Happy New Year!!!





HILL COUNTRY NEWS

VOLUME 51, ISSUE 1 | SERVING CEDAR PARK, LEANDER AND NORTHWEST AUSTIN SINCE 1968 ■ **hillcountrynews.com** | THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 2019

CITY OF CEDAR PARK

City to hold public meeting on transit options

STAFF REPORTS

Cedar Park's ongoing transit study moves into another phase in January, with the first of a series of public meetings scheduled for Jan. 16. at the Cedar Park Recreation Center.

The city council approved the study in 2018, and the project began in the fall with a data-gathering process, according to the city's transit study website. According to city documents, the study calls for a review of existing services, land use, infrastructure and markets for transit, combined with input from the public, to determine how the city should address transit issues over the next five years.

The January meeting is officially Public Meeting No. 1, with the stated goal of providing the community information about the study's key goals and providing an opportunity for public input.

The study's goal is to review potential transit options, from bus services to pedestrian and bicycle elements, and present the results to the public in the summer.

"At the conclusion of the study, we will learn what the needs and wants are for the traveling public, we would also be able to identify the types of options that are available, and we will also learn how much each of these will cost," said the City of Cedar Park's Diana Vargas during a council meeting in June.

Public Meeting No. 1 is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2019, at the Cedar Park Recreation Center, 1435 Main Street in Cedar Park, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. with brief presentations beginning at 6:15 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

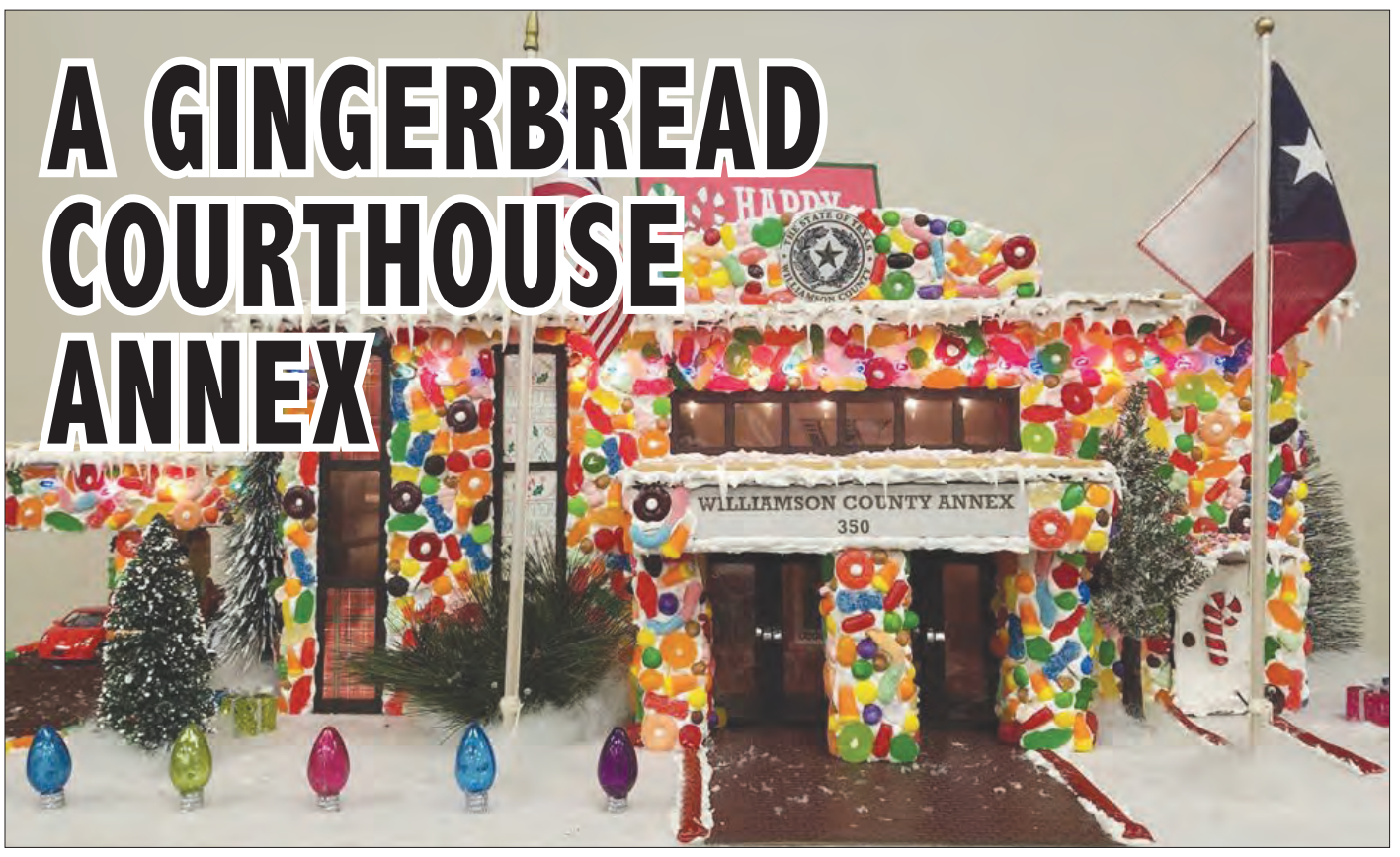
The city's agreement with Nelson/Nygard Consulting, Inc. allows for an expense of up to $130,000 for the study. For more information visit www.cedarparktransitstudy.com.



SCOTT W. COLEMAN

The City of Cedar Park will hold a public meeting on transportation options on Jan. 16.

HOLIDAY SPIRIT







CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Williamson County employee Deanna Vaters and her husband built a meticulously-decorated gingerbread replica of the Williamson County Annex in Cedar Park for the holidays. The county placed the gingerbread house on display throughout the holidays.

CITY OF ROUND ROCK

Round Rock considers noise ordinance

STAFF REPORTS

Round Rock's bustling downtown nightlife scene got a boost and then word of a possible bust in December.

The city gave final approval to an ordinance extending from midnight until 2 a.m. the hours that bars, restaurants and hotels can serve alcohol. However, concerns over the noise from a growing number of live music venues may spur the city to implement noise restrictions.

Greg Kirwin, who has lived in a neighborhood about half a mile away from Main Street for more than two decades, told the city council that he and his neighbors don't want Round Rock's Main Street to become another Sixth Street.

Despite expanding hours for alcohol sales, the city council is considering limiting noise to just 50 decibels, measured at the property line, beginning at 10 p.m. on weeknights. The 50 decibel limit would take effect at midnight on weekends. The ordinance would reduce the daytime noise limit to 75 decibels, from the current 80 decibel limit.

According to a study from Purdue University, 50 decibels is equivalent to the sound of a quiet conversation at home. The city's current 80 decibel daytime limit is roughly equivalent to the sound level of a food blender or garbage disposal.

