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Hearing room filled for Greyhound testimony

At least 56 area residents crowded into the municipal building's meeting room Tuesday morning for the local Texas Railroad Commission hearing on Greyhound bus lines' request to discontinue freight and passenger service here.

For more than an hour, many of those in the room presented their testimony, making a case to the commission and Greyhound, in hopes the bus service will continue.

Although each person had his or her own reasons, those who presented evidence told the commission that without the service, the community would suffer because there would be no public transportation to Houston and its excellent medical facilities, and the agriculture and trucking-gravel industries here would be cut off from efficient overnight repair parts service.

Four representatives of the Railroad commission and two Greyhound representatives took their places at the tables in the front of the room; the three major television stations from Houston each had a news team in the room, and the audience filled chairs.

One at a time, each person with information to present took a seat at a table on the right side of the room, stated their name, and then presented their information. For some, it simply was a request to keep the bus service "so I can go see my people and my doctor."

For Charlie McTear, who said he uses the bus to go to Houston three times every week for dialysis treatments, "it is my only way of living."

For others, like T Lang of Eagle Tractor, the information was factual. He said that in 1982, his company paid Greyhound $4,550.14 in freight charges for parts shipments.

"We need the previous service," he added, requesting that Greyhound consider rescheduling the afternoon east and west bus service it recently discontinued. "Parts fall out of the bus when the (freight compartment) door is opened," he said.

"The bus company does a tremendous job and should be commended for its service," Lang said, adding that certainly with twice a day service and even now most of the time with once a day service, he could almost promise next day delivery of parts a farmer ordered before noon.

Draper Stephens with Eagle Lake Implement Co., also presented factual evidence on the money his company spent on shipping parts, $2,243.05, and added that if they were required to have the parts shipped to Columbus, it probably would double the freight charge in the cost of labor and vehicles.

T. J. Smith, owner of Eagle Lake Dairy Delite, said he felt that Greyhound would not retain its revenue from Eagle Lake, through the Columbus bus stop, if service were discontinued here. In some instances, he said, it is quicker and cheaper to drive in to Houston to get the material, and, he said, many of the passengers here who get off the bus have no other transportation, and could not get to Columbus without public transportation.

After Mayor Elmer Struss testified, Robert Rierson representing Greyhound, asked the mayor if the city was willing to subsidize the service here, to which Struss asked, "is Greyhound willing to subsidize the city of Eagle Lake?" Rierson pointed out that the federal regulations governing bus service allows cities to provide subsidies in order to keep service.

Fire Chief Sonny Spanihel asked Rierson just how much money the company is losing here. That started a brief but seemingly unpleasant exchange between Rierson and Renee McCright, the legal hearing examiner for the commission.

She asked the bus company to point out just exactly what the revenue and expense figures were for Eagle Lake. Rierson told her that those numbers were on file with the commission in Austin, and when she pointed out that the audience here did not have a chance to review those figures could he please reveal them, he again said that they were on file with the commission.

Then, when she read some numbers indicating that more than $18,000 worth of tickets were sold in Eagle Lake, and asked him if that number was correct, he said he didn't have the information with him and that if she was reading from the information the company filed in Austin, those must be right.

During this exchange, the cameramen from the television stations added a light touch to the proceedings as they panned their cameras from Rierson to McCright in order to film the exchange.

Others who testified suggested that if Greyhound wanted to discontinue service because it was losing money, it should raise rates...which four people suggested would be better than no service at all.

After the hearing adjourned for lunch, Jo Ann Mahalite, who is president of the chamber of commerce, the organization partly responsible for having the hearing held here, and Lang were talking with another representative of the bus company, asking how the area could retain its bus service. He gave an indication that such a request to the company would be considered.

Some of the others testifying were County Judge Lester Cranek, David Wintermann, Rick Arlitt, Ron Peroni, Joe S. Reed, Jr., Louis Ondrias, Jim Clipson, Jr., William Harrison, Sr., Dan Sauerwein, Marcy Salinas, Rev. Melburn Sibley, Steve Nelson and Mike Barron.

