

NEWSBRIEFS

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out to each athlete and high school this year with practice times and important dates. If someone did not get a letter please call the athletic dept. at 979-234-3531 ext. 1138 (Coach Dumont) ext. 1111 (Coach Blaschke). Bus pick ups: Eagle Lake: Eagle Lake Elementary, 6:40 a.m.; Rice Mill, 6:45 a.m.; Behind Buc-ee's, 6:50 a.m.; B&B, 6:55 a.m.; New Town (Corner Yett St.), 7 a.m.; Garwood: School, 6:40 a.m.; Vox, 6:50 a.m.; Altair (Blue Goose), 7 a.m.; Sheridan: School, 6:45 a.m.; Rock Island, 6:55 a.m.

Time to Order Lamb and Goat Tags

Time is fast approaching for 4-Her's and FFA students to make decisions on how many ear tags they will need for the 2007 Texas 4-H/FFA Lamb Validation and Texas 4-H/FFA Goat Validation Programs for the major livestock shows. The tags will cost \$9 each. In order to get our orders in on time we ask that you please turn in your orders to the Extension Office by August 16. Tags must be paid for at the time of order.



The home of Hollis and Katherine Smith, at 705 Partridge Lane, sustained fire damage to the garage and kitchen area and water and smoke damage throughout the house Tuesday afternoon, July 18. The Smiths were not at home at the time of the fire and came home to find the garage filled with smoke. Cause of the fire is unknown at this time.

July Sales Tax Payment Up Nearly 24 Percent

Sales Tax payments to the City of Eagle Lake in July were \$22,702 an increase of 23.55 percent from last July, figures from the state comptroller shows.

So far this year in Eagle Lake, sales tax payments have totaled \$124,704, an decrease of 7.93 percent from the same period last year.

Texas Comptroller Carole

Keeton Strayhorn today said the state received \$1.49 billion in sales tax revenue in June, up 15.6 percent compared to June 2005.

Strayhorn delivered \$412.4 million in July sales tax allocations to cities, counties and other local taxing entities, up 19.7 percent compared to last July. So far this calendar year, sales tax allocations to local governments are

running 15.9 percent higher than last year.

"The strong Texas economy continues to generate double-digit gains in sales tax for the state and many local governments," Strayhorn said.

The half-cent sales tax rebate for Colorado County was up 21.03 for the month, with a payment of \$78,830.

Rice Board Discusses School Improvements

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renovation of portions of the High School to serve as a Junior High for students who currently attend

Guilty Plea

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eration of citizens.

"I'm proud of all the officers that worked so hard on the case," he said.

"I appreciate the way the citizens came together to assist the Police Department during the investigation."

"I have been particularly impressed with the courage and continued dignity of the 83-year-old woman. She has been an encouragement and inspiration."

sixth, seventh, and eighth grade in the Eagle Lake attendance district.

For the bond election to appear on the November ballot trustees must approve a final plan by August 29.

Preliminary estimates place the cost of the project at nearly \$18.5 million, with the increase due mainly to steep a steep rise in construction costs over the preceding months.

In other board action:

Trustees approved Assistant Superintendent Billy Hefner's recommendation to increase the price of all free and reduced meals by 25 cents.

Trustees heard remarks from Colorado County Chief Central Appraisal District Chief Assessor Billy Youens regarding estimated tax revenues for the coming year.

The tax base for the district increased about \$84 million over last year to about \$550 million total. This would provide revenues of about \$8.2 million based on last year's tax value. However, the actual number is expected to be lower due to state mandated lowering of the maintenance and operations portion of the tax rate.

Youens also assessed the potential tax impact of the pro-

posed LCRA-SAWS water project on Rice C.I.S.D. He believes the project might cost Rice C.I.S.D. as much as \$42,000 per year in lost tax revenue if a 10,000 acre water storage facility is built in the district.

Trustees discussed the topic of transfers between schools in the district. Concerns stemmed from the potential of intra-district

transfers to increase the student to teacher ratio beyond the 22 to 1 level mandated for grade levels one through four by Section 25.112 of the Texas Education Code. Such a violation requires the hiring of additional staff to bring the ratio back within legal limits. In special cases schools may obtain a waiver of the 22 to 1 provision.

LCRA-SAWS Project

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would not spend \$42 million on scientific studies.

Now, let's get to the heart of the issue of taxes and land.

It will take land to build the off-channel storage facilities, up to 10,000 acres.

We will pay a fair price for the land - LCRA cannot acquire private land without paying a fair price, through voluntary sales or through a judicial process.

It is our hope to work with landowners who want to sell their land. Anyone who claims LCRA will "take" land without fair compensation is wrong.

LCRA knows that taking land off the tax rolls is bad for taxpayers.

LCRA has been committed for more than 70 years to improving the life of people in this region and will do everything it can to eliminate the tax impact of off-channel storage facilities.

Some estimate the tax impact to be \$60,000. I can think of a number of ways to mitigate this impact and we will be discussing them with local officials.

However, there is something much worse than losing tax dollars - losing the opportunity to develop new water and conserve water, which is underpinning of our economy. We cannot afford to do nothing.

If we do not take action to conserve and develop water, the rice economy of this area will face the inevitable loss of surface water in the future as the population of our basin increases.

The rice industry puts \$230 million into the local economy annually.

If surface water irrigation goes away, the loss of the rice industry would be felt by farm

laborers, farm implement sales and repair; banking and finance; seed and fertilizer, insurance, auto sales, retail, advertising and other industries.

So, on one hand, you have the possible loss \$60,000, which can be mitigated.

On the other is the collapse of the agricultural economy, which has occurred in many other rural counties.

Some opponents say the rice industry does not have a long-term future. Maybe it does, maybe it does not, but a lot of jobs depend on that \$230 million in economic value.

With so many jobs at stake, LCRA is trying its best to make sure that irrigated agriculture does not fail for lack of water.

To get water for this basin - for rice and for cities and industry - we need land for off-channel storage facilities. Nothing is free.

Developing water takes land, just as it did in the 1930s, when the Highland Lakes were constructed.

But stopping the project could cost this area tens of millions of dollars in taxes, salaries and property values.

If you are concerned about taxes, stopping the project could be exactly the wrong strategy.

We ask that concerned citizens work with us to understand the potential costs and benefits of the regional water plan.

We are not asking you to support it, just to join us in the process as we determine whether the project would be good for the lower Colorado River basin.

Let's keep talking and let's hope there is a feasible way to have the water we all need for the future of our area.

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