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Fort Stockton's 5-Day Forecast

Issued Wednesday morning
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Monday: 83-52



SXSW artists performing Fri., March 18 at The Garage



Business Profile Debra Johnson United Realty

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Pipeline starts 10 condemnations

By Bob Beal reporter@fspioneer.com

Trans-Pecos Pipeline LLC had begun condemnation proceedings against 10 Pecos County landowners as of last week. TPP, a three-company consortium, is seeking easements for a 42" natural gas pipeline that is to run from the Waha gathering hub near Coyanosa to a tunnel under the Rio Grande about 10 miles upriver from Presidio, for export to Mexico. Condemnation is the first step in invoking power of inherent domain to appropriate land, rights of way, easements or other property, in this case for the natural gas pipeline system.

TPP's public relations firm has said the consortium does easement negotiations in good faith and only as a last resort invokes inherent domain as an intrastate natural gas utility empowered and regulated by the Railroad Commission of Texas.

Legal advice regarding pipeline easement negotiations is included in an online handbook newly published at agrilifecdn.tamu.edu/texasaglaw/files/2016/02/just-click-here..pdf.

Pipeline meets farming enterprise

Mandujano Brothers, an agricultural enterprise around the Coyanosa area, is a defendant in one of the condemnation cases.

Armando (Mando) Mandujano, who handles those matters for the enterprise, discussed his experience.

"You know what it feels like? Like a stranger going to move into your house and ain't a darn thing you can do about it," said Mandujano.

Mandujano said that the pipeline wanted to come through farm fields improved with an integrated drip irrigation system.

"It affects a whole lot more acres (than the easement sought); the rest of the field is out of commission, like a car with a flat — three tires isn't enough," he said.

Mandujano said the "wording wasn't

right."

"The money wasn't enough to be concerned about, but with the wrong easement, you become a servant to the land," said Mandujano. "It could keep you from putting in an irrigation line. And you don't want anybody coming in a doing whatever they want."

Mandujano said he deals with issues related to his surface rights "on a monthly basis — power lines, gas leaks — no respect for the landowner; it leaves a sour taste; why do an easement if you don't have to?" he said.

See PIPELINE on A-7

County eyes Rooney amphitheatre

By Bob Beal reporter@fspioneer.com

Construction of an amphitheatre in Rooney Park was a topic of the Pecos County Commissioners Court workshop Monday. The workshop followed the rest of the agenda items at the regular commissioners court meeting.

Hospital-to-hospital patient transfer

One agenda item was a presentation by a company interested in establishing a fixed-wing medical evacuation service in Pecos County, primarily for non-emergency hospital-to-hospital transfers. The company, Speed Aviation, said there would be no cost to the county government. The court asked the company to determine the minimum average number of flights per month it would need to be profitable.

Pecos County Memorial Hospital interim CEO Jim Koulovatos, who was at the meeting, said PCMH is averaging 27 transfers per month — six by helicopter and 21 by Pecos County EMS ground transportation, which takes a mobile ICU and crew out of local emergency service several hours.

County Judge Joe Shuster said he does not want to jeopardize the county's existing contract for helicopter evacuation services, which can be critical for remote accident victims with life-threatening injuries. Pecos County government's cost to enroll all res-

idents in AeroCare basic membership is about \$56,000, less than \$4 per capita, and it covers them in this and the seven surrounding counties. The county Shuster told the court that he had asked Brewster, Jeff Davis and Presidio counties to consider entering arrangements with AeroCare for their residents.

"That would make it more likely it would stick around," Shuster said after the meeting.

PCMH posts good finances

Koulovatos, during his presentation of PCMH financial reports for January, said net patient revenues were 10 percent — \$212,000 — less than total operating costs. He pointed out that net patient revenues are after contractual adjustments to PCMH's charges and write-offs of bad debt and do not include intergovernmental revenues, such as from Medicaid or the county subsidy. He also showed that total operating costs include depreciation on capital assets.

"Anytime a rural hospital can get that close to breaking even on its own, that's good," Koulovatos told the court.

Amphitheater construction discussed

Bids for the construction of an amphitheatre in Rooney Park were double what the county had budgeted for the project.

