

Commissioners are currently pondering direction on a Courthouse Renovation project.

# Courthouse Project Costs Keep Rising

*Continued from front page*

Preliminary estimates of the \$5.5 million cost of an annex are based on 22,690 square feet at \$185 a square foot.

Architect Brad Cutright said the estimates are preliminary and indicated that the size of the facility could probably be reduced by 10 to 15 percent.

At several points, commissioners and members of the advisory committee noted that offices were presenting a wish list.

"It will be like Christmas," said Hahn. "Everybody likes more."

But at the same time, they noted that the county's facilities building, constructed three years already has space problems.

"Let's build as big as we can afford, not extravagant," said County Attorney Ken Sparks, who said he was speaking as a citizen.

Hahn said he also had reservations when he heard about the possibility of moving the offices of justice of the peace for precinct 1 into the annex building.

"We've got to slow this train down a little," Hahn said of the annex building.

But County Judge Al Jamison, who said he has tried to attend most of the meetings of the committee, told Hahn that he could

have gotten information by calling committee members.

Commissioner Doug Wessels said he felt the commissioners needed to decide whether it needed the Farm Bureau property.

But Jamison said he thought the decision needed to be made on the type of building.

Cutright, in a letter to Jamison, had proposed a two story building rather than a three-story building because he thought the two-story building made a more efficient floor plan.

"The lower building height also means that it will not compete with the historic courthouse," he said in his letter.

Sparks also cautioned that the committee couldn't poll commissioners on decisions related to their recommendations.

If commissioners want input, he suggested they have a joint public meeting with the committee, or two members of the commissioner's court could meet with the committee without requiring an open meeting.

In addition to himself, Jamison suggested the other commissioners pick a representative to attend the committee meetings.

Jamison also discussed financing.

At one point, he said he was

looking at issuing certificates of obligation for 20 years, but was more inclined to issue them for 30 years.

After the meeting, in answer to a question, he noted that once commissioners authorize issuance of certificates of obligation, residents can petition for an election.

Five percent of registered voters must sign a petition to call an election.

After an executive session on possible purchase of land related to the construction of the proposed annex, commissioners voted to hire attorney Don Bendy to represent the county in what Jamison called a "pending real estate matter."

He declined to say whether it involved the Farm Bureau building property.

Members of the steering committee also agreed to their next meeting at 9 a.m. on Dec. 6.

In other action, commissioners:

—Authorized spending up to \$8,000 for a fueling system at Robert R. Wells Airport.

Jamison said another \$8,000 should be available to the county through a state grant program for rural airports.

—Tabled awarding of bids for a document imaging system for the county clerk's office.

—Appointed Corkey and Joyce Johnson to the Colorado County Historical Commission.

—Approved a letter of agreement with the county and Colorado County Youth and Family Services to provide services to youth who are at risk of mistreatment or juvenile delinquency.

—Accepted an environmental and historic report from Union Pacific on the railroad's proposed abandonment of 8.3 miles of track between Chesterville and Eagle Lake.

# School Board

*Continued from front page*

coop, current special ed employees in the district would become El Campo employees. He indicated that if Rice joined, many of the services would remain where they are, but that it could be possible that some students would be bused to El Campo. He said that for the most part, teachers and specialists would come to Rice.

Lanier said that it is becoming very costly to provide services because the district is required to provide services no matter what for all students with special needs. He said that some of the specialists required are very difficult to find and expensive to employ.

He said that current Rice employees that would become El Campo employees would likely receive pay increases because the El Campo district is on a higher pay scale.

If the district decides to join, it would not take effect until next school year, but the state requires notification in January.

No action was taken as the item was on the agenda for discussion only.

In other board action:

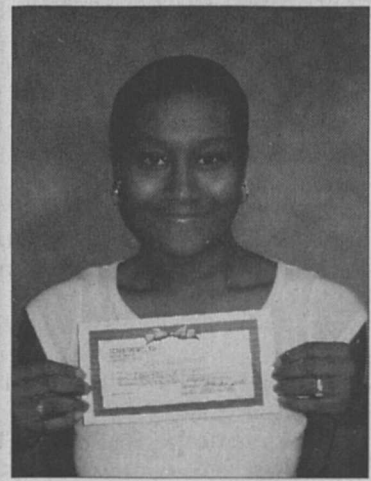
—Steven Mahalitic was reappointed to the Central Appraisal District Review Board and Tom Kallina was reappointed to the Central Appraisal District Board.

—Discussed the possibility of an incentive program for TAKS testing. Lanier said that, while the state does not allow for students to be rewarded for TAKS results, it does have a program that allows early summer release for students who pass the TAKS. He said that the program would let passing students out of school after TAKS results are in.

Lanier said that TAKS results are generally received at the very end of the school year and that students would get about 10 days off under normal circumstances.

He said that when he first heard about the program he dismissed it, but then thought that the district should at least look into anything that might motivate students to work on the TAKS.

Lanier said that student apathy about the test was one of the biggest problems schools face when preparing students for the TAKS.



Kiara Roy, pictured, and Eunice Frnka, both of Eagle Lake, were the first winners of the Headlight Kris Kringle Cash Contest. Roy will use her certificate at Starr Tends and Frnka will use her's at Taco Tony's.

# Holiday Home Protection

During the holiday season you shouldn't have to worry whether your house and all those new holiday gifts are safe from burglars while you're out and about, celebrating with friends and family.

To help make your home more secure during the holidays and year-round, Protection One, an electronic security company, is sharing these handy tips:

\* Avoid displaying gifts where they can easily be seen through windows, and take care when disposing of product packaging, so that you aren't "advertising" recent, high-dollar purchases.

\* To reduce the chance of easy entry, cut tree limbs away from second-story windows.

\* Secure objects that might allow access to your home, such as ladders or trashcans that could

be used to enter a window or scale a fence.

\* To prevent hiding places for intruders, trim bushes to expose branch structure.

\* To illuminate entries, install motion lights.

\* Install easy-to-read and illuminated address numbers so emergency personnel can easily locate your home.

\* Be aware of usual and unusual neighborhood activities and report suspicious behavior.

\* Secure all windows, including those upstairs.

\* Never leave a key hidden outside. Burglars know all the best hiding places.

\* Install peepholes and ask to see identification from service and delivery people.

\* Install deadbolt locks on exterior entrances.

When leaving your home for an extended period of time, such as for a holiday vacation, follow these simple steps to help your home appear occupied and to deter burglars:

\* Leave blinds and curtains in everyday positions.

\* Use timers to operate lights.

\* Turn your telephone ringer down, so no one outside can hear repeated rings.

\* Review your answering machine, and make sure it does not imply you are away.

\* Arrange for continuing yard care.

\* Ask a friend to pick up deliveries, or have deliveries stopped.

\* If your car is parked in the driveway, have a friend move it occasionally.

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honoring Mrs. Helyn Farris,**  
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*Funds from this event paid for the recent hospital lobby renovations which totaled approximately \$16,000.00.*

**THANK YOU!!!**