

Editorials



Tuesday, April 29, 2008

Lampasas Dispatch Record

www.lampasasdispatchrecord.com

Page 5

More concerned than ever

I was honored to attend the April 18 meeting of the Concerned Citizens group at the Holiday House. I am more concerned now than I was before.

The sign-in sheet was actually a "sign-up" sheet similar to the latest petition. Basically, "don't worry about the truth or facts; we'll cover that later. Just sign up."

I learned some things I had suspected but which were even more disappointing than I had anticipated. I didn't sign up.

First, this community has only one news outlet that is even remotely interested in factual reporting, and they weren't there. The local news-sheet author was there and openly verified that facts from county officials are not a part of his daily routine. Anyone who reads that publication and gets mad enough to start a petition is really missing the point. I enjoy reading the news sheet and can get good laughs from it, never suspecting that there are actually people who believe that stuff, let alone believe it enough to get mad.

The judge, two commissioners and the county auditor were there, much to the dismay of the organizers, and they had some good factual answers to the framed questions. That was not what was desired, and they were not well received.

More of what I learned is:

The 3.94 percent certificates of obligation for the annex opportunity had expired, and thus the 3.35 percent note opportunity was embraced. Not the high-hater story that has been reported some places. Yes, there is some truth that this particular note opportunity is not subject to petition, but just possibly if folks will listen to the county officials and discuss their concerns, things can be worked out without spending valuable time and money with suits and recalls. Does anyone care that the cost for the annex has gone up \$600,000 since the first petition?

The real numbers are a \$4 million note for a \$3.85 million project, not the \$2 million and \$5 million reported elsewhere.

The balance after seven years, if the note is not refinanced, is a little over \$4 million, very similar to the same time frame on a 15- to 20-year amortization schedule. Do I need to keep saying these are very different from the daily news sheet reporting? Let's just assume that from here on and save trees.

The actual tax impact per \$100,000 valuation from this annex project is about \$10 per year. That is per year, folks.

The \$400 per square foot "construction" costs actually include the furnishings, paving of the parking lot, and a new bullet-proof bench and sound system for the upstairs courtroom to meet state requirements. The actual building construction costs are about \$200 per square foot, very much in line with similar projects. It was noted by an attendee that the acoustics resulting from the Historical Committee design for the courtroom need help badly.

National, state and local records retention mandates are very specific for property records. The records need to be close to the people who need to access them. They should not be stored in the first floor in a flood zone. This is not rocket science, folks.

Many of the decisions made by our county officials are made with the future in mind. The past has been plagued with spending limitations so stringent that no future planning was considered. Now we are faced with reinforcing five-year-old buildings that should have been built to last at least 10 years or more. If we don't plan ahead for the growth that is already here, our "catch-up" taxes will be so paramount that the county will not be able to survive.

Those who are touting this latest controversy have rarely if ever attended a Commissioners Court, have never attended the information-sharing sessions provided by the local officials, have never requested a conversation with local officials to provide input, have no reasonable suggestions and are not interested in learning anything about current economics. They are going to do what they are going to do no matter what facts are presented. Furthermore, they didn't even serve ice water for a two-hour meeting.

It was apparent to me, through observation, that this is much the same group that was involved in keeping the Lampasas schools occupied through controversy for 20 or more years and put them 20-30 years behind any other school district within 100 miles. Now that the schools are on a path to some success, they are going to try to keep our county services as far behind as possible. Their yearning is for the county they remember in the '50s and '60s. I'm not referring to the Kempner school issue. That was valid and needed to be addressed.

If we who are really interested in what this county can be in the future don't band together and vote in support of our local officials, we will continually fall further and further behind, and valid county services will be more and more costly.

There were some very valid questions raised about historical preservation. I don't have an answer for that one. My preference would be to take pictures and save some of the stones from the Brooks building and preserve them in the local museum. Possibly build a memorial somewhere with the stone. I just think it needs to be replaced before it finishes falling down and kills someone.

I certainly don't have all the answers, but I spent 30 years as an engineering planner frustrated with those who only managed by "Held Orders" and wouldn't build plants to avoid "Held Orders." Sorry, if I didn't lose most readers a few lines ago, I have for sure lost them now. Time to quit.

David Hamilton
Lometa

From the Bible

"For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He watches all his paths."

Proverbs 5:21

Letters

Communication needed in county

On April 18, my husband and I attended a meeting of citizens to debate the need for a help group for our county, the "Lampasas County Concerned Citizens" or LCCC. It was an open meeting, and many attended, including some of the county's elected commissioners and county judge.

Although I have an idea why the officials came, I cannot speak of their intentions, but they inflicted an atmosphere of distrust. I agree with many as to how the law was used against the citizens of this community to obtain what a certain few wanted without the public's participation.

