

# Lampasas Dispatch Record

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75 CENTS

## School officials review FY23 budget; two members sworn in

BY MONIQUE BRAND  
DISPATCH RECORD

Lampasas Independent School District officials are projecting enrollment in preschool through high school to be the equivalent more than 3,200 students for the 2022-23 school year.

Board members and staff reviewed the proposed budget for the new school year at the district's regular Board of Trustees meeting Monday. It marked Harvey Stinnett's first meeting after winning a runoff election for the Place 5 seat. He was sworn in alongside incumbent Jeff Rutland.

The 2022-23 LISD general fund budget is projected to be about \$37 million, which pays for most school

operations and personnel.

Chief Financial Officer Shane Jones told the Dispatch Record through an email that trustees "are still finalizing those numbers," when asked the amount of the overall budget.

The board will take a final vote on the budget and tax rate on Aug. 22.

### TECHNOLOGY EXPENSES

The overall technology budget shows a decrease of more than \$244,000 from the current-year budget.

Some big-ticket items listed in the department's budget are \$30,000 for 18 wireless access points to be replaced, \$22,620 for Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) support, \$13,680 in imaging software, \$12,300

for a three-year antivirus software renewal and \$14,800 for a new student online enrollment.

### SAFETY MEASURES

In the wake of the recent Robb Elementary School shootings in Uvalde, school districts across the state are re-examining and increasing their security measures.

LISD administrators and staff previously held non-public discussions on how they will expand the safety policies for the district.

School officials and local law enforcement officers evaluated each campus' entrance and safety devices. The district also has updated its safety protocols.

Improvement takeaways from the meetings included

having new security cameras installed at the front entrance of each campus and a door-buzzer entry system.

In the proposed budget, security and monitoring line items show an increase of more than \$145,000 for new school resource officers and salary increases, \$3,500 for cyber-security insurance, \$1,000 for safety supplies and \$350 for software.

### CTE UPGRADES

In the district's proposed budget for Career and Technical Education, some big expenses include \$15,000 for culinary and food science supplies, \$17,000 to go toward welding



Harvey Stinnett, right, and Jeff Rutland share a laugh after a swearing-in ceremony during Monday's regular meeting of the school board. Stinnett is new to the board, and Rutland was uncontested for re-election to his trustee position.

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## Kempner council discusses combining positions to alleviate budget concerns

BY ALEXANDRIA RANDOLPH  
DISPATCH RECORD

During budget talks Tuesday evening, the Kempner City Council discussed combining the positions of city manager and police chief to prepare for challenging budget years ahead.

In a special meeting, city staff presented budget information for Fiscal Year 2022-2023, as well as cost-saving options for the upcoming years that included the possibility of combining staff positions.

City Manager David C. Williams II said while the budget is in the black for FY 2022-2023, the last of the American Rescue Plan Act funds would be issued this fall, and their absence will affect the city's budget in future years.

The city's total expenditures are just under \$500,000 and revenue is \$506,000, including the ARPA funds.

"We will have those funds for the next two fiscal years to spend, but without those funds we're not doing a balanced budget," Williams said. "We have to plan for the future without those

funds. We have to do what's right for the city of Kempner, and we can't do it one year at a time. ... The tax base is growing, but not fast enough to maintain staff."

The city manager submitted his own resignation July 12, stating that Kempner's financial resources could be better allocated elsewhere. His last day is Sept. 30.



David C. Williams II

Williams presented five budget options for the council's consideration.

Under option one, the budget could remain relatively the same. With option two, the council could add 5% raises for all city staff positions and retain a city manager position. Option three recommended the number of employees be reduced by combining the city manager and city secretary positions.

With option four, the number of employees could be reduced by combining the city manager and assistant city secretary or municipal court clerk positions.

Option five combines the city manager and chief of police positions.

After a closed executive session, the council voted unanimously to have city staff investigate option five.

Williams said currently the chief of police is paid a part-time salary of \$22,880, despite occasionally working fulltime hours.

"He is the lowest-paid employee," Williams said.

The current budget allots 47% to staff pay, 13% to restricted-use funds and 40% to all other city expenditures. The tax rate sits at \$0.2249 per \$100 property valuation.

"It's the lowest one in the area by far," Williams said.

For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the council could lower the tax rate and still have a balanced budget. If council members do that, however, Williams warned that the rate would need to "more than double" to maintain a balanced budget in the following years.

In other discussion at Tuesday's meeting, the council heard a presentation by Dalton Rice, a former city manager of Morgan's

Point, who pitched contract management services in the wake of Williams' resignation.

