

Coins scarce at some sites but available at area banks

BY MADELINE MILLER
DISPATCH RECORD

Local banks say they are feeling the effects of the national coin shortage but are still able to provide coins.

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said in June the amount of coins in circulation decreased as the economic activity slowed due to coronavirus restrictions.

The U.S. Mint also has decreased production to implement COVID-19 risk-management protocols.

Kelvin Barkowsky, president and CEO of First Texas Bank, said he learned of the shortage in late April.

He said First Texas Bank has not run out of coins but is receiving limited coin shipments due to Federal



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A quarter commemorates Lowell, Massachusetts, a key city in the Industrial Revolution and textile industry.

Reserve System restrictions. Barkowsky said the shortage mainly has

affected the bank's penny supply, as the bank can order only half of its normal stock weekly.

"We have not had anyone whose coin orders we have not been able to fulfill," he said. "But we've put our employees on notice that we may all need to bring our piggy banks to the bank and roll coins."

Barkowsky said the bank's coin courier normally accepts only rolled coins but is now taking in bulk coins to sustain its stock.

Sue Ann Parson, First State Bank of Burnet vice president-branch manager, said her bank asked those operating car washes, ice machines, laundromats and other businesses to bring in change.

"Everyone is doing their

part, so we are OK," she said.

Parson said demand for coins seems to have decreased since grocery and convenience stores began requesting that customers give exact change.

Kroger stores are not returning customers' change in coin, but instead are loading it onto Kroger cards. H-E-B stores have not limited coin dispensing, but signs are posted asking customers to pay with cards.

Barkowsky said he hopes the coin shortage will ease soon.

"Either the mint will start making more, or people will start deciding they want to turn their coin into cash," he said. "One way or another, it will come back to us."

Study to yield recommendations for public transportation

FROM PAGE 1

agencies similar to the Hill Country Transit District in size, geography and service type, the document states.

Performance data could include cost per vehicle hour, passengers per revenue hour, operating cost per passenger and the fare recovery ratio, the document states.

The consultant also proposed to present case studies of different approaches to providing and funding public transit in an area with a mix of urban and rural settings.

"Possible models," the draft scope-of-services document states, "include service operated by transit districts, by counties, by cities, and by multiple cities through inter-local agreements."

An assessment of the current system plus two or three alternative service models will determine how well each service model would achieve stakeholders' goals, the consultant's proposal states. The consultant added that the assessment will consider the total local investment, amount of local control, cost-effectiveness and complexity of each potential method of providing transit service.

The consultant's final report will recommend the best approach for providing transit services in the study area. If the approach differs from the current service model, the consultant will recommend steps to take to implement the new service method and will estimate the time required to implement the changes.

The Commissioners Court's vote to participate in the transit service study was 3-1, with Precinct 4 Commissioner Mark Rainwater casting the lone dissent.

Rainwater said because the transit district charges fees for rides, taxpayer funds should not pay for a study that will help the district make money.

Hoyer said the goal of the study is not necessarily to make money for the transit district. The issues, he said, are to determine if the transit system is efficient and to decide if the district should disband.

Precinct 2 Commissioner Jamie Smart joined the meeting by remote access, but County Clerk Connie Hartmann said Smart did not vote on the agenda items.

Because of uncertainty about how many counties may choose to participate -- and therefore share costs -- the motion stated that Lampasas County's cost will be \$1,562.50, or a maximum of \$2,322.

The lower figure is how much each relatively rural county -- excluding Bell -- would pay if all eight counties in the district choose to participate in a \$12,500 study of the district's rural areas, Hoyer said. The judge said the transit district's urban entities have agreed to share the cost of a \$20,000 study of the urban areas the transit district serves.

Hoyer said the per-entity cost of \$2,322 was listed in an inter-local agreement before urban and rural studies were itemized separately and

urban officials agreed to pay for the study of more densely populated areas.

Hoyer said he is not sure what each rural county will do, although he said San Saba County will participate in the study. Lampasas County's cost will be more than \$1,562.50 if not all eight rural counties participate, Hoyer said.

Lampasas County does not pay anything to the transit district, Hoyer said. The district charges rider fares, and it also receives funding from federal, state and local government sources, the district's website states.

Although Lampasas County ride numbers were not available during Monday's meeting, Hoyer, Precinct 1 Commissioner Bobby Carroll and Precinct 3 Commissioner Lewis Bridges said they know county residents use The HOP. The service has a fair number of riders in the county, including students getting transportation to school, Hoyer said. The judge said he has not received many complaints about The HOP, although he said one person has expressed disappointment about the scheduling company the bus service uses.

"But that was the state of Texas' doing, not Hill Country Transit," Hoyer said of the selection of the scheduling company.

Hoyer said he believes The HOP provides an important service to the county. He added that "for Lampasas County to have a voice and to show participation [in the study], I think it would be money well spent."

