

Hill Country News

VOLUME 23, ISSUE 28

SERVING CEDAR PARK, LEANDER AND NORTHWEST AUSTIN SINCE 1968 ■ hillcountrynews.com

THURSDAY, JULY 15, 2021

WILLIAMSON COUNTY

Costs of Chody-era lawsuits growing

By JOSH MONIZ

HCN SENIOR REPORTER

Williamson County will be footing the bill, now and into the future, for an unheard-of 14 separate lawsuits against the County during former Williamson County Sheriff Robert Chody's tenure, which taxpayers will have to foot into the future as they cause the County's insurance premiums to skyrocket. The number of lawsuits exceeds the

total seen under the 12-year tenure of Chody's predecessor, former Wilco Sheriff James Wilson.

The County's insurance has already settled over \$2.4 million in lawsuits with the County itself already paying out over \$407,000 total in attorneys' fees for the cases and the associated deductibles.

The County has two main insurance policies to cover police conduct:

- Travelers Insurance, which has a nearly \$180,000 yearly premium with \$2 million annual limit. In 2020, the yearly premium rose about \$55,000 due to the increasing number of lawsuits; and

- QBE, which has an over \$320,000 yearly premium and a \$3 million annual limit. In 2020, the premium increased 332% due to the lawsuits.

These increased costs will have

to be budgeted into the County's annual budget, meaning it will either contribute to an increased tax rate or reduce how much money the County has for additional services. The County has several million allocated for emergencies but no dedicated litigation fund for lawsuit settlements. Elected officials believe they will exceed their insurance coverage with the still outstanding lawsuits, although the

final costs remain to be seen.

AMBLER CASE

The highest potential cost lawsuits still outstanding against the County largely deal with the pattern of excessive force incidents and controversial leadership that was prominent during the department's participation in the now-defunct

See **CHODY**, page A2

TEXAS LEGISLATURE



PHOTO BY HARRISON FUNK

At a town hall last month, State Rep. John H. Bucy III (L) defended joining other Texas House Democrats in walking out at the last minute of the Texas legislative session. On Monday, he joined other House Democrats on a trip to Washington DC.

Walkout: Bucy, Texas Democrats leave Austin for DC; deny House a quorum

By RICHARD STONE

HCN EDITOR AT LARGE

Last month, HD 136 Rep. John H. Bucy III sat for an interview at Whites-tone Brewery in Cedar Park.

During that interview, he defended his decision to break the quorum and deny Republicans a vote on a contentious voting rights bill, though he acknowledged that the issue would come up in a special session of the Texas Legislature.

But he neatly side-stepped a question about whether or not House Democrats might use that tactic during that special session.

"I will say that the Texas House is the body of the people," he joked, referring to the fact that the last time House Democrats broke quorum, they went to Ardmore, OK while Senate Democrats managed a nicer retreat in New Mexico.

As it turns out, House Democrats chose Washington DC as their retreat when they left Texas on Monday to deny the advancement of several Texas GOP measures including voting rights

legislation.

"... Texas elections in 2020 were smooth, secure and a success according to the Greg Abbott-appointed Secretary of State's office," he texted Monday afternoon while driving to the nation's capital. "Republicans insist on pushing through voter suppression bills which will make it harder for Texans to vote. So we're heading to DC to demand that Congress act ... and pass the For The People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. The freedom to vote is non negotiable."

While Bucy took the long way to Washington DC, the other Democrats boarded a pair of private jets for the journey. A supporter donated the use of the aircraft to the Texas House Caucus.

Bucy joined at least 58 other House Democrats — including HD 52 Rep. James Talarico, whose district is in the southeastern part of Williamson County and includes most of Round Rock — and made it impossible for the Texas House to vote on legislation during this special session. The House rules require that two-thirds of the members be present for

action.

The state Democrats vowed to remain in Washington until the end of the special session, which is Aug. 7. While there, they hope to pressure the U.S. Senate to pass legislation that protects the voting rights they argue are under siege.

"Today, Texas House Democrats stand united in our decision to break quorum and refuse to let the Republican-led legislature force through dangerous legislation that would trample on Texans' freedom to vote," Democratic leaders said in a joint statement released Monday.

Republicans in Texas quickly condemned the Democrats' actions and promised to press on to enact voting legislation and other priorities. State Sen. Charles Schwertner, of Georgetown, said Democrats would face blowback for "abdication" their responsibilities in Austin.

"The work of the people of Texas needs to get done," he said. "They need to come back; they need to argue these very important issues in their respective

See **WALKOUT**, page A5

LEANDER ISD

LISD bond discussion continues

By LILLY CHANDLER

HCN REPORTING INTERN

At Tuesday's special meeting, the Leander ISD Board of Trustees proposed making discussion about the \$933.4 million bond recommendation a rolling agenda item.

The board reviewed the Steering Committee's placement of "parking lot" projects: tier 2 and 3 projects that the Citizens' Facility Advisory Committee (CFAC) initially put aside, but ultimately included in its bond recommendation after discussion. The board discussed its

concerns, like possible rezoning, major maintenance and financing.

"We will have lots more conversations as a group, and I hope to whittle this down a little, but it's not without many hard choices and decisions ahead of us," Elexis Grimes, who asked for the parking lot projects to be further discussed, said.

Anna Smith raised questions about the major maintenance items of the bond package. Major maintenance projects in the package total \$34,535,965. Smith asked if LISD will be "replac[ing] what we have," or "truly bring these [schools] up to where they need to be."

"Most importantly," Smith said, "if we're doing major maintenance every year, why are we throwing it in a bond?"

Jim MacKay said that including major maintenance in the previous bond got the board "in trouble." The board also discussed using savings from the previous bond for these items.

The board discussed concerns of population growth in some areas, like the North, Grimes said, and declining in others. This spurred the idea of possible rezoning conversations to utilize facili-

See **LISD BOND**, page A2

CORONAVIRUS

As new cases grow, county warns of spike

By RICHARD STONE

HCN EDITOR AT LARGE

After watching COVID-19 infection rates steadily increase for the last two weeks, the Williamson County and Cities Health District Monday moved it's watch guidelines to the orange phase of transmission.

The orange phase means that there is a high rate of transmission among the county's population.

"With the increase in variant infections, and waning immunity from those previously infected, this is a critical time for our community to protect themselves and their families by getting vaccinated," said Allison Stewart, lead epidemiologist for the district.

According to a WCCHD press release Monday afternoon, the threshold for the new gating criteria was reached on July 5 and had been "sustained and rising for an additional week"

See **COVID-19**, page A5

CEDAR PARK

One dead in Cedar Park shooting

By JOSH MONIZ

HCN SENIOR REPORTER

A man was declared dead and another man is facing felony murder charges following last Wednesday night's fatal shooting at 206 Peach Tree Lane in Cedar Park, near the intersection with Bois D Arc Lane.

According to the Cedar Park Police Department, officers responded at 8:30 p.m. to reports of a shooting and found Cameron Wilcox, 30, dead in the driveway from multiple gunshot wounds.

Hector De Jesus Villatoro-Guevara allegedly fled the scene and was located in a traffic stop in Leander, where he was taken into police custody.

The police report indicates that Wilcox lived with the caller at the address, that Villatoro-Guevara was the caller's ex-boyfriend and that Villatoro-Guevara had initially argued with Wilcox in the parking lot of the H-E-B at 107 E Whitestone Boulevard.

Afterward, Villatoro-Guevara drove up while they were unloading groceries in their shared driveway, retrieved a handgun after exiting his car and fired it into the air before then firing it at the victim while he and the victim were approaching each other. He allegedly fled the scene after striking the victim multiple times.

Villatoro-Guevara was booked into Williamson County Jail and charged with first-degree felony murder.

The Texas Department of Public Safety, Leander Police Department, and the Williamson County Sheriff's Office helped in this case, which is still under active investigation.



HECTOR DE JESUS VILLATORO-GUEVARA

HAVE A NEWS TIP?

news@hillcountrynews.com

GET THE PAPER DELIVERED

hillcountrynews.com/delivery



July 15, 2021
10 pages in one section

50 cents

Probate? Divorce? Wills? DWI?

Voted Best Lawyer by Hill Country News Readers

1st Place

Call for an appointment
512-918-3958
www.terrydavis.com

Terry Davis & Associates
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

RESEARCH PEST CONTROL

Locally Owned & Family Operated

www.ResearchPest.com

Residential • Commercial

512-258-5228

Sizzling heat is here and so are the bugs!

Hill Country News BEST BEST 2011-2020

Serving Cedar Park & surrounding communities for over 35 yrs

FIRST DRAFT

HCN UPDATES
STREAMED LIVE AT
5PM MWF

f

CHODY

from page A1

"Live PD" reality television, which was uncovered during an extensive investigation by the Austin American-Statesman and KVUE.

Most notably, their efforts led to the release of body camera footage of Javier Ambler's death while in the custody of Williamson County Sheriff's deputies, which drew national attention to both his death and the department in the wake of George Floyd's death while in police custody. The footage revealed deputies had continued to repeatedly taser Ambler even after he warned about his heart condition and began begging for help just prior to his death. It also led to the revelation that "Live PD" had been filming during the incident but had since destroyed the film despite the ongoing investigation into the incident, which they claim was due to the department telling them it was no longer needed in the investigation.

In the wake of these revelations, two of the deputies involved in Ambler's death are facing criminal manslaughter charges while Chody and Williamson County General Counsel Jason Nassour are facing felony evidence tampering charges related to the case in Travis County. All of these parties have denied the charges against them.

Ambler's family has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Williamson County.

The incident also led to the recent passage of the Javier Ambler Law, which bans Texas law enforcement from partnering with reality television shows.

Big Fish Entertainment, which produced "Live PD," filed a lawsuit against the Sheriff's Office, the Austin Police Department and



JOSH MONIZ

Williamson County District Attorney Shawn Dick and Williamson County Sheriff Robert Chody held dueling press conferences Monday afternoon, Sept. 28, 2020, following a Williamson County grand jury's indictment of Chody and Williamson County general counsel Jason Nassour for third-degree felony evidence tampering charges.

other law enforcement officials, alleging officers with both law enforcement entities violated their constitutional rights and illegally seized the show's footage after the death of Javier Ambler.

It also claims the involved law enforcement agencies tried to deflect blame for their failure to quickly investigate the incident by wrongfully claiming the show was "stonewalling" their investigations.

Separately from the recent totals, the County already spent \$287,687 on attorneys' fees suing Chody after they cancelled the contract with "Live PD" during the controversy and he entered his own agreement with the show using his own money. The lawsuit was eventually dropped before it went to court following Chody losing his re-election bid.

OTHER INCIDENTS

Many of the particularly egregious claims filed in the various lawsuits deal with alleged excessive use of force by deputies in several incidents that were never prosecuted or dismissed after charges were filed, often involving them using force on suicidal individuals they were dispatched to help.

The allegations range from a police dog mutilating a man's genitals to a man's death in a jail cell when deputies delayed taking him to the hospital despite excessive vomiting to a woman being thrown to the ground in front of her children during a traffic stop and then being not allowed to use the restroom at the hospital, resulting in her having to urinate on the floor.

Other cases dealt with exces-

sive force by deputies during "Live PD" was filming them. An Austin American-Statesman investigation discovered a demonstrable increase in use of force incidents when the show was filming in Williamson County. One of the lawsuits alleged particularly stark allegation that the Cedar Park man who filed it had appeared in court for an initial case but deputies declined to arrest him then for additional charges related to the same incident, instead opting to arrest him when "Live PD" would be filming by breaking down his front door with a SWAT team during a "no knock" raid.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, many of these outstanding lawsuits have been delayed for most of last year, so many are only now finally moving forward in the courts.

LEANDER CITY COUNCIL

Leander Council to discuss comprehensive plan, water and wastewater rate; host developers forum

By JOSH MONIZ
HCN SENIOR REPORTER

The Leander City Council will hold a strategic planning session Thursday to discuss the implementation of the Leander Comprehensive Plan, including the detailed item list for putting the Plan into practice, and the city staff's proposed ordinance amendments aimed at supporting "an evolving development environment."

The Council will also host a Developer Forum to update the development community about the proposed update and receive public feedback from them on it, although Open Meeting rules means it will have to be

focused on just these discussion items.

These items will be discussed starting at 4 p.m. during the Strategic Planning Session held before the regular Council meeting. Since it is not part of the regular meeting, no formal action will be taken and any ordinance changes will be brought back before the Council for a formal vote at a future meeting.

