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Lampasas Dispatch Record

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75 Cents

WEATHER

Date	High	Low	Rain
June 27	101	76	
June 28	102	76	
June 29	103	76	
June 30	96	72	0.13

2013 rainfall to date: 10.12 inches. Same date last year: 12.93 inches. Normal through this date: 17.31 inches.

Data from Lampasas Municipal Airport through National Weather Service.

BRIEFLY

Fireworks

Several Lometa businesses and individuals are sponsoring the annual Hometown Fourth of July fireworks show at Lometa Regional Park.

Action will get under way at dark, and the public is welcome.

For more information, contact Sheri Stone at 512-734-5000.

Book-signing

Texas State Historian Bill O'Neal will be at the Lampasas Public Library on July 10 from 4-5:30 p.m. for a book-signing.

O'Neal will give a presentation about his newest book, "West Texas Cattle Kingdom." After his talk, O'Neal will sign copies of the book, which features over 200 photos and stories of cowboys, longhorn cattle, trail drives, range wars, and great Texas ranches and ranchers.

A portion of book sale proceeds will be used for library expansion.

Blood drive

Carter BloodCare will hold a blood drive on Friday at the H-E-B parking lot from noon to 5:30 p.m.

Phone Ryan Wilson at 512-556-3461 to schedule an appointment or for more information.

Fest contests

Entries are being accepted until July 11 for the annual Spring Ho Floor/Window Display Contest.

To enter, contact Andy Berry at 512-556-5434, or e-mail adrateberry@yahoo.com.

The festival theme is "Saddles, Spurs & Springs, It's a Texas Thing."

Office closure

The Lampasas Dispatch Record will be closed Thursday in observance of the July Fourth holiday.

The July 5 issue will appear on newsstands and be in area subscribers' mailboxes at the usual time, and deadlines for classified, real estate and display ads, as well as editorial copy, will be one day early.

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PHOTO BY DAVID LOWE

Turning dirt

A Shallow Ford Construction Co. Inc. front-end loader hauls off dirt excavated from the new Family Medicine Clinic construction site off U.S. Highway 190, while a sheepfoot compactor, back left, presses down subsoil. Work began recently to build a 12,000-square-foot medical facility between Oil States Industries and Lampasas Veterinary Clinic. After crews compact subsoil and press down base material on top of it, workers in about two weeks will begin drilling piers to prepare for pouring of the building slab, said David Holden, superintendent for RKJ Construction Inc. -- general contractor for the new clinic.

City Council, capital committee set infrastructure, facility goals

By DAVID LOWE
Staff Writer

The Lampasas City Council and the Capital Improvements Program Committee held a joint meeting Thursday to discuss budget priorities for infrastructure and public facilities.

The meeting, in which council and committee members discussed matters ranging from old city buildings to utility work to a possible increase in paving, was intended to help the council plan for the 2014 fiscal year.

The new fiscal cycle will begin Oct. 1, and the council expects to adopt a budget Sept. 23.

City Manager Finley deGraffenried plans to give the City Council a proposal for balancing the new fiscal-year budget without increasing city tax or utility rates.

As one of several proposed capital items discussed at the joint meeting, the CIP committee recommended adding \$115,000 to the city's budget for street paving. Lampasas has spent about \$250,000-\$275,000 annually on paving in recent years, city officials said.

The extra \$115,000 is intended for paving on South Broad Street from Seventh Street to Tenth Street.

In general, an increased annual allocation of funds for paving would allow Lampasas to pursue maintenance and improvements on streets using a quicker rotation than what is in place now, CIP Committee member Chuck Williamson said.

In addition, deGraffenried, who has

met with the CIP Committee several times in recent months, discussed the possibility of replacing 500-700 feet of sewer line near the middle school. The city manager recommended doing the work -- at an estimated cost of \$100,000 -- next fiscal year or in the 2015 cycle.

Also, deGraffenried noted, the CIP Committee has suggested making improvements to a water line on Third Street between Spring and Walnut streets. CIP members did a good job setting priorities for proposed water/wastewater expenses, deGraffenried said.

