

Weather

THURS Sunny, H 66, L 46
 FRI Windy, H 73, L 54
 SAT Partly cloudy, H 72, L 53
 SUN Isol. T-storms, H 71, L 57

TRI COUNTY LEADER

Staff

BILL WOODALL Publisher
 CHARLOTTE SMITH Editor
 SUZANNE LOUDAMY ... Staff Writer
 CATHRYN KRUEGER Sales
 KYLA WEIS Graphic Design

Service Desk

Contact Us

Our Mailing Address:
 P.O. Box 1067
 Whitehouse, TX 75791

Our Physical Address:
 304 Hwy. 110 North
 Whitehouse, TX 75791

Our Telephone
 903/839-2353

Our Fax
 903/839-8519

Our Web Address:
 www.tricountyleader.com

Hours

Normal business hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mail slot is in door for after-hours use.

Email

News
 news@tricountyleader.com
 reporter@tricountyleader.com

Sports News
 sports@tricountyleader.com

Advertising
 ads@tricountyleader.com
 tclcomposing@tricountyleader.com

Billing or Circulation
 circ@kilgorenherald.com

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Economic development ideas leaning toward family recreation

When the dust settled on the recent economic development brainstorming forum held by the Whitehouse City Council, the list of ideas had a primary focus: family-oriented entertainment or recreation.

Topping that general theme was the goal of utilizing the city's proximity to Lake Tyler through various means including developing camp grounds, short-term RV facilities and acquiring concession rights.

"The exploitation of Lake Tyler is the most unused benefit that the City of Whitehouse has," said Mike Peterson, the city's director of community development and also the president of the chamber of commerce. He and other members of council pointed out that many visitors to the lake travel through the city every day and yet there's no place to stop and buy bait or other supplies.

Following up on another idea that the city needs a slogan or catchphrase, council member Mike Jeter suggested, "Whitehouse: the Gateway to Lake Tyler."

In addition to the variety of possibilities related to Lake Tyler, council members also tossed out ideas for other recreation possibilities such as a civic center for concerts, conventions or weddings; a family entertainment center with miniature golf and a water park; a hiking and biking trail; an Olympic-sized pool; a lighted par three golf course; and horse track/stock car track.

"Tyler has got shopping sewed up," said Jeter, and the consensus of the council followed that the focus on lifestyle including entertainment and recreation would be the best course to follow.

The format for the brainstorming session began with members of council and citizens tossing out ideas; all suggestions were accepted provided they were legal.

"We need to be creative," council member Charles Parker said at the beginning of the meeting. "We want any idea, no matter how far out in left field, out of the bleachers it comes from."

By the end of the second phase of the meeting, discussing some of the suggestions further, Parker felt "there's not a bad idea on the board. Every one would be good for the community, good for the city."

Mike Ogg of Austin Bank, one of two citizens in attendance, responded that he would agree with the majority of ideas but not all.

He opposed the inclusion of a wet/dry referendum; although Mayor Danny Hogden said he personally did not support that idea, it remained on the list and was highlighted during the discussion phase as an idea that could result in a large/moderately large revenue stream, could be implemented within 12 months and would be of minimal cost.

On the Board ...

- Civic center
- Family entertainment center
- Baseball/soccer field
- Purchase marina
- Purchase and develop land around City Hall
- Sports league
- Venue for weddings
- Exercise 1968 annexation of Hwy. 110
- Lake Tyler
- Golf course
- Fishing tournament
- Wet/dry referendum
- Develop city image
- Support local business
- Catchphrase
- Convenience store on east side of town
- Develop nighttime activities/business
- Promote public/private partnership to share costs
- Railroad museum
- Hike/bike trail
- Residential development
- Retirement friendly
- Olympic-size pool
- Make the city wireless
- Partner with WISD
- Partner with churches
- Land acquisition for development
- Expansion of YMCA
- Hosting bike race/marathon
- Municipal airport
- Hotel
- Horse track
- Stock car track
- Rodeo arena
- Flea market
- Expand, capitalize on YesterYear
- More city decorations, activities for Christmas
- Annexation

"I had someone tell me, 'If you do that (go wet), I'll be there the day after to open a store,'" Peterson told the council.

In addition to the myriad of tangible suggestions, the council also discussed the need to promote shopping at home and to change the mindset of citizens who consider Whitehouse strictly a bedroom community.

As the purpose of the meeting overall was to pursue ideas for economic development that would benefit the citizens by easing the tax burden, Peterson pointed out a statistic gleaned from the chamber's last annual dinner.

A dollar spent locally, such as Brookshire's or a convenience store, multiplies itself seven or eight times before going to Tyler or some other source of outside spending, he said.

Phil Rogers, another citizen in attendance, said the city would have to do more than promote shop-at-home, it would have to follow that advice as well.