The Council will also host a Briefing Workshop at 6 p.m. before the regular Council meeting to review and discuss the City of Leander's Water and Wastewater Cost of Service Study.

The rate model forecasts that the current

water rates will remain the same for at least the next three years, assuming projected growth continues as expected, while the sewer rates are projected to increase 5% in 2022, another 5% in 2023 and 7% in 2024.

CEDAR PARK

Cedar Park man convicted of impersonating FBI agent

By JOSH MONIZ
HCN SENIOR REPORTER

A Cedar Park man was convicted by a federal grand jury on June 28 of impersonating an FBI agent in order to obtain fentanyl patches, according to an announcement by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Jonathan Jefferson Ferris, 52, was convicted of two felony counts of False Personation of an Officer or Employee of the United States, which carry sentences of up to three years in federal prison each.

Ferris reportedly entered a pharmacy in Temple on multiple occasions between July and August 2019 to fill a prescription for fentanyl patches while claiming to be an out-of-town FBI agent on temporary assignment, even providing fraudulent documents and wearing a lanyard with a

fake FBI identification card.

Notably, the pharmacy is one of only seven pharmacies in Texas that can fill out-of-state prescriptions. While filling prescriptions, he would provide an envelope that claimed to be addressed to simply "FBI Chief" in Austin with the official Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation Seal on it.

Investigators from DEA Diversion and the Cedar Park Police Department helped the FBI with the investigation.

Ferris is expected to be sentenced on Sept. 29.



JONATHAN JEFFERSON FERRIS

More hugs Less Zoom

Get Vaccinated

COVID-19 MODERNA
VACCINES

CONSULTS AND SHOT
CLINICS

Free!!
(Insurance or CARES Act covered)

FAMILY MEDICAL CENTER

190 BUTTERCUP CREEK AT 183 • 512-336-5824

LET'S SAFELY GET BACK TO: FAMILY TIME

After a year of being told to keep our distance, it's time to join together and get the vaccine. Getting the vaccine helps us all. The doctors right here in our community will tell you: it's safe and effective.

OUR CLINICS ARE OPEN - CALL FOR AN APPOINTMENT

WILLIAMSON COUNTY AND CITIES HEALTH DISTRICT

512-943-3600 | WWW.WCCHD.ORG

CEDAR PARK



ELIZA J. SANCHEZ

The next event will be Oct. 24.

The Healthy Kids Running Series is set for fall activities

From STAFF REPORTS

The Healthy Kids Running Series (HKRS) has been encouraging kids nationwide to “Get Up and Go” since its inception in Philadelphia 11 years ago and has been a spring and fall fixture in Cedar Park for the past five years. As parents of very active children and residents of Cedar Park, Kelly Gin and Patrick Walz are proud to help bring the series to children ages 2-14 again this fall, starting up again on Oct. 24 at Milburn Park. In the spring, the group had over 350 runners and were once again one of the largest series in the nation out of almost 250 locations. The Walzs like to describe HKRS as the little league for runners where all ability levels are welcomed. They said they take pride in being an inclusive sporting activity in which everyone can participate.

To allow everyone to compete, there are different race divisions based on grade level and gender. Children as young as ages 2-3 can race the 50 yard dash, with progressively longer distances all the way up to middle-schoolers, who run 1 mile. This fall a new division has been introduced, the Challenger Division, which is a 75-yard dash for all ability levels. Those with special abilities who are not able to compete in their age/grade designated categories, can participate in this division and volunteers and parents can help them make their way down the course if needed. There are two series per year, in the spring and the fall, and each are five weeks in duration. The runners compete each week for a chance to earn points, and at the end of the series, the top three boys and girls with the most points in their respective age division earn a trophy. All participants

receive a Healthy Kids Running Series technical shirt in their race packet and a finisher’s medal after race 5. The Walzs say they are passionate about this series and believe in its mission - to promote an active healthy lifestyle and to teach persistence through running. It does not matter where a runner starts or how slow or fast he or she runs, we see growth in grit and determination over each 5 week season. There are so many benefits to running, including both physical and mental health. Registration for this fall’s series has already begun. Each race will be held Sundays at 4p.m. at Milburn Park, on Oct. 24, 31, Nov. 7, 14, and Dec. 5. To register a child, volunteer, or become a sponsor, please visit the website at www.HealthyKidsRunningSeries.org, and register for the Cedar Park location.

Cap Metro's service disrupted

From STAFF REPORTS

Capital Metro's MetroRail will not operate now through Sunday, July 18 due to construction and maintenance work on the rail.



BUS ALTERNATIVES

Supplemental Route 454 will bring riders from Leander, Lakeline and Howard Stations directly to 4th and Trinity Streets, near Downtown Station. CapMetro also has alternative service on MetroBus and MetroRapid routes from most MetroRail station locations that can take you downtown, though not directly to Downtown Station.

Leander: MetroExpress 985
Lakeline: MetroExpress Routes 985
Howard: Supplemental Route 454
Kramer: MetroBus 3 and MetroRapid 803 (at Domain)
Crestview: MetroBus 1 & 7 and MetroRapid 801
Highland: MetroBus 7
MLK: MetroBus 18

Plaza Saltillo: MetroBus 4 (on 7th Street)

TRAFFIC DISRUPTION ON HOWARD LANE
Construction will disrupt traffic on Howard Lane near Howard Station the weekend of July 16-18, for 48 hours. Alternative routes for this closure are more scarce, so plan ahead.

PUBLIC MEETINGS



- **WILLIAMSON COUNTY — WILCO.ORG**
The Williamson County Commissioners Court is the county’s governing body. Commissioners meet beginning at 9:30 each Tuesday morning at the Williamson County Courthouse in downtown Georgetown. Agendas and packets are available, and the meetings are streamed live, on the county’s website. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register.
- **LEANDER INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT — LEANDERISD.ORG**
Leander ISD Board of Trustees meet the third and fourth Thursday each month at 6:15 p.m. at 1900 Cougar Country Dr. in Cedar Park. Meetings

- are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register. You can find agendas, board meeting packets and a live stream on the district’s website.
- **LAGO VISTA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT — LAGOVISTAISD.NET**
Lago Vista ISD Board of Trustees meet at 6:15 p.m. on the second Monday of the month at 8039 Bar-K Ranch Road in Lago Vista. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register. You can find agendas and board meeting packets on the district’s website.
- **CITY OF CEDAR PARK — CEDARPARKTEXAS.GOV**
Agendas and minutes for all boards and commissions are

- available, and many meetings are streamed live, on the city’s website.
- **CEDAR PARK CITY COUNCIL**
Meets at 6 p.m. the second and fourth Thursday of each month at City Council Chambers, 450 Cypress Creek Road, Building 4. Council agendas and packets are available on the city’s website. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register.
- **CITY OF LEANDER — LEANDERTX.GOV**
Agendas and minutes for all boards and commissions are available, and City Council meetings are streamed live, on the city’s website.
- **LEANDER CITY COUNCIL**
Meets at 6 p.m. the first and

- third Thursday of each month in the City Council Chambers, Pat Bryson Municipal Hall, 201 N. Brushy Street. Council agendas and packets are available on the city’s website. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register.
- **CITY OF LAGO VISTA — LAGOVISTATXAS.ORG**
Agendas and minutes for all boards and commissions are available on the city’s website.
- **LAGO VISTA CITY COUNCIL**
Meets 6:30 p.m. the first and third Thursday of each month in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 5803 Thunderbird Drive. Council agendas and packets are available on the city’s website. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register.



CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

LEGISLATURE RETURNS FOR SPECIAL SESSION

The Texas Legislature convened in special session last Thursday and GOP legislators introduced a fresh set of voting bills after Democrats blocked an earlier attempt during the regular session by walking out in May, preventing a quorum. HB3 and SB 1 don’t include some of the more controversial measures that were in the previous bill, such as restricting voting on Sundays. KUT.org reported the new bills include new ID requirements for people voting by mail and banning local election officials from sending vote-by-mail applications that have not been requested by the applicant. The measures, still largely opposed by Democrats and voting rights groups, also ban drive-through voting and extended hours during early voting. Those backing the new bills say those extended hours encourage voter fraud, though there is no evident of widespread fraud during the 2020 election. Republican lawmakers are pushing for a full House floor vote this week. Gov. Greg Abbott announced the topics to be considered during the special session the day before it opened. Besides the voting bills, they include:

- Bail reform to “protect the public from accused criminals who may be released on bail.”
- Border security with increased funding to support law-enforcement agencies and counties.
- Social media censorship legislation to protect social-media users from being silenced by social media companies based on their viewpoints.
- Restoring funding to the Legislature and legislative agencies that was vetoed by Abbott after the walkout.
- Family violence prevention legislation to provide funding for education to middle school and high school students about dating violence, domestic violence and child abuses. Parents would have the right to opt their children out of such programs.
- Youth sports measures to revive legislation passed by the Senate that bans transgender students from participating in UIL athletic competitions “designated for the sex opposite to the student’s sex at birth.”
- Abortion-inducing drugs legislation that would prohibit providing such drugs by mail or delivery service.
- Thirteenth Check legislation to allow a one-time supplemental payment of benefits under the Teacher Retirement System of Texas.
- Bills targeting “critical race theory” and restricting how current events and the country’s history of racism is taught in Texas public schools.
- Appropriation bills targeting property-tax relief, protecting children in the state’s foster-care system and safeguarding the state from potential cybersecurity threats.

PUC ORDERED TO IMPROVE ELECTRIC RELIABILITY

Abbott also last week directed the Public Utility Commission to make major changes “to ensure the reliability of the Texas power grid,” the Houston Chronicle and other media outlets reported. Abbott asked the PUC, which oversees the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, to improve maintenance on power plants and speed development of some transmission projects. “The objective of these directives is to ensure that all Texans have access to reliable, safe, and affordable power,” Abbott wrote in a letter released last Tuesday. In response, PUC chairman Peter Lake in a letter to Abbott expressed “wholehearted agreement with its contents.” Besides the widespread black-out during the mid-February storm, a heat wave in June prompted ERCOT, which maintains the state’s electric grid, to urge Texans to conserve electricity as usage approached peak capacity.

\$4.1 BILLION MORE IN SCHOOL STIMULUS FUNDS

Texas will receive another \$4.1 billion in federal stimulus funding for its public schools, the San Antonio Express-News reported. The U.S. Department of Education announced last week that it had approved the state’s plans for spending \$12.4 billion that was allocated to the state. According to the Express-News, the top priority for the Texas Education Agency is bolstering the mental and emotional health needs of Texas students by expanding tutoring and other methods. TEA estimates Texas students lost 5.7 months of learning during the pandemic school year. “The approval of these plans enables states to receive vital, additional American Rescue Plan funds to quickly and safely reopen schools for full-time, in-person learning; meet students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs; and address disparities in access to educational opportunity that were exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic,” Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said in a news release.

NUMBER OF COVID-19 CASES IN STATE RISES

At 12,426, the number of new COVID-19 cases in Texas increased 18% in the past week when compared to the previous week, according to the Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University. The number of new deaths in the past week dropped slightly to 151. Hospitalizations of lab-confirmed COVID-19 patients in the state were on the rise, with 1,927 currently in Texas hospitals as of Sunday, according to Texas Department of State Health Services. The number of Texans fully vaccinated crossed the 12 million mark this week, DSHS reported. The rate of vaccinations in the state has slowed significantly in recent weeks, despite troubling reports of the spread of the delta variant of COVID-19.

Gary Borders, a veteran award-winning Texas journalist, compiled this report. He published a number of community newspapers in Texas during a 30-year span, including in Longview, Fort Stockton, Nacogdoches and, once upon a time, the Hill Country News in Cedar Park. Email: gborders@texaspress.com.

LETTERS POLICY

■ 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.