The city is also considering requiring a permit for businesses to play amplified music outdoors. A number of the downtown venues have outdoor seating, which would be impacted by such a change.

LOWER COLORADO RIVER AUTHORITY

LCRA accepting grant applications for community projects

STAFF REPORTS

The Lower Colorado River Authority is accepting applications for grants for community projects throughout the month of January. Grants of up to $50,000 are available.

Applications for the Community Development Partnership Program grants will be available at lcra.org/cdpp beginning Jan. 1 and are due by Jan. 31.

The grant program recently helped fund 23 projects, including providing emergency equipment to firefighters and other first responders, replacing playground equipment, upgrading electrical systems in community halls, and renovating volunteer fire department stations.

To date, LCRA and its wholesale electric customers have awarded 1,695 community grants totaling more than $44.5 million. When combined with almost $224 million in community-raised matching funds, the total investment in projects is more than $268.5 million.

Most of the grants are for $25,000 or less, but every cycle includes two or three grants of up to $50,000.

Eligible organizations include volunteer fire departments, emergency responders, local governments, schools, libraries, civic groups, museums and other nonprofit organizations. For-profit entities, individuals, professional associations and nonprofits with limited group memberships are not eligible for CDPP grants.

For a list of eligibility requirements or more information, visit lcra.org/cdpp or call the grant coordinator at 800-776-5272, ext. 3140.

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GAS PRICES

Gas prices dip below $2 per gallon regionally

STAFF REPORTS

Gasoline prices in Austin have fallen 2.8 cents per gallon in the past week, averaging $1.97/g by New Year's Eve, according to GasBuddy's daily survey of 830 stations in Austin. This compares with the national average that has fallen 6.6 cents per gallon versus last week to $2.25/g, according to GasBuddy.

"As the national average price of gasoline continues to test multi-year lows, U.S. motorists are keeping over $250 million in their pocket every single day versus 80 days ago," said Patrick DeHaan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy. "The plunge has seen sub-$2 gas prices show up at over a third of all gas stations in the country while eleven states have seen average prices dip under the $2 level."

Average gasoline prices on December 31 in Austin have ranged widely over the last five years:

$2.21/g in 2017, $2.11/g in 2016, $1.76/g in 2015, $2.04/g in 2014 and $3.13/g in 2013.

Including the change locally during the past week, prices yesterday were 23.7 cents per gallon lower than a year ago and are 20.6 cents per gallon lower than a month ago. The national average has dropped 21.3 cents per gallon during the last month and stands 23.8 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

Areas near Austin and their current gas price climate:

San Antonio- $1.85/g, down 3.9 cents per gallon from last week's $1.89/g.

Waco- $1.90/g, down 1.9 cents per gallon from last week's $1.92/g.

College Station- $1.92/g, down 5.4 cents per gallon from last week's $1.97/g.

"The most common price at gas stations in the U.S. is now $1.99 per gallon while the second most common price is just $1.89," said DeHaan. "With the plunge perhaps continuing for another couple weeks, many motorists have been asking how long this trend will continue into 2019 — and the answer is that it's complicated but possible summer gas prices won't be anywhere near this low."



COURTESY PHOTO

Local area gasoline prices have fallen more than 20 cents per gallon in the last month.

Don't Wait Until It's Too Late!

Scientific studies have proven that if hearing loss goes untreated, a condition called "auditory deprivation" occurs.

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3. A need to ask people to repeat themselves
4. Hearing but not understanding what is being said

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TRANSPORTATION

TSA will use more floppy-ear dogs because they're less scary



CARL JUSTE/MIAMI HERALD/TNS

TSA officer Cedric Belvin and German short-hair pointer Angus search departing passengers for explosives at Miami International Airport in November, 2018.

By HUGO MARTIN
Tribune News Service

In its effort to make the airport security screening process faster, the Transportation Security Administration is employing new high-tech baggage scanners, facial-recognition cameras and "automated lanes" to eliminate passenger gridlock.

But TSA Administrator David Pekoske said the agency is also making at least one new change to reduce traveler stress: deploying more floppy-ear dogs, rather than pointy-ear dogs, to sniff out explosives in public areas.

During a recent tour of Washington Dulles International Airport, Pekoske told the Washington Examiner that his agency believes floppy-ear dogs are less intimidating to travelers than dogs with pointy ears.

"We find the passenger acceptance of floppy-ear dogs is just better," he said. "It presents just a little bit less of a concern. Doesn't scare children."

The TSA has more than 900 teams of officers and explosive-sniffing dogs either screening passengers at airports or sniffing cargo and baggage behind the scenes. About a third of those dogs interact with passengers in airports, according to the TSA.

The agency says it trains seven breeds of dogs: German shepherds (pointy ears), Labrador retrievers (floppy ears), German shorthaired pointers (floppy ears), wirehaired pointers (floppy ears), Vizslas (floppy ears), Belgian Malinois (pointy ears) and golden retrievers (floppy ears).

Because of the federal shutdown, TSA representatives could not be reached to comment on how the agency will transition to more floppy-ear dogs.

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Tuesday, Jan. 1st 9am-5:30pm
Wed. - Sat. 9am-8pm
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Prices good in stores Monday, December 31 – Saturday, January 5, 2019. Prices good online Sunday, December 30 – Saturday, January 5, 2019. Some advertised items not available online. Sale subject to supply in stock. Selection and quantities may vary by store and do not apply to pre-reduced items. Discounts provided every day; marked prices reflect general U.S. market value for similar products.

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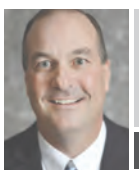
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SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Season's greetings from all of us at Leander ISD



DAN TROXELL
LISD SUPERINTENDENT

With half the 2018-19 school year complete, I want to thank and encourage our teachers, students, parents and staff for all of their efforts this past semester. It is my sincere hope that each of us is able to take time this holiday season to recharge.

I also want to ask our community to share some holiday cheer with our educators. The day-to-day routine of a school year can be taxing on our teachers, instructional and support staff, who strive to help each child reach their potential every day.

Whether it is your child's teacher, a relative or a neighbor, if you know an educator, please do me a favor and thank them for everything they do for our children.

Please also thank members of our Leander ISD team who serve students in support roles, including employees who keep our buildings maintained and clean; who welcome our families on the phone or at the entrances to our buildings; who hire and support employees; who pay our bills; or who serve students with transportation or meals.

Children need a caring learning environment to thrive. We have passionate professionals in several walks of life who choose to work in public education because they truly care for our schools and our community. Share some kind words or a handwritten note if you know a member of our team. When the children in your household return to school Jan. 8, ask them to say "thank you" to their bus driver, custodian, cafeteria worker or anyone else they encounter who makes our schools operate.

If you are a member of our Leander ISD team reading this column, please know I wish only the best for you and for your family. I hope you have a truly relaxing, meaningful holiday and take time to enjoy your family and friends. See you in 2019!

