Texas border businesses fear life without NAFTA

By Collin Eaton

El Paso — El Paso, Mexico, and its neighbor Ciudad Juarez were single, independent economic entities, especially since 1753, when the North American Free Trade Agreement lowered barriers to trade between the United States, Mexico and Canada. As trucks owned by Eroles and other local companies carry billions of dollars in merchandise in long, lumbering lines across the border, at least one in every four jobs in El Paso can trace its roots to trade activity.

But the fate of this link between Mexican factories and Texas companies hinges on negotiations to update the North American Free Trade Agreement, which expired in 2019.

The appointment of a Mexico City official as the top NAFTA negotiator last month is a sign of renewed concern in Mexico about the future of the trade agreement.

Mexico is the destination for 40 percent of the state’s exports — some $90 billion for 40 percent of the state’s exports — some $90 billion in a single month.

Fate of El Paso’s economic prosperity hinges on future of trade with Mexico

If NAFTA ends, we’re going belly up,” said Angel Ponce, who oversees exports at Eroles. “The business will literally go away.”

Eroles, which employs more than 600 people, is just one of the thousands of companies across Texas that have prospered from trade with Mexico and four羟 | The Houston Chronicle | HoustonChronicle.com and Chron.com | Vol. 117, No. 121 | $4.00

Six months after Harvey, local state leaders eye an overhaul of defenses

By Andrea Zelinski

AUSTIN — Local and state leaders are moving toward a major, lengthy and costly overhaul of the state’s flood defenses that includes regulating development, marvying of flood-prone properties and reducing the impact of heavy rains discussed for decades but never built.

The fate of the initiatives will depend in large part on how the federal government responds before hurricane season begins in June, but recent events have increased the urgency of the debate.

Hurricane Harvey dumped more than 80 inches of rain over three days in late August and early September, flooding parts of South Texas to the point of crisis, and triggering a broader debate about how to address a problem that poses a threat to the state’s economy.

The immediate concern was how to respond to Harvey, which was the state’s worst natural disaster in recent memory.

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