SEND LETTERS TO:
USPS Hill Country News, P.O. Box 1777, Cedar Park, Texas 78630
EMAIL editor@hillcountrynews.com

HILL COUNTRY NEWS

SCOTT COLEMAN
■ Publisher
publisher@hillcountrynews.com

RICHARD STONE
■ Editor
editor@hillcountrynews.com

KIRSTEN FOLTZ
■ Bookkeeper/Ad Sales/Circulation
kirsten.foltz@hillcountrynews.com

ZACH SMITH
■ Sports Editor
sports@hillcountrynews.com

JOSH MONIZ
■ Senior Reporter
josh.moniz@hillcountrynews.com

LILLY CHANDLER
■ Content Editor
news@hillcountrynews.com

OFFICE HOURS:
9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday - Friday
715 Discovery Blvd, Suite 304
Cedar Park, TX 78613
(512) 259-4449

TO REPORT NEWS:
Call (512) 259-4449
or email:
news@hillcountrynews.com

TO REPORT SPORTS SCORES:
email scores@hillcountrynews.com

ADVERTISING:
For information on advertising in the Hill Country News, in print or online, call 512- 259-4449 or email advertising@hillcountrynews.com

BILLING:
Address billing inquiries to:
billing@hillcountrynews.com

CORRECTIONS:
We strive for accuracy and transparency in our reporting. If you believe that we have made a factual error in reporting, please call (512) 259-4449 or email editor@hillcountrynews.com with a link to the story in question, along with information on what you believe is factually incorrect in the reporting. Individual columns in the Hill Country News do not necessarily reflect the newspaper's editorial opinion.

FULL ACCESS SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
■ \$35.00 per year in the Hill Country News Designated Market Area including Cedar Park, Leander, Jonestown, Lago Vista, and portions of Round Rock and northwest Austin.
■ \$40.00 per year throughout Williamson and Travis counties.
■ \$46 per year throughout Texas.
■ \$58 throughout the contiguous U.S.

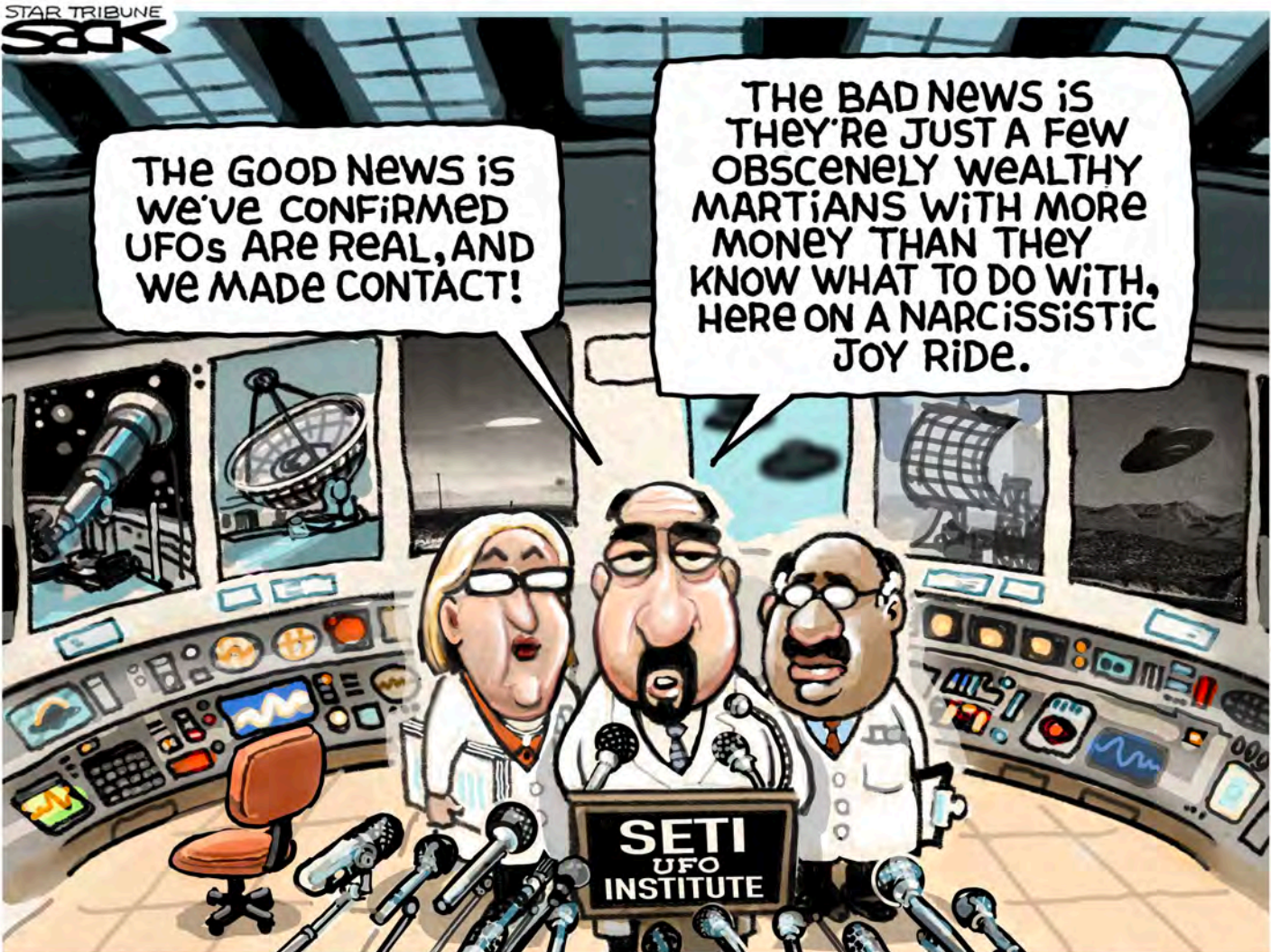
All subscriptions must be prepaid. Delivery inside Cedar Park and Leander may be made by carrier or mail. Full access subscriptions include access to hillcountrynews.com as well as full digital replica (e-edition) which may include updated content and advertising.

POSTMASTER:
Periodicals postage paid at: Cedar Park, TX (USPS 019423)
Send address changes to: P.O. Box 1777, Cedar Park, TX 78630

PUBLISHED BY:
Chionsini Children, LTD
715 Discovery Blvd, Suite 304
Cedar Park, TX 78613
© 2021 Hill Country News
All rights reserved.



EDITORIAL CARTOON



TEXAS TRIBUNE ANALYSIS

Gov. Abbott is running up the score

Over the last couple of weeks, Gov. Greg Abbott's fortunes have lined up nicely. Moments like this are rare and often don't last long in Texas politics, so take note.

He's only a few days into the second special session of his governorship — one that's focused on more restrictive voting and election laws. It includes other issues of interest to Republican officials and voters in particular, including bans on abortion drugs, teaching critical race theory, restrictions on transgender athletes in public schools, and money for policing and for building a wall on the state's border with Mexico.

Those issues could be helpful to Republican incumbents looking to fend off primary challengers, and while we're at it, to Democrats who want to show their opposition to some of Abbott's ideas.

Specifically, the agenda could make it harder for conservative GOP challengers to attack incumbent Republicans as insufficiently conservative.

That would work for the governor, if he needed the help. But Abbott isn't in political trouble — just look at the smoke coming out of his chimney recently.

First was the announcement that former President Donald Trump, who remains very popular with Republican voters in Texas, was endorsing Abbott for reelection.

Keep tabs on our events - your chance to hear lawmakers live

Then came word that the governor raised \$18.7 million in the last 10 days of June, bringing his cash-on-hand balance to \$55



ROSS
RAMSEY

TEXAS TRIBUNE

million. The best-known candidate is starting the 2022 governor's race with enough money to bury everyone, even if he wasn't already well known.

If you didn't think the current set of Republican challengers to the governor were gnats, the Trump endorsement and Abbott's fundraising results should end the argument.

In case that's not enough, Abbott's campaign released "internal polling" — a phrase that hides the campaign's deep desire for the public to see the results — that shows the governor getting 69%, former Texas GOP Chair Allen West at 13%, and Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller and former state Sen. Don Huffines both at 3%. Miller, who has some real-life rodeo experience, apparently knows when to stay away from the big animals; he has said he will seek reelection to his current post in 2022.

The season is just starting and maybe someone has a magic lantern, but Abbott has everything an incumbent could want right now — nothing at all to fret about.

That's going to make him a bigger problem for Texas Democrats. They don't yet have a challenger of their own for the governor's race, the top contest on the ticket next year.

Second, as soon as census numbers are available, the Legislature — which has Republican majorities in both houses — will draw political maps that will be used in the 2022 elections.

All of that is encouraging to down-ballot Republicans, who'll be running behind a juggernaut at the top of the ticket on maps drawn by their fellow conservatives to give them every possible edge. And the incumbents in that crowd will be boasting about how they voted on red-meat issues in the current special session.

If they get their way with the special session's signature issue, they'll be running in an election under new laws that voting rights activists say are particularly hard on people of color, and Democrats.

They've set the table for a Republican-flavored election cycle, if the current special session goes well. The Republicans in the Legislature have plenty to fight about, if they want to, as demonstrated in the regular session that saw differences on voting law, restrictions on transgender athletes, responses to February's electric grid failure and other issues.

Some of those are on the agenda now. Some, like the grid, didn't make the governor's list. Despite the differences within the GOP, things in Texas government and politics are going their way right now — especially for that guy who lives in the Governor's Mansion.

Ross Ramsey is the executive editor of the Texas Tribune, a non-profit, reader-supported news organization focused on statewide legislative and policy issues.

GUEST VIEWPOINT

Yes. Get a vaccination

By JAY AMBROSE
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

It's seldom that conservatives get me frowning as much as regressive progressives do, but quite a few are arguing that people should not take coronavirus vaccines if they don't want to, and the frown is forming permanent wrinkles.

They frame the issue as a matter of rights when in fact it's a matter of everyday morality. By the calculation of most of the world's medical scientists, not taking a vaccine increases the chances of infection with which you may kill yourself, your parents, your grandparents, your next-door neighbors, your fellow workers, the stranger you sat next to at a bar or the last person you held hands with. It's not just about you and your rights, but about the immediate and even long-term harm you may do to others, a question of basic human decency.

Look, cancel culture is out there and conservatives may visit it soon, too, so let me concede a right for people to be unenlightened on this score. Yet about all that right means is that you are not going to face criminal penalties for avoiding a needle pushed into your arm. At the same time, private businesses have a right to fire you or not to hire you if you don't get shots. Shots make it a lot easier get rid of lockdowns. After all, those in charge are obligated to protect other workers and customers as best they can, as in letting you know you cannot come to work with grenades, arsenic and a Bowie knife strapped around your waist.

A supervisor could tell you to take that stuff off, just as airlines, subways, buses and other modes of transportation are perfectly entitled to refuse rides to people who have not had shots because, here again, they could either infect others or be infected themselves.

It's true that a minority of scientists may think vaccines unnecessary right now, and if you've dug into this and arrived at what

seems an impenetrable truth, you probably haven't; science seldom works like that. An unpleasant truth, for example, is that new virus variants are on the march. Certainly, there are exceptions about vaccines like everything else; given the statistics, I myself am convinced there is next to no case where children under 12 should have them. But it appears undeniable that vaccines have made an enormous difference in saving lives and that the pandemic is getting close to at least a conditional surrender if we fight on.

That is not the same as saying we should go on forever in a desperate fear-the-virus mode. Your chances of being infected may be slim and the chances that you would die or actually kill someone are unbelievably slim if you or the other person aren't at least over 60. But given the reach of the pandemic and even the non-fatal harm it can do, that is still not argument enough at the moment for no more

vaccines.

I have no wish to end this trying to sound as if I am the last word on a technical issue, but here is what I would say. If you have not had shots, visit a physician and ask him or her whether you should. I would also argue that the government should issue certificates to everyone who has had a shot and they should be as obliged to carry them as auto drivers are to carry a license. If you believe without consultation that shots will sicken you or that they are some kind of metaphysical curse, fine. Proceed with your life in whatever way works for you, but don't get on airplanes and fight with flight attendants who recognize obligations in this life.

Jay Ambrose is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service. Readers may email him at speakto-jay@aol.com.) ©2021 Tribune Content Agency, LLC



NEWS

TEXAS TRIBUNE | TEXAS LEGISLATURE

House Republicans vote to track down absent Democrats

By **PATRICK SVITEK**
and **CASSANDRA POLLOCK**
THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

A showdown in the Texas House was locked into place Tuesday after the chamber voted overwhelmingly to send law enforcement after Democrats who left the state a day earlier in protest of a GOP priority elections legislation.

More than 50 House Democrats left Monday for Washington, D.C., to deny the chamber a quorum — the minimum number of lawmakers needed to conduct business — as it takes up voting restrictions and other Republican priorities in a special session.

The impact of the House move is unclear since Texas law enforcement lacks jurisdiction in the

nation's capital.

Meeting shortly after 10 a.m. Tuesday, the House quickly established that it lacked the two-thirds quorum required to do business, with only 80 of 150 members participating in a test vote.

