of the 1,699 protests were a part of the 3,177 inquires his office received last month.

Last year there were 684 protests filed with the review board.

"We heard many times about the bad economy," Mr. Flowers said.

"Texas is one of the areas where the market has not been damaged like the rest of the country," he said.

Other values not greatly affected are luxury homes and mid-size cities, according to information from Texas A&M University.

"This can be credited to the fact that Texas did not have a boom of overbuilding. Most buildings in the state were affordable to the builder's income. This has not been the case in other parts of the country," Mr. Flowers said.

County; \$103,089 for the City of Wells; \$483,691 for New Summerfield ISD; \$3,843,524 for Troup ISD in Cherokee County only; \$22,882 for the City of Troup in Cherokee

County; \$10,122,917 for Bullard ISD in Cherokee County; \$29,634 for the City of Bullard in Cherokee County; and \$1,566,317 for Carlisle ISD in Cherokee County only.

Scrap metal sale will net rail authority up to \$500,000

Board hears update on special runs, events slated for fall, winter

By MARIE WHITEHEAD
EDITOR

A surplus inventory sale at the Texas State Railroad will likely gross at least \$389,000 and possibly as much as \$500,000.

The Texas State Railroad Authority spent three hours hearing

reports regarding the operation of the Texas State Railroad July 30 and reviewed seven bids for the surplus material.

High bidder was A&K Railroad Materials, Inc. of Metairie, La. The bids were submitted on a per pound basis.

A period of 30 days was given for closure and an upfront down payment to be held in escrow, until finalization of the sale.

Activities at the tourist train are positive, despite existing economic conditions, said Chap Boaz, TSR manager and American Heritage

spokesman. "We are operating with a bare bones staff now on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, but the good news is that over the past three weekends, on seven runs, we averaged 151 passengers per run."

"We're doing well considering the fact that tourist train operations are down about 25 percent across the U.S."

The Lone Ranger event was so successful that it will return by popular demand, said Boaz. "That date is set for Sept. 13-14. Another event is Bikers and Box Cars which is scheduled Sept. 19-21. Oct. 10-11

are the dates for the Rusk Pioneer Festival at the Park and a Halloween promotion is being considered," he stated. "Polar Express will return Nov. 28-Dec. 28."

"A Day Out with Thomas 2008: The Great Discovery Tour" will be featured at the TSR Oct. 17-19 and 24-26. Eight daily train departures are included Fridays and Sundays and nine on Saturdays.

"Murder on the disORIENTed EXPRESS" is slated Oct. 11.

More information on special engagements and attractions are on the web at www.TexasStateRR.com

Board members also heard reports on the status of grant applications with additional work underway.

"These things just take time," said President Steve Presley.

Other revenue sources, like the film industry and advertising agencies preparing commercials for television, are also on the board for negotiations.

Subcontracts for work performed at the maintenance complex by TSR staff is another possible new source for income. More promotion for the use of the camp grounds is also expected to help.

2-A-DAY

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prepare for their first season under new Head Coach Ted Patton. Coach Patton holds a large amount of optimism for his team.

"We want to be more competitive this year," he said. "We want to change the expectations. The guys came in excited today. We want to build on this excitement and increase it throughout the season."

Rusk will hold true two-a-day practices starting mornings from 7-9 and again in the evenings from 6-8. Coach Patton said that for the first four days of practice, the players will be out of pads in order to focus on the facets of Rusk's new offense and defense.

The Eagles have inherited their coach's optimism. Several players, including senior pre-season all-state defensive lineman Quinn Anthony, said that Rusk has "something to prove to everyone" this season.

For Rusk, the mission to disprove their doubters starts Aug. 29 at home against Palestine.

'Lots of hard work to do'

Meanwhile, in Jacksonville, new Head Coach Steve Wells and his Indians started prac-

tice promptly at 6:59 a.m. with conditioning, and continued until 2:30 p.m.

"We've got a lot of hard work to do," Coach Wells said. "I've got a lot of names to learn."

The emphasis during the Indians' two-a-days was more on hard work. As the Indians broke huddles, the team chanted:

"Hard work makes dreams come true!"

The Indians spent an hour working on defense and an hour working on offense, but the first part of practice included an extended session on special teams. The Indians learned everything from blocking techniques to how to line up.

