

The Bedford Citizen

THE NEWS YOU NEED TO GUIDE YOUR CITY

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This is a one page overview of the agenda for the Bedford City Council meeting tomorrow night.

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There are many issues facing Bedford residents and the city council which will be decided in the next few weeks. The biggest items are the never-ending debate over outsourcing of our public library and the adoption of our FY 2007-2008 budget.

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The Bedford Library Advisory Board will meet at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 29, in the library board room to elect officers and to review policy-related action items from the Jan. 19-July 18 Library Board agendas.

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A number of Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) were identified by staff to the Council during a budget work session held on Aug. 10, 2007.

OPINIONS AND EDITORIALS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: BONNIE FINN Page 7

I am one of the three library advisory board members removed for requesting a replacement for Charles Orian as a council library liaison because we felt he was working against the welfare of the library by pushing his agenda to outsource the library to a private for-profit company.

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FEATURES

TOMORROW'S CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPICS AT A GLANCE

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Work Session 6 p.m. (Open to the Public)

- ◆ Review Bedford 2005 CIP Projects

Regular Session 7 p.m. (Open to the Public)

- ◆ Council recognition of Billy Mason for a Bedford Employee Commitment Award (BECA)
- ◆ Employee recognition of Gary Landers (Parks and Recreation, 10 years)
- ◆ Proclamations: Aug. 28, 2007 as The Beryl Companies Day; Aug. 29, 2007 as Harris Methodist HEB Hospital Day; Sept. 2007 as Be Bedford Prepared Month
- ◆ Persons to be heard:
 - Claire Kamego re: keeping Bedford Public Library a local and a public library
 - Carolyn Helsel to make a statement about the library and the possibility that the Council will decide to outsource it
 - Jon Westrom re: the outsourcing of the library
 - Jackie Reily re: the library outsourcing and Library Advisory Board
- ◆ Second reading of Ordinance

No.07-2862 re: unattended commercial kiosks

- ◆ Public hearings:
 - Proposed 2007 tax rate
 - Annual budget for Oct. 1, 2007-Sept. 30, 2008; levying taxes for 2007
- ◆ Resolutions to be considered:
 - Accepting the City of Bedford Investment Policy
 - Authorizing the City Manager to amend the current production agreement with DataProse, Inc.,
 - Declaring expectation to reimburse expenditures with proceeds of future debt
 - Denying the request of Atmos Energy Corp., Mid-Tex Division, for an annual rate increase
- ◆ Discussion and possible action with regards to the RFP to outsource the operation of the Bedford Public Library *Item requested by Councilman Orean*
- ◆ Discuss the law relative to parking the wrong direction on our streets and possible related ordinance *Item requested by Councilman Whistler*
- ◆ Open Forum

Note: The public is invited to address the Council on any topic at this time. However, in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, the City Council cannot discuss issues raised or make any decisions at this time.

**BEDFORD ISSUES:
COUNCILMEMBER ROY TURNER**

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There are many issues facing Bedford residents and the city council which will be decided in the next few weeks.

The biggest items are the never-ending debate over outsourcing of our public library and the adoption of our FY 2007-2008 budget.

I have never seen such an outpouring of public sentiment opposed to the proposed outsourcing of our award-winning library. I have had multiple and repeated phone calls, personal contacts, and e-mails voicing that the council keep our library under local management. **I have yet to have a single contact in support of outsourcing the library.** Approximately 6.0 cents per day per resident is a small price to pay to follow the will of the people of Bedford who elected each of us to the council. I will vote against outsourcing our library.

The second issue is the budget. We were presented with a rational, reasonable, well-thought out budget by our city manager and her staff. Our tax rate is among the lowest in north central Texas and this year's proposed budget maintains that tax rate of 44.6 cents per \$100 valuation. It will generate 2.8% more revenue than last year because of a 1.7% increase in property valuations and a 1.1% increase in new property built in Bedford during the last year. Maintaining the 44.6 cents tax rate will cost the average residence homestead an additional \$8.87 for the entire year. This is a small price to pay for

meeting the needs of Bedford.