The people in attendance at the meeting did all agree we need better communication between citizens and our elected officials that will not disrupt anyone's meetings.

This proposed organization will not be dividing political parties; it is about working together and giving the public a voice in local government with a small amount of spokespersons to attend local meetings. Most of our community does not expect government to be able to please everyone, but we need new faces and ideas. All the crying from the officials still does not dilute one important point of law and government: "Of the people, by the people, for the people," you are servants of the people when you take office. Expect discourse.

As a member of the Lampasas County Historical Commission, I did take offense with the remark from one official about how the Historical Commission did this or that. I did not hear all the statement, but I heard enough to know it was an insult for the work both the Texas and local commission have done.

Those statements made it appear as if our county officials want to dislodge our premier status for parts of the Old Town Addition to the City of Lampasas, downtown and the courthouse. It would not surprise me to find out this was one of the reasons why they "pulled the wool over our eyes" on this sudden change of plans [to issue tax notes, rather than certificates of obligation OK'd by the voters].

To those of you who may not know, our downtown is on the National Register of Historic Places, along with our courthouse. Many "downtowners" are upset because complete destruction of the Brooks building or any downtown buildings could remove us from that honor. For years our downtown businesses joined together with the LCHC chairman to have our town recognized. This honor was to protect Lampasas and help bring visitors here that will keep Lampasas and the downtown square alive. How many cities have you been to that have that honor bestowed upon any part of their city? Have you been to any town/city nearby that has even one building on the National Register? Getting us on the register was a serious investment in its future, but we still need more than Spring Ho to boost trade and bring attention to our town.

It's too bad more citizens and/or the national news media did not come to that meeting. I don't believe we would have heard what we did. Just sign us "Two more voices to deaf ear."

John and Kay Richardson

The \$4 million storage building

Many years ago, my ol' Grandpappy told me, "Two heads are better than one, even if one is a gourd."

Now Precinct 3 County Commissioner Lowell Ivey tell me five heads are better than 723 heads. I am somewhat confused.

Then Mr Ivey tells me we have got a select few of about 600 who are ruling everything he does while doing the county's business. Mr. Ivey also tells me there are 22,000 residents in Lampasas County. Fuzzy math?

Mr. Ivey, I have a couple of questions for you.

1. In the last election when you were running for county commissioner, how many good people did not vote for you? (Reference: Lampasas Dispatch Record, March 4, 2008)

2. Out of the 22,000 people who are claiming reside in Lampasas County and pay taxes, how much of that tax money is yours?

I can see it now: a \$4 million storage building.

Mr. Ivey, we are the people! We pay the taxes and vote. I am just one of the more than 600 people living in Lampasas County who pay taxes, vote and have a voice in our county decisions. Don't sell us short!

J.D. Moore

Blood drive

It's spring, a time for re-birth and re-growth. The American Red Cross would like to urge you to reach out and help someone else see another spring day, another birthday, another anniversary. For someone in need, that can be accomplished just by donating blood.

The statistics don't change with the seasons. Every two seconds, someone in the United States needs blood. Yet only 5 percent of those who can give blood actually do. So, here's an idea: Celebrate this new spring, celebrate life by giving the "gift of life." Someone will be very glad you did.

Our third blood drive this year will be May 5 at AMVETS Post 80 from 12:30 to 6:30 p.m. Contact me at 556-3338 for further information. Please donate a pint of blood in honor or memory of your mother.

Wanda Meyers

Blood drive chairman



National Day of Prayer--May 1

Grace, repentance bring God's healing

Only one thing can redeem America, and we have but one path to follow toward that redemption.

God's grace -- His free gift of forgiveness -- alone will cleanse us of our sin. Only the Holy Spirit's work of turning us from wickedness will restore God's blessings for our families and our land.

Some Americans look for their messiah in political figures such as Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton or John McCain. Some conservatives, unfortunately, expect national salvation from a strict constructionist Supreme Court, a Republican Congress, a constitutional marriage amendment or victory in the "culture wars."

Indeed, our problems -- both individually and nationally -- ultimately arise from spiritual, not political, sickness. Scripture clearly teaches the intimate connection between a country's adherence to God's commands and its national well-being. As Proverbs 14:34 declares, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." With the stench of our sin testifying against us, we as families, as churches and as a nation need the Holy Spirit to lead us to repentance.

Thursday's National Day of Prayer offers a timely reminder that America needs God's blessing -- and that Americans must pray for forgiveness to escape the Lord's wrath for our sins. Our country's Founding Fathers understood these biblical truths, regularly proclaiming -- often from the same Congress constitutionally prohibited from establishing a national religion -- corporate days of prayer, fasting and repentance.

