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Eagle Lake Headlight

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Rumor not true

Railroad not leaving

The local rumor mill was proven wrong again last week when a spokesman for the Southern Pacific Transportation Co. said the railroad was in no way considering closing its operations in Eagle Lake.

The rumor had been floating around for some months, but the spokesman, Jim Johnson, public relations manager based in Kansas City, said that one simple way to disprove the rumor was to look at the depot station on Commerce St. "The rumor is not true by any means," he said, just look at the recently renovated building "with a new roof and new paint job."

The rumor perhaps was fueled by the fact that the huge transportation company, like many other industries in the United States, is working its way through a system-wide reduction in staff. In Eagle Lake, where seniority rules also include people in Flatonia and Rosenberg, five clerical employees took advantage of the staff-reduction "buyout" of their jobs.

One of them in Eagle Lake was Joyce Argo, who took the \$20,000 buyout and left her job. Four others took early retirement, which Johnson said was lucrative for them, since they apparently were able to retain some company benefits although he was not specific.

Of the five positions that were vacated, four were abolished, and one, a Rosenberg position, was filled with another employee.

"We have no plan on closing out" the Eagle Lake operations, Johnson said. Although in Kansas City, Johnson obtained his information from P.R. Flores, the Eagle Lake roadmaster who replaced R.L. Gentry.

There still are a dozen "Maintenance Away" track workers working out of the Eagle Lake area, and there are a total of 19 clerical positions still on the seniority roster here, again covering Rosenberg and Flatonia as well as Eagle Lake. There are five people in the operations division, as well as an engine switching crew.

Johnson also pointed out that the tower operations, 200 yards east of the station house, is staffed 24-hours a day. The trainmaster, roadmaster and assistant agent all continue to headquarter at the depot station.

Rice schools in session Chamber BBQ, VFW memorial services Monday

Buy BBQ tickets now while available

Although Monday, May 26, is Memorial Day with the annual Eagle Lake Chamber of Commerce fund-raising barbecue and the annual VFW services in memory of those veterans who have passed on, students in the Rice school district will be in classes.

The school calendar shows the end of classes for students at next Thursday, May 29, and the end of school for teachers on Friday, May 30.

The VFW services, switched last year from the November 11 Veterans Day, will be similar to services held in past years. Last year the services were changed slightly to include the reading of only the names of those who have been added to the memorial list in the last 12 months.

Tommy Pilkington, who is in charge of the services, said they will begin at 10 a.m. at the Community Center. There will be a speaker, and the Community Choir will provide music.

Buy BBQ now

Tickets for the Chamber barbecue are available from any member, and cost \$4.50 per plate. Serving is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., with the usual drive-through line on Partidge Lane, or buffet-line table service in the Recreation area.

The menu includes barbecued chickens with Dr. Russell Thomas the chief cook; rice salad prepared at The Sportsman's Restaurant, and beans with Roy Van Nort in charge of the cooking.

Ticket sales scheduled to end this weekend, but the chickens will be delivered Friday, so sales will be cut off. Call Cindy Gohlitz at Delta Savings for information and tickets.

The proceeds from the barbecue help fund chamber activities throughout the year.

Airport work to be explained

An effort to explain why Eagle Lake's Municipal Airport should be improved will be made this week in a series of person-to-person education sessions with voters.

Members of the Industrial Foundation and Revitalize Eagle Lake, Inc. came up with the plan in response to discussion over the past several weeks that voters were ill-informed prior to the April 8 city election. Council has discussed the fact that the public was told only that improvements, including lengthening the runway, would cost \$250,000. Therefore, voters were forced to make decisions on the one fact that their taxes would increase.

That is refuted in the information distributed Tuesday morning to members of the foundation, revitalization and Chamber of Commerce. They were not told the improvements would generate revenues for the city, and thus pay at least some of the improvement costs.

With assistance from other governmental agencies, the cost of improvements would range between that high figure, and the low estimate of \$92,500.

However, members of the three groups involved with the education campaign this week feel voters could better understand that the airport could generate revenues for the city government and city businesses, and be a positive influence toward broadening the tax base.

Such tax base growth would spread the tax burden among more people, and give taxpayers better control to stave off tax increases.

Tuesday, Paulette Klockman gave members of the hosts of the petition, educational information, and a list of 25 registered voters each. The board member is being asked to contact the names on the list, explain the information now available, and ask for their signature on the petition. The petition asks council to purchase then land, then within six months make a decision on improvements.

Petitions must be turned in by 10 a.m. next Tuesday, May 27, in order to be tabulated and presented to council at their meeting that night. Klockman said signatures on a second set of petitions are being sought from Eagle Lake business owners. Although some of them can't vote in city elections because they live outside the city limits, they do own businesses in town and pay city taxes. The groups feel their attitude toward the airport is important for council in making decisions.

The short time the petitions are to be distributed is due to the fact that next Wednesday is the expiration date of the city's option on the land needed to extend the runway.