City issues reminders about garbage service

The city of Lampasas is asking residents to maintain a five-bag and/or trash can limit on what they put out for curbside garbage pick-up service. This limit is especially helpful on Mondays and Tuesdays, city officials said.

"With more people at home the past few months, the volume has increased significantly," according to an announcement on the city website. "This is not just affecting our

municipality but others as well."

Waste Connections, which provides garbage service inside the city, requests that trash be at the curbside by 7 a.m. on service days. It offered these reminders:

- All trash must be in bags or cans; no loose items.
- Bulk items such as couches or dressers will be picked up on Thursday or Friday, depending on the regular service day and providing the max load

requirement has not been met.

• Tree trimmings should be no more than three inches in diameter, tied and bundled in four-foot lengths weighing no more than 35 pounds. Place all brush outside the container.

• Construction debris will not be picked up. Other items unacceptable for curbside service are gasoline, large metal pieces, paint, batteries, tires, motor oil and electronics.



FILE PHOTO

The city is asking residents to put out no more than five trash cans and/or bags for curbside pick-up -- especially on Mondays and Tuesdays.

DISTRICT COURT

Lampasas County 27th District Court convened last week with Judge John Gaunt presiding over the day's hearings.

Defendant Heather Leann Seevers of Lampasas entered a plea of guilty to a charge of abandon/endorse a child-criminal negligence, and a presentence investigation was waived. She received five years' deferred adjudication, a fine of \$1,500 and is to pay court costs of \$310. Her case was transferred to Harris County.

At his July 10 hearing, Saul Rodriguez of Killeen had an open plea and entered a plea of true to one charge of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and one charge of possession of a controlled substance over 4 grams and less than 200 grams. He will continue on probation and has participation in a Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Facility program or treatment listed as a sanction.

In other action, John Anthony Carvajal of San Antonio had his plea of guilty withheld, and an open plea with presentence investigation is reset for Aug. 14. He is charged with sexual assault. A \$10,000 personal recognizance bond was approved, and Carvajal is to have no contact with the victim.

And motions for early release were denied for Kevin Cory Havins of Lampasas. He has been charged with possession of a controlled substance over 1 gram and less than 4 grams, and with unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon.

In court action planned for today, Felix Oscar Arroyo-Figueroa of Killeen is scheduled

for arraignment. He is charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Reset for later this month in 27th District Court are the following:

A July 24 arraignment of Frank West of Lampasas, charged with illegal dumping over 1,000 pounds or more than 200 cubic feet.

A July 31 pretrial hearing for Roland Balderas Vasquez of Lampasas, charged with burglary of a building.

A July 31 adjudication hearing for Elvis Glen Smith of Milano, charged with aggravated sexual assault of a child.

Moved to Aug. 7 are the following cases:

Arraignment of Johnny Russell Keeter of Lampasas, charged with assault on a family/household member-impede breath/circulation. He remains in jail in Falls County on pending charges out of Hamilton.

Pretrial hearing for Thomas Carter Simmons of Lometa, charged with possession of a controlled substance less than 1 gram. A waiver of arraignment has been filed.

On the docket for Aug. 14 are these hearings:

Pretrial hearings for Chayo Boy Rendon of Lampasas. He is charged with credit card or debit card abuse, and with assault on a family/household member-impede breath/circulation. Waivers of arraignment have been filed for the defendant. A personal recognizance bond of \$2,500 was approved by the court on count one, and a \$10,000 bond was approved on count two.

Pretrial hearing for Ezequiel Baerga Cintron of Killeen, charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. A waiver of arraignment was filed for him.

Plea hearing with presentence investigation for Brian Anthony Mezzacappa of Lampasas, charged with assault on a family/household member with a previous conviction.

Plea hearing with presentence investigation for Brandon Lee Young of Lometa, charged with assault on a family/household member with a previous conviction.

Plea hearing with presentence investigation for Deedee Lynn Gilstrap of Lampasas, charged with possession of a controlled substance less than 1 gram.

Plea hearing with presentence investigation for Pamela Jane Garcia of Lipan, charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Pretrial hearing for Anthony Joseph Martinez of Lampasas, charged with evading arrest/detention with a vehicle. Martinez also has an adjudication hearing Aug. 14 on a charge of theft of a firearm.

Open plea hearings with presentence investigation for Jesse Joe Garcia of Lampasas. He is charged with assault on a family/household member-impede breath/circulation, and he faces two separate charges of burglary of vehicles with previous two or more convictions.

And jury announcement is slated Oct. 9 for Jerry Lamont Pickens of Belton, who is charged with engaging in organized criminal activity. A jury trial for Pickens could be held Oct. 19.

Lampasas could have about \$1 million surplus at end of budget year, city manager says

FROM PAGE 1

need a new substation within the next five years.

The CIP program also includes providing resources for expanded internet service, developing and extending utilities for phase-1 business park construction, using hotel occupancy tax funds to upgrade the Hostess House and historic Colored School, and completing four water-looping projects.

