

HILL COUNTRY NEWS

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2025

Leander enters Stage 4 water restriction ahead of BCRUA plant shutdown

Outdoor watering is temporarily banned

BY JOSH MONIZ
SENIOR REPORTER

Leander entered Stage 4 water restrictions Dec. 30 as part of its planned

water usage reduction ahead of the Brushy Creek Regional Utility Authority (BCRUA) water treatment plant going offline in mid-January for its scheduled upgrade project. Stage 4 water restrictions will temporarily ban outdoor watering, including the usually allowed handheld

See **WATER**, page A2



SCOTT W. COLEMAN

The Brushy Creek Water Authority's Cedar Park Treatment Plant on Lime Creek Road at Lake Travis. To the right of the treatment plant is the construction site for the future Raw Water Pump Station that will pump 145 million gallons per day when complete.

Texas has a housing affordability crisis. Here's how lawmakers may tackle it in 2025.

A likely fight over how much power to take away from local governments may dominate the debate.

BY JOSHUA FECHTER
THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

DALLAS — Buying or renting a home in Texas used to be relatively cheap. Amid the state's economic boom, its once-celebrated housing affordability has slipped.

Texas renters now spend more on keeping a roof over their head than ever. As home prices have vastly outpaced incomes, homeownership has become a distant fantasy for many Texas families.

The state's high housing costs have caught the attention of state officials — who worry that Texas could lose its competitive edge with other states if it doesn't get a handle on home prices and rents.

Here's how Texas lawmakers may address housing costs when the Texas Legislature returns to Austin later this month — and how the debate could unfold.

TACKLING THE STATE'S HOUSING SHORTAGE

Texas needs about 320,000 more homes than it has, according to a recent estimate by housing policy organization Up For Growth. That deep shortage, housing advocates argue, drove up home prices and rents as the state's economy boomed and competition increased for a limited supply of homes — even though Texas builds more homes than any other state.

State lawmakers must find ways to address that shortage, real estate experts and housing advocates warn, if they want to keep housing costs in



SHELBY TAUBER FOR THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Texas lawmakers are expected to debate how to curb rising home costs this year as the state continues to grow. Celina in North Texas is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States.

check as the state grows.

"Our population is going to continue to increase in the next 30, 40 years," said Scott Norman, Texas Association of Builders CEO. "All of those people have to live somewhere."

State lawmakers, backed by a coalition of outside groups that span the political spectrum, will likely look for ways to build more homes and put a dent in the shortage. One avenue they may go down: addressing local regulations that critics say prevent the state from adding enough homes to meet demand.

Cities restrict what kinds of homes can be built and where using rules called zoning regulations. Research shows those rules limit how many homes can be built and contribute to higher housing costs — and relaxing them can help cities add more homes and contain housing costs.

Texas lawmakers considered ways

in 2023 to relax cities' zoning rules, but those ideas went nowhere. Some are certain to make a comeback.

"The starting point is to make sure that we don't have obstacles like regulatory issues and local government that are making things worse," said state Sen. Paul Bettencourt, a Houston-area Republican.

Lawmakers could make it easier for homeowners to build accessory dwelling units — also known as ADUs, granny flats, mother-in-law suites or casitas — in the backyard of single-family homes, considered a relatively low-cost housing option. Texas House lawmakers shot down a bill during the 2023 regular session that would have overridden any city bans on ADUs or regulations that researchers have found can prevent ADUs from getting built. Out of 11 major Texas cities surveyed by the Tribune, most allowed ADUs but also

See **HOUSING**, page A2

2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

Five years later, prosecutions in Javier Ambler's death have resulted in acquittals, delays and uncertainty

BY JOSH MONIZ
SENIOR REPORT

Five years after Javier Ambler's death while in the custody of Williamson County Sheriff's Office deputies, the criminal charges filed against several law enforcement individuals in the wake of the incident finally went to trial this year.

So far, the two former deputies charged with manslaughter in his death, Zach Camden and J.J. Johnson, were acquitted while the prosecution's prospects have been bleak in the evidence tampering charges filed against former Williamson County Sheriff Robert Chody and assistant Williamson County attorney Jason Nassour after the judge in the case ruled the prosecution's central argument couldn't be admitted in court. The case has been on hold since mid-August while the prosecution appeals the ruling.



ROBERT CHODY



JASON NASSOUR



JAMES JOHNSON



ZACH CAMDEN

MANSLAUGHTER

On March 14, after a nine-day trial, a jury found Camden and Johnson not guilty of all charges.

According to court records, during the filming of an episode of the now-defunct Live PD reality show, the deputies entered a high-speed pursuit of Ambler back on March 28, 2019, after he failed to dim his headlights to oncoming traffic. While arresting him, Camden and Johnson repeatedly used their Tasers on Ambler, even after he started screaming for help and repeatedly warning them about his heart condition. He fell unconscious during this part of the arrest and died moments later.

Prosecutors claimed during the trial that Camden and Johnson were reckless and used their Tasers on Ambler even though he was trying to comply with their orders after exiting his vehicle.

The defense claimed the two men acted in a reasonable manner while arresting Ambler, keeping with the department's procedures. They also claimed Ambler's death was due to the combination of his health conditions and the stress of the police chase.

Following the verdict, they claimed the case was politically motivated prosecution by Garza's office.

In an almost unheard of moment, Ambler's father, Javier Ambler II, embraced both of the former deputies in a hug after the ruling and said, "No hard feelings."

Speaking with reporters after the verdict, Doug

See **AMBLER**, page A5

Leander holding fourth MLK Day event on Monday

BY JOSH MONIZ
SENIOR REPORTER

Leander is gearing up for its fourth annual MLK Day event this Monday, Jan. 20.

Organized in collaboration with the Leander Public Art and Culture Commission and the City of Leander, the theme for this year's event is "Marching Towards A Better Tomorrow."

The event runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., starting at Camacho Elementary for the march that kicks off the event and proceeding to Old Town Park, where the festivities are being held. The event will feature live music, proclamations by city leaders, food trucks and a craft marketplace.

The City of Leander and Leander ISD partnered to host an essay and video contest to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The winning Leander ISD student who wrote about how they feel they can make a positive impact in their community and beyond will be announced in the near future.



The City of Leander and Leander Public Arts and Culture Commission seek march participants and performers. We seek a diverse representation of Leander and the surrounding areas multiplicity of cultural experiences.

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Terry Davis & Associates
ATTORNEY AT LAW

HOUSING

from page A1

had rules that hindered development.

State Sen. Bryan Hughes, a Mineola Republican, and state Rep. Cody Vasut, an Angleton Republican, have each filed bills that essentially revive the ADU proposal that died during the last regular session.