President James Madison in 1812, responding to a congressional joint resolution, proclaimed "a day of public humiliation and prayer" in which Americans should give the Lord "the public honor due to His holy attributes ... acknowledging the transgressions which might justly provoke the manifestations of His divine displeasures" and "seeking His merciful forgiveness." The proclamation later urged Americans to pray for the Lord's blessing and protection, showing the president's belief that God restores a country when its people repent of their sin.

Presidents issued similar documents through the Civil War, when both the United States and the Confederate States of America called numerous days of fasting, prayer and the confession of sin. The National Day of Prayer, first observed in 1952, offers Americans a chance to turn away from our wrongdoing, ask God's forgiveness and trust in Him to change both our individual hearts and our national moral climate.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1 John 1:9 promises. By admitting

the evil we have done, we can experience the power of redemption in Christ and the purified life that comes from the Holy Spirit's work in us.

As God's judgment begins with Christians (1 Peter 4:17), those who profess Christ should be the first to ask His forgiveness for the sins that have invoked His holy anger. The National Day of Prayer reminds Christians to ask for God's mercy, to confess to fellow followers of Christ, to plead with the Lord to show unbelievers their need for His loving grace.

Upon the foundation of individual repentance, national revival can grow. When the Lord called Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, Nehemiah confessed his own, and his people's, sins before asking the Lord to bless his restoration work. God later led a remnant of the nation of Israel to fast, humble themselves, confess "their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers" (Nehemiah 9:2) and recommit to keeping God's commandments.

The Lord answered those prayers, proving, as the Israelites acknowledged, that He is "a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Nehemiah 9:17). For America -- and any other country whose people repent -- He still loves to answer prayers of contrition.

An America in spiritual turmoil cries out for God's restoration. The National Day of Prayer offers a perfect time to repent and seek His blessings on our land.

To see America's families healed, parents should begin by confessing their failure to discipline their children and lead them in obedience to God. Children should confess their failure to honor their parents.

To see American marriages last, each husband should confess his failure to love his wife sacrificially, as Christ loved His church (Ephesians 5:25). Each wife should confess that she has not always submitted to her husband's authority. All should acknowledge the temptations that so easily lead to marital wreckage.

To welcome our troops home safely, we must confess the times we have depended on bomber planes and rifles to protect us. We must declare Psalm 28:7, the 2008 National Day of Prayer theme verse: "The Lord is my strength and my shield."

Where we have worshipped our economy's ability to supply us, we must and trust God to meet all our needs through the riches of Christ (Philippians 4:19).

Great needs and great troubles have captured Americans' attention. God holds out His forgiveness to us, May His Spirit move us to repentance and to the healing it brings.

Recognition long overdue

Last week, a friend and I attended the groundbreaking ceremony for construction of the new Taylor Creek Elementary School. I had high expectations that the people who were so instrumental in securing the new school for Kempner and the east end of Lampasas County would be duly recognized.

Dr. Brant Myers, superintendent of the Lampasas Independent School District, gave introductory remarks. He mentioned how hard everyone worked for so long to get the school, even after the first school bond election failed. School board members and other key people had the honor of turning the first shovelfuls of dirt. Others in the large crowd were singled out for special recognition.

To my astonishment, however, two -- Walter L. Prugh and Ray Upp -- who have worked diligently for construction of a new school for Kempner were not recognized. They were in attendance, though.

Mr. Prugh and Mr. Upp have long supported the creation of a public school to serve the rapidly growing east end. In fact, years ago, they served on a Blue Ribbon committee that explored the feasibility of the Lampasas ISD building a school for the Kempner area.

Significantly, Mr. Prugh and Mr. Upp opposed the bond issue in the fall of 2006 that called for construction of a new Lampasas High School. A new school for Kempner was not in the original bond issue. Mr. Prugh, Mr. Upp and others strenuously objected to what they felt was a glaring omission. Apparently they are paying now for being a fly in the ointment to LISD officials.

A second bond election was proposed that called for not only a new Lampasas High School but also a

Letters

Kempner elementary for kindergarten through fifth grade. Residents of Kempner and the east end of Lampasas County owe a world of gratitude to Mr. Prugh and Mr. Upp for the fact that a Kempner school will now be a reality.

It is a shame LISD officials could not bring themselves to give credit where it's due: to two dedicated men who have worked so tirelessly for a Kempner school. Mr. Prugh and Mr. Upp did not receive a personal invitation to the groundbreaking, as they should have. They were not singled out at the event for the recognition they were due -- though school officials could tell they were in the crowd. The treatment of these two hard-working men was unacceptable and inexcusable.

I can only hope they know how much the people of Kempner and eastern Lampasas County are indebted to them. Thank you, Judge Prugh and Mr. Upp. I, and many others, appreciate all you have done. Taylor Creek Elementary School will be a lasting testament to your concern for our students and their families, and this fact should be a tremendous source of encouragement to you that your efforts have been most successful.

Josie Overton