

Eagle Lake Headlight

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EAGLE LAKE, TEXAS

MARCH 15, 2007



Pictured above is the wreckage from an accident that occurred Friday afternoon south of Altair on Hwy. 71. The 18-wheeler was apparently facing northbound and starting to make a left turn when the pick-up tried to pass on the left and collided with the rig. A camper being pulled by the pick-up was completely destroyed in the wreck. Both drivers were transported to the hospital with what appeared to be non-life threatening injuries.

Sparks Testifies In House Committee

Colorado County Attorney Ken Sparks traveled to Austin Monday and was among 15 prosecutors who appeared before a Texas House panel looking at allegations of abuse against inmates of the Texas Youth Commission.

Sparks testified before the House Corrections committee.

In an interview after the hearing, Sparks said he and other prosecutors said their offices are prosecuting abuse cases when they are brought to them.

Sparks noted that his office prosecuted three cases since 2003 stemming from incidents at the Eagle Lake Juvenile Detention Facility.

The facility is now closed due to budget cuts at the state.

Sparks said he was asked to come to Austin after reports surfaced that there were a number of complaints about sexual abuse statewide, but little prosecution of those cases.

The committee's chairman, Jerry Madden of Richardson, said the youth commission's system for investigating abuse allegations and referring them to law enforcement authorities was so inadequate that most of the cases ended up in record rooms of local police departments to gather dust, according to a report by the Houston Chronicle.

Sparks noted that Madden suggested the creation of an office of inspector-general in the youth commission to investigate all complaints of abuse.

The cases he prosecuted, Sparks said, were investigated by the Eagle Lake Police Department.

They include a September 2005 case in which a female guard had sexual contact with an 18-year-old inmate. Sparks said the inmate did not want to prosecute.

He said the guard was fired from the facility, placed on three years probation, with deferred adjudication and ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine.

In another case in April 2005 Sparks said a male guard was prosecuted for having sex with a female inmate. He said the man was fired, placed on three years probation, ordered to spend 60 days in jail and pay a \$1,000 fine. He said that the inmate said the sex was consensual.

The third case, he said, was in November 2003. In that case, a male guard was charged with fondling a female inmate. In that case, he said, the individual was fired, was ordered placed on three years probation and ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine.

Sparks said he was called by a reporter from the Houston Chronicle last week about one of the cases. He said the reporter said he had a list of 13 cases involving sexual abuse complaints that he said had not been prosecuted, including one in Eagle Lake.

Sparks said he provided the information about the prosecution and also went back through his files for the other cases.

Rice Board Calls Bond Election

The Rice School board voted unanimously on Friday to call a bond election on May 12.

The election will ask voters to decide yes or no on two bond propositions totaling about \$16.65 million.

The first proposition will ask for just over \$12 million for construction of 16 classrooms, two science labs, two computer labs, a library, gym, administrative area and band hall. This area will be used for seventh and eighth grade for the entire district.

The second proposition asks for an additional \$4.6 million for construction of a 500-seat auditorium with a lobby-type area that would be used as an eating space for the seventh and eighth grade. The area would also include space for a kitchen if the district wanted to add one later.

The board also passed a resolution effectively tying the two propositions together. The resolution specifies that if only the second proposition passes, then the district will not go forward with the project.

The vote on Friday came after a series of special meetings held to discuss district facility issues that needed to be addressed after the failure of last May's bond election.

Trustees have said that they feel this election package will be a compromise with voters who narrowly defeated a bond election a year ago. Board members said that they had heard from constituents who did not like the idea of sixth graders being on the same campus with high school

aged kids.

The current overall tax rate for the district is about \$1.41 per \$100 of valuation. This amount includes seven cents in taxes that are going toward a past bond issue that will be paid off after 2010. At that point the seven cents would drop from the tax rate.

The state mandated reduction in maintenance and operation tax means that the rate will drop 30 cents after this year, no matter what happens with the bond election.