Then Rep. Will Metcalf, R-Conroe, chair of the House Administration Committee, moved to issue what is known as a “call of the House” to try to regain quorum. That motion passed 76-4.

Metcalf offered another motion, asking that “the sergeant at arms, or officers appointed by him, send for all absentees ... under warrant of arrest if necessary,” effectively making the missing Democrats legislative fugitives. That motion also passed 76-4.

Metcalf’s motions were opposed by four Democrats who were present on the House floor Tuesday morning: Reps. Ryan Guillen of Rio Grande City, Tracy King of Batesville, Eddie Morales Jr. of Eagle Pass and John Turner of Dallas.

Under a call of the House, according to chamber rules, all entrances or doors leading out of the hall are locked, and members are not permitted to leave without permission in writing from the speaker.

Morales said members had been told informally that House Speaker Dade Phelan, R-Beaumont, planned to excuse lawmakers daily in the afternoons as long as the chamber is under a call of the House.

“We don’t have to be here 24/7,”

he said.

After Metcalf’s motions passed, Rep. Tony Tinderholt, R-Arlington, sought to move to strip absent Democrats of their committee leadership posts if they do not return by noon Wednesday. The motion did not immediately get a vote, and in a subsequent exchange with Rep. Morgan Meyer, R-Dallas, House Speaker Dade Phelan, R-Beaumont, said committee chairs and vice chairs cannot be removed from their positions under the current chamber rules.

Meanwhile, House Democrats held a news conference Tuesday morning in D.C. reiterating their intention to stay outside of the state through the end of the special session.

Rep. Chris Turner, who chairs the House Democratic Caucus, said any negotiations about Democrats returning to Austin would have to start with Abbott reversing his veto of funding for the legislative branch.

Democrats are challenging the governor in court over that veto, which Abbott issued after two of his priority bills — including the election legislation — died after House Democrats walked out of the chamber in the final hours of the regular session. Funding for the Legislature, staffers and legislative agencies is set to run out Aug. 31.

The Texas Tribune is a reader-supported, non-profit news organization focused on statewide legislative and policy issues. This story has been edited for space.

COVID-19

from page A1

On Monday, the incidence was at 6.17 per 100,000 people, which has more than doubled in the past week, and continues to climb. On July 1, the infection rate was 2.5 per 100,000.

The TSA Region O hospitalization has also increased daily in the past week, which is the second criteria for moving up a phase, public health officials said. Hospitalization rate remains low at 2.47% but has doubled in the past seven days. Age ranges with the most cases are those 18-30 years, followed by those 31-50 years.

In the last seven days, public health officials have reported 253 new infection cases. The is more than double the number of new cases reported the previous week.

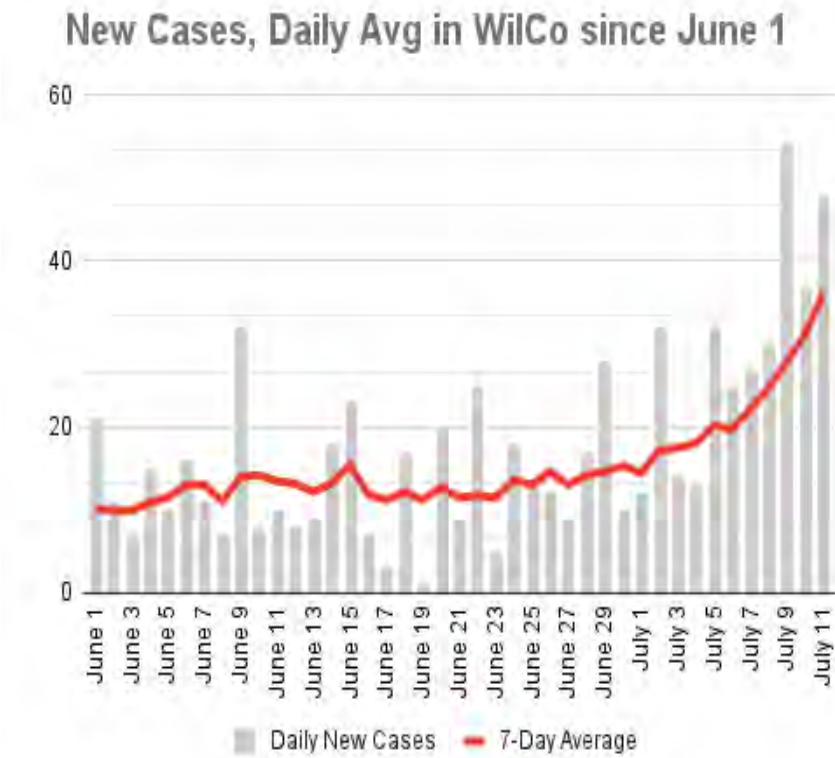
Over that same time, the rolling seven-day average of new cases reported has more than doubled, from 14.43 to 36.14.

There have been no new fatalities reported.

According to the most recent data from the Texas Department of State Health Services, 68.38% of eligible WilCo residents have received at least one dose of a vaccine. The data say that 59.48% of eligible residents are fully vaccinated.

“Vaccination remains the single most proven effective way to stop the spread of COVID-19 and our best tool to end the pandemic,” said Stewart.

Public health officials said that the



color-based phase guidelines are not changes to local rules or regulations for businesses; they are guidelines for individual actions and behaviors based on levels of risk of exposure in the community.

“It is important to note that everyone should continue to follow any additional requirements of local businesses, venues, and schools regardless of vaccination status or stage,” officials said in the

press release. “The recommendations for partially or unvaccinated individuals have not changed. Additionally, residents are reminded that wearing a mask, even when fully vaccinated, is an effective tool to reduce spread of many respiratory illnesses.”

The COVID-19 dashboard will reflect the orange phase update today and dashboard updates will resume back to daily updates, Monday through Friday.

WALK-OUT

from page A1

chambers, vigorously argue it. But in the end, it needs to be settled here, where they are elected to serve.”

“I can and will call special session after special session,” warned Gov. Greg Abbott. “As soon as they come back in the state of Texas, they will be arrested and cabined inside the Texas Capitol until they get their job done.”

Those threats did not move the Democrats.

“We are not going to buckle to the big lie ... that has resulted in anti-democratic legislation throughout the United States,” State Rep. Rafeal Anchia said in a press conference from Washington Tuesday morning. “We said no during the regular session and we’re saying no during the special session.”

When the Texas House was gavelled into session Tuesday morning, only 80 representatives were present. Only four Democrats were in attendance. As a result, the Speaker of the House, Dade Phelan, ordered the chamber locked — so no one, including Republicans, could leave — and ordered that any missing representative be arrested and forced back to the Capitol in Austin.

Texas law enforcement has no jurisdiction in Washington DC.

The Democrats lack the votes to keep the Republican-controlled Legislature from passing new voting restrictions, along with the other conservative priorities on Gov. Greg Abbott’s 11-item agenda for the special session.

Their only path is to deny the House enough votes to pass legislation.

SUDOKU

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

Level: Intermediate

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test.

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

ANSWER:



AUSTIN TELCO

FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

512-302-5555 | www.atfcu.org

24 Locations



80th
ANNIVERSARY

Proudly Serving the
Austin Community Since 1941



Now Hiring!

Part-Time Tellers

\$15+ Per Hour

Apply Online at
www.atfcu.org/careers.htm

An Equal Opportunity Employer



MG FLOORS

WOOD TILE CARPET

Your friendly hometown floor store!

- Call or email today for a free estimate
- Visit our 5,000 sq ft showroom & browse our samples
- Professional installation
- 30+ years experience

Flooring for every need!

8863 Anderson Mill Road, #102-104 | Austin, TX 78729
512-238-6190
MGFloors@yahoo.com | www.mgfloors.com

Austin Telco Offers Loans to Fit Your Needs

Auto Loans

New, Used, and Refinance

as low as

1.90%

APR¹

Up to 66 Months

Home Equity Loans

No Closing Costs²

as low as

2.75%

APR¹

5 Years Fixed

¹Annual Percentage Rate. Actual rate may vary depending on credit qualifications. Rates and terms are subject to change without notice. This Auto Loan rate is applicable for the purchase of a new or used vehicle, or the refinance of an existing vehicle loan from another lender. New auto loan of \$20,000 for 66 months at 1.90% APR will have a monthly payment of \$319. ²Austin Telco pays all standard closing costs for new Home Equity/HELOC loans below \$100,000. These costs include: title search, flood determination, credit report, and county filing fees. Refinances of existing Austin Telco Home Equity/HELOC loans are subject to a \$300 refinance fee. If necessary, additional fees for member requested appraisal, survey, and/or title company closing costs will be the responsibility of the borrower. Estimated costs will be disclosed upon receipt of application. Loans of \$100,000 and above may require an appraisal, title policy, and title company closing costs at the member's expense. Hazard insurance is required. Rates and terms on loans above \$200,000 may vary. All loans are subject to standard credit approval. Federally Insured by NCUA. Austin Telco NMLS #422857



EQUAL HOUSING
LENDER

HBO narrowly tops Netflix with 130 nominations

By STEPHEN BATTAGLIO
LOS ANGELES TIMES

HBO — with the help of its streaming service HBO Max — landed the most 2021 Emmy Awards nominations of any media outlet, edging last year’s leader Netflix by a single nod.

The WarnerMedia-owned premium cable network scored 94 nominations while the streaming service HBO Max delivered another 36. That was enough to top Netflix, which landed 129 nominations, the Television Academy announced Tuesday.

HBO was helped by strong showings for “Lovecraft Country,” and “Mare of Easttown,” which starred Kate Winslet as a troubled detective in a Pennsylvania town; each scored 18 nominations. “Lovecraft Country,” a horror series set in the segregated U.S. during the 1950s, was canceled last week after a single season.

Netflix was down 19% from its record 160 nominations in 2020. As expected, the streaming giant’s royal family drama “The Crown” was a major nomination driver, scoring 24. “The Crown” and the Disney+ series “The Mandalorian,” which also had 24 nominations, tied for the most nominations of any program.

Netflix also saw 18 nominations for “The Queen’s Gambit,” the wildly popular limited series starring Anya Taylor-Joy as a young chess master in the 1960s.

The Shonda Rhimes-produced period drama “Bridgerton” landed 12 nominations for Netflix, including one for breakout star Rege-Jean Page, who was only committed to the program for one season.

HBO also earned nine nominations for “I May Destroy You,” the critically acclaimed limited series with Michaela Coel as a young writer in London trying to unravel the mystery of a sexual assault she cannot remember.

HBO did not have the help of its most buzz-worthy show and multi-Emmy winner, “Succession,” as the addictive family business drama did not air during the 2021 eligibility period, which ran from June 1, 2020 through May 31.

But HBO Max, which launched last year to push WarnerMedia into



Shane (Griffin Matthews), right, and Cassie (Kaley Cuoco) in “The Flight Attendant.”

the streaming landscape, broke through with 15 nominations for its comedy series “Hacks,” the tale of a boomer stand-up comedian (Jean Smart) collaborating with a perpetually dissatisfied Gen Z writer (Hannah Einbinder). Both actresses were nominated and the series is up for best comedy.

“The Flight Attendant” with Kaley Cuoco is another HBO Max contender with nine nominations, including best comedy. Cuoco earned a best actress nominee for her portrayal of a partying airline employee who wakes up in a hotel room next to a murdered man she slept with the night before.

The major category winners for the 73rd Emmy Awards will be presented on Sept. 19 in a live telecast airing on CBS.

While the Emmy Awards no longer draw massive TV audiences — last year the ceremony pulled a record low 6.1 million viewers — the industry recognition they provide are valuable to streaming services looking for any advantage in marketing their wares amid the

massive number of available viewing choices.

The newer streaming services also made an impression on Television Academy voters, as Walt Disney Co.’s Disney+ brought in 71 nominations, up from 19 in its inaugural year.

Disney’s innovative limited series WandaVision, based on a Marvel Comics franchise that includes homages to past sitcoms, scored 23 nominations including acting nods for its leads Elizabeth Olsen and Paul Bettany, and supporting player Kathryn Hahn.

Disney’s “Star Wars” bounty hunter series “The Mandalorian” also had a strong showing with 24 nominations for its second season, after landing 15 in 2020.

Disney+ also benefited from the pop culture phenomenon of “Hamilton.” The filmed version of the Broadway smash by Lin-Manuel Miranda captured 12 nominations, including best made for TV movie.

