

Judge: New Facilities Still Up for Discussion

By Dustin Wright
Sentinel Managing Editor

Almost five months has passed since Gaines County Commissioners have formally discussed any issues pertaining to the proposed plans toward the possible construction of three new county-owned facilities: a new event center/community building and two "multi-use" facilities -- proposed future home of the county's library branches, senior citizens center and other county office branches -- within the Seminole and Seagraves facilities.

But despite the public silence, Gaines County Judge Lance

Celander -- the spearhead behind the proposed ventures -- said the desired projects are far from being dead or pushed away from the table of discussion.

"I guess you could say we are still discussing the possibilities of it, weighing all of the options," said Celander in a Thursday afternoon telephone interview with the *Seminole Sentinel*.

"But, at this point, we are not in any rush with this project. We're still exploring our options."

Celander, in Thursday's telephone discussion, said there was no definite timetable on when Gaines County

leaders would continue public discussions of the project proposal through their meetings within the Gaines County Commissioners Court.

"I, personally, have been visiting some area facilities, looking at them and getting some ideas to bring back for discussion," said Celander. "But, right now, I honestly don't know when (the discussions) will be. We will just have to see."

In late-October, Gaines County leaders tabled a decision in response to a request for qualification (RFQ) bid from Lubbock-based Parkhill, Smith and Cooper, Inc. for scope

work related to the county's bond proposal quest for constructing a new multi-use event center and two multi-office building facilities.

According to information obtained by the *Seminole Sentinel* in regard to the proposal, PSC had submitted a fee schedule of \$171,000 in to the company's "Phase 1" services, which included an evaluation of the county's existing facilities, development of a needs program for the bond project, conceptual drawings of the county's proposed bond venture, site evaluations and assistance in the public meetings process with Gaines County residents over the bond proposal.

According to PSC's scope of services information obtained by the *Sentinel*, the three facilities sought by the County include:

- a new arena and conference center to be located in Seminole. The arena is to be modeled after Hockley County's new Mallet Center Arena (located in Levelland);
- a new senior center, library, museum to be located in Seminole. This is to replace the current facilities of all three functions. The existing senior center would then be rented out for functions, the library and museum would be used to expand

other services currently housed adjacent to these spaces; and

• a new facility in Seagraves which would house the Justice of the Peace, Gaines County Sheriff's Department's Seagraves office, probation offices, county tax assessor, ag extension office, a library and senior center. This new facility would replace all current facilities.

In mid-July 2012, Gaines County Commissioners approved of three separate issues pertaining to the authorization of seeking an architectural firm through the RFQ process, and the authorization of Special Public Finance, Inc. -- based out of Austin -- and the law firm of Bickerstaff, Heath, DelGado, LLP -- also out of Austin -- to serve as

the county's financial advisor and bond council respectively. All three agreements, according to county leaders, would also be contingent upon the outcome of the then proposed 2013 bond election.

Celander, in a the mid-July meeting, stated he felt the proposed bond quest at being in the neighborhood of \$25 million, based on his financial estimates.

According to the late-October tabled RFQ submission from PSC, the Phase 1 schedule was quoted at being 28 weeks in length, which included an estimated six weeks of developing a needs program in association with the bond proposal, and eight weeks for the preparation of conceptual drawings.

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and taxing boundaries, and similar taxable property/mineral values.

"Much like (Seminole ISD), the Hospital District has the ability to use the dramatically increased mineral values to its advantage in the repayment of this bond," said Williford in a Feb. 27 presentation to SHD Board officials. "With the current 'oil boom' taking place, it appears your values won't be seeing any significant drops anytime soon."

In a break down of bond figures provided by the hospital district, a SHD homeowner with a home valued at \$100,000 would see an annual tax increase of \$65 in property taxes, based on the proposed 6.5-cent per \$100-valuation debt service tax rate. Monthly, that increase would amount to \$5.42 under the proposed figures.

"To put it logically, that's about the price of a Big Mac meal at McDonald's," said Williford. "So, if a person were to skip one meal out per month, their portion of the tax would be paid for."

The proposed bond project will total 128,450 sq ft, of which 81,020 sq ft will be new construction, according to information provided by SHD officials.

For farmers and large land owners within the SHD boundaries, the tax

increase would cost 29-cents per 1 acre of irrigated land and 9-cents per 1 acre of non-irrigated land, under the proposed 6.5-cent per \$100-valuation rate figures.