We are facing a mounting problem of transportation in North Central Texas. Bedford is a part of North Central Texas. We need to join our sister cities to help fund the Trinity Railway Express (TRE). We pledged support 3 years ago and have not paid our share for the last 2 years. We need to come out of our turtle shell and help address the mounting problem of transportation in this area. You only have to try to go somewhere on Airport Freeway (especially between 4 & 7 PM) to recognize the monstrous problem we have. And it will not get any better unless we do something to address the problem. We will not get any direct dollars and cents from our participation with TRE, but we will join in with the area cities to begin to help solve our transportation problems. We cannot continue in our isolation. I am strongly in favor of the \$108,000 supplemental to our new budget to help fund the TRE. This will cost about \$2 per Bedford resident.

Come to the council meetings and express your opinions. It is time for the majority of Bedford's residents to make their ideas known and move Bedford forward.

Let's live up to our motto:

Life is Better in Bedford.

Roy W. Turner, MD
Bedford City Councilmember

BEDFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY BUDGETARY GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2006/2007

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- ◆ Continue providing excellent customer service by anticipating the needs of the community.
 - Added *Library Elf* for email notification at no cost to city or to patrons
 - Became the second library in the nation to add *Library Thing for Libraries* to create an *Amazon.com*-like feel to the library's online catalog
- ◆ Provide library services which are responsive to each patron's unique needs and literacy levels.
 - Added two early literacy computers appropriate for use by preschoolers-3rd graders
 - Added basic computer literacy classes as a result of successful application for a \$7600 grant to purchase laptop computers in order to provide this service
 - Created a new Spanish language area which includes English-as-a-Second-Language audiovisual items
- ◆ Increase the library's visibility in the community by marketing our programs, resources and services.
 - Received a \$2511 grant to sponsor, in partnership with the Friends of the Library, author events (Pat Summerall, Tim Madigan), Short Story Contests for Youth and for Adults, and a Harry Potter Birthday Party
- Hosted a Seuss Super Sunday Celebration to promote new Sunday hours
- Shared a booth at the HEB Chamber of Commerce Business Expo
- Promoted library services, under an *Every Child Ready to Read* grant, at the six elementary schools in Bedford
- Had a booth in the Children's Tent at the City's 4th Fest Celebration; used the opportunity to promote *Library Elf* and other library services to booth visitors
- ◆ Create and enhance partnerships with other City of Bedford departments and community organizations to maximize outreach and financial resources.
 - Sponsored a \$25 Scholarship Program with the Library Foundation of North Texas
 - Invited the Parks and Recreation Dept. to share their bounce house, popcorn machine and helium tank for both the Seuss Event and the Summer Reading Club Rally, thereby saving the library \$300
 - Increased the number of new visitors to the Old Bedford School through the Evenings with the Authors

- Partnered on grants with Friends of the Library, with HEB ISD, and with the Texas Workforce Commission
- Promoted *Be Prepared* Programs with the Fire Department
- Collected 124 children’s books for the local Women, Infant and Children’s (WIC) offices, sponsored by the HEB Chamber of Commerce Leadership Class
- ◆ Conduct a community focus group and library survey to encourage citizen involvement in the library.
- 994 people filled out an online or print library satisfaction survey. (*Editor’s Note: See related chart in this issue of The Bedford Citizen.*)
- 42 people attended and participated in the Community Focus Group meeting.
- Results for both events have been posted on the library web site:
<http://www.bedfordlibrary.org/>.

NOVEMBER 2006 LIBRARY SATISFACTION SURVEY UPDATE

Priority Ranking	# of requests	Which of the following changes would most increase your satisfaction? Rank top three in priority order.	Action Plan
1	261	Open evenings until 9 p.m.	Implemented Mar. 2007
2	238	Sunday hours	Implemented Mar. 2007
3	231	More DVDs	Requested increase in 2007/2008 DVD budget
4	223	More books	Interlocal agreement with Northeast Texas Library System (NETLS) increased purchasing discount, saving \$4000/year; requested increase in 2007/2008 book budget.
5	177	Bigger/newer building	No action
6	149	Email notification	<i>Library Elf</i> notification was added at no cost.