Disney also showed creative muscle with its established streaming service Hulu landing 25

nominations, including 21 for third dystopian drama “The Handmaid’s Tale.”

Apple TV+ counted 20 nominations for its lauded fish-out-water comedy “Ted Lasso,” which stars Jason Sudeikis as an American college football coach hired to lead a Premier League soccer team. The streamer saw its nomination total grow to 35, up from 18 in 2020.

Comcast Corp.’s streaming service Peacock landed two nominations, while Paramount+, owned by ViacomCBS, was recognized with six nods.

With its multi-Emmy winner “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel” not airing in the eligibility period, Amazon’s Prime Video saw its nomination tally drop to 18 after hitting 30 in 2020. Superhero series “The Boys” led the service with five nominations, including one for best drama.

Streaming and premium cable networks have overshadowed the broadcast networks at the Emmys for the last decade, a trend continues in 2021.

Comcast’s NBC came out on top

among the traditional networks with 46 nominations, driven largely by the durable sketch comedy series “Saturday Night Live,” which landed 21. NBC was also recognized for its prestige drama “This Is Us,” with six nominations, and “Kenan,” which picked up a best actor nomination for its star Kenan Thompson. Thompson was also nominated for his work on “Saturday Night Live.”

CBS finished second with 26 nominations, including three for the sitcom “Mom,” topping Disney’s ABC, which had 23.

Among ad-supported cable networks, Walt Disney Co.’s FX led the way with 16 nominations, including nine for “Pose,” its drama depicting New York’s underground ball culture. Other networks with multiple nominations included VH-1 (11), National Geographic (10), Bravo (eight) and CNN (four). History, Discovery Channel and Comedy Central each had three nominations.

©2021 Los Angeles Times. Visit at latimes.com. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

FREE DATE CHANGES ON 2021 TOURS*

BEST OF HAWAII FOUR-ISLAND TOUR

12 days, departs year-round

Oahu • Hawaii Island • Kauai • Maui — Enjoy a fully guided 4-island Hawaiian vacation with centrally located lodging in Waikiki on Oahu, and beachfront lodging on the “Big Island” of Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui. Guided throughout by our friendly Tour Directors—your local experts. Includes 3 inter-island flights.



FROM
\$2,349*
\$2,099*

GRAND ALASKAN CRUISE & TOUR

12 days, departs May - Sep 2021

Seattle • Vancouver • Ketchikan • Juneau • Skagway Glacier Bay • Anchorage • Denali • and more — Visit Denali National Park and Glacier Bay National Park on the same incredible trip! Cruise through the Gulf of Alaska and the Inside Passage as you discover the best of the Frontier State by land and by sea.



FROM
\$1,799*
\$1,549*

FREE ONBOARD CREDIT

CRIMSON CANYONS & MESAS NATIONAL PARKS TOUR

10 days, departs Jun - Sep 2021

Grand Canyon • Bryce Canyon Zion • Capitol Reef • Arches & Canyonlands • and more — Experience the stunningly red rocks of these 6 iconic southwestern national parks. Travel through deserts, forests, mountains, and to the very edge of the Grand Canyon in this tour.



FROM
\$1,749*
\$1,499*



promo code
N7017

CALL 1-844-260-2351

*Free date changes anytime up to 45 days prior to departure for land tours, up to 95 days prior to departure for cruise tours. Deposits and final payments remain non-refundable. Prices are per person based on double occupancy plus up to \$299 in taxes & fees. Single supplement and seasonal surcharges may apply. Add-on airfare available. Onboard Credit requires purchase of Ocean View or Balcony Cabin. Offers apply to new bookings only, made by 3/31/21. Other terms & conditions may apply. Ask your Travel Consultant for details.

TRANSFORM YOUR BATH OR SHOWER IN AS LITTLE AS ONE DAY



CALL NOW! FOR **\$500 OFF** OR **NO PAYMENTS & NO INTEREST FOR 18 MONTHS** OFFER EXPIRES 3.31.2021

855-475-0386

- Over 850 Authorized Dealers in North America
- Lifetime Warranty
- Factory-Trained & Certified Installers
- Made in the U.S.A.

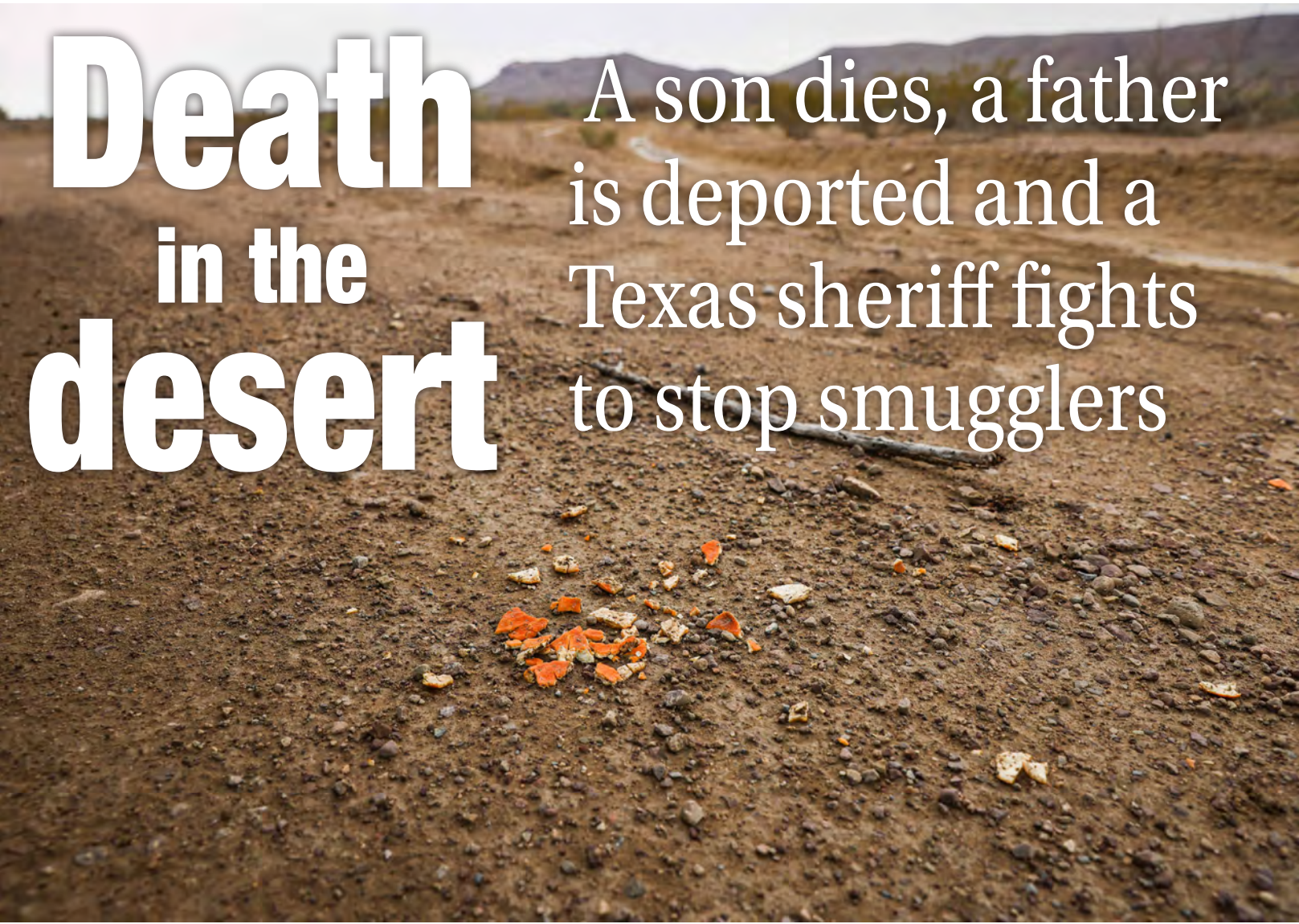


BCI BATH & SHOWER
“We make bathing safer”



Military & Senior Discounts Available

*Includes product and labor; bathtub, shower or walk-in tub and wall surround. This promotion cannot be combined with any other offer. Other restrictions may apply. This offer expires March 31, 2021. Each dealership is independently owned and operated. **Third party financing is available for those customers who qualify. See your dealer for details. ©2020 BCI Acrylic Inc.



LOLA GOMEZ/THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS/TNS

Orange peels, that a rancher gave to Raul, still lie on the ground of Chispa Road in Jeff Davis County, Texas on Thursday, June 24, 2021. Culberson County Sheriff Oscar Carrillo said he received a distress call from a rancher using a satellite phone on June 21st. The rancher had found two migrants in the desert of Texas on Chispa Road in Jeff Davis County. Raul, 35, and his son Christian, 15, both from Ecuador, were crossing the border from Mexico to the U.S. when they got lost after their smuggler abandoned them. Upon deputies' arrival to the scene, Raul was showing signs of severe dehydration, but his son Christian was already deceased.

By ALFREDO CORCHADO | THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

The sheriff drove his white pickup down a familiar dirt road past Needle Peak Mountain toward another macabre scene deep in the vast desert. Dark gray clouds formed and promptly unleashed heavy rains on a land scarred by death.

For a moment Culberson County Sheriff Oscar Carrillo wasn't sure where he had earlier been called out to see the teen's body. Then he saw the orange peels. He stopped his truck and stared at the spot where, on June 21, he responded to a call from a rancher who had discovered what the sheriff had seen too many times — two more people dying in the scorching heat. It was 109 degrees that day.

He found a 35-year-old Ecuadorian named Raul curled up under the rancher's jeep to escape the heat that hours earlier claimed his son, Christian. The high school student had just turned 15.

His father had traveled from New Jersey to Ecuador to bring his son to the U.S. He was finally going to live with his parents, who left Ecuador when the boy was 2. They'd been absent for 13 years of Christian's young life. Now, Raul was on the ground only feet away from his dead son, next to those orange peels from an orange the rancher had given Raul to help revive him. The bright peels still lay scattered on the soggy ground.

"I've grown desensitized because I've seen so many bodies, but this one hit me hard," said Carrillo, a 34-year law enforcement veteran, most of those years spent here around rural Van Horn. "The back-story of a young man who didn't want to come up north and a father who must now live with a guilt of having brought his son against his will. He was also the youngest among the victims of these reckless deaths in the desert."

Carrillo asked that the men's last names not be published because Raul, now back in Mexico, could be exposed to danger from drug cartels.

This tragic story is not only about a family's failed attempt to cross the harsh borderland on the edge of West Texas to end more than a decade of separation but also the story of one sheriff's quest to hold smugglers accountable and find justice for a growing number of victims led into death traps and abandoned in the desert.

Carrillo is determined to help families find closure by recording names, faces, video and voices of the dead and injured, including a chilling account by Raul about his 2,900-mile journey with his son, because, as Carrillo explained, "unfortunately that's become part of my job, to investigate and document these unattended deaths."

He posts many of the names and pictures of victims on his own social media page, which helps relatives looking for information about their loved ones who went missing as they tried to cross the border.

Rural Culberson County, population 2,300, is caught in the middle of a polarizing immigration debate, full of political theater and drawing the community unwanted attention. Carrillo's county straddles three other rural counties — Hudspeth, Jeff Davis and Presidio. But key roadways pass through the area: Interstates 10 and 20, State Highway 54 and one of Texas'



LOLA GOMEZ/THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS/TNS

Culberson County Sheriff Oscar Carrillo shows photos of the work his office does in answering calls involving undocumented migrants crossing the border from Mexico into the United States through Culberson County in Van Horn, Texas on Thursday, June 24, 2021.

most iconic, picturesque roads, U.S. Highway 90. The county is also about a two-hour drive from the Mexican border.

"We're always in somebody's way," said Carrillo, as he drove from Van Horn on U.S. 90 — which slices across wide-open spaces, below clouds hanging like giant cotton balls — zipping past the Prada Marfa and a permanent art installation, near the town tiny town of Valentine, with its whiff of romance.

It's also a path of destruction for a growing number of migrants dying from heat exhaustion as they try to evade immigration authorities.

"It's a beautiful highway," Carrillo said. "Deadly one, too."

Death of a son

This year, the sheriff's office has handled 13 migrant deaths — two of them in the first week of June. In recent weeks, Carrillo and his local deputies, often alongside Border Patrol agents, have rescued hundreds of migrants — found in cramped cars, U-hauls, trucks, horse trailers, recreational vehicles and railroad cars — headed for Alpine and beyond. In one case, 17 migrants were discovered in a compact Chevy Cruze.