Project plans developed by McKinstry -- a full-service design, build, operate and maintain (DBOM) firm hired by the local district earlier this calendar year to begin the development and planning work for the project -- calls for the construction of a new three-level emergency/operating room wing facility adjacent to the current emergency room facility at Memorial Hospital, according to a Feb. 18 project presentation to SHD board members.

McKinstry officials are proposing the construction of a basement level to the new addition, which would house the hospital district's information technology department, emergency room on-call doctor's living quarters, mechanical room and clean storage facilities.

Ground level facilities for the new addition would feature the hospital's emergency room facility, which would include four ER patient rooms, one cardiac room, two trauma rooms, one isolation room, two storage rooms, three treatment rooms, and four urgent care rooms. In addition, the ER facility would

see an enlarged waiting area, with a holding capacity of 35-to-40 people, and separate patient entrances for emergency personnel and patients/visitors.

The second level of the facility would house the hospital's operating room department, complete with two full-sized operating room and one Caesarean section operating room, which could easily convert over to a full operating room in the event of additional surgical needs.

General patient rooms for the facility would remain on the ground level of the hospital's floor plans, according to drawings presented in Monday's meeting, while an expanded Labor/Delivery Dept and Outpatient Surgery wing would be constructed on top of the campus' current patient wings.

Additions at the Memorial Health Care Center will see the addition of 16 new rooms, broken into four, four-patient "pods," which would have the capability of housing Alzheimer's patients.

The additions, according to hospital district officials, will not change the local facility's Medicare designation of being a "Critical Access Hospital," which limits the facility to just 25 patient beds, according to Medicare reimbursement guidelines.

Local hospital district taxpayers have until April 11 to register to vote for the May 11 municipal election.

Early voting for the election will be conducted during a period spanning from April 29 through May 3, according to election guidelines defined by the Texas Secretary of State's Office.

Seminole's Sales Tax Allocations Up Again

AUSTIN -- Sales tax allocations for the Seminole community continue to show the city's thriving economy.

In the latest report from the Texas Comptroller's Office, released Wednesday, the City of Seminole saw a 28.08 percent increase in allocations for March compared to the same month, one year ago.

The City of Seminole, according to the report, received a payment of \$143,286.67 for the month, which was a \$31,417.77 increase from March 2011's payment of \$11,868.90.

The sales tax figures represent January sales reported by monthly tax filers, according to the Texas Comptroller's Office.

Texas Comptroller Susan Combs said Wednesday that state sales tax revenue in February was \$2.08 billion, up 3.7 percent compared to February 2012.

"Sales tax revenues continue to grow, but at a more moderate pace compared to recent months," Combs said. "The latest increase was led by receipts from the construction and restaurant sectors. Collections from other major sectors such as oil and natural gas-related businesses and manufacturing remain at high levels."

Combs will send cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts their March local sales tax allocations totaling \$531.3 million, up 12.2 percent compared to March 2012.

Year-to-date, the City of Seminole has received \$440,721.54 in allocation payments, a 17.25-percent increase from the \$375,852.48 in payments received by the city through March 2012.

Allocation payments for the City of Seagraves showed an 8.10-percent decrease, according to Wednesday's Comptroller's figures, for allocation payments received by the community. In March, the Seagraves community had received an allocation payment of \$22,339.28, which was down from a \$24,308.66 allocation payment received in March 2012.

Year-to-date, the City of Seagraves has received \$64,928.11 in allocation payments, which was down 7.54-percent from the \$70,228.26 in allocation payments received through March 2012.

Obituary

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Jewel Barnett

SEAGRAVES... Funeral services for Jewel Barnett, 100, of Seagraves, formerly of Seminole were conducted on Saturday, March 9, 2013 at 1:30 p.m. in the First Baptist Church of Seagraves with the Rev. Phillip Golden officiating. Interment followed in the Gaines County Cemetery in Seminole with services under the direction of Ratliff Funeral Home. Mrs. Barnett passed away on March 7, 2013 in Seminole.

Jewel Barnett was born on December 31, 1912 in Comanche County to John Anderson Thomas and Lora Ivadell Allison. She married J.V. "Blondie" Barnett on December 24, 1931 in Roswell, New Mexico. Mrs. Barnett was a homemaker and a member of the Baptist Church. She was preceded in death by her husband, Blondie Barnett on April 7, 1990.

Survivors include three sons, Gail Barnett and wife Shirley of Seminole; Charlie Barnett and wife Diane of Boerne and Gery Barnett and wife Twila of Del Rio; one daughter, Judy Sellers and husband Calvin of Seagraves; one sister, Edna Hammonds of Samjon, N.M.; 12 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to the Seagraves Senior Citizens Meals on Wheels.

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