Rice's start-up company aims to "plug and play" management teams into small Texas municipalities, with services and cost based on each city's needs. Rice said his company would offer a free assessment for the city of Kempner, determine what kind



John "J.W." Wilkerson

of management would be needed and then, through a flat-rate monthly or annual agreement, empower city employees to lead and carry on management skills and knowledge.

"When it comes to city managers, we're expensive," he said. "It costs money to get good managements. My goal is to work myself out of a job. If I can do that, I've succeeded."

When Kempner Mayor John Wilkerson asked about a price point for the service, Rice said he estimated \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually for Kempner, but added: "For me, the data and testimony

is more valuable. The price point is negotiable."

City staff and council members had a few questions for Rice, including whether impartiality could be maintained if his company represented multiple cities at the same time, especially when it came to vying for Central Texas Council of Governments grant dollars.

Rice said having representation that understands the needs of multiple small cities would be an advantage when competing with larger entities like Temple or Waco, and if a conflict of interest developed, his company and Kempner could part ways.

"The risk would be negligible at the end of the day," Rice said. "My goal is to provide the city with resources and not a contractual burden."

"I would like to see successful history of your business," Municipal Court Judge Gene Isenhour said. "If I was on council, I would not want to be the guinea pig."

Wilkerson recommended the council form a committee to discuss additional concerns with Rice before making a decision.

## Lometa council considers new ordinances

BY MASON HINES  
DISPATCH RECORD

The Lometa City Council held its regular meeting Monday, with a priority on new ordinances for the city.

The ordinances under consideration involved zoning for subdivisions as well as an ordinance for a new fire department substation.

In the past, the Lometa Volunteer Fire Department has had issues with trains blocking the railroad crossings when firefighters needed to respond to emergency calls fielded by

the department.

Council members on Monday approved a substation to be built on the north end of town. This would provide access to fire and medical equipment on both sides of the railroad tracks.

At the July council meeting, Carlos Garcia of the Lometa Volunteer Fire Department made a presentation on zoning for the substation, with a proposed resolution similar to one that was issued last fall to K&S Towing.

The conditional-use permit was approved unanimously by council members.

Following that item of business, the council opened a public hearing for input on a new subdivision ordinance.

Former councilman Larry Koch expressed concern about the ordinance and a lack of information.

"The city of Lometa already has a city ordinance; I'm not sure why we're thinking about this," Koch said.

He also asked the council members if they had read the full ordinance.

"There's 75 pages here. Has anyone read through

SEE LOMETA, PAGE 8

## Sales tax-free weekend starts today

Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar has reminded shoppers they can save money on clothes and school supplies during the state's sales tax holiday this weekend.

State law exempts sales tax on qualified items – such as clothing, footwear, school supplies and backpacks – priced below \$100 purchased from Aug. 5-7. This will save shoppers about \$8 on every \$100 they spend.

"With inflation driving prices higher on just about everything, this sales tax holiday provides Texas families some small relief managing costs associated with kids heading back to the classroom," Hegar said. "As the father of three school-aged children myself, I know how these expenses can add up."

One local resident said the weekend is a re-

minder that the school year is approaching. "As much as I love my kids, it's time to go back to school," Marsha Adams told the Dispatch Record via phone interview.

Texas' sales tax holiday has been an annual event authorized by the legislature since 1999.

Apparel and school supplies that may be purchased tax-free are listed on the comptroller's website at TexasTaxHoliday.org.

Qualifying items can be purchased tax free online or by telephone, through mail or custom order, as well as through in-store shopping as long as the item is paid for and delivered to the customer during the exemption period, or the seller accepts the order for immediate shipment, even if delivery is made after the exemption period ends.

### WEATHER

Date	High	Low	Rain
July 31	106	76	0
Aug. 1	101	74	0
Aug. 2	103	77	0
Aug. 3	105	74	0

Total rainfall for 2022: 7.29 in.

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

### BRIEFLY

#### BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

The city of Kempner will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday with a special event Saturday from 1-3 p.m. at Kempner City Hall.

Light refreshments will be served, and a brief history will be offered. Special dignitaries have been invited to participate in the celebration.

The city incorporated in 1997

to fight off attempts by Copperas Cove to add Kempner into its city limits.

#### MEET THE TEACHER

The Lampasas and Lometa school districts will hold Meet the Teacher events, beginning next week, to help usher in the start of a new term.

Meet the Teacher will take place Monday from 5-6 p.m. at Hanna

Springs Elementary and Kline Whitis Elementary. Taylor Creek Elementary will hold its event Monday from 5:30-7 p.m.

At Lampasas Middle School, Meet the Teacher will be Tuesday from 5-6 p.m. Freshman Orientation will be Tuesday from 3:30-5:30 p.m. at Lampasas High School. Lometa ISD's Meet the Teacher event is Aug. 15 at 5 p.m.

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