His 10-deputy department has been part of several high-speed police chases, often pursuing vehicles driven by U.S. citizens eager for quick cash who are working for Mexican smuggling organizations.

The department has recorded accounts of desperate migrants breaking into remote, often empty ranch homes looking for food and water. And they've heard stories from ranchers complaining of migrants trespassing on their property, leaving behind piles of trash, including empty plastic bottles and clothes.

In one case, a desperate migrant abandoned by his smuggler set an isolated home on fire to send a distress signal.

The journey for Raul and his son ended just past bountiful pecan orchards, just before Chispa Road where towering mountains and the Rio Grande divide Texas and Mexico. The two had been trying to

reach U.S. 90. They trekked alone for three days through the desert after their paid "foot guy" abandoned them for unexplained reasons and went north in a different direction with four other people.

Smugglers leave behind injured migrants or those considered too slow to keep up. Some die in rugged West Texas, exposed to the elements.

Raul was dressed in camouflage. Christian was wearing jeans and a polo shirt. An empty water bottle was next to him. His body was taken to a funeral home in Alpine.

Worried because she had not heard from her husband and child, the boy's mother reached out to a group that helps families find missing relatives on June 22, according to William Murillo of New York City-based 1800migrante.com an organization focused on providing legal service for Ecuadorean migrants.

Murillo said the mother, identified as Martha Quezada, told him she had not heard from Raul and her son since June 18. She said she and Raul were divorced.

Hours later, the group found and shared the news with Quezada: Her son was gone. She was devastated and angry, according to Murillo.

She had signed documents to authorize the underage boy to travel from Quito to Mexico City. From there, the father and son traveled to Chihuahua City and eventually to the border city of Ojinaga, across from Presidio, where they set off on their grueling journey. It was their second attempt to cross within a month, Quezada told Murillo.

Quezada, who declined to be interviewed, released a statement through Murillo calling for privacy and respect for "the family's immense pain."

She also pleaded with other undocumented parents living in the United States to reconsider any plans to have their children sent north: "Don't do it. It's too dangerous, and you may lose your treasure as has happened to me."

Raul was transferred to a hospital in El Paso with life-threatening

injuries. He was released June 24 and was promptly expelled to Mexico under the pandemic-era health order Title 42, according to a U.S. Customs and Border Protection spokesman. His whereabouts are unknown.

"These criminal organizations do not care about the human beings they are smuggling. They only care about the money they can gain from exploiting them," said Big Bend Sector Border Patrol Chief Sean L. McGoffin.

The Ecuadorian Consulate in Houston confirmed Raul's injuries and death of his son, but, citing privacy, they declined to comment further.

Carrillo calls the actions by smugglers "criminal," and also blames U.S. prosecutors for not holding most of them accountable. "Why are we putting ourselves at risk, the public at risk, if at the end of the day, nobody's gonna get prosecuted? They'll deport the deportables, but there's no real accountability."

The Department of Justice responded to questions about smuggling prosecutions by saying, "Our office works closely with federal law enforcement, and we continue to vigorously prosecute human smuggling cases when sufficient evidence is presented."

That last day
The sun sets over a desert rain. A striking rainbow forms overhead. Carrillo jumps back on his truck and heads home to Van Horn, past Needle Peak, which locals here simply refer to as Loma de Aguja. The truck roars through an angry rainstorm that instantly fills gushing arroyos, carrying empty water bottles.

A native of El Paso, he once worked the oil fields in Midland before going into law enforcement. He's gradually seen his duties shift. Nowadays, aside from carrying his assault rifle, taser, ballistic vest, water and food, he also carries body bags and a backboard to rescue injured migrants.

"They say they come for the promise of the American Dream," Carrillo said. "There's no American Dream. The American Dream is

being put in the back of a border patrol van, or shipped in a coffin back home. How is that an American Dream?"

Along the dirt road, he points to white posts painted with shades of purple, part of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's border security effort. If you cross a purple post, you are trespassing.

Carrillo shakes his head. "The governor assumes these people know the difference between a purple or regular post. And he's bringing in guardsmen from Florida, South Dakota? What do they know about the border? It's just a show."

He said Culberson County signed on for the governor's recent border disaster declaration, "but not for political reasons. I'm just practical. We need to be reimbursed for the \$30,000 we spent on the migrants who've died so far."

He said the influx of migrants coincided with the new Biden administration "New administration. New hope," he said with a touch of sarcasm.

The radio scanner goes quiet. Carrillo looks for drones above, boasting that U.S. technology is so much more effective these days, more so than a wall. Then he talks about the last time he drove this dirt road. It was with Raul, who was dehydrated and in need of medical attention.

"I kept thinking if I could keep him talking, keep him alert, maybe he has a chance," Carrillo said. "I didn't want him to go to sleep, and he seemed like he was blacking out."

It was a seven-minute ride, evidenced by the length of the audio the sheriff recorded where he peppers Raul with questions:

"You were abandoned?" Carrillo asks.

"Yes," Raul replies. Raul and Christian paid smugglers \$27,000 for the trip. They'd been out in the desert for three days, getting weaker by the minute.

"We walked all this road," Raul says. "And the drones, I tried to get their attention, waving my phone."

"Drones, you say?" Carrillo asks.

"Yes," Raul responds, "And they didn't see us. ... All I wanted was for immigration authorities to detect us, me and my son. That's why I would walk on the road so they could spot me. ... They never noticed us. They never paid attention to us."

Raul says he dropped Christian's backpack on the road to leave a clue.

"What did smugglers promise you, Raul?" asks Carrillo.

"According to them, it would all be beautiful," Raul responds.

"Yes, sir," Carrillo says, then quietly adds, "Raul, you were disoriented, going in the wrong direction," pointing out that he was headed back to Mexico.

"I just wanted immigration to find us," Raul responds.

"Was this your first-time crossing?"

"No, I already live in the United States," Raul says.

"In New Jersey?" Carrillo asks.

"Yes," Raul says.

"So you came back to pick up your son?"

Raul doesn't answer. The silence is deafening.

©2021 The Dallas Morning News. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

CALL, EMAIL OR VISIT:
(512) 259-4449
Kirsten.Foltz@HillCountryNews.com
HillCountryNews.com

CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE
YOUR AD
TODAY!

CLASSIFIED LINE AD RATES

\$14.00 minimum charge for 15 words.
54¢ each additional word.
As low as \$8.50 per issue with discounts
for consecutive weeks.

DISPLAY AD RATES

Starting at \$16.00 per column inch
with discounts for multiple
consecutive weeks.

DEADLINES

Thursday Edition

Display Ads are due Friday by 5 p.m.
Word Ads are due Monday by Noon

PAYMENT

Pre-payment required on all line ads.



055 ESTATE SALES

ESTATE SALE. JULY 29th - 31st. Liberty Hill. A house and 2 barns full of treasures! Lots of everything. Vintage German beer steins and glassware, vintage cookie jars, large selection of hand made quilts and blankets, vintage glassware, vintage clothing, paintings, Christmas and holiday items, crafts and sewing supplies, dolls, beanie babies, toys, books, guitars and SO SO MUCH MORE! Address to be printed next week. For more information please go to <https://www.estatesales.net/TX/Liberty-Hill/78642/2947827>

470 MISCELLANEOUS FOR SALE

ELIMINATE GUTTER CLEANING forever! LeafFilter, the most advanced debris-blocking gutter protection. Schedule a FREE LeafFilter estimate today. 15% off Entire Purchase. 10% Senior & Military Discounts. Call 1-855-945-1184.

PORTABLE OXYGEN CONCENTRATOR May Be Covered by Medicare! Reclaim independence and mobility with the compact design and long-lasting battery of Inogen One. Free information kit! Call 877-461-2914.

DONATE YOUR CAR, truck or van. Help veterans find jobs or start a business. Call Patriotic Hearts Foundation. Fast, FREE pick-up. Max tax-deduction. Operators are standing by! Call 1-855-945-2873.

DISH NET-WORK. \$64.99 for 190 Channels! Blazing Fast Internet, \$19.99/mo. (where available.) Switch & Get a FREE \$100 Visa Gift Card. FREE Voice Remote. FREE HD DVR. FREE Streaming on ALL Devices. Call today! 1-855-977-7145

900 BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS FOR SALE ANNA'S ALTERATIONS - LAGO VISTA

The alteration shop has been in business since 1997. Due to COVID19, retirement plans and health issues, the shop is now for sale.

An inventory of sewing machinery and equipment, furniture, and a great variety of supplies are included in the sale, making it ready to continue operating, once it re-opens under new ownership.

For more information call: 512-267-7993
Please leave a recorded message and your phone call will be returned as soon as possible.

• Previously, the shop provided services to a customer base located in Lago Vista, Point Venture, Jonestown, Marble Falls, Cedar Park and Leander.

★ ★ ★ DRIVEN TO BE THE BEST ★ ★ ★ Be Your Own Boss, Choose Your Own Routes

Looking for CDL drivers to deliver new trucks all over the country, starting in Laredo, TX.

Experience preferred. Must have DOT physical and be willing to keep logs. No DUIs in last 10 years, clean MVR.



Apply Online at
www.qualitydriveaway.com
or call 574-642-2023

470 MISCELLANEOUS FOR SALE

BECOME A PUBLISHED author! Publications sold at all major secular & specialty Christian bookstores. CALL Christian Faith Publishing for your FREE author submission kit. 1-844-932-0845.

UP TO \$15,000.00 of GUARANTEED Life Insurance! No medical exam or health questions. Cash to help pay funeral and other final expenses. Call Physicians Life Insurance Company- 855-611-3907 or visit www.Life55plus.info/hill.

DONATE YOUR CAR OR TRUCK TO HERITAGE FOR THE BLIND. Free 3 Day Vacation, Tax Deductible, Free Towing, All Paperwork Taken Care Of. CALL 1-888-684-1097.

DONATE YOUR CAR TO UNITED BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION! Your donation helps education, prevention & support programs. FAST FREE PICKUP - 24 HR RESPONSE - TAX DEDUCTION 1-833-536-0904.

GENERAC STANDBY GENERATORS provide backup power during utility power outages, so your home and family stay safe and comfortable. Prepare now. Free 7-year extended warranty (\$695 value!). Request a free quote today! Call for additional terms and conditions. 1-877-460-4051.

TWO GREAT NEW offers from AT&T Wireless! Ask how to get the new iPhone 11 or Next Generation Samsung Galaxy S10e ON US with AT&T's Buy one, Give One offer. While supplies last! CALL 1-877-354-1759.

900 BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

950 PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE

Howard Family Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit exempt private foundation, has filed IRS form 990-PF, including all attachments, with the Internal Revenue Service. This annual return for 2020 is available for inspection during regular business hours of the foundation by contacting Joel E. Howard, 706 Guadalupe Street, Austin TX 78701. A free copy may also be obtained through mail by writing to that same address. This inspection period is valid for 180 days after its initial publication.

Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a Mixed Beverage Restaurant Permit with Food and Beverage Certificate by Cajun Skillet LLC dba Cajun Skillet to be located at 215 N. Bell Blvd #101, Cedar Park, TX, Williamson County. Officers are Shantrese C. Gillam and Steven Gillam Jr.

ADVERTISEMENT FOR SEALED PROPOSALS

Sealed proposals addressed to **City of Lago Vista**, will be received at **City Offices, 5803 Thunderbird, Lago Vista, TX** until **11:00 A.M., August 3rd, Utility Installation Services**. Sealed proposals will be opened publicly and read aloud shortly thereafter on the same date in the **place and address of bid opening and available via web live**. A non-mandatory pre-submittal conference will be held via web, on July 27th, 2021, at 11:00 AM. Copies of the bidding documents will be available at no cost on CIVCAST under ID: LAGOUTILRFP. For more information email: ebelaj@lago-vista.org.

PUBLIC NOTICE

On July 1, 2021, the City Council of the City of Lago Vista, Texas passed and approved the following Ordinances:

Ordinance No. 21-07-01-02

An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Lago Vista, Texas pursuant to Vernon's Texas Codes Annotated, Local Government Code, Chapter 102, Section 102.007(b) providing for amendments to Ordinance No. 20-09-17-02, for the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2020 and ending September 30, 2021; amendments to said budget by department are set forth in "Exhibit A" attached to this ordinance

Ordinance No. 21-07-01-03

An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Lago Vista, Texas pursuant to Vernon's Texas Codes Annotated, Local Government Code, Chapter 102, Section 102.007(b) providing for amendments to Ordinance No. 20-09-17-02, for the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2020 and ending September 30, 2021; amendments to said budget by department are set forth in "Exhibit A" attached to this ordinance

Notice of Public Hearings

The Lago Vista Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on August 12, 2021, at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 5803 Thunderbird Street, Lago Vista, Texas to receive citizen input on the items described below.