If both propositions of the bond election pass, the district would need a tax increase of about 25 cents to cover bond payments.

As things stand right now, if both propositions pass, the district expects the overall tax rate to go down next year to about \$1.37

per \$100 of valuation. This takes into account the state mandated maintenance and operations tax reduction and the increase in the interest portion of the tax rate due to the bond election.

Then, in 2010, after the old bond is paid off, the rate would go down another seven cents to about \$1.30 per \$100 of valuation. If only the first proposition passes, the rate would be about \$1.25.

On a \$50,000 home current taxes are roughly \$705 per year. If both propositions pass, the new tax amount would be about \$685 until 2010 when it would reduce further to about \$650 per year.

The above estimates are based on the current tax base of the district and conservative growth

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18-Year Old Hospitalized After Monday Shooting

A shooting Monday night in the 300 Block of Allen Street sent 18-year old Michael Johnson to the hospital.

The incident happened around 9:00 p.m. and police arrested Charles Casa Casanova on charges of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Police confiscated a 12-gauge shotgun that they say is likely the weapon that was used to shoot Johnson in the back.

Police Chief Bill Lattimore indicated that another arrest is expected in the case.

He said it is unclear exactly what caused the shooting but indicated that there has been some feuding going on between two groups in that area since sometime in December.

Lattimore said that he thinks tensions may have reached a boiling point on Monday night.

He said that Johnson was transported to Rice Medical Center with non-life threatening injuries and was then transported to Hermann Memorial Hospital in

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NEWSBRIEFS

E.H. Henry to meet set tonight

The E.H. Henry Alumni and Ex Students will meet Thursday, March 15 at 6 p.m. Those interested are asked to meet at White Cloud Baptist Church.

Historical Commission meets tonight

Colorado County Historical Commission (CCHC) will meet March 15, at 7 p.m. at the Diamond Center, St. Peter & Paul Catholic Church Church Lane in Frelsburg. The program will be given by Charlene Raysdale, "Researching & Writing a Historical Story/Book" (her books will be available for purchasing). Hosts will be Ed & Jean Ellis, Janice Houghton, Larry Uhlig, Carolyn Hastedt and Ken Stavinoha.

CPR classes start today

South Texas CPR Associates will be conducting CPR classes Thursday, March 15 starting at 5 p.m. If interested call 361-772-0495 for details.

Lenten Luncheons in progress

The Eagle Lake United Methodist Church (UMC) will host the 11th Annual Lenten Luncheons each Monday through April 2 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., with special music and guest speakers. A love offering will be taken and net proceeds go to the Eagle Lake Community Food Pantry. The fourth luncheon on Monday, March 19, will feature the Rev. Ed Triem, of First Presbyterian Church of Eagle Lake as guest speaker. Eagle Lake First Baptist Church will provide an array of soups and desserts. A sliced meat and cheese tray, crackers, sandwich bread, hot cornbread, iced tea and coffee will be furnished by the UMC. Everyone is cordially invited...bring a friend!

Relay For Life

Every year is excited about the upcoming Colorado County Relay For Life 2007 to be held this year at the Weimar Wildcat football stadium/track April 20-21. It is not too late to organize a team to participate in this worthy fundraising event to benefit cancer research. If interested in forming a team, you may contact Valerie Harmon in Weimar at 979-725-8912 or Robin Maertz in Columbus. Team captain meetings will be held at 5:30 p.m. at the St. Paul Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall in Columbus on the following dates: March 26, April 2, 9 and 16. See you there!!

Co-ed softball registration underway

Co-ed softball registration will be held through March 18. For more information please call 281-989-2555.

Youth, Family Services to hold classes

Youth and Family Services (Y&F) will have Family Strengthening Workshops/Parenting Classes in the MET-Head Start building, 1436 Eagle Lake Road in Sealy. Classes will meet Monday evenings, March 19 through April 23 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Please call 1-800-256-7321 by March 19 to register or for information. Workshops are free. Snacks provided, no childcare will be provided.