DEATH NOTICE

NAME OF DECEASED: C.D. "Dan" Goodrum
AGE: 89
RESIDENCE: Cedar Park, Texas
DATE OF DEATH: 12/23/2018
TIME, DATE, OF SERVICE: 1:00 pm, January 5, 2018
LOCATION OF SERVICE: Shenandoah Baptist Church, Cedar Park, Texas 78613
FUNERAL HOME INFORMATION: Beck Funeral Home, 1700 E. Whitestone Blvd., Cedar Park, Texas 78613

WHAT'S HAPPENING

January 4

Way Off Broadway Community Players present the mystery thriller "Gaslight" Fridays and Saturdays Jan. 4 to Jan. 26, 11880 Hero Way West, Leander. Visit wobcp.org or call (512) 259-5878 for information and tickets.

January 5

Don't have time to take your holiday tree to be recycled? Boy Scout Troop 233 will pick up your tree and deliver it for recycling for $10. Visit troop233leander.org or email treerecycle@troop233leander.org with any questions.

Bring your live holiday tree for recycling Jan. 5, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., Cedar Park Recreation Center, 1435 Main St. Please remove all decorations and stands. Receive a free seedling (while they last) for recycling your tree.

Support local farmers and vendors by visiting the Farmers Market in the Lakeline Mall parking lot Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Shop local at Old Town Leander Farmer's Market, where local businesses, artists and farmers offer their products Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., 203 W. Broade St.

North Shore News



North Lake Travis CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Lago Vista
Jonestown | Point Venture

EVENTS CALENDAR

Lago Vista City Council Meeting
5803 Thunderbird Street, Suite 101
Thursday, January 3 & 17 at 6:30 PM
Council Chamber

Twilight Concerts
Tuesday, January 8, 7:30-9:30 pm
Villa Antonia
19039 Adrian Way, Jonestown, TX
Nina McIntire

LVPOA Monthly Board Meeting
Wednesday, January 16 at 7:00 pm
Bluebonnet Room, Activity Center
2601 American Dr., Lago Vista

Chamber Casino Night
Saturday, January 19 at 6:00 pm
K-Oaks Clubhouse
7000 Bar-K Ranch Rd, Lago Vista
Games, Food, and Prizes

Lago Vista's Women's Club Gala
Saturday, January 26
6:00pm-10:00pm
K-Oaks Clubhouse
7000 Bar-K Ranch Rd, Lago Vista

Flat Creek Winery & Vineyard, Disc Gold Members
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9:00 am - Dark
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Bring a Friend for FREE

Friends of Nameless School Monthly Meeting
Meets the second Monday at 10:30 am
23436 Nameless Rd., Leander

Keep Lago Vista Beautiful
Meets second Thursday Monthly
at 2:00 pm
Meetings are at the
Lago Vista Police Station
5901 Municipal Complex Way

Lago Vista Lions Club
Meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesday
monthly at 6:00 pm
K- Oaks Clubhouse
7000 Bar-K Ranch Rd., Lago Vista

North Shore Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group
Meets the first & third Thursday
monthly at 10:30 am
Lago Vista Library, 20505 Dawn Dr.

North Shore Cancer Discussion Group
Meets the second Monday each month
at 10:00 am
Lago Vista Library, 20505 Dawn Dr.

North Shore Fire Wise Community Meeting
Meets fourth Wednesday at 6:00 pm
Travis County ESD #1
18300 Park Dr., Jonestown

North Shore Republicans Meeting
Meets second Monday at 6:30 pm
LVPOA Activity Center
2601 American Dr., Lago Vista

Point Venture Lions Club
Meets the second and fourth Tuesday
monthly at 6:00 pm
Point Venture Golf Club
422 Venture Blvd. S.



OUR VIEW

Teacher sues Pflugerville ISD over misguided 2017 state law

Bahia Amawi worked for nine years as a speech pathologist for Pflugerville Independent School District. But in September, when it came time to renew her contract for the coming year, she was asked — under the provisions of a recent state law — to affirm that she does not and would not boycott Israel.

That put her in a tough position. As an American of Palestinian descent, she does try to avoid buying products from Israel. So she declined to sign the contract. And she lost her job.

That is as ludicrous as it is un-American. Regardless of one's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, it should be clear that a U.S. citizen like Amawi has a right to make choices for herself about what kind of hummus or olive oil she does or does not want to buy, and about what kind of political statements she wants to make through her purchases.

"This is a personal choice," she said, and she's absolutely right.

Over the years, some people have boycotted grapes and lettuce to protest the treatment of farmworkers; others refused to travel to South Africa at the height of apartheid. Today, some people won't invest in cigarette companies or arms manufacturers; others won't buy from Nike because of its support for former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick and his pregame protests.

As the Supreme Court has recognized, boycotts are a form of speech protected under the Constitution. That protection exists so that government cannot penalize people like Amawi because their opinions are out of step with those of the state.

The Texas law was passed in 2017 by the Republican-controlled state Legislature. It bars governmental entities from contracting with companies that boycott Israel, apparently to prevent state money from somehow being used to support a sanctions movement they disparage. That's problematic on its own. But to make matters worse, "company" is defined broadly to include individual "sole proprietorship" contractors such as Amawi.

As the Supreme Court has recognized, boycotts are a form of speech protected under the Constitution.

Had she signed the contract, she would have been promising not to engage in any action "intended to penalize, inflict economic harm on, or limit commercial relations with Israel, or with a person or entity doing business in Israel or in an Israel-controlled territory."

Lawmakers may have been trying to deter the state's suppliers from taking a corporate stance against Israel, but there's nothing in the language of the law suggesting that it does not cover a contractor's personal behavior as well.

Instead of signing, she is now suing the school district and the Texas attorney general, arguing that the law violates the First Amendment's protections on political speech and political advocacy. We hope her challenge is successful.

The Texas law is part of a bigger worldwide effort to combat the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement. The highly controversial BDS campaign calls on people and companies to boycott Israel until that country ends its occupation of "all Arab lands," ensures equal legal rights for its Arab citizens and accepts the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the former homes of their families in Israel. Some supporters of BDS accept the idea of a "two-state solution." Others don't, preferring a single-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians live together in one land.

Although BDS has not so far inflicted substantial damage on the Israeli economy, the movement's increasingly high profile — especially on some college campuses — has alarmed Israelis and their supporters in the United States.

Laws like the one in Texas are one response. According to Palestine Legal, a group that advocates for Palestinian causes, 26 states in the U.S. have passed some type of anti-Israel boycott legislation. (Another response is the effort to conflate anti-Zionist speech — that is, speech arguing against the state of Israel — with anti-Semitism; among others, the U.S. State Department has taken positions that move down this troubling path.)

It is understandable that many people would object to the BDS movement, worrying that it demonizes Israel and that it will weaken the country, which enjoys strong support in the United States. But the effort to legislate the boycott out of existence is wrongheaded and misguided.

