

The Bedford Citizen

THE NEWS YOU NEED TO GUIDE YOUR CITY

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ABOUT THIS E-NEWS

The mission of this electronic newspaper (e-news) is to increase citizen awareness of current events and thereby increase their involvement in our government's decision-making process.

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DEADLINE FOR PERSONS TO BE HEARD

Anyone who intends to speak at next week's City Council Meeting as a "Person to Be Heard" must submit a written request no later than this coming Wednesday at noon. The request must include name, address, phone number and the topic of discussion. It may be emailed to the City Secretary at sjennings@ci.bedford.tx.us or mailed to:

Bedford City Hall
ATTN: City Secretary Shanae Jennings
2000 Forest Ridge Dr.
Bedford, TX 76021

If you find this e-news helpful and informative, please help us grow by passing it along to others.

FEATURES

TONIGHT'S BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION MEETING

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The Beautification Commission will meet tonight at 6:30 p.m. in the Bonnie Finn room of Bedford Public Library. The meeting is open to the public under the Texas Public Meeting Act.

Among the topics on the agenda are:

- ◆ Paper Shredder Event Presentation
- ◆ Board and Commission Term Limits and Membership Renewal
- ◆ Senior Citizens' Benefit Fair Participation
- ◆ Kiwanis Club Request to Share Work Events
- ◆ Subcommittee reports
 - Business Recognition
 - Communication
 - Plant Sponsorships/Landscaping
 - Recycling
 - Tree walk
 - Workday Schedule
 - Citywide Vision
- ◆ Calendar Dates
 - Sept. 15 Workday – Boys Ranch
 - Sept. 17 Beautification Commission Meeting
 - Sept. 21 Senior Citizen Benefit

Fair

- Sept. 22 Business Recognition Event

CONSIDER PROPOSED TAX RATE

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During last week's City Council Regular Session, Director of Administrative Services Tom Ross explained the definitions and dollar amounts related to this topic.

He said that the tax rate required to fund the 2007-2008 budget as presented at last Friday's Council Work Session is \$0.446882 per \$100 valuation, the same figure as last year's rate. Because of increased property values, that tax rate will actually generate a larger amount of tax revenues in the coming year. Therefore, the effective rate (tax rate that will generate the same amount of tax revenue as last year from the same property) is \$0.438692 per \$100 valuation.

For 2007-2008, the rollback tax rate (maximum rate the City may adopt without triggering the possibility of a rollback election) is \$0.462137 per \$100 valuation.

The Council discussed and considered several options for the proposed maximum tax rate and approved, with a 4-3 vote, a maximum of \$.45 per \$100 of valuation. Council members Cason, Orea and Whistler opposed the motion.

The action didn't actually set the tax rate for next year; it merely established the upper limit for the tax rate that the Council will consider when an actual vote is required. At that time, the Council may

consider any rate up to but not more than \$.476 per \$100 of valuation.

Because the Council voted to consider a rate greater than \$0.438692 (this year's effective rate), two public hearings are required. In order to meet the publication and scheduling requirements outlined in the City Charter, the dates recommended for those two meetings are Tuesday Aug. 28 and Tuesday Sept. 4. Both meetings will begin at 7 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. Council will take the first vote on the actual tax rate for 2008 at the Aug. 28 Council meeting and a final vote at the Sept. 11 Council meeting.

For more explanation of 2007 property tax rates for Bedford, go to: http://www.ci.bedford.tx.us/News/news_pdf/2007property_tax_rate.pdf. That document presents information about last year's tax rate and this year's effective and rollback tax rates. It also includes an illustration of how each rate is determined.

2007 Ad Valorem Tax Roll from the Tarrant Appraisal District

The Council officially received the *2007 Appraisal Roll Information Valuation Summary (25 July 2007)*, as well as the certified anticipated collection rate from the Tarrant County Tax Assessor Collector for the City, during the Regular Session of last week's Council meeting. The valuation summary is provided below.

Market Value		\$3,049,182,140
Deferred Special Use Value Loss:		
Agricultural	\$2,240,927	
Partial Exemption Value Loss:		
Disabled Veteran	\$2,089,000	
Over 65	\$127,148,028	
Homestead	\$0	
Disabled Person	\$0	
Pollution Control	\$69,374	
Prorated Absolute	\$144,361	
Abatement Value Loss:	\$3,509,334	
Certified Net Taxable Value		\$2,913,981,116
Estimated Total Net Taxable Value Including Suggested Values to be Used for Pending ARB Accounts and Incomplete Accounts		\$2,962,919,394

INCREASED BASE RATES FOR WATER AND SEWER

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During their Aug. 14 meeting, the Council consented to a resolution approving and authorizing the publication of notice of intent to issue certificates of obligation and adopted a related resolution. This was necessary after staff identified a maximum of \$4,924,000 worth of major water and sewer construction and rehabilitation projects that need to be addressed.

Sewer projects include infiltration and inflow studies (\$100,000), repair or replacement of sewer mains at various locations (\$237,000) and rehabilitation of sewer mains in the Brook Hollow Addition (\$840,000). Water projects include replacement of water mains in the Shady Brook Addition (\$746,000) and replacement of 30" water main along Cummings Dr. (\$2,534,000).

The amount approved exceeds the totals of all projects listed above in case unexpected construction or rehabilitation is determined to be necessary after a project has begun.

In addition, Council passed a reimbursement resolution April 11, 2006, authorizing the use of proceeds from the sale of debt to reimburse the Utility Repair and Replacement Fund for Phase II of the Insituform Sewer rehab project. The amount of the reimbursement will be \$467,000.