Lawmakers also may consider reducing how much land cities require single-family homes to be built on. Those rules, known as minimum lot-size requirements, drive up the final cost of a home by encouraging larger, pricier homes and leaving less land behind to build other homes. The most common minimum lot-size requirements among major Texas cities the Tribune surveyed last year is between 5,000 and 7,500 square feet.

Vasut's bill would also reduce lot-size requirements to 2,500 square feet — though it would only apply to cities with more than 85,000 residents or those that sit in counties with at least 1 million residents.

Whether the Legislature should force cities to reduce their lot-size rules across the board, including in existing neighborhoods, will likely be a major point of discussion. Advocates have said state lawmakers should at least encourage smaller lot sizes in new developments outside of existing neighborhoods.

Another idea would allow homes to be built in places that now only allow commercial businesses — a practice not allowed in Texas' largest cities. And as Texas' urban areas see high office vacancies, housing advocates are also crafting ways to encourage developers to convert empty office buildings into residences.

Both ideas hold some appeal for homeowners who may not welcome other types of housing in their neighborhoods — and will likely put up stiff resistance to any proposal that attempts to allow more housing there.

A FIGHT OVER SINGLE-FAMILY NEIGHBORHOODS, LOCAL CONTROL

A likely point of contention is whether statewide changes to boost the housing stock will apply to neighborhoods that only allow single-family homes — and mostly don't allow other kinds of housing.

Texas cities tend to allow standalone single-family homes to be built nearly anywhere dwellings are allowed. But it's usually illegal to build denser, cheaper housing — like townhomes, duplexes and smaller apartment buildings — in many of those places.

Proposals to allow more kinds of homes in existing single-family neighborhoods can draw stiff resistance from existing homeowners and neighborhood groups. Doing so, they often argue, will upset their neighborhood's character.

A bill filed by state Rep. Carl Tepper, a Lubbock Republican, seeks to shield predominantly single-family neighborhoods from attempts by cities to allow more housing in those places. The bill is in direct response, Tepper said, to a measure passed by the Austin City Council in 2023 that allows developers to build up to three units in most places where detached single-family homes are allowed. If passed, the bill would reverse the Austin reform and effectively give homeowners across the state greater authority to resist such changes.

"The problem we have is that many of these homeowners put their life savings into these homes with the expectation that they would be single-family neighborhoods," Tepper said. "I think it's really an overreach of the cities to allow a major sea change to these neighborhoods that would completely change the face and the intent and the design of those neighborhoods."

The idea baffled Austin City Council Member José "Chito" Vela, a strong proponent of the three-unit reform. Austin's high home prices and rents have been a core if not dominant theme

in recent city elections — in which the capital city's voters elected a supermajority of members to enact such reforms.

"There's just no reason for the Texas Legislature to step in and try to undo any of this," Vela said.

Proponents of changes to allow more housing hope the severity of the state's housing crisis will push lawmakers to overcome "not-in-my-backyard" sentiments and enact laws that will meaningfully address the state's high housing costs.

"I don't think 1,000 NIMBYs showing up at a hearing [at the Texas Capitol] will get a sympathetic ear," said Jay Blazek Crossley, executive director of the nonprofit Farm & City, an urban planning advocacy group.

Another likely flashpoint: how much state lawmakers may override cities' zoning regulations in order to allow more homes to be built.

Republican lawmakers over the last decade have aggressively sapped authority from the state's bluer urban areas, culminating in a sweeping bill during the 2023 session aimed at preventing cities from enacting progressive policies. Democrats in the Legislature have been on guard against any attempts to further erode cities' authority — which propelled a majority of House Democrats to lead the charge to defeat the ADUs bill.

Texas Democrats have since shown openness to allowing zoning reform at some level — adopting a party platform this year that calls for rolling back local zoning regulations that get in the way of adding more homes. But it's unclear to what extent Democrats in the Legislature will embrace those ideas — and skepticism toward state intervention remains.

"If we're going to try to create a blanket law for the entire state, can we craft something that fits everyone's needs and fits everyone's community?" said state Rep. Gene Wu, a Houston Democrat who leads the Texas House Democratic Caucus. "I don't know the answer to that."

One reform floated by advocates may please enough people on both sides of the local control argument: making it harder for neighbors to object to new housing.

An obscure state law gives landowners the power to make it harder for cities to move forward with proposed developments near them. If a proposed development requires a rezoning and 20% of neighboring landowners object, the city council needs a supermajority to advance the new building. A group of Austin homeowners deftly wielded the law in recent years to convince a judge to kill a series of changes aimed at allowing more homes to be built.

The law saw renewed attention this year when neighbors near a proposed affordable housing development in San Antonio used the law to help stop the development — which then failed to get enough votes on the City Council to move forward.

That vote has fueled a new push to defang the law, creating unlikely alliances. The Texas Municipal League, an interest group that lobbies on behalf of cities, and the Texas Public Policy Foundation, the highly influential conservative think tank, are among those who want lawmakers to raise the petition threshold to 50% of neighboring landowners and reduce the required council vote to approve the project as a result of the petition to a simple majority.

WHAT ELSE IS ON THE TABLE?

Tweaking cities' zoning rules isn't a silver bullet for the state's housing woes, housing advocates and experts caution. And lawmakers will likely look at other ways to reduce housing costs.

After enacting more than \$12 billion in property tax cuts in 2023, tax-cut hawks in the Legislature have eyed the state's projected \$21.2 billion surplus to deliver a new round of cuts. The skyrocketing cost of homeowners' insurance also will likely get lawmakers' attention.

Lawmakers have also filed proposals aimed at speeding up cities' building permitting processes so homes can hit the market more quickly.

Gov. Greg Abbott and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick have indicated they're concerned that so-called institutional investors — or investors and corporations that buy single-family homes to rent them out — may be crowding would-be homebuyers out of the state's home-buying market.

Institutional homeowners own a small slice of the country's overall housing stock, estimates show, though their buying activity noticeably ticked up during the COVID-19 pandemic. Economists and housing experts have shown skepticism that laws curtailing investors' home purchases would give first-time homebuyers a better shot at finding a home and improve housing affordability.

Texas has a dire shortage of housing affordable for the state's poorest families — and the state spends little on housing for low-income families, housing advocates note. That's unlikely to change in the GOP-dominated Legislature, they acknowledge, even with the state surplus.

Still, state Sen. Nathan Johnson and state Sen. Royce West, both Dallas Democrats, have each filed bills intended to encourage the construction of housing specifically for poorer families. Another West bill would require many cities and counties to identify land they own that could be suitable for affordable housing development.