Politicians are entitled to denounce BDS, if they choose to. But they must not take actions that infringe the free speech rights of their constituents. The First Amendment exists to protect all points of view — not only yours, but also those of the people you disagree with. At the end of the day, that benefits us all.

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Scott W. Coleman | Editor & Publisher

Zach Smith | Sports Editor

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- Reader letters are welcome and will be run as soon as possible after they are received.
- Letters must be limited to 350 words or less. "Thank you" letters must be no more than 300 words.
- The Hill Country News reserves the right to reject letters deemed libelous, in poor taste, solicitous, or produced on a mass basis.
- Anonymous letters will not be published. Please include an email address, city of residence and telephone number for verification.

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EDITORIAL CARTOON



MY VIEW

Bipartisanship is another word for ignoring the base



MICHAEL SHANNON

GUEST COLUMNIST

Here's how the Opposition Media's beloved "bipartisan cooperation" works among the residents of Incumbentstan here in Washington, DC. Republicans join leftists to proudly pass a "prison reform" bill that is of absolutely no importance to the conservative base that keeps Washington country club conservatives in offices.

But all passage of "prison reform" really proves is Curator of the Senate Mitch McConnell and retiring Boy Ryan are more than willing to quickly pass a bill that speeds the process of putting illegal immigrants in prison back out on the street. Unfortunately, they won't spend a dime to prevent illegal immigrants currently out of the country from finding a way back in.

In fact, McConnell is having trouble keeping is utter disdain for the base that elects him in check. His latest disingenuous move is a continuing spending resolution that pushes wall funding into February when Nancy Pelosi will be running the House.

Building the wall, deporting illegals and citizen-first immigration reform were the issues that elected President Trump. That should have been the primary focus of his administration from the beginning.

Trump did face a unique situation. First, he didn't expect to win, which is something he and Hillary had in common. He had to scramble to staff his administration. It was chaos. The only difference between the product of Trump's HR department and Uber's was Trumps staffers didn't assault women. Oh, wait. Well at least not as many as Uber drivers.

He was closest advisors were Democrats, daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared. Neither of whom would have voted for any other Republican candidate running on Dad's issues. Staff slots went to closet Never-Trumpers who opposed his immigration plans and careerists dragging their feet because they were afraid Trump's policies would kill future job prospects with housebroken conservatives and big donors after they left the administration.

I also suspect Trump was naive. He probably assumed after he achieved an unprecedented upset what passes for Republican leadership would be eager to fall in line behind policies that obviously resonated with the electorate. The bumptious outsider and the wily insiders would pass important legislation while the opposition was stunned and before the investigations began.

Trump should have realized it was him against the world when prissy McConnell contemptuously dismissed Trump's first budget with a wave of his dainty hand.

Trump should've started publicly making the case for his signature legislation then and there. It should have contained all funding for the wall; nationwide, retroactive EVerify for all jobs; criminal sanctions for employers who hire illegals and a tax on over-the-border remittances to fund a stepped-up program of deportations.

First step would've been passage in the House, followed by internment in the Senate. But Trump could've been patient. Then when the next spending bill came up he could inform McConnell that he won't sign any budget bill unless his immigration reform is passed.

Curator McConnell's dirty secret is it doesn't really take 60 votes to pass legislation in the Senate. And he doesn't need any Democrats either. All the Curator must do is return to the filibuster rules that were in effect until 1975. Then a simple majority is enough.

Yes, there would've been wailing and gnashing of teeth, but so what? It would have been worth the turmoil and potential loss of the House in the 2018 midterms to get that bill passed. Now we've lost the House and have nothing to show for it.

Instead Trump did nothing. He tweeted while the border burned. Last week he said he would embrace a Trump Shutdown if he didn't get just the wall. Earlier this week he said he'd sign the spending bill without the wall. As this is written, Trump says he's not going to sign the bill.

So, who knows? My bet is Trump will botch his last chance for a wall.

Illegal immigration matters to some of us. My wife's best friend was killed by a drunk driving illegal. After we moved to Virginia another drunk driving illegal killed a friend we made here. My daughter has had two cars totaled by illegals. I was rear-ended by an anchor baby. (By the way, where is Trump's executive order ending the anchor baby scam?) We certainly aren't alone in this. We're just ignored.

We read that when Ivanka gets teary-eyed, her father often responds forcefully. I'm hoping in the next few days one of the First Daughter's friends will have a bad experience with an illegal. Maybe he'll take that parking spot at the mall the friend was waiting for or he'll prune the wrong tree. Something that really engages upper Manhattan emotions.

If only Ivanka chokes up again, maybe her father will stop choking on the wall.

— Michael Shannon is a commentator and public relations consultant, and is the author of "A Conservative Christian's Guidebook for Living in Secular Times."

MY VIEW

My new year's resolutions for a select group



JAY AMBROSE

GUEST COLUMNIST

I have some New Year's resolutions I want various politicians and other officials to make, and so I imagined a stage, dreamed about their getting together and uttering chosen words, and noticed President Donald Trump speaking up.

"No more tweets," he said, glancing at my script, his golden hair shining, "and no more off-the-cuff, antagonizing, low-life insults from any platform. This I pledge, and I pledge not to say there will be a shutdown and there won't be a shutdown but there will be a shutdown, exhibiting a confusion of mind that leads to confusion of the nation and is just maybe more subversive than a Russian collusion."

"I won't blurt our new policies on Syria and the like," he continued, "but will construct them carefully in a way that protects the Kurds and others and I will continue to watch out for Iran, ISIS and Turkey." He wipes off his mouth and says, "I will stay tough on China but work with allies in Europe and Asia to stuff other tariffs in a sock."

His resolution went on for an hour and a half, obviously leaving out some important matters and with only 100 or so errors...

His resolution went on for an hour and a half, obviously leaving out some important matters and with only 100 or so errors, but, next thing you knew, there was Sen. Bernie Sanders marching forward and saying he has learned to like the rich and recognizes that many contribute much to this country and that his ranting sometimes seems on the order of "a bigot full of hate."

"As Mr. Ambrose requested," Sanders said, "I also resolve not to push Medicare for All. As a careful study has shown, my program would cost more than $32 trillion over a decade and require doubling of all individual and corporate taxes so that consumers would have little to spend and corporations would be unable to produce. After more thought than usual, I don't think that would be wise."

"Walls are moral, after all," burst in Nancy Pelosi, former and possibly future speaker of the House of Representatives.

"In 2019,"she said, "I will do my best to keep in mind the wall on the Israeli-Egyptian border that brought to zero the 55,000 illegal immigrants that crossed the border between 2010 and 2012. Murder and rape had accompanied some of them, and that's not OK."

She also said she would negotiate seriously from now on, refusing to get caught up in relatively trivial numbers for something seriously needed, and, after a while, turned the floor over to Sen. Kamala Harris.