Planning for street and utility improvements is a good idea, Councilman Chris Harrison said.

"We need to concentrate on it," he said. "The infrastructure in this town has been neglected for a long time."

Infrastructure spending, deGraffenried said, would be one of the best uses of fund balance if the City Council opts to use some monies that have been held in reserve.

A draft ordinance, which the council may consider for adoption at a later date, would allow the city to use some unrestricted fund balance for one-time capital purchases. The draft states the city must keep enough fund balance to pay for three months of general fund operating expenses -- about \$6 million, deGraffenried said.

If the council approves the ordinance, any fund balance above the three-month requirement would be eligible for use for specific capital projects.

Councilman Robert McCauley said

he would feel better about requiring the city to keep enough funds to cover three months' operating expenses plus another 10 percent -- or about \$6.6 million total -- rather than just \$6 million.

Even if the council approves that suggested change, the city will have \$5 million in excess fund balance that could be used for capital purchases, deGraffenried said.

Council member TJ Monroe asked if spending some of the city's fund balance and keeping enough to pay for 90 days of operations would hurt the city's credit rating.

DeGraffenried said he and Finance Director Carol Boberg talked to the city's auditor and debt consultant about the proposed new fund balance plan. The debt consultant, deGraffenried said, encouraged city officials to seek a rating agency's opinion but indicated agencies might look favorably on Lampasas spending its own funds rather than borrowing for capital projects.

Harrison said it is logical to pay for improvements with excess fund balance rather than borrowing money.

Mrs. Monroe asked if Lampasas has ever come close to depleting its 90-day operating expense reserve. Mrs. Boberg and McCauley -- who has served several council terms -- said they do not remember any time when that was a concern.

Excess fund balance, deGraffenried said, could be used to construct a larger City Council meeting area. Several council members said they

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Court ruling allows for Texas to start voter ID

By DAVID LOWE
Staff Writer

The U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling that part of the Voting Rights Act is unconstitutional means Texas will implement new voter identification requirements immediately, state officials have announced.

The Supreme Court voted 5-4 to strike down the act's Section 4, which set forth the formula to determine the states, including Texas and several others in the South, that were required to seek federal approval or "preclearance" for changes in voting procedures.

Enacted in 1965, the law required states that had a history of racially discriminatory voting qualifications, low voter registration and turnout to seek federal permission for any voting-related law. Over time, all or part of 15 states became subject to preclearance requirements.

In his opinion for the Supreme Court's majority, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote that Section 4 departs from the constitutional principle of treating all states as equally sovereign. Moreover, he argued that it does so based on outdated information, now that for white and minority voters in the covered jurisdictions "turnout and registration rates now approach parity. Blatantly discriminatory evasions of federal decree are rare. And minority candidates hold office at unprecedented levels."

What identification will be accepted? See story on page 10.

The Supreme Court did not invalidate Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act -- the part of the law that outlines preclearance mandates.

Its ruling to overturn Section 4's formula for picking the "covered" states, however, means Texas no longer needs federal pre-approval for changes to election law. As a result, Texas will implement immediately a voter ID law passed in 2011, Attorney General Greg Abbott announced.

Beginning with elections this fall, voters will have to show one of seven approved forms of photo identification, county Elections Administrator Randy McGuire said. Acceptable ID are a Texas driver's license, Texas personal identification card, U.S. passport book or card, Texas concealed handgun license, U.S. military identification, or a U.S. citizenship certificate or Certificate of Naturalization. Those who do not have an acceptable form of photo identification may obtain an Election Identification Certificate from the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Lampasas County Republican Party Chairman Skipper Wallace, who began working 10 years ago to get a voter ID bill passed, said a requirement for people to show photo

Please see VOTER, page 10

PHOTO BY JEFF LOWE

Feels like summer

A sign on Key Avenue reflects the above-average temperatures Lampasas faced last week, as daily highs above 100 degrees prevailed Thursday through Saturday. Although most of the state remains in a serious drought, light rain fell Sunday morning in Lampasas, and conditions have cooled compared to last week. Forecasts call for daily highs in the 90s with overnight lows in the 60s for most of this week.

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