100 N Brushy St, Leander, TX 78641 • 512-259-1907 • www.leandercc.org

Past Events



Northline - Cascade Art Installation • December 3



ACES ABA Ribbon Cutting • December 6



Jet Stream at Stone Oak RV Ribbon Cutting • December 11



Daddy's Chicken Shack Ribbon Cutting • December 19

grab a drink with us!

After Hours

January 16 • 5pm - 7pm

@ Frost Bank
1450 East Whitestone Blvd.
Cedar Park

CHAMBER of COMMERCE & VISITORS CENTER Cedar Park Chamber of Commerce

Congratulations on your anniversary!

- 20 years- [Don Quick & Associates](#)
- 10 years- [Rockpointe Church](#)
- 10 years- [Smile On Orthodontics](#)

Welcome to our December New Members

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salgado's Bakery Regions Bank Texas Two Step Gaming RDT Mortgage A Team Home Services Preferred Care at Home North Austin & Williamson County Pack and Ship Pros 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michelle's PatisserieThe Foundry Tilson Homes Hensel Homes Construction Cadence Bank AusTexVet Freedom Fuel Co. Shoot 360 Austin
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Leander Chamber of Commerce

Community & Non-Profit EXPO

Date/Time: Friday, February 28th 2025 3:00-7:00pm
Location: Premier Athletic Complex 8220 183A Toll Road www.leandercc.org

Monthly Member LUNCH & LEARN

Topic of Discussion:
Mayor's State of Leander

Leander Chamber of Commerce
January 28th, 11:30AM
Facilities Resource

International Women's Day
WOMEN OF WILCO
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Nominations are now open!!!

Showcase your organization in front of local leaders, businesses, and community members while supporting an event that highlights show your commitment to uplifting and empowering women leaders in Williamson County.

Join us on MARCH 6th
from 11:30 to 1 PM
At SHERATON

Chamber Partners: [Logos for various partners]

Sponsorships open on Jan. 1 at 9:00am.
All sponsorships through Eventbrite and the Women Of Wilco 501C3.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 10
Lash & Company Leander Ribbon Cutting
2:00 PM to 2:30 PM
7680 183A Toll, Service Rd., Ste. 203, Leander

January 15
David Weekley Homes Ribbon Cutting
11:30 AM to 12:00 PM
1321 S. Brook Dr., Leander

January 16
After Hours Mixer at Frost Bank
5:00 PM to 7:00 PM
1450 E. Whitestone Blvd., Cedar Park

January 17
Remedy Roofing Ribbon Cutting
11:30 AM to 12:30 PM
3600 W. Whitestone Blvd., Cedar Park

January 21
Whataburger Ribbon Cutting
9:30 AM to 10:00 AM
West State Highway 29 and Ronald Reagan Blvd., Leander

January 23
Agape Women's Clinic Ribbon Cutting
3:00 PM to 3:30 PM
1464 E. Whitestone #15, Cedar Park

January 27
Texas Humane Heroes Ribbon Cutting
4:00 PM to 4:30 PM
10930 E. Crystal Falls Pkwy., Leander

January 28
Monthly Lunch & Learn: State of Leander
11:30 AM to 1:00 PM
Facilities Resource, Inc., 1641 Scottsdale Dr., Cedar Park

January 30
Gramercy at Northline Ribbon Cutting
4:00 PM to 4:30 PM
336 John Webster, Leander

WATER

from page A1

watering. Residents can still wash clothing, drink water and take baths or showers during the restrictions, but the city is asking them to try to avoid any nonessential water usage while the restrictions are in place.

Because the BCRUA plant provides 60% of Leander's water supply, the restrictions aim to help ease residents into reducing their usage ahead of the plant actually going offline to avoid overtaxing Leander's second water plant - the Sandy Creek Water Treatment Plant.

First-offense violations of the restriction will receive a courtesy warning, but second offenses and all subsequent offenses could potentially be subject to \$1,000 fines and even emergency disconnection of water services during the restrictions.

The BCRUA water plant project will start on Jan. 13 and is expected to take three weeks to complete, including up to six days of shutting down the plant. The project will involve installing a 78-inch diameter butterfly valve for the raw water line that feeds the plant.

Leander will return to its normal Stage 2 water restrictions once the project is complete.

The project is intended to help prepare to connect to the massive, new Deep Water Intake pipeline the BCRUA is currently building as part of its Phase 2 upgrades, which will pull water from a deeper, more drought-resistant part of Lake Travis and increase how much water the plant can pump per day from 42 million gallons per day total to 145 million gallons per day total. The plant is jointly owned by Leander, Round Rock and Cedar Park.

When the Phase 2 upgrades are completed in April 2027, the plant will increase how much water it can pump to Leander by 12 million gallons per day.

Leander imposed similar restrictions back in February 2024 when the BCRUA tackled its planned project to replace its 36-inch raw water intake pipeline, ending the reoccurring issue of the deteriorating original pipeline breaking and causing unplanned water outages. Similar to that project, the construction occurred during the Winter, the city's lowest usage months, to minimize its impact on residents.

Cars don't need to pass a safety inspection, but owners will still pay the fee

Noncommercial cars in 17 counties will still have to pass an emissions test to obtain a state registration.

BY JAYME LOZANO CARVER
THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Most Texas drivers will no longer be required to have their cars pass an annual safety exam after state lawmakers removed the rule from Texas code.

Texas is one of 15 states that mandate annual inspections for non-commercial cars. That will change on Jan. 1 because the Texas Legislature approved House Bill 3297, which eliminates most vehicle safety inspections, in 2023.

Supporters of the bill called the safety inspections time consuming and inconvenient. Opponents of the bill say it could set Texas drivers, and future Texans, on a dangerous path.

"The majority of our business is centered around making sure people's vehicles are safe," said Charissa Barnes, owner of the Official Inspection Station in San Antonio, to lawmakers earlier this year. "We need to make sure that their cars, the people joining us in Texas, are safe."

WHAT DID THE LEGISLATURE CHANGE?

The Legislature repealed provisions in state law that mandate annual vehicle inspections. However, the \$7.50 fee remains intact under a new name: the inspection program replacement fee. That fee will be paid at the time the vehicle is registered with the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

The 17 Texas counties that require emissions inspections will still mandate annual emissions tests regardless of the bill becoming law. They are Brazoria, Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, El Paso, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Johnson, Kaufman, Montgomery, Parker, Rockwall, Tarrant, Travis and Williamson counties.

WHO IS AFFECTED?

All Texas noncommercial drivers outside of the exempted counties stand to be affected by the legislation. According to the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles, there are 26 million registered cars in the state. Annual inspections are used to determine if certain features of a car, such as the tires, seat belts or brakes, are safe to drive with.

A study mandated by the Texas Legislature in 2017 shows that cars with defects, such as bald tires or bad brakes, were three years older than the average registered vehicle, which is nine years old.