"Oh, so sorry," Harris said. "What we Democrats did during the Supreme Court hearing on Brett Kavanaugh was to belittle the process, and there I was butting in when it wasn't my turn and playing antagonistic gotcha games based on nothing much. I resolve never again to ask a nominee for justice if he knew of any laws 'that the government has power to make over the male body.'"

Her hand on her forehead, she said: "I was treating a fetus, a living, human creature on its way to being a baby, as it were a mere body part, a kidney or something. It was also the case that Kavanaugh had made it clear he was not going to vote to overturn Roe v. Wade, and the main worry was that the Constitution might rise again, getting in the way of progressive ambitions."

The last but not the least speaker was Robert Mueller, hardly in a good mood as he said: "I am fed up with all of you, with your suspicious changes of heart, and I am going to investigate. If necessary, I will get confidential information from your lawyers or priests, and, if I can't find a crime, our team will find a lie that's a crime, and after millions of dollars and focused intent, we will get you. "

Well, you can't win 'em all.

— Jay Ambrose is an nationally-syndicated op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service.

FAITH COMMENTARY

That we might become what God is



RONNIE McBRAYER
FAITH COLUMNIST

A friend gave me a little book a few weeks with a startling title: "Sum: Forty Tales From The Afterlives," written by neuroscientist David Eagleman. My first thought was that it was about people who had come back from the dead, as there is a whole genre of such books today.

Thankfully, no, it is a collection of thought provoking essays from Dr. Eagelman's remarkable, inventive mind. He imagines all of these different possibilities about what might happen after we die, imagined to make the reader think about the here and now — the miracle of the life we all have been given to live.

Without spoiling the entire book, my favorite tale of his is one where a person is given the chance to choose his next life. Do you want to be a king or queen; want to be rich and famous? It's your choice. This particular person, who has had a difficult life, isn't interested in money, fame, or "more" of anything. He wants simplicity.

So, he chooses to come back as a horse. Why not? Grazing green pastures, frolicking over the hillsides, running across the plains without a care in the world; and doing all of this as a big, beautiful, literal stud. His decision is made, God speaks, and the transformation begins. Eagleman writes:

"A mat of strong hair erupts to cover you like a blanket… your neck thickens…your carotid arteries grow in diameter… your fingers blend hoof ward. Your concern about human affairs begins to slip away. But suddenly, for just a moment, you become aware of a problem you overlooked.

"The more you become like a horse, the more you forget what it was like to be a human wishing you could be a horse! And that's not the worst of your revelation. You realize that, with your thick horse brain, you won't have the capacity to ask to be a human again. Your choice to slide down the intelligence ladder is irreversible."

Dr. Eagleman, observing the frail, troubled reality of being a human, then asks a rhetorical question: "What magnificent, extraterrestrial creature… would choose to become a human?" Implying of course, that no being of superior intelligence would ever stoop to become a lesser creature, to become one of us.

But that's not quite right, not in light of the Advent story. Christians believe that the baby born and laid in the manger is more than a remarkable child, more than a religious symbol. We believe he is "Jesus Christ, God's only Son," as the Creed says, signaling that indeed, a "magnificent, extraterrestrial creature chose to become a human."

Thus, Christmas is an event of descent, a movement of downward mobility, with heaven plummeting to earth, fusing these worlds together in a wondrous, inexplicable mystery. "Mild he lay his glory by," and he came sliding down the ladder to reach, love, and elevate us. God met humanity on its own terms, becoming "what we are, that we might become what God is."

— Ronnie McBrayer is a nationally-syndicated columnist and the author of several books.

FAITH CALENDAR

January 4

Keypoint Church hosts Game Night the first Friday of each month, 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., 1004 W. Whitestone Blvd., Cedar Park. Visit keypointchurch.org.

January 7

Senior A-Glow meets the first Monday of each month, 5:30 p.m., to Reach-Teach-Fellowship with each other, Shenandoah Baptist Church, 3003 Blue Ridge Dr., Cedar Park. We love having new friends join us. Visit shenandoahbaptist.com for details.

January 8

Join the Young at Heart Sing-a-Long, Tuesday, Jan. 8, 11 a.m., Brennan Auditorium, St. Thomas More, 10205 FM 620 N., Austin. Bring an item to share for the potluck and listen to pianist Linda Hardy play tunes from the '50s, '60s and '70s. Visit stmaustin.org for details.

January 12

Cedar Park's Samaritan Heath Ministries hosts the Samaritans Give Gala Saturday, Jan. 12, 6 p.m. to 11:30 p.m., Sheraton Hotel, 701 E. 11th St., Austin. The event will feature dinner, silent and live auctions and a reception. Visit theshm.org for details and tickets.

January 18

HCBC's High School Winter Camp is a chance for students to take some time away from their routine and encounter God, Jan. 18 to Jan. 20, Camp Buckner, Burnet. Visit hcbc.com to register and for more details.

January 20

Beginning Jan. 20 Freedom in Christ is a 13-week course designed to help Christians break through to a greater level of spiritual maturity, Hill Country Bible Church Lakeline, 12124 RR 620 N., Austin. The course teaches strategies to renew our minds and break free from negative thinking and unhelpful patterns of behavior. Visit hcbc.com for information.

January 21

Join in a day of peaceful solidarity as Christians remember Rev. Martin Luther King's legacy and continue the quest to end racism, with the MLK community March & Festival, Jan. 21, departing at 8 a.m. from Bethany United Methodist Church, 10010 Anderson Mill Road, Austin. Visit bethany-umc.org for details and registration.

January 25

Seniors, join folks 50 and older for board games, dominoes and cards, Friday, Jan. 25, 1 p.m. Leander UMC, 107 S. West Dr., Leander. Invite a friend or neighbor. Visit leanderumc.org.

The annual Ladies' Retreat for St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church will be Jan. 25 to Jan. 27, at Cedarbrake in Belton. Register at www.stmargaretmary.com.

January 27

The Annual World Fair event at Hill Country Bible Church offers information about the church's short-term trips, how to reach other nations locally, food, giveaways and more. The event is scheduled for Jan. 27, 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., HCBC Lakeline, 12124 Ranch Road 620 N., Austin. Visit hcbc.com for more info.

February 15

ATX Student Weekend is a city-wide event attended by more than 1,500 students. Several local churches have joined together for worship times at Riverbend Church, 4214 N. Capital of Texas Highway, Austin. Visit atxstudentweekend.com for registration and schedule.