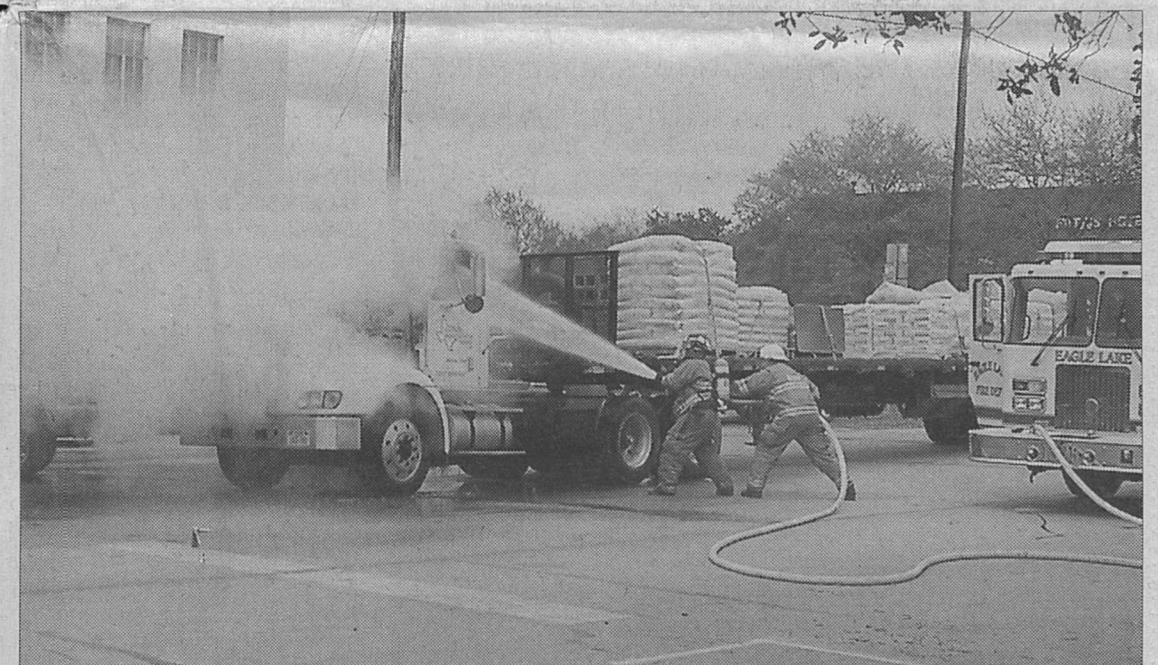
Musical set for April 1

Come and worship with South Point Missionary Baptist Church, 6904 Hwy. 71, Garwood. Workshop musical rehearsal dates: March 21-23, 7 p.m.; Musical: March 24. At 6:30 p.m. A Pre-Easter celebration with all the trimmings will be held April 1 at 11 a.m. Rev. Herbert M. Long, II, pastor.

Hoff Family Reunion

The Hoff Family Reunion will be held on March 25 at the home of Arthur and Debbie Wammel-1748 Hwy 159 W. Family members will gather for food, fun and fellowship. Round up as members of your family as you can and join us for a great day! For more information, call Beverly Hoff at 979-865-5585.

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This 1998 International driven by Edmond Mensah caught fire on Monday shortly after turning onto McCarty Ave from FM 102. The cause of the fire was said to be electrical. No one was injured thanks to the quick response of the driver who used a fire extinguisher that was in the truck to try to extinguish the flames. Officer David Wiese also used his extinguisher until the Eagle Lake Volunteer Fire Department arrived to finish the job of extinguishing the flames.

County Sets Tax Abatement Hearing For Rice Dryer

Colorado County commissioners, meeting on Monday, set a public hearing for March 26 on a request for a tax abatement for a company to build a \$2 million rice seed drying and storage facility to be built about three miles south of Eagle Lake.