Almost a quarter of the people



RYAN MCCRIMMON FOR THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Starting this month, many Texas drivers will no longer have to have their car inspected for safety.

surveyed in the study were asked by a mechanic to fix slick or defective tires during an inspection, potentially preventing more accidents. Another report found that defective cars in Texas were more than three times as likely to be involved in a crash that resulted in a fatality.

Texas roadways are notoriously dangerous. At least one person dies on a Texas road each day. According to the most recent state data, 4,283 people were killed in auto crashes in Texas during 2023. Based on the reported crashes in 2023, one person was killed on a Texas roadway about every two hours.

WHO INFLUENCED THE BILL'S OUTCOME?

Republican Rep. Cody Harris of Palestine and Sens. Mayes Middleton of Galveston and Bob Hall of Edgewood sponsored the bill to do away with annual vehicle inspections.

"These inspections are a waste of time for Texas citizens and a money-making Ponzi scheme used by some shady dealerships to upsell consumers with unnecessary repairs," Harris said in a statement to ABC 13 in Houston. "Texans are responsible, fiercely independent, and I trust them to keep their cars and trucks safe while on the road."

Other groups and businesses — such as former Texas Sen. Don Huffines' Liberty Foundation, Continental Automotive Group, Texas Public Policy Foundation, Texas Conservative Coalition and Tesla — were all witnesses in favor of the bill. Huffines, whose family owns a car dealership empire in North Texas, has been a vocal supporter of the bill.

Representatives with the Sheriffs' Association of Texas, the Dallas Police Association, the Houston Police Officers' Union, the Texas State Inspection

Association, Toyota Motor North America and more spoke against the bill.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST TEXANS?

Drivers will still be paying the annual \$7.50 when they register their vehicles. The money will go toward the Texas mobility fund, general revenue fund and the clean air account.

For drivers with new cars — either the current model or preceding model year that has not been previously registered in Texas or another state — there will instead be an initial fee of \$16.75 to cover two years.

All commercial vehicles in all of the state's 254 counties will still be required to pass an annual vehicle safety inspection and pay the safety inspection fee.

The Texas transportation department estimates that the state's economy lost \$51.4 billion due to car crashes in 2021.

WHAT ALTERNATIVES WERE CONSIDERED?

No alternatives were considered for the bill, but there was some pushback from other lawmakers. Sen. Nathan Johnson, a Dallas Democrat, spoke against the bill on the Senate floor before it passed.

"It's really not going to take any time, and if they want to sell me a windshield wiper while I'm there, I'm OK," Johnson said. "I would at least vote this bill down until one of you brings out a study that says they're not effective. The evidence I've seen says they are."

Johnson urged fellow members to vote the bill down, saying people's lives are at stake.

The bill passed on a 109-32 vote in the House chamber and a 20-11 vote in the Senate. Gov. Greg Abbott signed it into law in June 2023.

State sales tax revenue totaled \$4.1 billion in December

STAFF REPORTS

Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar said state sales tax revenue totaled \$4.1 billion in December, up 1% from December 2023.

"Overall sales tax collections grew modestly compared with December 2023, and at less than the rate of general price inflation," Hegar said. "This suggests a lack of growth in real sales taxable activity, as continued high interest rates and depleted savings constrain spending, even as overall

employment and income continue to grow."

Reflecting strength in the tourism sector, hotel occupancy taxes were up 47% from a year ago to \$61 million.

Natural gas production tax was up 25% to \$214 million, while oil production taxes were down 14% to \$431 million.

Motor fuel taxes, reported at \$313 million in December, were down 1% from the same month a year ago.

"The largest increase among major sectors was in receipts from the con-

struction sector," Hegar said. "Among the other large sectors driven primarily by business spending, remittances from the manufacturing sector were essentially flat, while receipts from the mining and wholesale trade sectors came in significantly lower than a year ago."

Motor vehicle sales and rental taxes were up 12% to \$583 million. Alcoholic beverage taxes were up 10% to \$150 million.

See **REVENUE**, page A5



• WILLIAMSON COUNTY — WILCOX.GOV

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 second and fourth Thursday each month at Cedar Park Middle School library located at 2100 Sun Chase

Boulevard at 6:15 p.m. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register. Agendas, board meeting packets and a live stream are 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

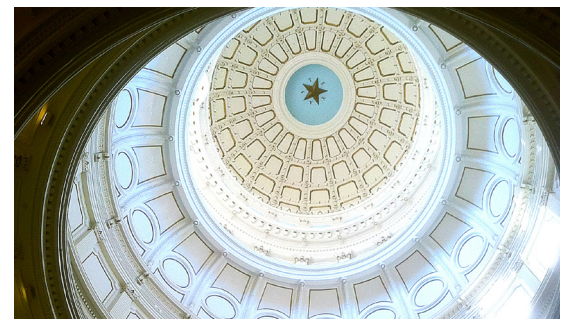
third Thursday of each month in the City Council Chambers, Pat Bryson Municipal Hall, 201 N. Brushy Street. Council agendas and packets are available on the city's website. Meetings are open to the public. If you wish to speak, arrive early and register.

• 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

Legislative session begins on Jan. 14

The 89th Texas legislative session begins on Jan. 14 with a still-unresolved race for speaker of the Texas House of Representatives.

State Reps. David Cook, R-Mansfield and Dustin Burrows, R-Lubbock, are considered the frontrunners for speaker, but speculation continues as to whether other candidates will throw their hats into the ring.

The Republican caucus is split between those who oppose appointing any Democrat to chair a House committee and those who contend it's essential to work across the aisle to get the state's business done in a biennial five-month session. Historically, a few chairmanships have gone to members of the minority party.

In the wake of the November elections, the make-up of the 150-member Texas House is 87 Republicans and 63 Democrats.

School vouchers will again be on the legislative plate since they are a top priority for Gov. Greg Abbott. His efforts to pass what are also called Education Savings Accounts failed numerous attempts in 2023, including several special sessions.

Legislative watchers predict more bills aimed at property tax relief but geared more toward business owners, since those passed in the 2023 session were primarily aimed at homeowners.

Another issue that Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has prioritized is banning the sale of all THC products in Texas.

GOP bills seek to regulate wind, solar and battery power projects

Several Republican lawmakers have filed bills to increase government oversight over renewable energy projects, The Dallas Morning News reported. Proposals include requiring property buffers between the projects and neighboring properties. Another bill would require environmental fees and studies for any new renewable projects.

The News reported that wind, solar and batteries account for about 46% of electric generation capacity for the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which controls nearly all of the state's power grid.

"Currently, renewable energy facilities do not have statewide guidelines for permitting and decommissioning, leading to variations in how the installations are installed," said state Rep. Jared Patterson, R-Frisco and sponsor of one of the bills.

