

County to participate in public transit study

BY DAVID LOWE
DISPATCH RECORD

The Lampasas County Commissioners Court voted Monday to participate in a study that could result in recommendations for changes to The HOP public transportation service.

County Judge Randy Hoyer, who serves on the Hill Country Transit District board, said the district plans to engage a consultant to recommend ways to maximize efficiency in providing public transportation. The district -- which runs The HOP bus service -- transports riders in Lampasas, Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Llano, Mason, Milam, Mills and San Saba counties.

A study by Nancy R. Edmonson, Transportation Consulting will guide the transit district board in deciding the future of the district, Hoyer said. The judge said based on the

recommendations from the study, the district could continue The HOP, modify it if there are suggestions for improving service, disband it, limit the public transportation service to the urban areas the district currently serves, or limit service to the rural counties.

The consulting team, according to a draft scope-of-services document, will review the current structure of the transit district, meet with stakeholders to determine the goals for public transit in the area and conduct a peer review.

The peer review, according to the draft scope-of-services document, is to understand how the Hill Country Transit District "performs in terms of finance and operations relative to other agencies in the region" and across the state. The review will include six to eight transit

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DAVID LOWE | DISPATCH RECORD

Sign at library park nears completion

Colby Wright, foreground, and Tanner Lynch of Miller's Service Co. dig to install the electrical system that will light a sign at the corner of the Lampasas Public Library's outdoor park. The sign is set for completion next week, and Library Foundation of Lampasas, Texas members hope the entire library park project will be completed next month, foundation President Judy Lansford said. For more details about the park and landscaping project, see the story on page 2.

Hegar prevails in Democratic Senate runoff

Mary "MJ" Hegar won the statewide Democratic primary runoff for U.S. Senator over Royce West, and she will face Republican incumbent John Cornyn in November.

Hegar received 52.13% of the vote (498,180 votes) while West received 47.87% (457,555 ballots).

In the Democratic Party runoff for Railroad Commissioner, Chrysta

Castaneda defeated Robert "Beto" Alonzo 61.95% to 38.05% (575,460 votes to 353,399). Castaneda will face James "Jim" Wright in the November general election.

Republicans did not have any runoffs in Lampasas County, although the party had contested races in other

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Council discusses capital projects

BY MADELEINE MILLER
DISPATCH RECORD

The Lampasas City Council considered capital improvement projects and budget expenditures during workshop and regular meetings Monday. Mayor Misti Talbert, who announced Sunday that she tested positive for COVID-19, and Councilwoman Delana Toups were absent.

During the workshop session, City Manager Finley deGraffenried reported on the Capital Improvement Program for fiscal years 2021-2025.

The Capital Improvement Committee identifies, researches and plans possible improvements to the city's public facilities, infrastructure, vehicle fleet and equipment. It is up to the City Council

to prioritize, fund and implement the projects.

The committee included 82 projects in its 2021-2025 CIP program. DeGraffenried reviewed projects the CIP committee felt were most expedient to complete.

The committee recommended making city signage more consistent and easier to read, and encouraged the city to fund routine maintenance of equipment and heavy equipment to avoid costly replacements when they break down.

It suggested the city upgrade public-safety communications equipment and plan to construct a new fire department substation.

Fire Chief Jeff Smith said if the city continues to grow at its current rate, it will

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Sales tax rebates soar

BY GAIL LOWE
DISPATCH RECORD

The July sales tax payments to be distributed to cities and counties this month represent some of the best gains local entities have seen in months.

All cities in the surrounding counties recorded double-digit percentage increases for the period, and Lampasas notched its largest one-month gain in almost nine years.

July payments are based on sales made in May by businesses that report their tax monthly. Widespread social distancing requirements were relaxed across much of Texas in May, for which State Comptroller Glenn Hegar attributed the better economic news than was seen the previous month.

With a July check for \$193,607, the city of Lampasas had a 27% revenue increase over the comparable period last year. Its year-to-date total now stands at \$1.2 million -- up 11% for 2020 thus far.

Kempner's sales tax allocation was up 29% this month on the strength of an \$11,128 rebate. Through seven months of the year, Kempner maintains a 12% advantage over 2019 with receipts of \$72,111.