The request was made by RiceTec Inc., a company that develops hybrid rice.

When the plant opens, it is projected to employ three people and is expected to employ about 10 people at the end of the abatement.

If the abatement is approved, construction is expected to start almost immediately, with completion in August.

The plant would be located on land on FM 3013.

In other action, the commissioners:

—Adopted a revised flood damage prevention ordinance. The ordinance would provide a fine of up to \$500 for violations. The ordinance restricts building in flood prone areas.

—Heard from Richard Luhrs,

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Write-In Filing Deadline For Local Offices Is March 19

Filing has ended for local races for the May 12 election.

Anyone wishing to run may still do so, but must register as a write-in candidate by March 19.

In city elections, three individuals have filed for three at-large places.

Jane Meldahl filed for re-election and Michael Cooper and Wilbert Williams have also filed.

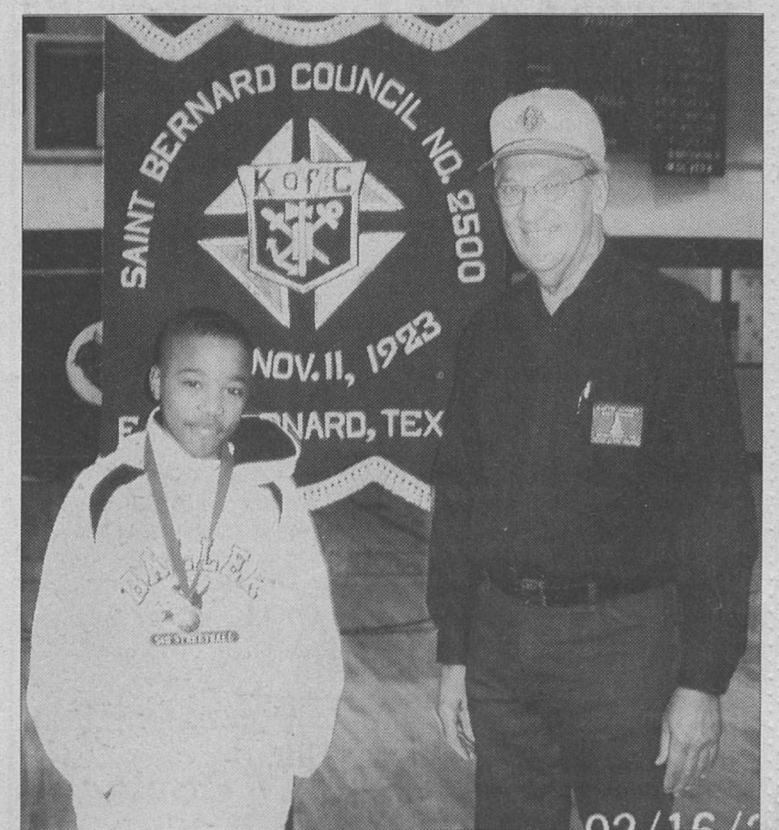
If no other candidates file, the city will likely cancel the election.

in the school board election,

Jack Vawter will be unopposed for re-election to Position 4. Incumbent Carolyn Baird will seek re-election to Position 5 against Carlos Gonzales.

As with city elections, candidates for write-in have until March 19 to apply.

Four positions held by Mark Anderson, Michael Thomas, Obie Rhodes and Robert Wilcox are up for re-election to the Rice Hospital Board. Each member will seek re-election and there have been no additional filings for the board.



Johnson Second In FT Contest

Pictured above is Jordan Johnson who moved on to win first place in the East Bernard Free Throw Contest sponsored by the Knights of Columbus Council. Jordan traveled to Hallettsville on Sunday, March 10 to compete in the Victoria Diocesan at Sacred Heart Gym in Hallettsville. Jordan ended his competition there by placing second in the contest. Those who won at Sacred Heart on Sunday will move on to the state division in San Antonio this weekend. Pictured with Jordan is Adam Adamek, Knights of Columbus District Deputy.