Here is a summation of the information on the petitions explaining how airport improvements might pay for themselves, decreasing the tax obligation of current residents:

- **Broaden the tax base.** An improved airport would attract more aircraft to be based here.
- **Raise revenues for the city.** For every \$7,000 in other revenues generated for the city, the tax rate can be lowered 1-cent. At the airport, new revenues could come from land lease fees for use by flyers; tie-down fees for airport storage on a daily or other basis; hanger space as described above; sales of non-agricultural items such as aircraft parts and accessories; fuel, and from other lease rights at the airport.
- **Improve safety.** A longer runway would make the airport safer, and decrease the chance of air accidents and near-misses that have been reported in the past. It would allow larger aircraft used during the hunting season to land.
- **In a general category of improving the opportunity to attract new businesses, the industrial foundation and the other groups also think the improvements would help.** The information to be given to voters discusses this, and points out that if the effort to attract new businesses is not successful, there will be fewer tax payers in Eagle Lake, but the cost of operating the city government will not decrease. That means that fewer people will be paying city taxes, and must pay more tax to keep city services now available.
- **The airport is not the full answer, but it is a good beginning.** The petition information reads:

that two churches want to use as a parking lot. They also approved the advertising of bids for two police cars.

Violent aftermath

Saturday's sudden storm brought a lot of wind and rain with it, but fortunately the damage was rather minor. Several trees were blown over, and this aluminum patio cover used to be attached to Doris Clipson's home on Burns St. During the storm it and several potted plants were deposited against Vic and Cherry Corman's house next door, missing the pick-up truck. While the cover was destroyed, damage to the Corman home was minor. According to the AS&M Research Station here, 1.65 inches of rain fell. The weather report is on Page 12.



The annual Xi Psi Psi art exhibition of works of Rice High School students is scheduled Monday. In this photo, from left are: Ernie Sommerlatte, sorority president; Idalia Gonzalez with her work "Too hot to handle" which was part of her portfolio that earned her a \$5,300 national scholarship; Suzanne Corman with her work "Where'd you get those peepers" that won her a Gold Award and a blue ribbon at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo; and Sandra Benge RHS art teacher. The show will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Eagle Lake Municipal Building with viewers asked to vote on their favorite for the People's Choice Award. Also, the sorority is asking donations be made to the Eagle Lake Pilot Club to help them purchase another Lifeline unit for which there is an immediate need.

Grant for Garwood housing rehabilitation sought

A delegation of Garwood residents asked last week that Colorado County Commissioners Court apply for a federal housing rehabilitation grant for that community.

The state administers money with applications reviewed on a regional basis. City and county governments can apply, but the competition is heavy and the funds are growing smaller, county judge Lester Cranek said. The county did approved the resubmission of another grant of those funds for a sanitary sewer system in the Sheridan area. Columbus, Eagle Lake and Weimar usually submit applications too.

Mella Dee Rowe acted as spokesman for the Garwood delegation of about 20 people, and said about 65 homes there could use rehabilitation. Cranek said the county would talk with its application consultant, Bruce Spitzengel of Sugarland, who also is Eagle Lake's consultant. Spitzengel is paid a fee for originating the application, but handles resubmissions each year without further charge. If the grant is approved, other fees are paid.

The court also heard Mrs. Rowe, speaking for Combined Community Action, Inc., of Bacoap ask the county to pay during the summer the cost of delivering federal commodities given free to low income persons who qualify. The court took no action.

The estimate was that it costs about 10-cents a pound to distribute cheese, butter, honey, flour and others. The food will be available to the agency, but the U.S. Department of Agriculture has cut off funds for local distribution.

Cranek and commissioner Otto Loessin said they were concerned the taxpayers in the county would object to spending local money, without asking the recipients to pay some of the cost.

Commissioners also:

- Approved the purchase of a radio tower at the new hospital in Weimar. The tower will broadcast the county ambulance calls in that area. Commissioners turned down the donation of a tower offered by Eagle Lake Rice Dryer, Inc. The dryer's new bins block the signal.
- Commissioners thought the removal, cleaning, painting and re-installation would not be worth the expense, compared to the new \$9,600 tower. Szymanski's Communications of East Bernard submitted the best bid.
- A continued discussion with a group of Kanstener Road residents who have complained for several months that they think a chemical compound from Dow Chemical that the county put on their road to control dust also is so corrosive it is destroying vehicles and other metallic items.
- Commissioner Jerome Wickes read notes that were called into his office from a laboratory in Houston that analyzed soil samples at his request. Unofficially, he said the lab report indicates there are no corrosive chemicals in those samples. Residents are not satisfied, as their lab analysis shows large concentrations of salt. The discussion will continue, with Wickes telling the residents that he too wants to know what's

causing the problem.

• Authorized advertising to sell a dead-end street in Garwood

housing rehabilitation grant. About 20 people from the Garwood area also attended. Commissioners said they would talk with their grant consultant.

1/2 PRICE SALE!

Monterey Snow White Mushrooms

64¢ 8 OZ PRG

California Summertime Peaches

78¢ LB

California Red Plums

99¢ LB

Crunchy Red Radishes

3/99 4 OZ PKGS

Tender California Carrots

49¢ 1 LB BAG

1/2 PRICE SALE!

Premium Russet Potatoes

64¢ 5 LB BAG

California Summertime Nectarines

98¢ LB

White Onions

39¢ LB

California Seedless White Grapes

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