Reward in Englehard murder tops $2,400

As the investigation into the murder last week of Mrs. Gay Englehard continues, the Chamber of Commerce reward fund grew to $2,445.

Mrs. Englehard died last Thursday afternoon in Herman Hospital in Houston from injuries she received in a beating in her home on Sunday night, February 27. She was found unconscious the following Monday afternoon, rushed to Community Hospital here, then LifeFlited to Houston via helicopter.

Police Chief Gil Steen said the department now will seek capital murder charges in the case. He said he feels the attacker was a young, local person, but that the investigation will not start producing workable results until some fairly complex laboratory work is completed.

That includes sending the rear door from Mrs. Englehard's home to the Federal Bureau of Investigation Laboratory in Washington D. C. for laser print testing, in order to lift finger and hand prints from it. Other materials were sent also.

Samples from inside the home were sent to Austin to determine blood and hair type, that will indicate what race of persons had been in the house. Steen said he will go to Austin this Thursday to collect those lab results.

The police have questioned one person during their investigation, because he was seen in the area on February 28, but Steen said until lab results are returned it will be difficult to ask other people in for questioning.

He also feels that the reward fund will help the case. For instance, the department received one telephone call indicating the caller knew who should be arrested in the case, but the caller hung up before giving any further information.

Details on how the reward money will be used is contained in an advertisement on page 12 of this issue.

Texas Ranger Ray Nutt of Columbus is assisting in the investigation, and a personal friend of Steen's, an FBI agent in Houston, also has been here offering assistance.

In the past week, the department has been somewhat busier answering calls from area residents about strange noises or similar situations, and Steen and other officers urged area resident to continue calling. "That's what we are here for," Officer Andy Munoz said Monday. The shift schedule has been changed for the five policemen and reserve force, to make two patrols available at night.

Funeral services for Mrs. Englehard were held Sunday at 2 p.m. at Mill-Bauer Funeral home under the direction of the Rev. J. Melburn Sibley of the First Baptist Church of Eagle Lake. Burial was in Lakeside cemetery.

Mrs. Englehard was a member of that church and the Beulah Sunday School Class. She was born in Austin on July 26, 1892, a daughter of the late John P. Bius and Willie G. Birdsong. She was the widow of Fritz Englehard, former state representative for this area, who died in 1957.

Pallbearers were Charles Spalinger, Robert Griffith, Frank Davidson, Melvin Stancik, Paul Powers and Dale Cassady.

She is survived by several nieces and nephews. Memorials may be made to the church.

Sunday afternoon friends of Mrs. Gay Engelhard attended her funeral at Mill-Bauer Funeral Home.

Tax rate to stay at .38

If council votes later this month as it indicated Tuesday night, the tax rate on property you own in the city will remain the same this year as it was last year — at 38 cents per each $100 valuation. That means your taxes will not change unless the new county central appraisal district increases the valuation of your property.

During council's regular meeting this week, with councilmen Roy Dean Van Nort and Ralph Truly absent, approval without a vote was given to budget and revenue estimates that will govern city operations starting April 1.

Briefly, council has been working on the budget with city manager Robert Klockman for the past couple of months, and started out seeking a ten per cent reduction in expenditures. Under the direction of Mayor Elmer Struss, council felt that revenues might fall lower this year than last, because of a slower economy.

However, the new expenditure projection essentially is the same as last year in total dollars. As expressed by Councilman Alvin Kohleffel, if the city doesn't properly maintain its equipment, and replace worn equipment when necessary, "we will be hurt." In the past, two trucks had to be replaced in the same budget year, crippling budget projections.

Details of the new budget, including plans to increase street paving, will be delineated in a future edition of The Headlight.

Also at Tuesday's meeting, council approved the ordinance giving Eagle Lake Cable TV Service, Inc., the right to change its rates. Effective immediately are changes for charges associated with installation and changes, but the $1 per month basic rate increase will not be effective until next month.