See COUNTY on A-7



Sunset illuminating Independence Creek and the spring-fed pond in easy walking distance of the Chandler Ranch guest cabins. (Staff photo/Jeremy Gonzalez)

Chandler Ranch showcases nature

By Jeremy Gonzalez, staff reporter pioneer@fspioneer.com

[Editor's note: This is the first of two installments about a renovated guest ranch in a riparian area where the Pecos River cuts into the west edge of the Edwards Plateau, just south of the Pecos County line, in Terrell County.]

The Chandler Ranch has great heritage and some of the purest water in Texas flowing through its territory. The unique area is an easy two-hour drive from Fort Stockton. The secluded guest ranch is on Independence Creek Road. The approach to the guest quarters is a rare scene of oaks and glistening ponds.

The Chandler legacy began in the early '50s, and in 1954 a handful of guest ranch facilities faced demolition due to damage from a historic flood. After extensive repairs it was all recovered and rebuilt into a thriving



Fourth-generation Chandler siblings, Anne Vargas-Prada and Joe Chandler, have been actively involved in revamping their family's guest ranch. The serene retreat is finally reopened to the public after years of being closed. (Staff photo/Jeremy Gonzalez)

business. It became well known for its nine-hole golf course during the '60s, and its popularity lasted all the way to the '80s.

ChandlerRanch.com showcases the

ranch's history. During the 1988-91 time period, age and health problems created difficulties for second-generation Joe and Mildred Chandler in maintaining their beloved guest ranch. The guest ranch remained closed to the public, and for years it was only used for private hunting leases through permission of the Chandlers' daughters. Recently, Joe and Mildred's grandson, Joe A. Chandler, CEO of Chandler Ranch, has set out to reopen and modernize the grounds for another historic Chandler comeback. He officially began the work of restoration in 2014 — with the help of his sister, Anne Vargas-Prada; his brother-in-law, Jeff Rowes; the hands-on ranch team, Tim and Tanner Smith and chef Richard Jasso Jr.

Many of the irreparable old structures were demolished and removed.

See CHANDLER on A-10

find us on Facebook



AREA DEATHS

Brenda Acosta
Nancy Irene Porterfield
Petra Mongarro Celaya

Shirlyn Alice Shirley Mitchell
Maria (Mary) Nuñez
Violet Louise Salazar

FUEL GAUGE: AVERAGE GAS PRICES AS OF 8 A.M. WEDNESDAY

Fort Stockton	\$1.62	Monahans	\$1.75	Sonora	\$1.76
Alpine	\$1.77	Pecos	\$1.75	Van Horn	\$1.79
Midland	\$1.35	Ozona	\$1.79	Odessa	\$1.63

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Sesiones informativas para FAFSA

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CHANDLER continued from page A1

However, there are now three completely refurbished (original structure) cabins available to accommodate visitors, and a fourth cabin is due to be renovated. Between the overhaul of cabins, beautifying the ranch by planting new grass and trees, putting up new signs and other hard-won projects, Chandler says the whole endeavor was almost a do-over. Refurbishing the oldest building on the ranch, the original game room, was a successful project. For entertainment the game room now furnishes a pool table, ping-pong, and foosball.

With the benefit of near zero light pollution, there is also a telescope available for stargazers to enjoy outside.

The game room now houses a restaurant; its kitchen is equipped with brand new appliances. There's now excellent seating for families to unwind and enjoy some home-cooked meals together. Ranch chef, Richard Jasso Jr., joined the new Chandler Creek LLC enterprise back in August. He enjoys preparing his 'good eatin' and always makes sure your glass of sweet tea stays filled to the brim. In the morning he's up brewing guests a pot of coffee at sunrise, and if you ever get the chance, you must try his biscuits made from scratch smothered in country gravy.

"I finally get to live my dream. They gave me my own kitchen! You know, so far the guests we've had out here, the women are just ecstatic that they don't have to cook or wash dishes. They can just enjoy themselves with the rest of the family. All you need to bring out



Chandler Ranch resident horses and fellow donkey often graze the grass near the guest ranch lodging area. (Staff photo/Jeremy Gonzalez)

here is your clothes and your appetite; we'll take good care of ya. It really is a special place. Life slows down at Chandler Ranch," said Jasso Jr.

Natural swimming pool heavenly

The reconstruction of the 1940s chlorine-free spring fed swimming pool is another milestone. The pool's deep end is 10 feet and is a great cool down. The pool overlooks Independence Creek, which also attracts guests who want to swim and float in the flow.