FBI probes reported threats against SpaceX

The FBI is investigating reported threats made against SpaceX's Starbase Facility near Brownsville, the San Antonio Express-News reported. The bureau's San Antonio office confirmed that it is investigating "possible bomb threats in South Texas in recent weeks."

"While we are working to carefully vet and investigate the information we have received, we want to reiterate that the safety and security of the American people is the FBI's highest concern," the bureau said in a statement late last week.

A frequent camper near the launch site reported five male passengers in a vehicle talked of blowing up a SpaceX space vehicle.

The probe comes as the company is working toward a planned test flight on Jan. 10 of its second-generation Starship.

The company has come under fire in recent months for its environmental record. Several Rio Grande Valley groups have sued the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for allowing SpaceX to discharge wastewater from its launch platform without a permit.

Texas losing clout in Congress this session

There are fewer Texans in leadership in Congress in the session that just began, largely because of retirements of several GOP members, the Houston Chronicle reported.

U.S. Rep. Kay Granger, R-Fort Worth, who led the powerful Appropriations Committee, and U.S. Rep. Michael Burgess, R-Pilot Point, who led the Rules Committee and was the second-ranked Republican on the Commerce Committee, both retired from Congress this year. Eighteen of the 25 Texas Republicans in the House have been there for three full terms or fewer. Another incumbent, Michael McCaul, R-Austin, is no longer heading the House Foreign Affairs Committee because of term limits.

State starts 2025 with 2.9 million business entities

Texas rang in the New Year with more than 2.9 million business entities actively registered with the secretary of state's office to conduct business here. That is up more than 125,000 from a year ago, according to Texas Secretary of State Jane Nelson.

"The economic climate in Texas continues to be strong as entrepreneurs grow and create businesses in our state and more out-of-state entities want to expand to Texas," Nelson said.

That number includes both businesses incorporated in Texas and out-of-state companies conducting business here.

State's citrus industry on the brink of disaster

The state's citrus industry is reeling after a pair of natural disasters — the deadly winter storm of February 2021 and a severe drought, The Texas Tribune reported. Nearly four years after that winter storm, production levels have not recovered.

The state's citrus industry is located entirely in the Valley and has an economic impact of more than \$300 million annually.

Farmers in the Valley largely depend on surface water from the Rio Grande. A mature citrus tree needs between 40 and 50 inches of water a year, according to the Texas A&M Agrilife Research Center. About half of that amount must be supplied by irrigation. Drought conditions and Mexico falling behind on delivering water under a 1944 treaty are blamed for the drop in citrus production.

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: gborderst@texaspress.com.

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HILL COUNTRY NEWS

SCOTT COLEMAN

■ Publisher
publisher@hillcountrynews.com

GINNY BROCK

■ Bookkeeper/Ad Sales/Circulation
bookkeeper@hillcountrynews.com

JOSH MONIZ

■ Senior Reporter
josh.moniz@hillcountrynews.com

CLAYTON KELLEY

■ Staff Writer
news@hillcountrynews.com

MARISSA FERREIRA

■ Page Designer

OFFICE HOURS:

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Cedar Park, TX 78613
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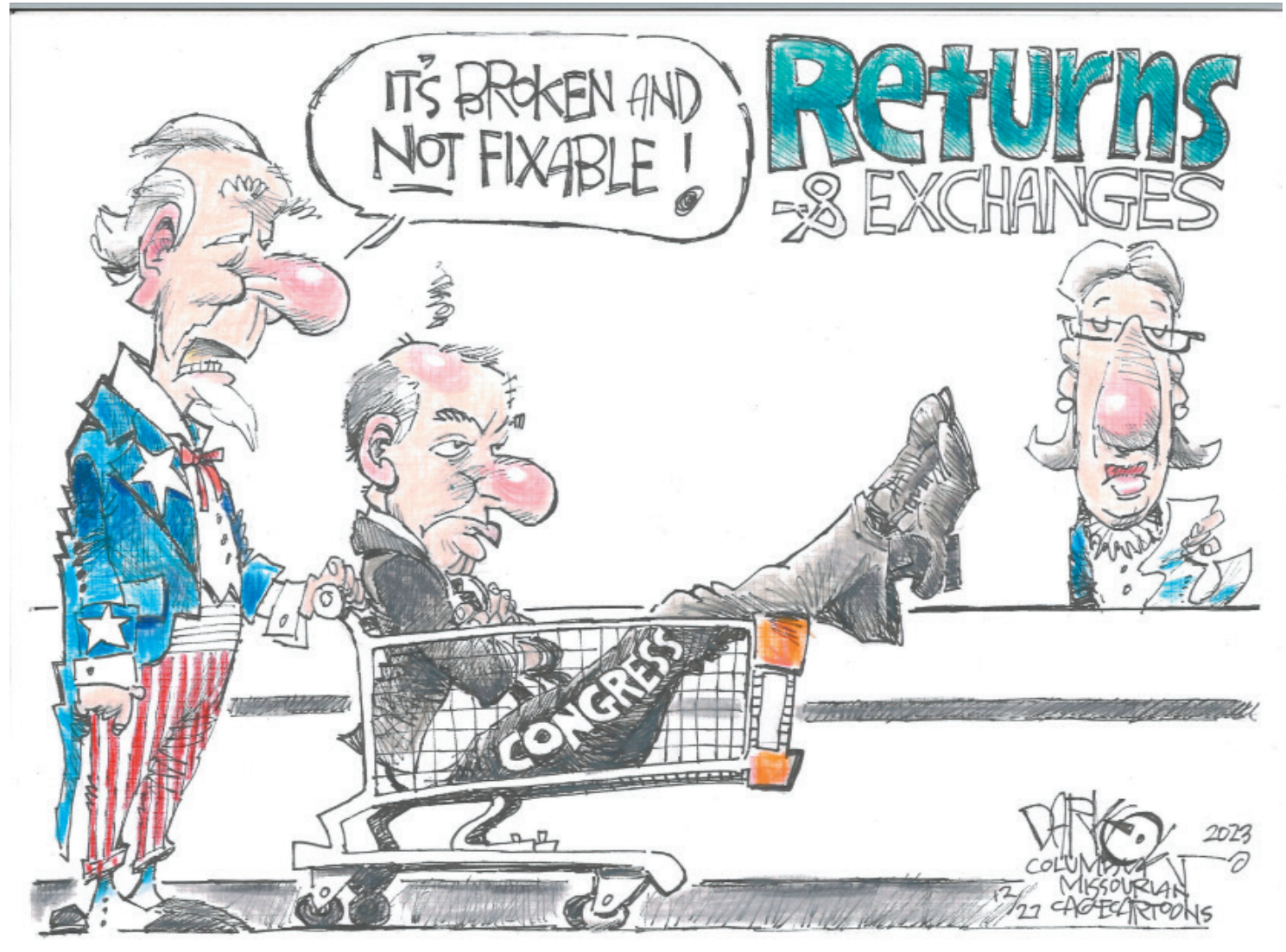
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EDITORIAL CARTOON



COMMENTARY

Will Rogers knew Congress too well

As we head into the New Year, the approval ratings of the U.S. Congress are still at historic lows. After bottoming out at 12% last February, Congressional approval is now hovering at a sorry 17%.