21-1873-R-REZ: Consideration of a recommendation regarding a request for a zoning district change from C-R ("Commercial Resort") to R-1T ("Single-Family, Tall") for the approximately 32.42-acre tract known as Abstract 2152, Survey 35 of the H & O.B. Railroad Company commonly referred to as being located on Highland Lake Road but which actually fronts on a unimproved section of right-of-way platted as Canary Way.

21-1878-PDD-MOD: Consideration of a recommendation regarding a zoning change request to amend the balance of an approximately 282-acre portion of the previously approved "Tusikanni Cove Planned Development District" (PDD), subsequently referred to as the "Firefly Cove Planned Development District" (PDD), to approve a new concept and detail plan modifying the uses and development standards applicable to all remaining phases. The property is commonly referred to as 19517 Boggy Ford Road and a legal description of the entire tract under consideration is available upon request from the City of Lago Vista.

Following the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Lago Vista City Council will hold a Public Hearing on September 2, 2021, at 5:30 PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 5803 Thunderbird Street, Lago Vista, Texas to receive citizen input prior to potential action on the above items.

The item described below can be determined by the Planning and Zoning Commission at the same Public Hearing and a recommendation will therefore not be forwarded to the City Council.

21-1879-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 23 feet for a single-family residence at 21705 Cardinal Avenue (Emerald Bend Subdivision, Section One, Block J, Lot 12).

All interested persons are invited to participate.



**The Classifieds
RIGHT
ON THE
MONEY!**

Trade your unwanted items for fast cash with the Classifieds.

PLACE YOUR
AD TODAY

512-259-4449

publisher@hillcountrynews.com

**HILL COUNTRY
NEWS
CLASSIFIEDS**

P.O. Box 1777
103 Woods Lane
Cedar Park, TX 78613

INVITATION TO BID

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

TRAFFIC SIGNAL – INTERSECTION OF BAGDAD ROAD AND SONNY DRIVE

will be received prior to 3:00 P.M., July 22, 2021 then be publicly acknowledged.

The Work consists of improvements at the intersection of Bagdad Road and Sonny Drive including a new traffic signal, pavement restriping, pavement regrading, culvert replacement and burying electric cable. Bid Documents for this project may be obtained electronically via the City of Leander's website. <https://bids.leandertx.gov/> Plans will be available starting Thursday, July 8, 2021. A Pre-Bid Conference for this project will not be held.

Questions can be directed to the City of Leander Purchasing Department at kwenzel@leandertx.gov or 512-528-2792.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS – VILLAGE OF POINT VENTURE

The Planning and Zoning Commission of the Village of Point Venture, Texas, will conduct a public hearing on **August 3, 2021, at 6:30 P.M.** to consider testimony and act upon a proposed amendment to Chapters 1 and 4 of the Zoning Ordinance requiring registration for short-term rentals of residential properties. All persons are invited to attend and participate in this public hearing at **411 Lohmans Ford Rd., Point Venture, TX**. Any person wishing to present written materials or statements regarding the proposed amendments may submit such prior to the date of the public hearing to the Village Secretary at 411 Lohmans Ford Rd., Point Venture, TX or via email at villagesecretary@vopv.org.

A copy of the proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance is available for review upon request or on the Village's website. For additional information please contact Vickie Knight, Village Secretary, at 512-267-5511 or via email at villagesecretary@vopv.org.

Notice of Public Hearings

Notice is hereby given that the City of Jonestown Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council will hold public hearings to receive citizen input and consider action on the following:

Landscape Ordinance: An ordinance of the City of Jonestown, Texas, amending Chapter 14, "Zoning"; Creating a new article 14.04, "Supplemental Regulations", Division 1, "Landscaping and Tree Preservation"; Creating new landscaping and tree preservation requirements; Providing for a purpose and applicability, required submittals, inspections and required permits; Tree Mitigation fees; Landscaping incentives; Property Owners' Association limitations; Education; Landscaping Standards; Landscaping requirements and minimums; Buffers; Irrigation requirements; Administration; Conflicting provisions; Severability; Effective date; Confirmation of proper notice and meeting; And providing for penalties.

Subdivision Variance: Request to allow a variance from the Jonestown Code of Ordinances Chapter 10 Subdivision, Article 10.02, Section 10.02.088(d)(3) is requested by Benjamin and Courtney Stockard to allow for a 6 ft iron fence across the front of the property and a 6 ft rock wall along the side of the property in the front yard at 9503 Harbor Dr, (Lot 3 Northlake Hills Sec 1), Jonestown, TX.

Zoning Change: Request by Csaba Kos & Seon Mee Chang for a zoning classification change from "Expired Planned Unit Development" to "Rural Residential" in accordance with Chapter 14: Zoning, Section 14.02.065, of the Jonestown Code of Ordinances, for property located at E Reed Parks Rd (Greg, Scott, Hayford Survey (Tract 11) 5.338 Acres), Jonestown, TX.

Final Plat: Request by The Hollows at Lake Travis, LLC, being the owners of 154.689 acres of land located in the J.F. Carlton Survey No. 102, Abstract No. 2511, in Travis County, TX, described by Deed of Record in Document No. 2018024745, Official Public Records, Travis County, TX, to subdivide 16.75 acres of land to be known as The Hollows Sanctuary South Phase 1 into 28 single family lots and two open spaces/drainage lots for property located off Destination Way, Jonestown, TX.

The hearings before the Planning and Zoning Commission will be held on August 4, 2021, 7:30 p.m. The hearings before City Council will be held on August 12, 2021, at 7:30 p.m. Both meetings are scheduled to be held at the City Council Chamber, 18649 FM 1431, Suite 3-A.

Information concerning this matter and a copy of the draft amendments are available for viewing at Jonestown City Hall, 18649 FM 1431, Suite 4-A, during the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. You may call 512-267-0359 or e-mail cjolly@jonestowntx.gov for more information.



LEGAL

NEED TO PLACE A LEGAL NOTICE?

Call the

HILL COUNTRY NEWS 512-259-4449

hillcountrynews.com

HOME RUN DERBY

Pete Alonso dominates Derby, beating out fan favorite Shohei Ohtani



ANDREW MILLS / TNS

Los Angeles Angels pitcher Shohei Ohtani (17) tosses a baseball to himself as he walks back to the mound during the first inning at Yankee Stadium on Wednesday, June 30, 2021.

By **MATTHEW ROBERSON**
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS (TNS)

Nearly every pitch Mets bench coach Dave Jauss threw was in Pete Alonso's wheelhouse, and the duo made light work of the Home Run Derby for Alonso's second straight win.

Nobody was having more fun than Alonso, who knocked off Salvador Perez, Juan Soto and Trey Mancini to defend his title from 2019.

His 35 home runs was the highest total of the first round, helping him beat Royals' catcher Perez, whose second-best 26 dingers fell victim to the luck of the draw. Alonso was dancing and singing along to the stadium's booming tunes during his round and letting out some primal polar bear roars after the more diabolical destructions.

The players were not constricted by Coors Field's humidior, an apparatus that houses the baseballs before each game in Colorado to suppress the high-altitude effects and try to keep them in the yard. Alonso ended up hitting 15,659 feet of home runs in the first round alone. Nine of the 35 went 475 feet or longer. The secret weapon was Jauss and his pinpoint, dead-eye accuracy. Alonso wanted the balls to be middle-up. Jauss told him to say less.

In the second round, Alonso outdid Soto with relative ease, beating his division rival's total with time to spare. At one point, he called his one allotted timeout simply to goad the crowd into cheering even louder for him. Alonso stepped out of the box, turned to the swath of fans packed behind home plate, and raised his arms to the sky while cupping a hand behind his ear.

With the pandemic cancelling last year's Derby, Alonso had plenty of time to prepare for this one.

He had a very calculated approach to the exhibition that many players treat like a fun novelty act. This is serious business for Alonso, and he had a plan. From selecting Jauss' cool hand over his cousin Derek that threw to him for the 2019 win, to the meditative rest he took between rounds, Alonso clearly set out to become the fourth multi-time winner of the derby and accept no alternatives.

In the final round, Alonso came head-to-head with the Orioles' Trey Mancini. After missing last season with colon cancer, Mancini said he wanted to compete this year to show the world that there's life after cancer and chemotherapy. His 22 home runs in the final round were an amazing display of resiliency that undoubtedly lifted thousands of viewers' spirits.

He just ran into the new undisputed king of the Home Run Derby.

With his blue and orange bat and balls belted over the left field seats onto the concourse, Alonso looked pleasantly at home. He'll have another Home Run Derby trophy (and an iced out chain) with him when he flies out of Denver.

The night was an overall smashing success for Major League Baseball. The beauty of the Home Run Derby, particularly when a star of Shohei Ohtani's caliber is involved, is the ability to draw in casual fans.

From the theatrics between Ohtani and Soto, to the hometown heroics from Rockies' shortstop Trevor Story and his 518-foot launch, to the feel-good story of Trey Mancini, everything went swimmingly for the league that can never seem to get out of its own way. With every player wearing No. 44 to honor the late Hank Aaron, it was a night of baseball that would have made the Hammer proud.

During Monday night's affair, Twitter was flooded with posts from people saying they don't normally watch or care about baseball, but had tuned in to watch Ohtani. While his first-round matchup with Soto produced some of the best drama of the evening, those casual fans were treated to an experience that hard-core fans have known about for years.

As has been the case time and time again, Ohtani wowed everyone with his ridiculous talent, but ultimately did not win.

Ohtani lost to the eighth-seeded Soto in a three-swing runoff, ending his night in disappointment like so many of his games with the Angels do. Both he and Soto clobbered 22 homers in the first round, spawning a one-minute swingoff, during which they tied again. In the final decider, which gave each hitter three swings, all three of Soto's produced a home run. Ohtani rolled over on his very first, ending the night for baseball's first-half home run king.

That doesn't mean Ohtani's performance lacked star power, though. He hit six home runs longer than 500 feet, the most ever in a single Home Run Derby and his longest flew a majestic 518 feet.

TOKYO OLYMPICS

Express reliever Ryder Ryan headed to Olympics

"It's really cool for the organization to have a representative in the sport of baseball."

By **ZACH SMITH**
HCN SPORTS EDITOR

Ryder Ryan is ready to rub elbows with the likes of Simone Biles and Katie Ledecky.

The 26-year-old will take a break from his duties as a reliever for the Round Rock Express to represent the United States baseball team at the Summer Olympics in Tokyo beginning later this month.

"It's so surreal," Ryan said. "There are only 24 guys on the roster, and they picked me as one of the guys to go out and compete for the gold. It's just awesome."

Ryan (1-4, 6.75 ERA) has appeared in 20 games for the Express this season, striking out 26 batters in 21.1 innings with a pair of saves.

"What an opportunity," Round Rock manager Kenny Holmberg said. "It's really cool for the organization to have a representative in the sport of baseball. It's really cool for him and his family. He's got big-time stuff, he can run a fastball up there 95-plus and he continues to develop his secondary slider as a put-away pitch."

Ryan will play in three warmup games with Team USA from July 18-20 prior to leaving for Tokyo.

Team USA takes on Israel on July 30 and faces Korea on July 31 in pool play to deter-

mine seeings for the knockout tournament beginning Aug. 1. The gold medal game is on Aug. 7.

Team USA is made up of minor-league professionals and a few veterans currently not on an MLB roster. Fourteen of the 24 players have played in the big leagues with two World Series Champions: Edwin Jackson and David Robinson.

Pitchers Anthony Carter and Nick Martinez, and infielder Patrick Kivlehan are other Express alumni on the Tokyo Olympics roster for Team USA.

Ryan was named as the player to be named later in a trade that sent Todd Frazier from the Rangers to the New York Mets last year. Now, they're both Team USA teammates.

"It's a dream for me to put on a USA jersey and represent our country while leading a group of guys that have a specific goal to win an Olympic gold medal," Team USA manager Mike Scioscia said.

Ryan tried out for Team USA in high school but didn't make the team — his only interaction with the national team before getting a phone call was when Round Rock was in El Paso late last month.

