



FRIDAY — June 26, 2009

That's a wrap



ANTHONY REYES Northwest Arkansas Times

Bidders and spectators look at a trio of cattle for sale Thursday during the last sale at the Washington County Livestock Auction in Fayetteville. To see a slide show on the closing days of the sale barn, go to www.nwanews.com/nwat/extras/salebarn.php/.

4.9-mill hike sought

Board sets amount of proposed tax increase for high school

BY BRETT BENNETT
Northwest Arkansas Times

The Fayetteville School District Board of Education voted 6-0 Thursday to ask voters to approve a 4.9-mill property tax increase in order to build a new high school on the existing campus.

If approved by voters, the proposal will finance \$113 million in bonds for the construction project. The plan was recommended by district administrators.

A key feature of the plan, referred to as master plan No. 2, approved Thursday is it does not include retaining the school's 1991 addition for remodeling.

Board members and administrators expressed the belief that while there were some potential cost savings from remodeling the facility, there was great potential

the remodel would be more detrimental to students on campus and the older facility would be viewed as second-rate after completion.

The project is expected to be challenging because construction workers will have to build new facilities on the 40-acre campus while school was in session. Assistant Superintendent Dick Johnson said it would be more challenging to move students and phase in construction projects if the building is remodeled.

"It will be much more difficult to segregate students during construction," Johnson said. "Our No. 1 priority is to ensure that in every way possible, student learning is not impacted."

Architects had estimated the district might save as much as \$10 million by

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District, city to talk parking deck

BY ROBIN MERO
Northwest Arkansas Times

Members of Fayetteville's Off Street Parking Improvement District want to move forward to build a parking deck downtown and authorized their legal counsel to talk with Mayor Lionel Jordan about partnering with the city.

John Logan Burrow, the district's counsel, said the mayor told him he has a "high degree of interest in

the possibility."

District members Bobby Odom, George Morton, Tonya Patrick and Mark Petrus asked Burrow to gather more information, and report back. The district meets once a quarter.

They also discussed possibly buying new property. Morton said the building at 118 N. Block Ave., where he practices law, is for sale for \$220,000. A television station is also trying to sell property near the Square.

The district owns about \$470,000 worth of property within its boundaries, from Spring to Rock streets and College to Locust avenues.

"We're interested in any property there is within those boundaries," Burrow said. "We're concerned there's not as much business going on downtown. For volume to increase, the need for parking will need to increase."

The district has \$1.2 million in assets, including \$721,820 in cash.

It receives parking revenue from the city based on its spaces, minus expenses in maintaining, and receives interest revenue.

About 11 percent of available city parking — decks, lots and free lots — belongs to the district.

The district does not need City Council approval to spend its resources and buy property but would need approval before taking steps to incur public debt, Burrow said.

Residents want more tennis courts, better ball fields

BY TRISH HOLLENBECK
Northwest Arkansas Times

More tennis courts and better and more baseball and swimming facilities were among the issues brought up Thursday night during a public input session on a grant application and a five-year capital improvement plan.

There were a little more than 20 residents who attended the session at the Ozarks Community Room on Wedington Drive.

The purpose of the meeting was to identify potential outdoor parks and recreational needs and priorities for next year, as parks and recreational officials prepare to apply for an Outdoor Recreation Grant. It is to be submitted to the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism. It is a matching grant available only to cities.

The maximum amount to be granted is \$250,000.

The city of Fayetteville has received several of these grants in past years, said Connie Edmonston, Fayetteville parks director.

"We've always gotten some kind of funding," she said.



ANDY SHUPE Northwest Arkansas Times

A cluster of purple coneflowers blooms near playground equipment Thursday at Gulley Park in Fayetteville. Fayetteville residents told city officials what improvement to city parks they would like to see at an input session Thursday.

The grant application is due by the end of August.

One of the requirements if the city receives the grant is that it must promise that the project funded remains outdoors in perpetuity, Edmonston said.

Allison Jumper, park planner for the Fayetteville Parks and Recreation Division, said public input is a very important part of the grant process, and the idea is to identify what people believe are needs to be addressed with this grant money.

She said money from the local budget will be used to put up the match for the grant.

Damon Webster, Sarah Evans and Bill Ward all said there need to be more tennis courts; there are only eight in the community, and there used to be several more, said Ward in an interview after the meeting.

Eight public courts are available for the current population of more than 72,000 residents — two courts at Walker Park and six at Wil-

son Park. Six are lighted.

Some residents object that both the University of Arkansas and Fayetteville High School use those courts.

Evans said adults often go to Springdale to play tennis. She said she would like to stay in Fayetteville and play there.

"I would like to see more tennis courts built," Webster said. He said tennis is one of the fastest-growing sports in recent years.

When asked, Webster and Evans said they would prefer to see the courts in one location.

Jim Compton said he sees the need for another baseball field in Walker Park.

He said he thinks that if 10 more fields were built in Northwest Arkansas "the demand would still be there."

"I'm strictly looking at the kids," he said.

Terry Lawson, president of Fayetteville Youth Baseball, said the city is missing out in not having enough baseball fields because they would be a boost to the economy in terms of bringing tournaments here.

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Attention on New at his last board meeting

BY BRETT BENNETT
Northwest Arkansas Times

At Bobby New's last school board meeting as superintendent of Fayetteville, the focus was on the retiring administrator.

"The years have been short, some days have been long. I've got the greatest staff in the world, and I've worked with some great, great board members," New said. "It has been a wonderful, wonderful 13 years, 95 percent of the time."

Before any business was transacted, Fayetteville Mayor Lionel Jordan presented a proclamation declaring it Bobby New Day. In the proclamation, Jordan noted his 37 years of expe-

rience in education and 13 years with the district.

Steve Clark, Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce president, also thanked New for his service.

Board member Steve Percival, the only current member involved with New's original hiring, read congratulatory letters from former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee and former President Bill Clinton.

"It is with great pleasure that I offer my heartfelt congratulations on your retirement," said Huckabee, who visited Happy Hollow Elementary School once when he was governor and New was superintendent.

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Curious reactions



ANTHONY REYES Northwest Arkansas Times

Regan Turner, 11, left, and Ebb King, 11, observe a chemical reaction of water and dry ice Thursday during the University of Arkansas GK-12 KIDS science camp at the university's alumni center in Fayetteville. The kids at the camp were learning how different substances respond to hot and cold temperatures.



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