Priority Ranking	# of requests	Which of the following changes would most increase your satisfaction? Rank top three in priority order.	Action Plan
7	149	Self check-out stations	Recommended for simultaneous implementation with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) system
8	142	More books on CD and/or cassette	Consider making downloadable books available to card holders.
9	120	Open mornings at 9 a.m.	No action
10	106	More computers	Two early literacy computers for the children's area were purchased using a Loan Star Grant and donations.
11	106	Online payment of fine and fees	No action
12	100	Computer classes	Grant-purchased wireless laptop computers enabled establishment of five classes per month.
13	86	More parking	No action
14	82	More music CDs	Requested increase in 2007/2008 CD budget.
15	75	Downloadable audio books	Requested increase in 2007/2008 audio book budget.
16	70	Downloadable movies	Six-month trial has had low usage.
17	61	More books for Youth	Interlocal agreement with Northeast Texas Library System (NETLS) increased purchasing discount, saving \$4000/year; requested increase in 2007/2008 book budget.
18	60	More programs for youth	493 youth programs have been presented, Oct. 1, 2006-July 31, 2007, to a total of 8,867 participants.

**SPECIAL CALLED MEETING OF
BEDFORD LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD**

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The Bedford Library Advisory Board will meet at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 29, in the library board room to elect officers and to review policy-related action items from the Jan. 19-July 18 Library Board agendas. Board members will receive an update regarding the library proposal also. Under the Texas Open Meetings Act, the meeting is open to the public.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

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A number of Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) were identified by staff to the Council during a budget work session held on Aug. 10, 2007. Those projects are listed in the table below along with their estimated total cost and their estimated impact on the tax

rate. The staff is requesting guidance from the Council regarding which, if any, projects to proceed with. They are shown in the table below.

OPINIONS AND EDITORIALS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: BONNIE FINN

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I regret that four members of the City Council misunderstood the point that a couple of other now-former Library Board members and I were trying to make when we asked for a Council Liaison to the Board who was not simultaneously investigating the possibility of outsourcing library operations.

I have been involved with and interested in the development of Bedford Public Library for over 40 years, and recent events have not changed my commitment. For that

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS AUTHORIZED BUT UNFUNDED		
Project	Total cost in \$	Impact on Tax Rate \$
Expand Linear Trails	295,000	0.0008
Park Maintenance Items	660,000	0.0019
Sulphur Branch Drainage	5,894,128	0.0168
New Library Building	7,885,000	0.0225
All Facilities Repair	188,900	0.0005
Animal Control Center Expansion	239,450	0.0007
Station #3 Apparatus Bays	338,750	0.0010
Signal Light Upgrades	1,370,000	0.0039
Signal Synchronization	350,000	0.0010
Dora Street	1,772,000	0.0051

reason, I want to point out some concerns I have about how outsourcing might effect the quality and quantity of services our community receives.

Since LSSI is a for-profit company, they have to be profit-driven in order to satisfy their stakeholders. I am worried about where the profit will come from, especially since their proposal suggests a savings to the City of at least \$111,000 in the first year.

Some obvious ways that LSSI could save part of the total the city would pay them include reductions in staff, salaries and benefits, and delayed filling of positions that become vacant once everyone is employed by LSSI. As a retired Bedford library manager, I have never forgotten what serious scheduling problems can develop when you are understaffed – especially when the library is open 7 days a week at a total 59 hours each week. The frequent turnover that tends to go hand-in-hand with non-competitive salaries and benefits can make that problem even worse, understandably reducing the quality of service that can be provided. Since non-competitive salaries can't attract and retain highly qualified staff, it could also become necessary to reduce the variety of services the library provides, too.

Another way that LSSI could see a profit is by charging the City for additional services they offer that were not included in the RFP, such as building consulting, architectural design, feasibility studies, community surveys, etc. Since they quoted prices with and without RFID (radio frequency identification) technology, but implementation of that technology was not

included in the RFP, they could even make a profit by contracting with the City to implement that technology.

I do not know which state's laws apply when a company based in one state is doing business in another, but I do know that, as a private, for-profit company, LSSI does not have to comply with the Texas Open Information Act. We already know that the proposal cannot be shown to anyone or even discussed by the Council. That does not leave much doubt about what it might be like to have a private for-profit company running our municipal library.

And because I care so much about our library, I cannot help wondering what will happen if the current Council decides to contract with LSSI and either LSSI or a future Council dissolve the agreement. We have been told that, even under a contract with LSSI, the City will continue to own the building and its contents. I wonder, though, how long it would take us to rebuild what we already have – a library that provides high-quality service, a wide variety of services and a highly experienced staff that has repeatedly proven its commitment to the community.

If you and your family oppose the idea of outsourcing our library to a private for-profit company in another state, please attend the council meeting tomorrow night, Aug. 28, to show your support for keeping our public library, and the taxes we pay to support it, under local control.

Bonnie Finn