SUDOKU

					4		7	
8			9					2
			3					
		1				6		8
				5		7		
9							1	4
4							3	
	2					4		
	1	5		2			9	

Level: Intermediate

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ANSWER:

1	9	2	6	8	4	5	7	3
8	6	3	9	7	5	1	4	2
5	7	4	3	1	2	9	8	6
2	3	1	7	4	9	6	5	8
6	4	8	1	5	3	7	2	9
9	5	7	2	6	8	3	1	4
4	8	6	5	9	7	2	3	1
7	2	9	8	3	1	4	6	5
3	1	5	4	2	6	8	9	7

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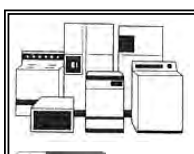
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PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE

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Notice Public Hearings

The Lago Vista Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on January 24, 2019, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 5803 Thunderbird St., Lago Vista, Texas to receive citizen input on the following item:

18-1373-SP-E: Consideration of a special exception application pursuant to Section 11.60 of Chapter 14 to allow an increase in the maximum height allowed by Table A of Chapter 14 from 18 feet to 22.7 feet for a single-family residence located at 21007 Buena Vista Trail (Lago Vista Estates, Section 1, Block F, Lot 3).

INVITATION TO BIDDERS

Sealed Bids, in duplicate, addressed to TRAVIS COUNTY MUD NO. 20 Attention Samuel G. Billings, President, Board of Directors, will be received at the office of Pape Dawson Engineers, Inc. until 2:00p.m. Local Time, January 18, 2019, and then publicly opened and read for "Travisso Phase 5, Sections 1 & 2 Clearing" for Leander, Travis County, Texas.

Scope of Work of the Contract includes the following: clearing and erosion controls.

Bids received after the closing time will be returned unopened. A **MANDATORY** pre-bid conference will be held on January 11, 2019, at 3:00pm Local Time, at the office of Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc. located at 10801 North MoPac Expressway, Building 3 – Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78759. Attendance by each prospective bidder or its representative at the pre-bid conference is **MANDATORY**, and no Bid will be opened unless the bidder or representative was present at the pre-bid conference.

Each Bid must be accompanied by a Bid Bond or a certified or cashier's check, acceptable to the Owner, in an amount not less than five percent (5%) of the total amount Bid, as a guarantee that the successful bidder will enter into the Contract and execute the Payment and Performance Bonds on the forms provided, and provide the required insurance certificates within seven (7) days after the date Contract Documents are received by the Contractor.

Copies of the bidding documents are on file at the following locations: 10801 North MoPac Expressway, Building 3 – Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78759.

The Owner reserves the right to reject any or all Bids and to waive all defects and irregularities in bidding or bidding process except time of submitting a Bid. The Successful Bidder, if any, will be the responsible Bidder which in the Board's judgment will be most advantageous to the District and result in the best and most economical completion of the Project.

TRAVIS COUNTY MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT NO. 20

PUBLIC NOTICE

Leander Independent School District (LISD) is soliciting proposals for:

RFP # 19MAN0001
Install Air Conditioning Systems in School Buses

The solicitation may be obtained through LISD's online procurement system, BID-EZ, at https://bid-ez.ionwave.net/Login.aspx. Proposals are to be submitted electronically in BID-EZ no later than 2:00 p.m. on January 29, 2019. Visit www.leanderisd.org/purchasing for additional information on doing business with LISD.

PUBLIC NOTICE

On December 20, 2018 the City Council of the City of Lago Vista, Texas passed and approved the following ordinances:

Ordinance No. 18-12-20-01

An Ordinance of the City of Lago Vista, Texas, amending Appendix A "Fee Schedule," Article 3.000 "Building Related Fees," to amend Section Sec. 3.100 "Building Permit Fees," Article 5.000 "Subdivision Fees," Article 6.000 "Utility Related Fees," to amend Section 6.100 "Impact and Tap Fees," and Section 6.200 "Utility Rates and Fees"; providing an effective date, repealer, severability, proper notice and open meetings clause

Ordinance No. 18-12-20-02

An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Lago Vista, Texas, amending Appendix A, Fee Schedule, Article 10.000, Parks and Recreation Fees to modify 10.200, Golf Course Fees; providing a savings clause; providing a severability clause; and providing an effective date

REQUEST FOR COMPETITIVE SEALED PROPOSAL

Sealed responses addressed to the Purchasing Department, City of Leander, 105 N. Brushy Street, Texas 78641, for:

LEANDER FIRE STATION #5 CONSTRUCTION

will be received prior to 3:00 P.M., February 7, 2019 then be publicly acknowledged. A **MANDATORY** pre-solicitation meeting will be held on:

January 8th, 2019 at 2:00 PM CST
Pat Bryson Municipal Hall
201 Brushy Street
Leander, TX 78641

Questions can be directed to the City of Leander Purchasing Department at jsimonton@leandertx.gov or 512-528-2730. Additional information can be found at http://www.leandertx.gov/rfps.

Complete plans and bidding documents can be obtained from **planroom.millerids.com**. For instructions on downloading plans respondents may contact:

Miller Imaging and Digital Solutions,
Simon Lucas, Digital Services Coordinator,
10713 Metric Blvd
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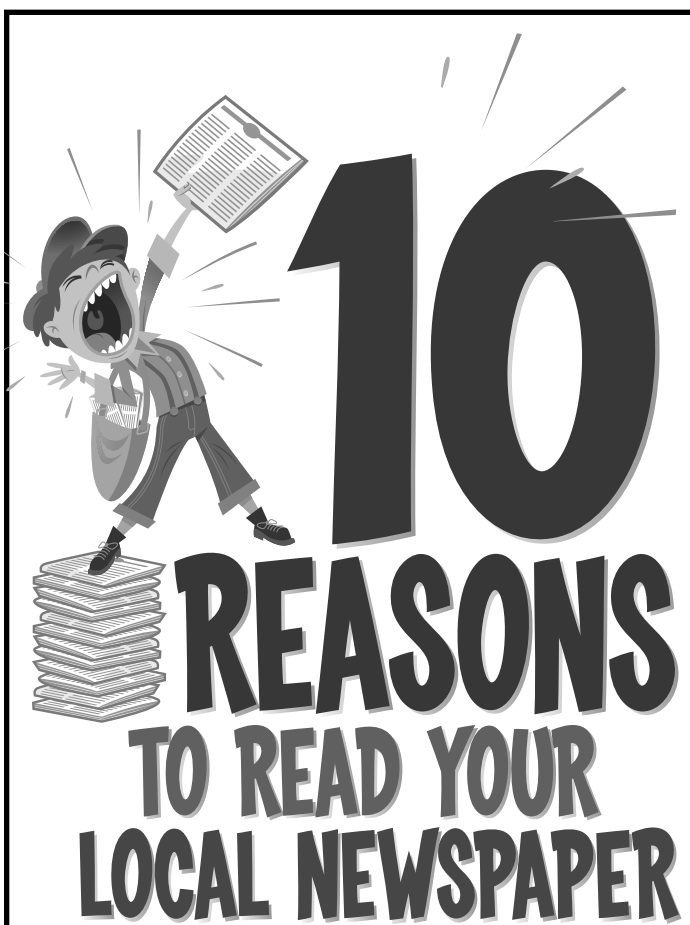
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HOUSTON COUGARS

Houston fires Major Applewhite after two seasons

By ZACH SMITH
Hill Country News

Major Applewhite has been fired as Houston football coach after two seasons in charge of the Cougars, according to a release from the school.