In the next five years, the city will be due to replace eight police cars, two fire apparatuses, three pick-up trucks, and its vacuum truck and street sweeper.

In their five meetings since February, committee members also discussed the need to reduce peaks and valleys of expenditures, and a desire to meet more frequently.

"If you look at it in total, it's a very impressive course that this city has taken through the committee and through the council," deGraffenried said.

DeGraffenried also briefed the council on the city's budget.

He said the city foresees surpluses in the general, water & wastewater, electric, and airport funds at the end of fiscal year 2020, amounting to a projected surplus of just over \$1 million in the total operating fund.

DeGraffenried said the surplus is less than 5 percent of the city's total budget, but still significant.

He reported that the staff is concerned about diminished sales-tax revenue but said he believes it will recover. The city's employee insurance premiums will decrease by 5.29%, he said, which will save the city \$70,000.

"I don't want to sound overly optimistic, but I think we're seeing some good things despite the current state of affairs," the city manager said.

DeGraffenried requested council members' input on how to use the budget surplus. He suggested it could fund CIP projects or engineering projects.

Councilwoman Cathy Kuehne said she thinks the city should use HOT funds to bring the Hostess House up to code. She said the council also should prioritize improving the city's internet access.

"We aren't going to be able to grow if we don't have internet,

and I think the lack of reliable internet in town is really hurting us," Kuehne said.

Councilman Randy Clark said he thinks it is important that the city improve the wastewater pretreatment plant and help the Lampasas Economic Development Corp. fund development of the business park.

He agreed that HOT funds should be directed toward the Hostess House.

Mayor Pro Tem TJ Monroe, who presided over the meeting in Talbert's absence, requested the council use an upcoming workshop to tour the wastewater plant.

Councilman Mike White said, given current economic uncertainty, he thinks the city should wait to spend the surplus.

"I know this money could go in a bunch of useful directions, but I like the idea of just sitting on a million dollars in the back pocket for a little bit," he said.

DeGraffenried said the discussion is only preliminary, and the council will not approve the budget until September.

During the regular meeting, Patrol Officer Jeremy Herring was sworn in as a new member of the Lampasas Police Department.

Lt. Chuck Montgomery introduced Herring and said the officer has spent 13 years policing the community for the Lampasas County Sheriff's Office.

"It's a rare find for us to get someone with Jeremy's experience," Montgomery said.

The council unanimously approved a specific-use permit request to allow Lotus Beauty Spa & Salon to apply permanent makeup tattooing at its location.

The council also voted unanimously to:

- approve a request to divide a property on Willis Street.
- renew the city's health insurance plan through Scott & White Health Plan.

• declare overstock and obsolete items in the water/wastewater department as surplus and allow staff to sell or scrap them.

• purchase a \$10,153 blower unit for the Ajinomoto Pretreatment Plant.

Monroe used the Mayor's Comments portion of the meeting to wish Talbert and her family a speedy recovery.

GRAND JURY

Lampasas County grand jury convened Wednesday for the first session of the July term.

Lampasas County Sheriff's Office Investigators Matt Barnes, Wayne Hilgenberg and David Thorp presented information that resulted in the following indictments:

Fabrizio Luciano Bienbenu for possession of a controlled substance-methamphetamine on May 21.

Dude Edward Beabout for theft on June 9.

Alana Marie Lopez for evading arrest with a vehicle-deadly weapon on June 30.

Michael Ray Haggerton for burglary of a building on May 30.

Lucio Jose Cuellar for injury to a child on May 12.

Keilyla Tajeron for injury to a child on May 12.

Ty Brooks McCoy for assault-family violence with a previous conviction on June 6.

And the Lampasas Police Department -- represented by Lt. Investigator Charlie

Boswell, Sgt. Investigator Nick Roberts and Sgt. Investigator Tim Ryan -- offered information that led to indictments against:

Jesse Joe Garcia Jr. for burglary of a vehicle-enhanced on March 9, burglary of a vehicle-enhanced on March 18 and assault on a family member -- occlusion on June 10.

Shannon Ana Marie Reid for continuous family violence on June 23.

Michael Ray Pierce for evading arrest with a vehicle-deadly weapon on Feb. 11.

Dean Logan Mitchell for evading arrest with a vehicle on June 13.

Jose Diego Gonzalez for endanger a child on June 21.

Ty Brooks McCoy for assault-family violence with a previous conviction on June 8.

Christopher John Faubion for possession of a controlled substance-methamphetamine on May 29.

Joshua Sanchez for possession of a controlled substance-methamphetamine on June 19.

ARRESTS

The following arrest was reported to the Lampasas Dispatch Record by area law enforcement officials. The Dispatch Record prints the name and charge(s) of people arrested on at least one Class B misdemeanor -- or more serious -- charge.

JULY 9

Angel Antonio Molina, 19, of Houston on Burnet County charges of theft of firearm-enhanced, aggravated robbery, injury to a child/elderly/disabled with intent to cause bodily injury, and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.