The timeless wit and political wisdom of Will Rogers explains why:

"Congress is so strange; a man gets up to speak and says nothing, nobody listens, and then everybody disagrees."

"We all joke about Congress, but we can't improve on them. Have you noticed that no matter who we elect, he is just as bad as the one he replaces?"

"When Congress makes a joke it's a law, and when they make a law, it's a joke."

Rogers — America's first great Mister Rogers — spoke these words in the 1920s and 1930s, but they're just as true now. When voters gave Republicans the majority in the Senate in November, they voted for change. They want an end to massive bills that are packed with ridiculous spending.

Regrettably, according to Rogers, there's nothing new about the shenanigans of Congress:

"We cuss Congress, and we joke about 'em, but they are all good fellows at heart, and if they wasn't in Congress, why, they would be doing something else against us that might be even worse."

"Never blame a legislative body for not



TOM PURCELL

GUEST COLUMNIST

doing something. When they do nothing, they don't hurt anybody. When they do something is when they become dangerous."

Rogers saved some of his best barbs for the Senate, the allegedly august body of distinguished minds that is supposed to snuff out bad ideas and bills the House passes and advance good ones. But even during Rogers' time, things hardly ever turned out that way:

"About all I can say for the United States Senate is that it opens with a prayer and closes with an investigation."

"Senators are a never-ending source of amusement, amazement and discouragement."

"The Senate just sits and waits till they find out what the president wants, so they know how to vote against him."

That's what is most agitating about our current Congress. Too many members on both sides of the aisle are narrow-minded, partisan and looking to advance their self-interests.

The average American doesn't like that. The average American knows that the country is facing giant challenges — entitlement

programs that are going broke faster than we can fund them and massive \$2 trillion federal budget deficits that must be tamed.

The average American wants these problems to be solved by people who are interested in the good of their country — not Republicans and Democrats interested in the good of their parties.

It's no wonder we are disgusted. But according to Rogers, that's nothing new either:

"It's getting so if a man wants to stand well socially, he can't afford to be seen with either the Democrats or the Republicans."

"There is something about a Republican that you can only stand him just so long; and on the other hand, there is something about a Democrat that you can't stand him quite that long."

We can only hope our 2025 Congress begins to comprehend what the American people have been trying to tell it — that it needs to get in step with the wisdom and will of the people.

Because, as the wise and witty Mr. Rogers said, "Our country is not where it is today on account of any one man. It's here on account of the real common sense of the Big Normal Majority."

See Tom Purcell's syndicated column, humor books and funny videos featuring his dog, Thurber, at TomPurcell.com. Email him at Tom@TomPurcell.com.

COMMENTARY

New Year's resolutions and recuperations

Yes, it's that time you've been waiting for all year, when I reveal my list of New Year's resolutions that I likely won't be able to keep beyond Valentine's Day, which, once again, I will probably spend demonstrating my love for my wife with Mexican food — mainly having her watch me eat it.

This year, though, I'm using my resolutions to focus on my mental health — since I've been told that I can't stay in bed until next January. Primarily, I'm resolving to stop allowing certain worries, concerns, questions and math problems to weigh on my mind and my digestive system.

First, I'm resolved to resist the acute feeling of dread every time my (or my wife's) cell phone vibrates and we see that one of our three semi-grown daughters is calling. Now, don't get me wrong. We love hearing from our



JASE GRAVES

GUEST COLUMNIST

girls, and we want to know that they are safe, healthy and fulfilled, but when they actually call us, it typically means that something is wrong, and that something often involves several hundred dollars — or a boy who has suddenly turned into a huge doofus.

Next is my resolution to stop allowing the check-engine light on my elderly SUV to burn a hole in my subconscious. I'm occasionally able to bribe it to turn off for a few weeks if I take it to the shop to have an exorbitantly expensive part I've never heard of replaced

with a new one. But as soon as I ease in to the carefree routine of driving a vehicle that isn't about to explode, that piercing, yellow-orange glow returns to torment me like something out of an Edgar Allan Poe short story. Sometimes I think I see it when it isn't even there ... or maybe it is!

Another anxiety I intend to alleviate involves my youngest daughter's little white doglet, Biscuit, who has developed a habit of ingesting items not meant to be processed by the canine gizzard. Biscuit seems partial to human hair, carpet fibers and miniscule particles of my daughter's pillowcase that she nibbles while my daughter is asleep or engrossed in YouTube videos on her cell phone. My main concern, of course, is the dog's health, which, at any moment, could require medical treatment that will result in a new set of tires on our vet's pickup. Another worry, though, is wondering where the dog will throw up next. Will it be the carpet, the couch, my desk chair or somewhere I don't see ... but feel ... between my toes? Nowadays, anytime Biscuit coughs, hacks or breathes funny, we frantically scoop her up like a live hand grenade and rush her outside — where she usually just stands there and looks at us like we need medication, which we probably do.

Finally, I have promised myself to stop worrying about the lumps, bumps, aches, pains and errant sprouts of body hair (usually in embarrassing locations) that come with getting older. I used to panic every time one of our children asked me why my legs sound like microwave popcorn when I walk, or why my nostrils have bangs, but I've now determined just to do my best to stay healthy, reasonably presentable in public — according to most city ordinances — and let God take care of the rest. (He's got His work cut out for Him there.)

So there you have it, my list of New Year's resolutions. I feel better already just getting that off my chest. Wait, was that my phone buzzing or the dog breathing funny again...?

Graves is an award-winning humor columnist from East Texas. Contact him at susanjase@sbcglobal.net.

EDITORIAL CARTOON



NEWS

LISD seeks feedback in annual hazardous bus route evaluation

STAFF REPORT

Leander ISD is seeking feedback from the community as the district begins its annual review of hazardous bus routes within 2 miles of a campus. "We want to hear from families about concerns on current walking routes to school. The district will use this input in planning our hazardous routes assessments," the district said in a statement. In Leander ISD, families living closer than two miles from their assigned school are in the "Not Eligible for Transportation Zone," or NETZone. Students in the NETZone are

only provided bus service if their route to school is rated as hazardous. Members of the transportation team annually review bus routes to schools of families receiving bus service and living inside the NETZone. Reviewers also assess routes to schools of families in the NETZone with significant changes, such as new construction or changes to road conditions. The form for community input is located at: <https://shorturl.at/wj3k9>. The form will close Jan. 21. Parents with students at different schools should complete the form separately for each school.