Hired as head coach before the 2017 season, Applewhite went 15-11 with a trio of bowl losses, including a lopsided 70-14 beatdown against Army in the Armed Forced Bowl earlier this month.

"We'd like to thank Coach Applewhite and his family for their commitment to the success of the Houston Football program over the last four seasons including the last two as our head coach," Houston Vice President for Athletics Chris Pezman said in the release. "After a thorough evaluation of our Football program, it is my assessment our future opportunities for success are better addressed by making this very difficult decision now.

Applewhite spent four seasons in total at Houston, serving as offensive coordinator in 2015 and 2016.

According to ESPN, the school will owe Applewhite a $1.95 million buyout.

The Cougars will now be looking to replace a big chunk of their coaching staff. Offensive coordinator Kendal Briles took a similar position at Florida State and defensive coordinator Mark D'Onofrio was fired before the end of the regular season.

Houston stormed out of the gate this season, starting the year 7-1 and jumping into the AP rankings for the first time under Applewhite. But the Cougars suffered major injuries, most notably to All-American defensive tackle Ed Oliver and quarterback D'Eriq King and lost four of their last five games to finish 8-5.

The search for a new coach is already underway, with multiple outlets reporting West Virginia's Dana Holgorsen as a name that tops Houston's wish list.

"While the immediate future may be challenging, our future at UH is very bright," Pezman said. We've made many sizable improvements over the past five years, and I look forward to enhancing our future success through the hiring of our next head coach."



SCOTT W. COLEMAN

Major Applewhite was fired as head football coach at Houston on Sunday. He went 15-11 in three seasons in charge of the Cougars with three bowl losses.

TEXAS STARS



DEREK SPARTA/TEXAS STARS

As the calendar ticks into the new year, the Stars are in fourth place in the Central Division with 38 points, six points behind the division-leading Chicago Wolves.

By ZACH SMITH
Hill Country News

The Texas Stars ended 2018 on a hot streak in Cedar Park.

Texas won six straight home games to end the year and hasn't lost at the HEB Center since late November. On the road, however, the Stars haven't been so fortunate, losing four of their last five games.

Texas played host to the Ontario Reign on Friday night, coming away with a convincing 5-1 before traveling down I-35 and losing to rival San Antonio Rampage 4-2 on Sunday in their final game of the year.

"Once we got the first goal, we kind of took the game over from start to finish," Texas head coach Derek Laxdal said. "Ontario is a hard-working team and they are re physical and our guys battled through that well. We had some pretty good chemistry on all four lines."

Goalie Landon Bow stopped 21 of the 22 shots he faced and five different Texas players scored in the win while six different players picked up an assist in the sixth-straight home win on Saturday.

Joel L'Esperance scored two goals in the loss on Sunday to take the outright team lead with 17 on the season.

"We try to approach every game the same way and we're finding ways to win and score and we've just got to keep that going," Stars forward Colin Markison said. "When everybody is in the game, everybody is contributing, and I think that's the way every team wants to play."

As the calendar ticks into the new year, the Stars are in fourth place in the Central Division with 38 points, six points behind the division-leading Chicago Wolves.

Texas is not new to lineup shuffling to help the NHL club in Dallas, and it saw even more over the last week as forward Roope Hintz returned to Dallas and defender Gavin Bayreuther was sent back to the AHL in different moves.



DEREK SPARTA/TEXAS STARS

The Texas Stars beat the Ontario Reign 5-1 at home on Saturday and have won six straight home games to end the year. They haven't lost at the HEB Center since late November.

"Give our guys a lot of credit over the last six weeks, managing with the young kids from Idaho," Laxdal said. "Now we're starting to get our (defensive) core back and getting a chance to see what it really looks like. It makes a big difference moving pucks and your offense changes look all the time."

One player that has been a stalwart in the Texas lineup has been Landon Bow, who has appeared in 23 of the team's 32 games and boasts a 13-5-3 record with a 2.69 goals against average, second-best in the AHL among goalies with more than 20 appearances.

"He's made the big saves when called upon," Laxdal said. "He's taken a step in his development and his game. We like what we see from him and he's our go-to guy."

NFL playoffs begin, Texans host Colts in Wild Card



SCOTT W. COLEMAN

DeAndre Hopkins and the Texans beat the Jacksonville Jaguars 20-3 on Sunday to clinch the AFC South for the fifth time in franchise history and finish the regular season 11-5. Houston will host the Indianapolis Colts in the in the Wild Card round on Saturday at 3:35 p.m. and would face off with the New England Patriots in the Divisional Round on Jan. 13 if it were to advance.

BAYLOR BEARS

Baylor completes massive turnaround in Texas Bowl



SCOTT W. COLEMAN

Baylor quarterback Charlie Brewer quarterback Charlie Brewer threw for 384 yards and two touchdowns and had the first 100-yard rushing game of his career, going for 108 yards and a touchdown in the Bears' Texas Bowl win over Vanderbilt on Saturday.

By ZACH SMITH
Hill Country News

In just two seasons, Matt Rhule has taken Baylor from a program reeling after a national scandal to one on the precipice of challenging for titles.

The Bears tied the biggest turnaround in NCAA history this season and capped off the year with an offensive 45-38 win Texas Bowl on Saturday night in Houston.

Baylor won one game a season ago and finished this year 7-6.

"It's been just this slow process and the thing is that we want to be a program that's built on something and built on rock," Rhule said. "Our senior class last year, the senior class this year and then the guys that are sitting next to me and many more like them, they are building the program on the right things. That will hopefully just continue from here."

Baylor's sophomore quarterback Charlie Brewer threw for 384 yards and two touchdowns and had the first 100-yard rushing game of his career, going for 108 yards and a touchdown. Tristan Ebner had 109 receiving yards and a touchdown and 90 rushing yards and a touchdown.

Four different players rushed for a touchdown, the first time a Baylor team has accomplished the feat since 2015.

The Bears' 668 total yards are the third-most in a bowl game in program history and the most in a game since Rhule took over.

"So many different guys are stepping up, and that's what was fun about it for me was watching it," Rhule said. "We wouldn't have wanted it any other way; the way our season's gone, the way we battled back. We didn't want it to be easy, and that was a great football game."

Baylor under Rhule, who was a candidate for the NFL's Indianapolis Colts' head coaching job last season, will have a lot to look forward to next season and in the coming years.

Both Brewer and Ebner return to lead an offense that ranked fifth in the Big 12 during the regular season, and all-conference players James Lynch and Clay Johnston are set to return to Waco and anchor the defense.

"We have great receivers, and it's really just a matter of quarterbacks doing a great job of getting the ball to the right guys," Rhule said. I thought it was an opportunity for a lot of our guys to maybe step in there and fill that role and build some momentum going into next season."

Celebrating is still new to the Bears, too.