It is necessary to sell debt in order to finance all of the above. The form of debt selected is certificates of obligation

supported by a pledge of net revenues from the Water/Sewer Utility Fund.

To pay down the debt on the issue, base rates for Water and Sewer will be raised in lieu of raising the rates for consumption.

AUG. 14 PERSON TO BE HEARD

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Diane Versocki presented observations, statistics and additional petition signatures.

Ms. Versocki reviewed the history and challenged claims that the increased hours we now enjoy at the Library are the result of the push to outsource. She reported the following facts:

- ◆ In 2006, Bedford ranked fourth in percentage of total operating expenses specifically used for library materials when compared to 21 similar cities in the north Texas area.
- ◆ Bedford ranked 16 out of 21 in operating income per capita.
- ◆ 18 out of 21 in wages and benefits expended per capita.
- ◆ So far this year, circulation at the Bedford Public Library is up more than 40 percent from last year.

She praised Library Manager as being "incredibly efficient" and went on to say to the Council, "This library is where it is today, not because of your push to outsource, but for the managerial expertise, creativity and people skills of our Library Manager Maria Redburn."

"According to research done by Norman Oder [Editor of the Library Journal], they

[LSSI] hire fewer librarians, cut salaries and benefits, spend less on materials, choose less-educated employees and increase the number of volunteers. ... Pressure is applied not to spend the full budget with the unspent funds contributing to the company's profits."

Ms. Versocki reported that research on the web site Factiva indicates that LSSI bids \$100 to 150 thousand dollars under the public library entity they are bidding against and she asked, "Wasn't that the magic number that was quoted by some on this Council that would force serious consideration of the bid proposal by LSSI?"

Ms. Versocki pointed out how easy it is for LSSI to underbid the Bedford Public Library staff since they have access to "salary schedules, library statistics and schematics" while the Library staff has no such information on LSSI. Furthermore she said, it is an indication of what's to come that LSSI has marked their proposal confidential so the residents of Bedford, whom they hope to serve, can't see it.

She said that, "to date, over 400 people have voiced their opposition to outsourcing by speaking, signing and writing and she presented about 155 more petition signatures.

Orean: "You said at the beginning of your presentation that some of us wanted to outsource the library. That is not exactly a true statement. What would be more correct is that some of us wanted to investigate whether or not outsourcing would be advantageous to the City of Bedford. That would be more correct."

Whistler: "Ms. Versocki, if you were to go back to when I ran for office, at The League of Women Voters, in my closing statement, I specifically stated that I was interested in getting the most for the least for the City and that included looking into outsourcing possibilities. That included literally any and every department in the City. The Library happens to be the second department that we've looked into. I personally was in charge of looking into Splash and talked to the people that would have taken that over, so it wasn't that we were looking at the Library first, in fact, I was looking at a number of departments. I still have others on my mind that should equally be considered for outsourcing, so it's not like we had a vendetta against the Library. The Library offered a potential opportunity and it's being explored. Until we finish with the exploration, no decision is going to be made, but I do want to make it a point that we weren't picking specifically on the Library. I was looking at anything and everything."

Ms. Versocki asked that we not outsource the library and that we work together to find whatever sources of funding we need to accomplish that goal.

Turner: "Ms. Versocki and Mr. Peters, I want to thank you for a very cogent, unemotional presentation to the Council. You have expressed what I have felt from the Citizens of Bedford, an overwhelming expression of their opinion as you have expressed tonight and I want to thank you for this presentation."

ABOUT THIS E-NEWS

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The mission of this electronic newspaper (e-news) is to increase citizen awareness of current events and thereby increase their involvement in our government's decision-making process. As a result, *The Bedford Citizen* will focus on providing Bedford's residents with the information they need in order to cast an informed vote. We also will include occasionally some helpful and entertaining information.

The Bedford Citizen is currently a volunteer effort which we expect to be circulated from friend to friend via email in its PDF format. If you find it helpful and informative, please feel free to pass it along to others.

During this introductory period, the subscriptions are free. This will allow us to gauge the demand and work out the bugs. Eventually, we plan to charge a fee for subscriptions. This will allow us to avoid the conflicts of interest that can arise from accepting paid advertising.

Initially, we plan to publish an issue every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, subject to volunteer availability and the amount of news to report.

To subscribe, please send us an email at Be.A.Citizen@earthlink.net Please include your name, address and email address.

The Bedford Citizen welcomes free of charge:

- ◆ News articles from any volunteer writers, provided we judge the articles are relevant to our readers and the facts can be substantiated

- ◆ Position papers from political incumbents and candidates provided these position papers clearly state that person's position and they do not attack any other party

Our policies are as follows:

- ◆ *The Bedford Citizen* does not share or sell its mailing list information.
- ◆ Paid advertising is not accepted.
- ◆ Except when identified as editorials, letters to the editor or opinion pieces, stories will contain only facts that can be verified. Writers should expect to be asked to provide documentation before articles are published.
- ◆ All submitted articles must deal with issues relevant to Bedford's residents and not exceed two pages, as published in this format.
- ◆ Only one letter to the editor or opinion piece will be accepted from a single household during any 30-day period.
- ◆ Public service announcements will be included as space allows.
- ◆ The staff of the Bedford Citizen will be the final judge.
- ◆ Submissions must be received at least 72 hours prior to publication.
- ◆ Submissions should be sent to Be.A.Citizen@earthlink.net and must include the author's name, address, email address and phone number.