REVENUE

from page A3

"From the major sectors driven mostly by consumer spending, receipts from the services sector were moderately above collections from December 2023 while receipts from the retail trade sector grew only slightly," Hegar explained. "Within the retail trade sector, receipts from grocery stores were up significantly, while receipts from general merchandise and clothing stores were about flat, and collections from online shopping grew only modestly." Total sales tax revenue for the three months ending in December 2024 was up 3.7%

compared with the same period a year ago. "Receipts from restaurants increased from a year ago, coming in above the rate of inflation for food away from home for November. Receipts from home improvement and furniture stores declined significantly from a year ago," Hegar said. Sales tax is the largest source of state funding for the state budget, accounting for 58% of all tax collections. The majority of December sales tax revenue is based on sales made in November and remitted to the agency in December.

AMBLER

from page A1

O'Connell, one of the defense attorneys for the men, spoke about their excitement over the jury's decision, but noted, "In a case like this, there are no winners."

In a statement after the case, Travis County District Attorney José Garza spoke about how the defense's hearts break for Ambler's family, and how they hope the case will bring them closure.

EVIDENCE TAMPERING

Chody and Nassour finally went on trial on Aug. 12, with both facing third-degree felony charges, which carry a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, for allegedly taking dozens of steps to conceal footage of Ambler's death back in March of 2019 from investigators, including ensuring the destruction of the video taken by the now-defunct reality television show Live PD.

Three days later, District Judge Karen Sage ruled that since the Private Protection Act, a federal law in effect at the time of Ambler's death, would have prevented seizing the LIVE PD footage and no warrant was issued for the footage before it was destroyed, the prosecution cannot present any evidence on whether or not the two were involved in letting the Live PD footage leave the scene. The assertion is a central point in the prosecution's case.

The lengthy process of appealing to the 3rd Court of Appeals has resulted in no progress for the case since August. The prosecution's case will have a difficult case to argue, and, if their appeal doesn't succeed, the prosecution will have to find a new foundation for their case.

According to the indictment filed against Chody and Nassour, the now-defunct reality television show

Live PD was filming but not live during Ambler's death, shooting the clearest view of the scene. It alleges Chody and Nassour allowed the video to be removed from the scene.

It alleges they subsequently sought a new contract with Live PD six weeks after Ambler's death, which included a provision this time that allowed the show to destroy old footage after a period plus a backdating of the contract far enough to overlap with the footage of Ambler's death despite "knowing that an in-custody death investigation or official proceeding was pending."

Chody and Nassour contacted Williamson County Judge Bill Gravel and the county's general counsel to add the backdated contract to the consent agenda for the June 4, 2019, meeting of the Williamson County Commissioners Court. The two of them allegedly contacted the show's production company on either June 5 or June 6 of 2019, to tell them the internal affairs investigation had concluded despite never requesting the video of the incident. As a result of these actions, the show later deleted the footage of the incident.

Recent court filings by the prosecution indicate that an executive with the company that produced Live PD will testify that no other law enforcement agency ever required a mandatory film destruction clause in their contracts.

Additionally, the indictment also alleges that Chody, while on the scene of Ambler's death, ordered all deputies to turn off their body cams and patrol car cameras while letting the Live PD crew leave without taking statements or getting contact information. They also allege that Chody and Nassour allowed representatives from the show's produc-

tion company, Big Fish Entertainment, to enter the restricted scene, obtain the raw audio and video of the incident and take it away from the scene.

Finally, the indictments claim they intentionally obstructed the investigations by the Austin Police Department, the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office and the Travis County District Attorney's Office, including withholding the names and information about the show employees who were at the scene.

Chody's attorney E.G. Morris told the media that he believes the prosecution's case has numerous deficiencies and that Chody was following both federal statutory law and Williamson County Sheriff's Office's own written policy at the time by not seizing the Live PD footage at the time. He claimed the basis for the indictment was contrary to federal law.

Travis County District Attorney José Garza said he and his office "remain committed to seeing this through on behalf of not just Javier Ambler, but also our community."

Regardless of the outcome of the case, Ambler's death, which didn't come to light until 2020 due to an investigation by the Austin American-Statesman and KVUE, has already had a major impact locally and on Texas. Beyond contributing to the debate about whether policing reforms are needed in the wake of George Floyd's death in police custody in Minneapolis, Minn., back in 2020, the case resulted in Chody losing his 2020 reelection bid, the cancellation of the shows Live PD and "COPS" and a new state law banning partnerships between Texas law enforcement and reality television shows.

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NOTICE OF SALE
LEANDER MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT NO. 3 UNLIMITED TAX BONDS, SERIES 2025
(A political subdivision of the State of Texas located in Williamson County, Texas)
\$4,615,000
Selling: Thursday, January 23, 2025
Bids Due: 9:30 a.m. C.S.T.

Place and Time of Award: The District will consider the award of the sale of the Bonds on Thursday, January 23, 2025, at 12:00 p.m. C.S.T. at the regular meeting place outside the boundaries of the District at Armbrust & Brown, PLLC, 100 Congress Avenue, Suite 1300, Austin, Texas, 78701. Action will be taken immediately by the Board of Directors of the District to accept or reject the best bid. Each bidder must deliver a Bank Cashier's Check in the amount of \$92,300 payable to the order of Leander Municipal Utility District No. 3 as a good faith deposit to Specialized Public Finance Inc., 248 Addie Roy Road, Suite B-103, Austin, Texas 78746, by 9:30 a.m. C.S.T., on the date of the sale.

The District and Specialized Public Finance Inc. are not responsible if such electronic mail is malfunctioning which prevents a bid or bids from being submitted on a timely basis. The District and Specialized Public Finance Inc. will not be responsible for submitting any bids received after the above deadlines. The District and Specialized Public Finance Inc. assume no responsibility or liability with respect to any irregularities associated with the submission of bids if the electronic mail bid option is exercised.

Sealed, Written Bids Delivered in Person: Written bids, plainly marked "Bid for Bonds" should be addressed to the Board of Directors of Leander Municipal Utility District No. 3 if delivered in person, delivered to Garry Kimball, Specialized Public Finance Inc., 248 Addie Roy Road, Suite B-103, Austin, Texas 78746, by 9:30 a.m. C.S.T., on Thursday, January 23, 2025. All bids must be signed and submitted on the "Official Bid Form."