Six miles down Independence Creek, there are some wondrous bluffs where the Pecos River and Independence creek converge. The Chandler Ranch holds one of the oldest Texas water rights and is the only ranch allowed to pump water out of the creek. The state monitors their water, and specialists have recognized Independence Creek's springs as producing some of the cleanest in the Lone Star State. There is currently no oil drilling in the immediate area of Independence Creek

For Chandler's sister,

Anne Vargas-Prada, viewing the large fish is one of her favorite parts of having such a great water source.

"I love to watch the large catfish swim out from underneath the big rocks. Sometimes you can walk up to the edge and see a big tail popping out from so many catfish being gathered together. On still days with no wind, the water looks like glass, and you can see the fish perfectly as the swim by. It's fantastic," said Vargas-Prada.

Chandler Ranch is stocking its four ranch ponds with catfish and bass, and the Pecos River provides some great fishing. A fishing license is required for fishing in state streams, even for catch and release fishing. Chandler Ranch encourages its visitors to carry a fishing license for all fishing. The abundance of water is not only favorable with the swimmers and fishermen, but a diverse population of wildlife is also drawn to the perennial stream. The wildlife outnumbers the human population. There have been sightings of mountain lions, foxes, raccoons, rabbits, beavers, possums, porcupines, bobcats, whitetail herds and occasional mule deer, javelinas, turkey, quail, ducks, river birds, armadillo, etc. There was even once a rare sighting of a black bear that might have wandered from Mexico.

"There is a lot to be observed and studied out here. Universities come study the freshwater springs, oak tree regeneration, lizards, snakes, birds, mussels, turtles — everything under the sun seems to be studied out here," said Chandler.

Chandler Ranch is accepting 2016 cabin reservations at chandler ranch.com. Updates and pictures of construction are at facebook.com/ChandlerRanchFans. Email is info@chandler ranch.com.

For an online version of this article, with links, go to FortStocktonPioneer.com.



EDC reviews its big projects

By Bob Beal
reporter@fspioneer.com

Doug May, executive director of the Fort Stockton Economic Development Corporation, gave its annual report at the March 1 special meeting of the city council, which appoints EDC board members. May's fast-paced presentation covered many projects that EDC undertook between Oct. 1, 2014 and Sept. 30, 2015. Last week, he sat down with The Fort Stockton Pioneer and discussed some of the larger projects. This is the last of two articles on local economic development progress.

Cummings Park gets big push

While the 4-A EDC is limited to retail, commercial and industrial development, the 4-B EDC can participate in community development projects. Last year, May started planning a project for investing nearly \$300,000 in playground design and exercise play equipment at Gene Cummings Community Park, sometimes called city park. An early discussion of the design concepts is covered on pages 6-7 of the minutes for the Aug. 24 city council meeting (see Minutes Archives under the Public Notices tab at cityoffortstockton.com).

The renovations will be handicap accessible.

In his annual report to the city council, May said the improvements could be in place by June. The Cummings park investment will use most of the 4-B funds for this budget cycle.

May said that concentrating this investment in one park is more effective for overall community development.

"It already has the spray park and volleyball courts — it will make a good facility exceptional," May told the council.

Business site improvement continues

May pointed to several storefront improvement projects, some of which are ongoing, in which EDC provides local businesses a 50-50 matching grant for enhancing the "street look" of their buildings.

EDC is also seeking to purchase deteriorating properties, some on the east side of town, to demolish them and prepare ready-to-go building sites, an important asset in attracting new businesses.

Solar rollout begins

In addition to its role for the City of Fort Stockton, EDC is also contracted to Pecos County, with which May has worked to develop first wind then solar electric generating facilities. Currently in the county there is one solar plant up and running; that Barilla project, operated by First Solar, began delivering power in September last year.

Construction has begun on four new utility-scale photovoltaic generating facilities in the county, and a fifth will soon begin construction. The construction projects, which take 12-16 months and 150-200 personnel, are using local contractors and employing some workers who lost jobs in the petroleum industry's commodity price bust.

All six of those solar projects would total about \$1.2 billion in taxable assets for applicable property-taxing governmental entities in Pecos County. The local governmental entities gave the solar project developers tax breaks that reduced their tax payments by about 80 percent. May said that a case can now be made that the solar electric industry has become established in the county and tax breaks might no longer be justified for future solar development.

During his annual report to the city council, May said that another solar project is seeking a Pecos County site for a facility that would be double the size of the largest ones now under construction. A 300 megawatt generating plant would involve investment of over half a billion dollars and would increase by half the solar production from the six tax-abated projects.