In their absence, Truly had told Mayor Struss he would vote for the increase, but Van Nort said he would vote against it because the company has not shown him figures indicating the company needs the additional money city residents will pay, and that compared to Beeville, Texas, residents here are paying the same amount of money for less service.

Council approved a bid from J. F. Miller Ford, Inc., for the purchase of a new police car. The bid was for $10,240. Lake Motors bid $10,644. Council, at the urging of Gene Baker, discussed the costs of operating two or three patrol cars. Baker suggested the force operate with the new car and the 1980 Ford, and sell the 1979 Plymouth. Council finally agreed not to sell the older car, but use it for the police chief's business, to be available as a backup. That older car is not to be used as a patrol car unless one of the other two is inoperable, and there is to be no major maintenance funds spent on it.

Baker's argument was that "we never have had the foot patrol (of policemen) that we intended when we added the fifth officer" to the police force.

In other business, council learned the city did not receive a federal grant for improvements in the Rice Mill areas; that a bill is pending in the legislature in Austin to share state highway money with cities for street work which could give Eagle Lake $80,000 additional paving and repair money; that the city is continuing its sewer leak detection program, and found a storm drain problem in the Meadowbrook addition that will be repaired to relieve flooding in that area; accepted the resignation of Ike Etheridge from the police reserve force.

Chamber plans aggressive program to boost business

The Retail Trade Development Committee of the Eagle Lake Chamber of Commerce met Monday and started plans for an enthusiastic program to encourage trade at local businesses.

The committee plans to kick off the series of monthly promotions with a pre-Easter event which will offer children an opportunity to visit with an Easter bunny; and includes registration for prizes to be awarded by the chamber and also by some individual business members. Fred R. Frnka, chairman of the committee pointed out that the series of promotions will be designed to encourage membership in the chamber although he reminded that all businesses in the community will benefit from public participation in the events planned. The committee and other chamber officers encourage businesses not already listed in the chamber's membership to give serious consideration to such membership in order that they may receive the full benefits of the programs.

The pre-Easter promotion planned by the committee will begin when an Easter bunny comes "hoppin'", to Eagle Lake for a visit with the children of the Eagle Lake trade area. Pre-school children, accompanied by a parent or guardian, will be given a chance to visit with the Easter bunny from 10 to 11 a.m. on Saturday, March 26 in the front foyer of the Municipal Building. All other children are invited to make plans to visit with Easter rabbit from 1:30 to 3 p.m. in the same area. Each child visiting with the Easter rabbit will be given a chance to "draw" for a selection of gifts to range from a candy Easter egg to a $5.00 gift certificate.

Seaholm Photo, owned by Carl Seaholm, Jr., has agreed to have a photographer on hand to take pictures of children with the Easter bunny at both sessions. This will be optional with the parents or guardians of the youngsters and there will be a slight fee, payable to Seaholm Photo at the time the pictures are taken.

On that same date, March 26, registrations will be taken at Chamber of Commerce members stores where a large poster indicates the firm is participating in the program is displayed. There will be no obligation for the registration, but those registering must be 18 years of age and over. Then on the following Saturday, April 2, drawings will be held in the member stores which opt to give prizes of their own at 11:00 a.m. You do not have to be present to win prizes given by the local stores. After the drawing at the local stores, all tickets will be collected and six grand prize awards, including a $100 bill and five $10 gift certificates, will be awarded at the front of the Municipal Building at 1:30 p.m. The Easter rabbit will be present to conduct this grand prize drawing. You do have to be present to win one of the six grand prize awards. No purchase is required to register in either case.

Business firms which are members of the chamber will be provided with full details, posters and registration slips. Others interested in participating in this and other projects for the year are invited to contact the chamber office at 123 McCarty, phone 234-2780; or the membership committee chairperson, Liz Waddell at Gifts of Distinction; or president Jo Ann Mahalitc at Jo Ann's department store.

