



STATE'S BEST!

Big Spring High School Cross Country team members are saluted during a "State March" through the halls of the school Tuesday. The team won the state University Interscholastic League Class 4A team championship Saturday in Round Rock. Coach Randy Britton is profiled on Page 1B.

Courtesy photo

Up for sale

Council to discuss Settles Hotel future

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
Staff Writer



McEwen

Bids and advertisements will take center stage during Thursday's meeting of the Big Spring City Council, as the group is expected to look at bids on the Settles Hotel and consider advertising for a full-time city attorney.

The council voted to request bids on the historic Settles Hotel during a special meeting in October, opening the door for would-be investors and renovators.

Mayor Russ McEwen said the council is prepared to award a bid for sale during the meeting, but that certainly doesn't mean it's going to happen.

"Right now we haven't had any bids submitted," said McEwen Tuesday afternoon. "However, the request for bids doesn't end until the end of the

business day Wednesday, so I'm really hoping we'll have something to consider during the meeting."

According to McEwen, the request for bids will give the council the opportunity to find out what interest expressed in the aging structure is real, and what is just talk.

"The thing we want to accomplish is to find out if there is any real interest out there," said McEwen. "There have been some people that have told us they might be interested, and this way we can find out if that interest is real, and at what level it is."

Any bids received are expected to be presented

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HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins
Texas Senator Kel Seliger talks about school finance reform during a town hall meeting at the Hall Center for the Arts Tuesday evening.

Education, water focus for legislators

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
Staff Writer

Education continues to be the dominating subject in the state capital, according to State Senator Kel Seliger, who held a town hall meeting at the Hall Center for the Arts on the Howard College campus Tuesday evening.

Seliger said he's pleased with the progress the 79th Legislature — and the several special sessions — made in public school finance reform.

"The Supreme Court said our method of funding public schools was unconstitutional," said Seliger. "So we went back and made that system constitutional and managed to lower that property tax to \$1.37 for those districts that were already at \$1.50. I feel like this year we'll go all the way down to \$1."

"A lot of what we talked about in the session came

"The point of school is to teach and to learn. We're stopping teaching and we're stopping learning with TAKS, and that's a mistake."

—Sen. Kel Seliger

from school superintendents, and a lot of it came from your superintendent, who worked really hard and is single-mindedly dedicated to public school education for all of the kids in Texas.

"He (Michael Downes, Big Spring Independent School District superintendent) was a tremendous help to me and his fingerprints are on a lot of things we've been able to do with public schools,

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CISD trustees to canvass results of bond election

By **STEVE REAGAN**
Staff Writer

COAHOMA — The euphoria hasn't quite passed, but the reality of renovation and construction projects at the Coahoma school district is beginning to settle in.

School trustees will take the first steps toward turning construction plans into actual projects when they hold their regular meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday in the administration building board room.

CISD voters passed a \$13.9 million bond issue earlier this month, giving the green light to a variety of construction and renovation projects at the various district venues.

The various projects include:

- High School — Plans call for 20 classrooms — two wings at the campus — to be razed and replaced and a new library/media center to be constructed. The agriculture shop also will be renovated.
- Renovation of the building's heating, ventilation, plumbing and air conditioning systems also is scheduled. In addition, a new field house will be constructed and the auditorium and band hall will be renovated.
- Junior High School — Projects there include improvements to the fire alarm and other safety systems, electrical upgrades, new heating and air conditioning and complete bathroom renovations.
- Elementary — Installation of a sprinkler system, plus upgrades to the plumbing, electrical and heating systems.

Administration building — This structure will be enlarged to house the district's technology department, currently housed in the old primary school building. That building will be demolished.

In addition, tennis courts and parking spaces would be constructed.

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GIVES IT EXTRA TWANG

HIDALGO (AP) — Federal Customs and Border Patrol agents arrested a man at a Texas border checkpoint after they said they found nearly seven pounds of cocaine in his two electric guitars.

Heriberto Quinones-Juarez, 25, a Mexican citizen who lives in Minnetonka, Minn., was arrested Monday.

Quinones-Juarez's baggage was examined at a border crossing in Hidalgo after he took a taxi from Mexico. An X-ray showed something unusual in the hollowed-out bodies of the guitars.

Investigators say each guitar contained a package of cocaine. They valued the cocaine at \$218,000.

ANGELFOOD PICKUP DAY

Angelfood pickup day is Saturday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 2702 N. Birdwell.

Angel Food Ministries is a non-profit, non-denominational organization dedicated to providing grocery relief to communities throughout the United States. Locally, the program is operated through North Birdwell United Methodist Church.

December orders can also be placed at this time. Orders will also be taken Nov. 25 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Westside Community Center and Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at North Birdwell United Methodist Church.

For more information, call Madeline Boadle at 267-2203.