Lometa posted a 21%

increase in sales taxes for the month, after a 33% rise in June. After a lackluster start of the year, those back-to-back gains bring the 2020 cumulative total to \$49,964 -- a 2% advantage over the same months of 2019.

Sales taxes for Lampasas County amounted to \$96,428 in July. That represents a 35% change over what the county collected the previous July. Payments to date give the county a seven-month total of \$583,358 for a 17% annual increase.

In Coryell County, the cities of Copperas Cove and Gatesville both posted 22% gains for the month. Gatesville has now erased its deficit from earlier periods this year, and it has drawn virtually even with 2019 revenues at \$1.328 million.

Copperas Cove holds \$3.39 million in cumulative sales taxes for 2020, giving it an annual increase close to 14%.

In Hamilton County, Evant was up 19% in July. It shows the best year-to-date gain among neighboring communities, as its current-year total is 33% above what Evant collected at this point last year.

The city of Hamilton rose 21% this month, after it recorded a 22% decline in June. Its check for \$52,768

Sales Tax

July Payments to Area Cities

Burnet	up	18%	\$251,260
Copperas Cove	up	22%	\$528,066
Evant	up	19%	\$3,640
Gatesville	up	22%	\$208,475
Goldthwaite	up	20%	\$43,503
Hamilton	up	21%	\$52,768
Kempner	up	29%	\$11,128
Lampasas	up	27%	\$193,607
Lometa	up	21%	\$7,508
Marble Falls	up	10%	\$871,545
San Saba	up	31%	\$46,823

DISPATCH RECORD GRAPHIC

While statewide sales tax allocations for July were down an average of 2.5%, cities in Lampasas County and the surrounding area all recorded double-digit percentage gains this period.

gives Hamilton a 2020 sales tax total of \$389,574 to move 1% ahead of 2019 figures.

Goldthwaite, in Mills County, garnered a July rebate of \$43,503 -- up 20% for the month. It posted sales tax percentage dips the first four months of the year but now has pulled 2% ahead of its 2019 total through seven months.

San Saba shows sales taxes are running 4% ahead of last year at \$294,868. The city's 31% jump for July is the largest monthly gain San Saba has

seen since February 2018.

In Burnet County, Marble Falls garnered a rebate this period of \$871,545 for a one-month increase of 10%. Its 2020 total approaches \$5.58 million now -- easily the highest sales tax total among area cities.

The city of Burnet saw an 18% jump in its sales tax revenues in July. Through seven months, Burnet has an annual gain of 9% over 2019 with more than \$1.54 million received thus far.

COVID-19 stats at press time: county's recoveries more than double this week

Lampasas County active cases:	27	Lampasas County fatalities:	0	Texas active cases:	129,657
Lampasas County recoveries:	62	(One week earlier, Lampasas County had 24 active cases and 28 recoveries.)		Texas recoveries:	149,276
Lampasas Co. residents hospitalized:	2			Texas total COVID-19 deaths:	3,432

WEATHER

Date	High	Low	Rain
July 12	102	77	0
July 13	105	79	0
July 14	104	77	0
July 15	97	75	0

Total rainfall for 2020: 22.30 in.

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

BRIEFLY

BURN BAN IN EFFECT

The Lampasas County Commissioners Court voted 4-0 Monday to approve a burn ban from July 13 to Oct. 11.

The order prohibits outdoor burning outside incorporated city limits. The order lists exceptions for burns authorized by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for firefighter training; public utility, natural gas pipeline or mining operations; planting or

harvesting of agricultural crops; or fires conducted by a certified prescribed burn manager.

A violation of the burn ban is a Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$500.

WEST AVENUE E PROJECT

West Avenue E roadway and drainage improvements are set to begin, as the contractor started moving in equipment and supplies Tuesday, the city announced.

The project will last about nine months. Work will take place on West Avenue E between North Porter and North Ridge streets.

Signs will be posted, and barricades will be in place when parts of the road will be closed. The contractor will work with getting residents to and from their homes when no other route can be taken, the city announced.

Those who have questions may contact City Hall at 512-556-6831.

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