"We urge the full support of all business firms and citizens of Eagle Lake in this trade development program," added Mrs. Mahalitc.

Other trade development projects for the year will include:

• Participation in the Downtown Revitalization Committee's Festival April 22-23;

• A Friday, May 13th Lucky Day sales promotion; a May 30th Memorial Day Program and benefit barbecue;

• Downtown Sidewalk Sale with limits and restrictions to be set out by the committee in accordance with existing city ordinance, to be held in June;

• Cooperation with Eagle Lake Recreation Center in staging a Fourth of July tournament and barbecue;

• A community-wide rummage sale or flea market in downtown Eagle Lake is being planned Saturday, September 9. Citizens of the trade territory will be given an opportunity to display and sell items. The committee will determine restrictions;

• A Halloween promotion project is to be planned for Saturday, October 29;

• Early November heralds the opening of the duck and goose hunting season and the committee plans to cooperate with the Special Events committee in staging duck and goose calling competition, retriever competition, etc.;

• Climaxing the year will be the annual visitation of Santa Claus on Saturday, December 10 wtih Santa arriving in a gala parade; followed by visitation and gifts for the youngsters.

Others serving on the Retail Trade Development Committee are: Robert Wilcox, Joe Duncan, Joe Reed, W. L. Bauer, Larry Austin and Jo Ann Mahalitc. All attended the committee meeting Monday with the exception of Bauer and Austin who had previous commitments, but pledged their full support to the activities planned by the committee for the year of 1983. Also attending the session were: Connie Gertson who assists in the Chamber of Commerce office and editor John Fearing. Fearing outlined plans for advertising promoting the April 22-23 Festival and also pledged the Headlight's full support in publicizing the trade development projects for the year.

Little League registration extended

Little League officials have extended registration for one more weekend. The last weekend for registration will be Friday, March 11 from 3:30 to 5:30 and Saturday, March 12 from 1 until 3 p.m. at the Little League field. A copy of the player's birth certificate will need to be brought at this time.

It is a must for all children planning to play Little League ball to register. Charles Darnell, president of the Little League, said that the money may be paid later. However, everyone who hasn't registered yet must register at this next session.

Darnell also stated a need for help from people in town. At this time there is a need for an electrician with a pole truck to replace and adjust lights and for a plumber. He said the Little League will gladly pay for materials. Officials hope, however, that someone will donate their time and services.

The Little League program is also in desperate need of coaches. For someone with a few extra hours a week, being a coach can be a very rewarding and enjoyable

Softball tournament in El Campo

A men's slowpitch softball tournament will be played March 19 and 20 in El Campo, according to Paul Garcia of the El Campo Strokers.

Registration fee is $50. For further information call Virgil Quintero, 713-543-3837. The tournament will be played at St. Robert's Field with an estimated 18 teams in the double elimination schedule.

City, school board elections have four candidates each

There were no last minute-candidate filings last Wednesday in either the Eagle Lake City Council, or Rice Consolidated Independent School District board of trustees.

The four candidates in each race previously published in The Headlight will be the ones voters will choose.

In the council election, three positions will be filled by the top vote recipients. Candidates are Kay Clipson, W. C. "Dub" Alley, Alvin Kohleffel and Mike Duarte. Duarte and Kohleffel are incumbents. Councilman Ralph Truly is not a candidate.

For the school board, three people also will be elected. Candidates are Ralph Stienke and Frederick Leopold for position six for a one-year unexpired term, and Ted Wiese, board president who is unopposed for position four, and Steve Balas, unopposed for position five. Balas and Wiese will be elected for three-year terms.

Voters in Eagle Lake will have to visit two polling places in order to cast their ballots in both elections. For the city, the polling place is the municipal building, but for city residents in the school district, the polling place will be the community center. The school voters in Garwood and in Sheridan will vote at their respective schools.

The polling places will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday, April 2. Absentee balloting begins Monday.