Electronic Bidding Procedures: Any prospective bidder that intends to submit an electronic bid must submit its electronic bid through the facilities of PARITY between 9:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. C.S.T., on Thursday, January 23, 2025, as described in the "Official Notice of Sale" described below. Subscription to the i-Deal LLC's BIDCOMP Competitive Bidding System is required in order to submit an electronic bid through PARITY. Further information about PARITY, including any fee charged, may be obtained from Dalcomp/Parity, 1359 Broadway, 2nd Floor, New York, New York 10018 attention: Eric Washington (212) 849-5021.

Bids by Facsimile: Facsimile bids will be accepted at (512) 275-7305 between 9:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. C.S.T., to the attention of Garry Kimball, on Thursday, January 23, 2025, all as described in the "Official Notice of Sale" described below.

Information: The Bonds are more completely described in the "Official Notice of Sale," "Official Bid Form" and the "Preliminary Official Statement," which may be obtained from Specialized Public Finance Inc., 248 Addie Roy Road, Suite B-103, Austin, Texas, 78746, Financial Advisor to the District.

The bidder whose bid is the winning bid in accordance with the "Official Notice of Sale" will be notified immediately and must submit a SIGNED Official Bid Form in connection with the sale by 9:30 a.m. C.S.T., on Thursday, January 23, 2025, to Monica Melvin, Specialized Public Finance Inc. at monica@sfpfuni.com.

The District reserves the right to reject any or all bids for the Bonds and to waive any and all irregularities except time of filing. This notice does not constitute an offer to sell the Bonds but is merely notice of sale of the Bonds as required by law. The offer to sell the Bonds will be made only by means of the "Official Notice of Sale," the "Preliminary Official Statement" and the "Official Bid Form."

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Lago Vista, TX 78645
The auction will be listed and advertised on lockerfox.com. Purchases may be made with cash on and paid to the above facility to complete the transaction. Old Gringo Storage may refuse any bid and may rescind any purchase up until the winning bidder takes possession of the personal property.

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PUBLIC NOTICE
The City of Leander Planning and Zoning Commission will meet on January 9, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. at Pat Bryson Municipal Hall, 201 North Brushy, Leander, Texas, to hold a public hearing to consider the following:
AND
The City of Leander City Council will meet on February 6, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at Pat Bryson Municipal Hall, 201 North Brushy, Leander, Texas, to hold a public hearing to consider the following:

850 HELP WANTED

Conduct a Public Hearing and consider action regarding Zoning Case Z-24-0137 to amend the current zoning of PAG Leander H1 PUD (Planned Unit Development) with a base zoning district of GC-4-A (General Commercial) to allow for an automobile dealership with unlimited outdoor storage without a primary structure on one (1) parcel of land approximately 6.592 acres ± in size, more particularly described by Williamson Central Appraisal District Parcel R578129; and legally described as Lot 1, Block A of the PAG Leander H1 Subdivision, Leander, Williamson County, Texas. Applicant/Agent: Penske Automotive Group (Jeff Anderson) on behalf of PAG West, LLC. (George Raysik).
This notice is a correction from a prior notice published on 12/19/2024 due to a clerical error.
Robin M. Griffin, Planning Director
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Ewers' clutch overtime performance, Mukuba's interception sends Longhorns to CFP Semifinal



Above: Texas defensive back Andrew Mukuba (4) intercepts a pass intended for Arizona State wide receiver Melquan Stovall (5) to seal the victory during the second overtime period of the Peach Bowl CFP Quarterfinal. Right: Texas wide receiver Silas Bolden (11) scores a touchdown on a 75-yard punt return during the first quarter of the Peach Bowl CFP Quarterfinal college football game last Wednesday in Atlanta.

PHOTOS BY SCOTT W. COLEMAN



STAFF REPORTS

ATLANTA, Ga — For most of the Peach Bowl game on New Year's Day, it looked like Texas was on its way to a rout of the Big 12 Champion Arizona State Sun Devils. Scoring twice early and adding a Bert Auburn field goal in the second quarter, the Longhorns led the Sun Devils 17-3 at the half.

However, a defensive battle in the middle of the third quarter saw Texas hold Arizona State out of the end zone on four straight downs after a first-and-goal at the Longhorns' six yard line.

After the defensive stop, Texas took over on its own two yard line with Arizona State's Shamari Simmons forcing Quintrevion Wisner to fumble in the end zone. Quinn Ewers recovered the fumble, saving a touchdown, but giving up a safety.

A solid return after the Texas kickoff following the safety set the Sun Devils up with decent field position. After being stifled in the first half, Arizona State's All-American running back Can Skattebo began to make an impact on the drive, but a sack on third and long forced Arizona State to settle for a field goal.

Leading 17-8, Texas started its next drive in the final seconds of the third quarter. Arizona State's Simmons broke up and nearly intercepted a would-be touchdown pass to Isaiah Bond, but Ewers completed the drive and scored on a 5-yard carry.

That's where Skattebo took over and recorded a quarter for the ages.

The senior running back came into the game as a known dual threat, having tallied more than 1,500 rushing yards and over 500 receiving yards.

He added a passing touchdown to his season on a 42-yard pass off a trick play, and began to chip away at the Texas defense, helping the Sun Devils tie the game late.

With Bert Auburn missing two field goal attempts, including what would have been a walk-off game winner as time expired in regulation, the teams were forced into overtime.

Ewers — solid but not stellar up to that point — perhaps cemented a place in Longhorn lore with a 28-yard touchdown pass to Matthew Golden



SCOTT W. COLEMAN

Texas head coach Steve Sarkisian reacts after a missed field goal that would have won the game as time expired in regulation on Jan. 1.

on 4th and 13 with everything on the line in the first overtime.

Moments later, Ewers took the first snap of the second overtime period and connected with Gunnar Helm for a 25-yard touchdown. Golden caught a pass for a two-point conversion to give Texas a 39-31 lead.

Longhorns defensive back Andrew Mukuba intercepted a pass from Arizona State's Sam Leavitt to seal the victory for Texas.

With three receivers to the left of the formation and a tight end at the end of offensive line, Leavitt took the snap, faked to Skattebo and let loose a throw towards the first-down marker.

Mukuba, a first-year Longhorn and Austin native, was seven yards off his receiver at the snap, but read the out-and-up route by Melquan Stovall and undercut the throw before Stovall had an opportunity to make a play.

It was Mukuba's fifth interception on the season — tying him with Jahdae Barron for the team lead — and the Longhorns' ninth consecutive game with an interception.

The Longhorns advance to face Ohio State in the Cotton Bowl Classic CFP Semifinal on Jan. 10 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington.

The Buckeyes beat No. 1 ranked Oregon 41-21 in the Rose Bowl CFP Semifinal last Wednesday.

Kickoff for the Cotton Bowl Classic is set for 6:30 p.m. on Friday.

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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.

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