Instead of dousing their coaching in Gatorade following the dramatic postseason win, they hit him in the head with the bright orange container.

"No one knows how hard we work," Rhule said. "(The players) sacrifice a great deal and I want them to celebrate it and I want all of Baylor and the fans, I want them all to have bragging rights. I want them all to smile and have fun. You sit back, thinking about how far you've come and everybody is happy."



SCOTT W. COLEMAN

Under head coach Matt Rhule, Baylor went from winning one game a season ago to finishing 7-6 this year after beating Vanderbilt in the Texas Bowl on Saturday.

SPORTS

BOYS VARSITY HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

GLENN AT ROUSE
Rouse High School Gym
Friday, 7 p.m.

It's still incredibly early in the district 17-5A schedule, but this game could give either squad an early boost. The Grizzlies picked up their first every Class 5A conference win ever before winter break when Sam Martin hit a 3-pointer to send the game to overtime and they down Pflugerville. Both teams competed in tournaments over the holiday break, the Raiders heading to Hays while the Grizzlies hosted a few local teams at the Glenn Holiday Classic. Rouse opened district play with a win over Marble Falls but fell on the road against a very talented Connally team on Dec. 21. This is the first-ever meeting between the two Leander ISD schools.

WESTWOOD AT LEANDER
Leander High School Main Gym
Saturday, 1 p.m.

VISTA RIDGE AT HENDRICKSON
Hendrickson High School Gym
Saturday, 7 p.m.

ROUND ROCK AT CEDAR RIDGE
Cedar Ridge High School Gym
Saturday, 1 p.m.

MCNEIL AT STONY POINT
Stony Point High School Gym
Friday, 7 p.m.

With two teams still undefeated as the district schedule gets underway in earnest in the new year, McNeil and Stony Point figure to be in the race for the other two playoffs spots if the standings continue to trend the way they are going. The Mavericks have proven they can play with just about anyone, whether it be the shooting of Round Rock or the versatility of Vista Ridge. Stony Point opened the Hays tournament last weekend with a win over Del Valle but dropped two straight to Antonian Prep and Colleyville Heritage. The Tigers have already matched their district wins from last season when they won a pair of games.

GIRLS VARSITY HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

ROUSE AT GLENN
Glenn High School Gym
Saturday, 7 p.m.

LEANDER AT WESTWOOD
Westwood High School Gym
Saturday, 1 p.m.

HENDRICKSON AT VISTA RIDGE
Vista Ridge High School Gym
Saturday, 1 p.m.

This is the big one, and it wraps up the first round of district play to boot. Vista Ridge and Hendrickson are the only two teams still undefeated in District 13-6A play. The Lady Hawks just lost their first game of the season to Bryan Rudder during a tournament last weekend and they still sit atop the TABC rankings. The Lady Rangers lost to Class 6A No. 4 Duncanville during a holiday tournament but rebounded with a win in the consolation bracket. These two teams met earlier this year at the Nancy Walling Classic, with Hendrickson coming away with a 65-57 win. The talented squads will meet again in the regular season finale on Feb. 5.

CEDAR RIDGE AT ROUND ROCK
Round Rock High School Gym
Saturday, 1 p.m.

Cedar Ridge is sitting in third place as the district schedule nears its halfway point, while Round Rock is battling for a playoff spot under first-year coach Pecos McDaniel. The Lady Raiders wrap up a tough stretch of games, facing off against the two top teams in the district in Hendrickson and Vista Ridge before traveling across town to face off with the Lady Dragons. Round Rock is part of the logjam of teams — along with Westwood, Stony Point and Vandegrift — fighting to stay in the playoff hunt and this is the type of game where it will look to pick up some ground. Cedar Ridge swept Round Rock last season on its way to a trip to the third round of the playoffs.

STONY POINT AT MCNEIL
McNeil High School Gym
Saturday, 1 p.m.

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

Crew staying in Columbus, Austin announcement expected

By ZACH SMITH
Hill Country News

Another domino fell on Friday in the efforts to bring a Major League Soccer team to Austin.

The league announced an agreement in principle with the Haslam family, owners of the NFL's Cleveland Browns, and the Columbus-based Edwards family, to become MLS owners and take over operating rights of Columbus Crew SC.

"After several months of discussions, we are extremely pleased to have reached an agreement in principle with the Haslam and Edwards families for them to assume an ownership position in Major League Soccer and operate Columbus Crew SC starting in January 2019," MLS Commissioner Don Garber said in a statement.

Earlier on Friday, the City of Columbus and the state of Ohio filed to dismiss their joint lawsuit against Major League Soccer and Precourt Sports Ventures.

The City of Austin and PSV agreed on the term sheet to build a 20,000-seat stadium at McKalla Place to host Austin FC not long ago, which is scheduled to be open before the 2021 season.

With Anthony Precourt's sale of the Crew, Friday's news in Columbus clears the way for an official MLS in Austin announcement.

"We are pleased with the lawsuit dismissal and the outcome that will ensure Major League Soccer teams in both Austin and Columbus," Precourt said in a statement. "This elegant solution is the culmination of many months of hard work from Commissioner Garber, the Haslam and Edwards' families, the local Columbus community, and Precourt Sports Ventures.

"We are happy for the people of Columbus and Crew SC supporters, who helped rally local government and business leaders to keep Crew SC in Columbus. We are proud to have built a strong club which is in position to be successfully transitioned to new operators in 2019."

The Haslam family will be the third group with a stake in both an NFL team and an MLS squad, joining Robert Kraft (New England Revolution) and Arthur Blank (Atlanta United).

The new Crew owners are expected to build a stadium in downtown Columbus in the coming years.

"While we work to finalize the deal promptly, we want to state publicly the tremendous collaboration and community support for Crew SC, which has set the stage for a powerful plan that includes a world-class soccer stadium - a critical step that will help ensure the club's success on and off the field," Garber said in a statement.



ZACH SMITH

Major League Soccer announced on Friday that they had agreed in principle with the Haslam and Edwards families to become MLS owners and take over operating rights of Columbus Crew SC beginning in January 2019, officially keeping the team in Ohio.

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NEW FOR 2019
VA BENEFITS
Lunch 'n Learn
January 10th – 12 Noon

The Veterans Administration's pension known as *Aid and Attendance* helps wartime veterans and their spouses pay for long term care. The pension allows you to pay for care *whereever* you receive it — at home, *an independent living community like Skye*, day care, Assisted Living or Skilled Nursing. This tax-free assistance is indexed for inflation and is paid directly to you.

Skye Luxury Retirement Living has partnered with Senior Resource Center who understands the Aid and Attendance benefit and what it means to families. More importantly, their services are free. Senior Resource Center Founder, Bill Witt, and Partner, Tara Kendrick, will be available to discuss how to plan to pay for long term care with VA benefits. Please join us at 12 Noon on January 10th for this very informative seminar. Chef-created lunch to follow. *RSVP's required as seating is limited.*

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