

The Bedford Citizen

THE NEWS YOU NEED TO GUIDE YOUR CITY

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Monday

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CORRECTION

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WEDNESDAY'S DEADLINE TO SIGN UP AS A 'PERSON 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 Wednesday at noon.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

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PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2007 TAX RATE

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PUBLIC HEARING AND FIRST READING OF 2007 BUDGET

A tax rate of \$0.446882/\$100 of valuation is required to support this budget. This will raise taxes on a \$100,000 home by \$9.57 per year.

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

FEATURES

CORRECTION

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In our Aug. 31 issue, we incorrectly stated that Councilmen Cason, Orea and Whistler had determined that contracting with Library Systems and Services LLC (LSSI) might save the City a quarter of a million dollars during the next three years.

Their statement was that they believed they could save a half million dollars over the next three years.

TOMORROW'S PUBLIC HEARING/SPECIAL COUNCIL SESSION

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There will be a special session of the Bedford City Council tomorrow, Tuesday Sept. 4 at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall. The following items are on the agenda for that meeting:

- ◆ Second public hearing to consider the proposed 2007/2008 tax rate (See below)
- ◆ Discuss setting dates for future Council meetings
- ◆ Discussion and possible action with regards to selected line items in the proposed 2007/2008 City Budget *Item requested by Councilman Orea*

This will be the final public hearing on a proposal to increase by 2.6 percent the total tax revenues from properties on last year's tax roll. Your individual taxes may

increase at a greater rate, or even decrease, depending on the change in the taxable value of your property in relation to the change in taxable value of all other property and the tax rate that is adopted. For more information, go to http://www.ci.bedford.tx.us/News/news_pdf/2007taxincrease.pdf.

WEDNESDAY'S DEADLINE TO SIGN UP AS A 'PERSON TO BE HEARD'

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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 Wednesday at noon. The request must include the speaker's name, address and phone number as well as 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 Drive
Bedford, TX 76021.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

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During the Aug. 28 Council meeting, the staff presented a list of higher priority Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) and asked the Council for guidance regarding which projects to pursue. The issuance of general obligation bonds to fund these projects was approved by Bedford voters in a 2001 election.

City Manager Beverly Queen advised that economies of scale could be enjoyed by the issuing all of the bonds that the Council wanted to issue at the same time. However, the total value should be less than \$10 million. Included in that figure is a \$5 million bond for major water and sewer construction and rehabilitation.

The Council decided to move forward with three additional projects: \$3 million to fund the purchase and redesign of the Food Lion building, which will house the new Bedford Public Library, \$660,000 for park maintenance and \$338,750 for the construction of Fire Station #3 apparatus bays. Councilman Cason said he did not want the library project to become stagnant. All members of the Council agreed with him.

PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2007 TAX RATE

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At last week's City Council meeting, City Director of Public Services Tom Ross said that the maximum tax rate, as established by Council vote on August 14, is \$0.45 per \$100 valuation. Two citizens spoke during the public hearing.

Kim Brown supported the current rate. She commended City Manager Beverly Queen and the City department heads for a job well-done and said that the budget was well thought out, provided detailed explanations for requested supplementals, and addressed areas within the city that need changes, things being updated or being replaced. "Overall," she said, "the budget is a soundly developed plan."

Ms. Brown also believes that future projects such as Highway 183 expansion, revitalization of older strip malls within the city, a comprehensive employee compensation plan and vehicle replacement funding should be cared for with any projected or anticipated additional revenues that may be generated by that tax rate. We should be investing for the city's future. While TxDOT isn't giving out dates for the planned expansion of Highway 183, it is clear that specific areas along that highway in Bedford will be significantly impacted with that expansion. A detailed comprehensive plan should be developed on how to help these businesses cope with the effects of the widening. "These businesses are part of the revenue that this city enjoys today," she said, "We should act now rather than later to make sure we keep these businesses in Bedford."

A comprehensive plan to adjust the number of city positions that are below the 50th percentile of the market should also be developed and a fund set up and funded, continuing to address this situation. Referring to City Manager Queen's introduction to the budget, Ms. Brown pointed out that a recent salary study in Bedford revealed that 53 of 64 positions studied were below that 50th percentile. While employees have been given cost of living adjustments in the past two years, with another planned for this year, those adjustments haven't brought them closer to the 50th percentile of the market because every other surrounding city has given staff raises of 3-6 % over the same time period that's increasing or maintaining that gap.

For example, an Aug. 20 Star-Telegram article indicated that in 2007-2008 Hurst employees will get a 4% pay raise; some will also get market adjustments to keep their salaries in line with other cities. With this kind of activity occurring in other cities in this same budget year, the 50th percentile of the market will continue to change.

The replacement of 2 new ambulances is a wonderful thing, but the struggle to find funds to do so should not have to occur year after year or even every other year.

There's a vehicle replacement fund in place and being funded, but is it adequate for future needs? Will the funds be there when the next two older ambulances need to be replaced? Will we need to wait until we have a surplus again to have the money to buy replacements? What about when we need to replace a fire engine or a large city-owned dump truck or any other large city vehicle?

Ms. Brown pointed out several unfunded supplemental requests that also should be included and retained in this budget: replacement of the retaining walls at City Hall, an additional dispatcher for the Police Department, a sound system for Council Chambers and the TRE, total an additional \$236,000, which roughly equates to an additional penny on the tax rate. Each of these items has its own merits for being considered and all of them should be considered and included in the 2007-2008 budget.

