

Equine virus confirmed in county

BY ALEXANDRIA RANDOLPH
DISPATCH RECORD

Lampasas County is on the list of confirmed cases of vesicular stomatitis virus, state authorities said. The virus attacks primarily horses.

Since Aug. 2, the Texas Animal Health Commission has received reports of 13 new confirmed VSV cases and 16 new suspected cases.

"It's pretty prevalent this year as far as I can tell," said Heath Lusty, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agent for Lampasas County.

Lusty said there is one confirmed positive case in Lampasas County and one premise that has been quarantined. The Lampasas case was confirmed in a horse on July 25, and the premise quarantine began July 31, TAHC officials said.

"It's very contagious," Lusty said of the virus. "If you get it and don't get on top of it quick, it can go through the whole herd really quickly."

Lusty added that VSV

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ALEXANDRIA RANDOLPH | DISPATCH RECORD

Students head back to school

Illia Fuentes takes her three daughters to Hanna Springs Elementary School on Thursday as the semester begins. Genesis Fuentes, left, entered kindergarten, and sister Aili Godinez, front, entered fourth grade. Alysia Garza, in her mother's arms, won't enter school for several years.

Lampasas council proposes to increase property tax rate

BY DAVID LOWE
DISPATCH RECORD

The Lampasas City Council has proposed to increase the municipal property tax rate.

The rate has been at its current level -- \$0.395218 per \$100 property valuation -- since Oct. 1, 2011, Finance Director Yvonne Moreno said.

REASONS CITED FOR POSSIBLE INCREASE

Mayor Misti Talbert said she does not want to raise taxes or pay more herself, but she believes it is time. An increase in the tax rate is necessary in the upcoming fiscal year, Talbert said, because the cost of city services has risen over the last several years.

Also, Talbert said, residents now receive a greater level of services from the city than they did years ago, the last time the tax rate increased.

"We have a responsibility to make sure that our revenues compensate us for the services, and we're not necessarily doing that

right now," the mayor said.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR TAXPAYERS

In a unanimous vote Monday, the council proposed a rate of \$0.42 cents per \$100 property valuation. That is about \$0.025 more per \$100 value than the current level.

The council will finalize the rate next month -- and can adopt a lower, but not higher, amount than what it has proposed.

A potential tax increase -- combined with taxable values that, on average, have increased in the past year -- could mean higher city tax bills in the upcoming fiscal year.

From last year to this year, the average taxable value of a residence in Lampasas rose from \$92,110 to \$97,904, according to statistics from Lampasas Central Appraisal District Chief Appraiser Melissa Gonzales. Based on those old and new values, and the current tax rate versus the potential new rate of \$0.42 per \$100, the average homeowner could

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County rejects district for proposed resort

BY DAVID LOWE
DISPATCH RECORD

The Lampasas County Commissioners Court voted unanimously Monday to reject a public improvement district for a nature resort and housing development proposed on the west side of the county.

The court's decision effectively kills the project, said Sergei Doroshin, entitlement developer for TALA Resorts Inc.

The court voted after a public hearing in which many area residents expressed concerns, raised questions about the project or said developers needed to provide more information.

ABOUT THE PROPOSAL

The hearing began with a presentation about what TALA proposed on approximately 3,200 acres of the Jackson Ranch property -- which stretches from FM 580 West near Nix to the Colorado River.

TALA proposed to create a five-star wilderness resort, as well as to sell 250-300 custom homesites, said Rick Rosenberg, managing principal for Development

Planning & Financing Group Inc. DPGF serves as financial consultant to TALA.

The public improvement district TALA requested would have encompassed only the property the company sought to purchase. Had the Commissioners Court approved creation of a PID, the district could have issued bonds in the county's name to fund qualified infrastructure expenses.

PID costs would have been funded through an assessment only on those who own property within the development, and the county would have had "no legal, financial or moral obligation" to make payments, Rosenberg said.

TALA projected that upon completion, the development would have total property value of more than \$350 million, Rosenberg said. An information sheet he provided also said TALA projected the following:

- annual county property tax revenue of approximately \$2.6 million -- about a 30% increase from the current budget.
- annual Lampasas Independent School District property tax revenue of



DAVID LOWE | DISPATCH RECORD

Sergei Doroshin, representing a resort company that sought a public improvement district for property on the west side of the county, addresses a question raised by county resident Beth Griess, right, during a hearing Monday about the PID proposal. Other residents who spoke at the hearing included Al Solomon, seated in gray shirt, and Melissa Primrose, in pink shirt.

approximately \$5.4 million -- about a 16% increase from its current budget.

- annual county sales tax revenue of about \$103,000.
- full-time employment of 173. The average salary --

including benefits -- would be \$54,348, TALA projected.

- part-time employment of 30.
- combined resort and residential construction expenditures of \$114 million.

Much of that would be spent locally, Rosenberg said.

Questions have been raised about road maintenance and water for the development, Rosenberg said. He addressed road maintenance and

then invited hydrogeologist Michael Thornhill to speak about water availability.

Much of the road network within the proposed residential community would be private, Rosenberg said. Private roads would be maintained by a homeowners' association, he said.

The main roads from the development's entrance into the resort and the residential community would be public, and would be dedicated to the county, Rosenberg said.

"We are prepared to work with the county on a maintenance program," he said. "It can be either through an additional component of the PID -- an additional assessment on the property owners -- or through a contract with the [homeowners' association] or [property owners' association] of the resort and the property owners for that so the obligation is not being incurred by the county."

EFFECTS ON WATER

Thornhill addressed water availability for the proposed development.

Thornhill, president of

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WEATHER

Date	High	Low	Rain
Aug. 11	100	75	0
Aug. 12	101	77	0
Aug. 13	100	77	0
Aug. 14	99	78	0.05

Rainfall so far this year: 18.38 in.

Data from the Lower Colorado River Authority (site 11 miles west-northwest of Lampasas, near Nix).

BRIEFLY

COMMUNITY SURVEY

As it works to develop a comprehensive plan for Lampasas' future, the city is surveying residents about their vision for the community. To take the 27-question survey, visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LampasasCompPlan>. Printed copies of the survey are available at City Hall, 312 E. Third St.

The city will hold a comprehensive plan open-house meeting Aug. 29 from

6-8 p.m. at the former Lampasas Middle School cafeteria, 103 N. Western. Those who complete the survey before the meeting will be entered in a drawing for one of three \$100 gift cards.

SCHOOL SUPPLY GIVEAWAY

The Kempner Back 2 School Giveaway is scheduled Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon at Sylvia Tucker Memorial Park on U.S. Highway 190. Along with receiving school supplies during the event, children

can meet Kempner's police chief and fire chief.

APPRAISAL DISTRICT SCHEDULE

The Lampasas Central Appraisal District will do a computer conversion from Aug. 21-23, Chief Appraiser Melissa Gonzales said. As a result, LCAD will not have access to information in its system on those three days, Gonzales said. Also, the appraisal district's website may be down on those days, she said.

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