"We work on offense and defense, as well, but we work on special teams because it's important," he said.

The Indians start their season at home Aug. 29 against former district 14-4A foe Marshall.

In Alto, fans drove just behind Yellowjacket Stadium to park on top of the hill next to the high school's Agricultural and Technological Building to get a glimpse of their Yellowjackets.

The goal for Head Coach Keith Gardner and his team

See pg. 2B for clip 'n save football schedules

is simple: winning another state title. To that end, the Yellowjackets practice from 8 a.m. until noon, preparing for another run.

"We want to learn as much as we can as fast as we can," Coach Gardner said.

Coach Gardner said aside from the year, things haven't changed much around Alto High School.

"The kids are still working hard, they still enjoy the game and they still want to win," he said. "The only difference is that we have a few new faces on the team."

The Yellowjackets threw themselves into practice, to the point where if Coach Gardner didn't like the speed with which his team ran to offensive sets, one sentence fired his team back up.

"We don't get lazy in Alto," he said.

The Yellowjackets start their season on the road Aug. 29 in San Augustine.

16 VIDEOS

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and oxygen doesn't reach the brain.

"You can kill somebody with this," said Asst. Chief Cavazoz.

The 16 videos were uploaded on the website between April and July 2008.

Two names were associated with the username, and the user is alleged to be part of the group.

The shortest video was eight seconds, while the longest video was 1:05.

A brief description of the choking incident on the website said, "Don't try this at home."

Four-letter words and obscenities were used repeatedly by the boys in the videos and in the 12 comments left by viewers/visitors to the website.

The Cherokeean Herald viewed all 16 of the videos.

Asst. Chief Cavazoz said that many of the videos feature fighting and that the participants appear to be willing.

"You can hear some of them laughing," he said.

However, the video which concerns him the most was

STUNT

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D.A. (district attorney) and see if there are charges (to be filed)."

The Rusk PD's lead investigator, Lt. Stephen Hughes, traveled to Dallas over the weekend for a bedside interview with the boy while he was at Parkland Hospital.

He was discharged on Sunday.

Police have identified all of the youth in the video who were present at the time of the accident. Besides the 15-year-old and another boy on the roof, there were two or three others, said the assistant chief.

A blood choke can lead to unconsciousness in four to 10 seconds. It requires little physical strength to apply and can cause brain damage or death if held too long.

the carotid restraint.

A blood choke can lead to unconsciousness in four to 10 seconds. It requires little physical strength to apply, and can cause brain damage or death if held for too long.

In some circles, this practice is known as the "fainting" or "choking game." It deprives the brain of oxygen and causes cerebral ischemia, a condition where parts of the brain do not receive enough blood flow to maintain normal functions.

Reports maintained by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that at least 82 youths aged 6-19 died as a result of the choking game between 1995-2007. Of those deaths, 71 were male; the mean age was 13.3 years.

The "game" is alleged to cause a brief sense of euphoria and/or intoxication and may be done by some youths as a rite of passage.

One video showed a youth applying what they claimed were pubic hairs to a piece of tape and placing it on another's face as he slept.

Several videos featured what looked like fights, including one with two girls and one with two younger children.

The total number of youths involved in the videos remains unclear and is under investigation by police.

They are also looking at a possible tie-in between the burning of Nicholas Pate and this group. (See related story, pg. 1A)

EL CAMINO REAL

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the door like the house was on fire. I flew out to her house grabbing a small tack hammer out of a basket as I went up the steps. The mother-in-law was screaming that she couldn't live there anymore, just as I rounded the corner into the den and saw the snake by the grandfather clock. Visions of ancient Egypt flashed through my head as I looked down on the

serpent. Cleopatra couldn't live without Mark Anthony, so she chose the bite of the serpent to ease her pain. I knew that I couldn't live with my mother-in-law, so I thought of taking up the serpent and ending the pain I saw coming. It turned out it was only a little chicken snake and my chances of an easy way out were gone. I killed the snake with the little hammer and we

brought the mother-in-law home. I hate snakes.

I can't think of anything else that won't wait until the next issue. If this wasn't long enough, you can read it the second time for free. Keep the news coming and I'll keep spreading it around. I'll see ya next week! And remember, **A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way.**