May said that many municipal and private electric utilities in Texas have filled their mandated renewable energy portfolios with wind generated electricity. However, due largely to recent reductions in the price of producing more efficient photovoltaic modules, solar electricity generation has begun to compete head to head with other power sources. Jordan Blum, writing for the Houston Chronicle FuelFix blog, reported Luminant electric utility, the state's largest, is purchasing a West Texas solar plant in a deal touted as the largest in the country in which solar power is being bought to compete in a competitive wholesale marketplace with all other power generation. Solar's daily and seasonal peak power production matches closely Texas' ERCOT grid's summer afternoon peak power demands.

In conversation May pointed to the currently very low price of natural gas. In the past May has said that he might at some point want to explore the possibility of attracting a natural gas-fired electricity generating plant to the county. There are two 42" gas pipelines in the works that will originate in the Waha gathering hub near Cayanosa and terminate at tunnels under the Rio Grande (in Presidio and El Paso counties) for export to Mexico. The Trans-Pecos Pipeline consortium that is to build and operate those pipelines has offered taps for domestic customers. Those pipeline construction projects will employ a few hundred people for about a year.

EDC budget and finances

In his annual report, May said that sales tax receipts in Fort Stockton — a small percentage of which fund 4-A and 4-B EDCs — have not had the recent wide swings and drops experienced by other cities over the Permian Basin. He said that the 4-A corporation has \$2.3 million in the bank, a resource for catalyzing retail, commercial and industrial development opportunities when they arise.

"We want to retain substantial funds for what can come up," said May.

For an online version of this article, with links, go to FortStocktonPioneer.com.

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Dates: March 16, 23, 30, 2016

Times: 10am -11am & 4pm-5pm

Where: WRTTC ROOM 104

Know which documents to bring with you to complete your FAF\$A



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Avoid I-20 & W LOOP 250

MIDLAND —Motorists need to be on lookout for traffic control changes at Interstate 20 and West Loop 250. A project to reconfigure ramps and rebuild frontage roads at that interchange is scheduled to make a significant change in traffic patterns the this week. TxDOT Odessa District strongly encourages motorists to find alternate routes if possible.

Approximately half a mile of the east-bound lane on the north Interstate 20 frontage road was closed on the west side of Loop 250 Monday. The closure is needed to rebuild the frontage road. This closure is expected to last until early June.

This is one of a series of traffic pattern changes expected during the course of construction in this year-long project. The project will adjust ramp locations, build deceleration lanes on I-20 and add turn lanes on the frontage roads. Once completed, this project will help move exiting

traffic off of the interstate travel lanes.

Motorists driving through the area are reminded that they must obey all warning signs and any flaggers they see. With high traffic volumes in the area, motorists will be a prime factor in safety in the work zone.

The speed limit in the entire 1.4-mile project area is reduced to 55 miles per hour. Law enforcement will be asked to step up enforcement in the area in the interest of public safety.

Concrete traffic barriers will be in place in part of the work zone to help protect work crews.

Reece Albert Inc. won the project with a low bid of \$8.726 million. Reece Albert Inc. is based in San Angelo and has an office in Midland.

For information, contact Gene.Powell@txdot.gov or 432-498-4746.



1601 N. Oklahoma

Beautiful brick structure stands one block from Ft Stockton High School. Mature landscaping with stately pine trees line the south border, allowing a country ambiance as you arrive. Large fenced back yard allows plenty of room for a growing family. The interior of this lovely house has been recently remodeled to include recessed lighting, new flooring and designer colours. Call today for your tour of 1601 N Oklahoma.



2003 W. Sixth

This lovely three bedroom, two bath house is ready to be enjoyed by a growing family. Fenced back yard with sprinkler system and storage building gives plenty of space for bar-b-ques and summer fun. Master bedroom suite sets apart from remaining two bedrooms, formal dining, living room and family room with large corner fireplace. Country kitchen is ready for you! Call today for your appointment.



800 N. Pecos

This all electric house boasts of ample room for a family to enjoy being together under one roof. Stucco exterior surrounds custom dual paned windows, original wood flooring in two bedrooms, large master bedroom with multiple closets, huge family room, an extra room presently being used for a bedroom, could be a man-cave or movie room. Kitchen reflects an art-deco impression with black metal cabinets. This could be your place to call home!



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