According to information provided by the city's director of finance, Jed Dillingham, the city is currently budgeted to receive \$867,947 in property taxes, \$384,000 in sales tax collections and \$192,000 from the half cent sales tax.

Combined with utility franchise fees and sales tax fees, taxes account for \$1.8 million of the \$3.5 million general fund.

The city's utility fund is roughly \$2.6 million, with \$2.5 million of that resulting from water sales and other sewer charges, tap/connect fees and penalties.

Smith County schools could receive \$24 million in stimulus funding

AUSTIN - Public school districts in Smith County could have an additional \$24,063,200 over a two-year period to spend, according to Strategic Partnerships Inc., an Austin-based research and procurement consulting firm. The totals quoted are part of the \$825 billion economic stimulus package currently being considered by the U.S. Congress.

"This is good news for schools, good news for the economy and good news for companies that sell to government," said Mary Scott Nabers, president and CEO of Strategic Partnerships, Inc. "Not only will the federal economic stimulus funding provide Texas schools with some much-needed additional funding for facilities, programs and technology, but it will also open up additional contracting opportunities for local businesses to sell their goods and services to school districts - providing a much-needed boost to local economies."

The funding is aimed at improving public school classrooms, laboratories and libraries for students across the nation and is part of the American Recovery

and Reinvestment Plan aimed at providing increased educational opportunities for school students, creating jobs and moving the nation's economy forward.

A breakdown of how much it is estimated that Smith County public schools will receive over two years from the House version of the Economic Recovery Package follows:

- Arp Independent School District - \$403,800
- Bullard Independent School District - \$820,200
- Chapel Hill Independent School District - \$2,169,700
- Lindale Independent School District - \$1,448,300
- Troup Independent School District - \$576,800
- Tyler Independent School District - \$16,305,100
- Whitehouse Independent School District - \$1,806,300
- Winona Independent School District - \$533,000

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Filing Application for City Election

The Election Day for City of Whitehouse offices will be May 9, 2009 those interested in running as a candidate for a position on the Whitehouse City Council need to file between **February 7, 2009** and **March 9, 2009**. The three City Council positions open for election are Place 1, Place 3, and Place 5.

For more information, contact the City Secretary's Office at 903-839-4914 x 222.

Edward Jones office sets grand re-opening

Aaron Pape of the financial services firm Edward Jones invites the public to join him at a grand re-opening celebration. The event will begin at 3 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 12 at his office at 601 Hwy. 110 North, Suite Q, in the Whitehouse Town Center plaza.

"I am excited to take over the Edward Jones office in Whitehouse," Pape said. "I know the people of this community have come to rely upon our firm to provide them with sound investment advice that is geared toward individual investors. I will strive to continue our tradition of excellence here."

Edward Jones provides financial services for individual investors in the United States and, through



its affiliates, in Canada and the United Kingdom. Every aspect of the firm's business, from the types of investment options offered to the location of branch offices, is designed to cater to individual investors in the communities in which they live and work.

WISD

Continued from Page 1A

Principal Curtis Williams of Stanton-Smith Elementary shared some of the outstanding projects his students have been involved in through the fall semester. Those community projects included a book drive for Bridge City schools that lost everything during Hurricane Ike. The students collected over 2800 books along with \$750 in Barnes and Noble gift cards. They arranged for the transportation and fuel to be donated to get the books to Bridge City once the project was complete.

Also, during the Christmas season, students brought in 1173 canned good items for Project Joy and collected over \$1800 to provide a Christmas for nine children from the Salvation Army's Angel Tree.

Williams said that it is not just about how good a job is done educating children but it is also about the job done fostering their hearts and teaching them about caring and compassion.

A trustee election was ordered for May 9, 2009 and an interlocal agreement be-

tween the district, the City of Whitehouse and Smith County was approved. Trustee places up for election are Place 5 currently held by Randall Robinson and Place 4 currently held by Jason Wade.

Three new 77 passenger buses will be purchased by the district from Longhorn Bus Sales at a price of \$77,540 each. Upon receipt of those buses, one of the current fleet will be retired. This will fully set the district for all routes and allow for eight spares to cover mechanical trouble and trips.

The school calendar for 2009-2010 was approved and discussion was heard concerning graduation requirements and changes that will be reflected in the high school course offering catalog that will be available later in the month.

Information items included an audit report of immunization compliance, a report on summer school and a comparison of results from previous senior survey results. This comparison had been requested by the board at a prior meeting.

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Thomas L. Stewart
 Financial Advisor
 908 W. Duval St.
 Troup, TX 75789
 Bus. 903-842-0279
 Cell 903-262-0309

Randall V. Childress, CFP
 Financial Advisor
 1377 Dominion Plaza
 Tyler, TX 75703
 903-509-9600

Aaron Pape
 Financial Advisor
 601 Hwy 110 N. Suite Q
 PO Box 796
 Whitehouse, TX 75791
 Bus. 903-839-7333
 Cell 903-530-3289

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