Joyce Johnson said that a year out is a long time. Decisions haven't been made yet about allowing drilling for gas and

minerals in Bedford. As presented at the last meeting, we could face very high additional costs Destroyed roads because of heavy trucks, underpass collapse, anything can happen. Sink hole collapses under city property or schools or hospitals, sink holes under a road. Those are very costly items to repair. Ms. Johnson says that's a hole that might be a hole even in next year's budget that's being considered. She also says she has had reports from individuals who are suffering severely because of road destruction near their property, and this is in property that's wide open spaces. It's an extremely packed issue. I hope and pray that Council will not be making any decisions that would pre-commit tax payers ahead of a vote for covering the liabilities that actually or traditionally always belong to the drilling companies that do damage to the roads in the name of profit.

Councilman Turner agreed with Ms. Brown's comments regarding supplementals. Explaining that he's particularly interested in going with the Trinity Rail Express, he said, "I think it's time for Bedford to come out of its turtle shell, its cocoon, and rejoin neighboring cities." He urged his colleagues to fund that supplemental item in the upcoming budget.

PUBLIC HEARING AND FIRST READING OF 2007 BUDGET

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A tax rate of \$0.446882/\$100 of valuation is required to support this budget. This will raise taxes on a \$100,000 home by \$9.57 per year.

The staff has recommended an increase in the base water and sewer rates to fund water and sewer capital projects. No increase in storm water rates is recommended.

Ralph Good observed that Maria Redburn has increased programs, attendance, and employee morale. She has increased revenue, partnered with other City departments and community organizations. She is a very strong manager. He expressed his confidence in Ms. Redburn's ability.

Saying that Ms. Queen's productivity improvement program will be in operation by the end of 2008, Mr. Good continued, "I also hope the outsourcing possibility has sent a message to all City departments that the City means business for every department to cooperate with Ms. Queen's productivity plan."

He questioned how much the 6% payroll increase will add to the cost of operating the library.

Mr. Good expressed his support for keeping the library under local control if Ms. Redburn would remain the manager.

Roger Ponce

Every contract has exceptions and qualifications in it. That is where the contractor makes his money.

Councilman Whistler expressed his concern that giving all employees 6% will distribute a disproportionate amount to the higher paid supervisors and will not help the lower-paid employees reach the 50 percentile of salaries. He also pointed out that employee turnover is 1.9%, which was

one person out of 362.

Councilman Orea stated his support for proper compensation for those employees deemed essential to the City's operation. He then asked, "Is there a performance qualifier associated with employees receiving that cost-of-living increase? By that I mean if you have an employee who is not performing totally up to standards, is that individual going to receive any compensation whatsoever?" Ms. Queen responded that there is no performance qualifier because substandard employees do not remain in the system for very long.

Orea then enumerated many of the items provided in the proposed budget. He said he wanted to see the tax rate reduced to the effective rate and accused the staff and Council of being "kids in the candy store."

Councilman Savage stated his preference for maintaining the tax rate at the proposed rate of \$0.446882/\$100 as opposed to the effective rate. Councilman Turner supported this position.

Councilman Savage moved that the tax rate of \$0.446882/\$100 of valuation be adopted and that the first reading of the budget be approved. Seconded by Nail. Passed 4-3. Story, Savage, Nail and Turner voted yes. Cason, Orea, and Whistler voted no.

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UPDATE ON SCHOOL CROSSING GUARD LOCATIONS

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As of last week, a school crossing guard will be assigned to the Brown Trail/Carolyn location, and there will no longer be guards assigned to the crossings at Forest Ridge/Lincolnshire and San Marcos/Spring Valley. The changes were prompted by the results of a year-long study conducted by both City staff and a private engineering company which was hired by the City to evaluate, prior to and during the 2006-2007 school year, every school crossing guard location used at that time. School crossing guards are positioned at street locations where the traffic control measures do not provide adequate safety for the children.

Whether or not a school crossing guard is present, drivers are expected to observe speed restrictions in school zones during the hours that those restrictions are in place. In Bedford, the fine for speeding in a school zone starts at \$196 and varies in relation to the driver's speed above the legal limit.

For more information about school zones or school crossing guards, contact the Bedford Police Department Community Services Division at 817/952-2444, visit the Law Enforcement Center on L. Don Dodson, or visit www.bedfordpolice.com.

SUPPLEMENTAL REQUESTS FOR 2007- 2008 PROPOSED TO BE FUNDED FROM NON-OPERATING FUNDS

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Staff has requested supplemental items,

earmarked to be funded from specific funds as described below.

To be funded from Splash Maintenance Fund:

- ◆ Painting of Splash facility \$14,000
- ◆ Installation of non-slip surface in Splash restrooms \$4,000
- ◆ Purchase of 4 floatable lily pads for Splash \$8,000
- ◆ Purchase of a foam climber for the tot area at Splash \$5,000

To be funded from Computer Replacement Fund:

- ◆ Purchase of an IBM PC with high end memory, graphics card, 2 DVD writers, etc., so that Police Department staff can view surveillance videos that are received in digital, rather than VHS, format \$6,000

To be funded from Facility Maintenance Fund:

- ◆ Replacement of the carpet in the LEC training room \$8,103
- ◆ Replacement of the carpet in Building B \$24,900
- ◆ Resurfacing of the BRAC gym floor \$8,400
- ◆ Repainting of the exterior of the BRAC \$7,800

To be funded from Park Donation Fund:

Cardio equipment at the BRAC \$5,000
Weight equipment at the BRAC \$7,800

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