Olympic organizers announced last week that no fans would be allowed at events in Tokyo after Japan declared a state of emergency



ZACH SMITH

Ryder Ryan tried out for Team USA when he was in high school. That was his only interaction with them before getting a call about the Olympics late last month.

after a boost in the number of COVID-19 cases.

Ryan isn't letting that dampen his excitement.

"You've just got to go out there with a good mentality and focus," Ryan said. "You can't really pay attention to it. It's fun going out there with all the adrenaline when you pitch with the fans, but this is going to be different."

Ryan grew up in a baseball family in North Carolina. He played third base at the University of North Carolina but switched to pitching full time after being drafted by the Cleveland Indians in the 30th

round in 2016.

He was an All-Star at the Single-A level in 2017 and 2018. This is his first season at the Triple-A level, and Holmberg said Texas would like to see him in high leverage and late-game situations.

"There is not a higher leverage situation than going to the Olympics," Holmberg said. "He'll come back a better person and a better player, and we'll continue his growth."

Ryan is an Olympian, and it's just starting to sink in.

"It's still crazy to this day," Ryan said.

TOKYO OLYMPICS

Gibson, Windle set to represent Longhorns in Tokyo

By **ZACH SMITH**
HCN SPORTS EDITOR

Alison Gibson and Jordan Windle are resiliently optimistic.

That attitude has helped the pair of Longhorns stay even-keeled when the college and international competitions got tough.

But it also boosted them to an elite level and helped them earn spots on the U.S. Diving Team, where they will represent the country at the upcoming Tokyo Olympics.

"Both of them consistently brush off any failures and get right back in with funnel focus, knowing that their next opportunity could go great," Texas head diving coach and Team USA Diving assistant coach Matt Scoggin said.

Gibson will compete in the women's synchronized 3-meter springboard, while Windle will take part in the 10-meter platform at the Tokyo Olympics, which runs from July 23 to Aug. 8.

Olympic officials announced last week that there would be no fans in the stands during the games due to rising COVID cases in Japan. Gibson and Windle won't mind having a bit of pressure lifted.

"They're pretty practiced with not having any fans in the stands," Scoggin said. "They're both really good at getting control of their breathing and staying relaxed."

Gibson started swimming at the Texas Swimming Center when she was an eight-year-old. She was walking around the swimming pool and eventually met Scoggin, who suggested she give diving a shot.

"I was like, 'No! I'm a swimmer! I'm going to go to the Olympics for swimming,'" Gibson said.

When her youth swim program got a new coach a few months later that cut her days in the pool down, she asked her parents if she could spend one day in the diving well.

"I fell in love with the sport, and now Coach Scoggin is taking me to the Olym-



ZACH SMITH

Former Texas diver Alison Gibson (left) will compete in the women's synchronized 3-meter springboard and Texas senior Jordan Windle will compete in the 10-meter platform for Team USA at the Tokyo Olympics.

pics," Gibson said. "It kind of came full circle. The journey itself has been difficult, but I've had a lot of fun along the way."

People always told Gibson that she had Olympic-level talent, but it was just the love of the sport that kept her going.

Gibson won the 2017 NCAA Title in 1-meter diving, won three Big 12 Championships, and is a four-time All-American. She has represented the United States on two occasions at the FINA World Championships and once at the World University Games.

When she gets burnt out or frustrated, Gibson reminds herself why she started diving and why she loves it so much.

"If you can remind yourself why you love what you're doing, it revives your soul," Gibson said.

Windle was born in Cambodia and adopted by Jerry Windle when he was an infant. His diving abilities were noticed when he was seven years old at a summer camp, and two years later, he won a National Title.

"My dad has sacrificed so much throughout my life," Windle said. "He's given me what I needed to succeed and I'm taking that as far as can, and so far, it's worked out. The emotion he showed after the (Olympic Trials) showed how much love he has for me and it makes me want to work hard and make him proud."

Windle's career diving credentials are impressive and include six junior national championships, seven senior national championships and two World Championship qualifications with Team USA.

With the Longhorns, he was the NCAA Platform Champion in 2019 and 2021, is a nine-time All-American, five-time Big 12 Champion and was named the Big 12 Diver of the Year three years in a row.

"This is the biggest meet of anyone's career, so I'm trying to treat it like an average meet," Windle said. "But in the back of my mind, I know this is going to be something incredible, and a great experience. This has been a 15-year journey, and I finally get to go to Olympics."

MLB: ALL-STAR WEEK

A tale of two cities: Atlanta's loss is Denver's gain

By **GABRIEL BURNS**
THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

DENVER – Trevor Story's recorded voice echoes through Denver International Airport as the Colorado Rockies shortstop greets visitors to the city as it prepares to host Major League Baseball's All-Star Game Tuesday.

The voice easily could've been that of Freddie Freeman as the Braves first baseman almost certainly would've been the hometown representative welcoming travelers at Hartsfield-Jackson, explaining what's wonderful about the host city.

Denver is well-decorated. The signs spread throughout downtown showing individual All-Stars. The influx of out-of-towners swarming bars, restaurants and tourist attractions. The businesses extending hours. The green "did you know?" quadrilaterals scattered on sidewalks with

fun facts about the city. The All-Star logo slapped on nearly every business, from the Milkbox Ice Creamery in Union Station to the cannabis dispensaries within a sniff of Coors Field, home of the game.

This was supposed to be Atlanta. A disappointing campaign so far for the home team would've been set aside in favor of the baseball macrocosm.

When MLB commissioner Rob Manfred stood in The Battery on July 9, 2019 and announced then-SunTrust Park (now Truist Park) would host the 2021 All-Star game, he oozed praise about the Braves organization, the team's facilities, The Battery and Atlanta's enthusiastic fan base. It would've been the third time Atlanta hosted the midsummer classic.

"It's about time that we're back," Manfred said that day.

Fast-forward 632 days: MLB announced it was moving the

All-Star game and amateur draft out of Georgia on April 2 in response to the state's new voting law. Manfred made the decision eight days after Gov. Brian Kemp signed the sweeping elections overhaul into law, a move met with strong opposition from voting rights activists.

President Biden supported MLB's decision. Kemp and others criticized it. The Braves issued a statement saying they were "deeply disappointed" in the decision. It was a hot-button topic around Georgia and throughout the country. At a time when sports and politics have never intersected more, this was the ultimate example.

Manfred in April: "I have decided that the best way to demonstrate our values as a sport is by relocating this year's All-Star game and MLB Draft."

Days later, the 91st All-Star game was relocated to Denver. It was welcomed news for the

Mile High City, which has had a tenuous relationship with its Rockies and team ownership, who initiated a roster teardown that currently has the Rockies among baseball's worst clubs.

Denver is a good baseball town, even though it lacks the history of Atlanta, Los Angeles or Chicago. "LoDo," the lower downtown area brimming with bars and restaurants near Coors Field, is the perfect backdrop for an All-Star event. The city has energy, vigorous crowds, and a thirst for baseball.

Just across the street, more baseball history will be made. Multiple future Hall of Famers on the same field. A packed stadium enjoying a return to 100% capacity after a trying year of the pandemic.

Hosting the All-Star Game may be the Rockies' biggest win of the season. Losing it may be the Braves' biggest loss.

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

Injuries pile up as Austin FC suffers first home loss

By ZACH SMITH
HCN SPORTS EDITOR

Not every first can be a good one for Austin FC.

Riding a wave of momentum from its first home win last week, Austin FC failed to hold on to momentum in a 2-0 loss to LAFC Wednesday night for the first loss at Q2 Stadium in the club's young history.

"We did a really good job putting them under pressure and creating chances," Austin FC head coach Josh Wolff said. "Quality and decision making in the penalty box has eluded us. It's a familiar song."

As has been the case for much of the season, Austin FC dominated the first portions of both halves, and finished with a 60% advantage in possession and a 14-12 advantage in scoring attempts.

Austin has failed to score in seven of the last nine games.

"As a team it's been frustrating not to capitalize on the opportunities we've been creating, but we score goals as a team just like we defend as a team," defender Matt Besler said. "That's at the core of how we play."

Kekuta Manneh got the start for the first time in his Austin FC career, while Jared Stroud returned to the starting XI in place of the injured Jon Gallagher, who hurt his foot early on in last week's win over Portland.

The Austin FC injury list would very nearly be a solid starting XI, and Tomás Pochettino was added to that list after leaving training on Tuesday with a muscle injury. Wolff said he doesn't know how long the designated player will be on the sidelines.

That list grew when Dani Pereira limped off in the 34th minute.

"It's unsettling when you lose one of your starting midfielders," Wolff said. "With Tomás also unavailable, you're missing some really key players, and you saw last week what those guys brought to the game."

Less than five minutes later, a poor clearance from Stuver was intercepted by LAFC. Stover was able to stop the initial shot, but José Cifuentes was in the right spot at the right time to finish off a rebound.

Austin again started the second half strong, and Fagundez had a close-range effort saved in the 49th minute.

When Austin did have it's



Austin FC midfielder Diego Fagundez (14) in action during Austin FC's 2-0 loss to LAFC on July 7, 2021.

"We did a really good job putting them under pressure and creating chances," "Quality and decision making in the penalty box has eluded us. It's a familiar song." — Austin FC Head Coach Josh Wolff

opportunities in the second half, it reverted to the form it had for most of the season and couldn't finish. Manneh had a good look from outside the box in the 64th minute sail over the bar.

The MLS transfer window opened Wednesday, and Austin FC is getting some attacking help in striker Moussa Djitté. Wolff said he still has some visa hurdles to overcome before joining the squad.

It took three games for Austin FC to score its first home goal, and the floodgates burst open in a 4-1 win over the Portland Timbers last Thursday night, the first win in eight matches.

"Any time you can string together a few wins in a row, you can do some damage in this league," Besler said. "It's a game where we're going to feel like it's a lost opportunity. We feel like we could've built on

the performance against Portland."

Austin FC has nearly two weeks until its next MLS match at home against the Seattle Sounders on July 22.

"It's one game, so we move on pretty quickly," Wolff said. "Getting guys to believe isn't hard. They've seen what it looks like when we perform. I don't think the guys are going to think that all of a sudden we're not a good team."

TEXAS BASEBALL



Texas Pitcher Ty Madden drafted by Detroit Tigers

By ZACH SMITH
HCN SPORTS EDITOR

Texas pitcher Ty Madden was drafted 32nd overall by the Detroit Tigers in the first round of the MLB Draft on Sunday night.

The Big 12 Pitcher of the Year finished 7-5 overall with a 2.45 ERA in 113.2 innings pitched. His 137 strikeouts this season were the most by a Longhorns' pitcher since 2004.

Madden was the ace for a team that made the College World Series for the 37th time in program history and pitched 13 innings with 18 strikeouts for the Longhorns in Omaha.

Madden was on five All-America teams in 2021 and was a first-team selection in two of them. He is the highest MLB draft pick from Texas since Taylor Jungmann was the 12th overall selection in 2011.

He slid a bit in the draft judging from pre-draft mocks. Many analysts had Madden going in the Top 15 picks, and MLB Pipeline ranked the right-handed starter as the ninth-best player entering the draft.

"To be honest, we were surprised he fell that far," Detroit Tigers Amateur Scouting Director Scott Pleis told the Detroit News. "He's got a great arm, with a good slider, and he shows a change-up, too. He's just kind of a workhorse on the mound with a great competitive edge to him."

Real Estate is Sizzling

SKYE LUXURY SENIOR LIVING LIMITED TIME SAVINGS!

Save up to \$10,000!*

SKYE SKYLUX

LUXURY SENIOR LIVING

BY TRUE CONNECTION COMMUNITIES

FOR SALE

SOLD

Moving to Skye!

Call 512-591-5121 to learn how you can save money by moving in now.

Home sale prices are the highest in years. Now is the time to sell to get your biggest return.

Enjoy Luxury All-inclusive Independent Living at Skye Luxury Senior Living

• Leave the cooking to us with our chef-prepared meals served daily from our scratch kitchen

• Convenient location near restaurants, shopping, and many recreational and state parks

• Let us take care of your housekeeping and maintenance needs

• Enjoy spacious apartments overflowing with amenities complete with your own personal trainer, chauffeur-driven Tesla, and days filled with adventures

*Limited time only, see Sales Director for details.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

11350 Hero Way West • Leander, TX 78641

512-591-5121 • www.SkyeLiving.com

Pet Friendly

Equal Housing Opportunity