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

StarTek, 501 Birdwell Lane Suite 30, will host a Business After Hours program from 4:30 p.m. until 6 p.m. Thursday.

Business After Hours is a community program sponsored by the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce specifically designed to encourage networking and to showcase sponsors.

Door prizes will be awarded; refreshments will be available.

There is no charge to attend.

Those attending are invited to tour the facilities.

Winter coats needed for state hospital

Special to the Herald

Big Spring State Hospital employees are collecting winter coats for hospital patients.

"Many patients arrive at the hospital with one set of clothing — the clothing they are wearing when they get here," said Mique Yarbar, hospital Patient Education Coordinator.

"We depend on clothing donations from the com-

munity to keep our patients in appropriate clothing for changing weather conditions," she said.

Patients spend a great deal of time outdoors walking to classes, doctor appointments or campus activities and sitting outside in their dormitory courtyards.

"Coats are a huge need in the winter, especially men's coats and larger sizes" Yarbar said.

Coats and light jackets should be in good condition, clean and free of stains and holes.

Take them to the hospital's Community Relations office (take the first left when entering from the south entrance).

The donations are tax-deductible and forms can be obtained from the hospital's Community Relations office. For more information, call Amy Perez at 268-7414.

CISD

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structed.

The first step in the process begins Thursday, when trustees canvass the Nov. 7 election results which showed the bond passing by a 686-to-462 margin at the polls.

Once election results are fully certified, officials must wait 30 days before beginning any action to formally issue the bonds, CISD Superintendent Jerry Johnson said.

"We're looking at selling the bonds around early January," he said. "Right now, we figure it will be around early June before actual construction starts."

Johnson likens this period to the figurative calm before the storm.

"We're all still very excited about the election results, but things will calm down a bit while we're getting the final plans ready," Johnson said.

Allan Wolf of the architectural consulting firm of Parkhill, Smith and

Cooper — which has been refining renovation plans for more than a year — will meet with trustees to discuss further refinements.

Also at Thursday's meeting, trustees will consider selling attendance credits to either Fort Stockton or Sanderson school districts. Also, they will discuss the district's audit.

Contact Staff Writer Steve at 263-7331, ext. 234, or by e-mail at reporter@bigspringherald.com.

SELIGER

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both for Big Spring and schools all over the state."

Seliger said it's important to remember the tax cuts instituted by school finance reform do not represent a decline in the fiscal needs of public schools in the Lone Star State.

"When we cut the tax rate it wasn't meant to imply we need less money for the schools," said Seliger. "That's contrary to the case. If we take the 4.3 million young people who are in public schools today and realize next year there will be enough (additional) kids in school that we could have another Fort Worth School District — that many children next year, and the next year and the next year — it's going to require more money, not less."

"We're going to set the standards for performance in public school districts so the people who pay taxes in those school districts can look at the performance and how they are spending the money and make sure they are satisfied that they are spending it on educating children."

Seliger said he feels the long term answer to school finance can be found in the state's franchise tax, not in taxing vices such as casinos,

tobacco and gambling.

"So where are we going to come up with the money? The answer is we're going to have to do something with the franchise tax in the state of Texas that has long since outlived its usefulness," said Seliger. "And it was never that useful because it was a voluntary tax... Somewhere between 50,000 and 250,000 new corporate entities will be in this tax system (at the end of 2007) that were not in the franchise tax, and that's a very broad base, but the tax system has to be broad-based. It has to be fair and it has to be efficient."

"The point is we're setting tax laws and one of the most important things we can do is to ensure the pro-business and business growth climate in Texas is enhanced by tax policy, not hindered by it (and) that people want to build businesses and need, for their business purposes, to build them here. There's a reason for the last couple of years that site location magazines has named Texas the best place to move businesses in the United States, and tax policy is one of those reasons."

Going into the 80th Legislature, Seliger said the most important thing on the minds of the men and women that represent Texans will most certainly be water.

"Make no mistake, we

will deal with nothing more important than water for the entire time the Texas Legislature meets," said Seliger. "Because without it, you can't live. Our cities are not supportable, our businesses are not supportable and it (water) is essential. There are a lot of things going on with water, both potentially good and bad, depending on whether we do a good job. I'm bound and determined that we will do a good job."

"I'm a big proponent of ground water conservation districts. For some of us, that conservation strategy is absolutely essential. Those districts will determine how much water we've got, how much we're using right now and using any growth model we choose to use, and how to ensure that we conserve that water so that everybody in Texas can live, work and farm where they live today because they have adequate water to do it."

Another issue Seliger said he expects to see come before the legislature is the statewide TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) test.

"I'd like to throw the TAKS test out," said Seliger. "And we can achieve all those goals with an end-of-course exam. A test that is given on what is being taught today. Now, is it a test of

COUNCIL

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to the council by City Attorney Jean Shotts, who's position will be the focus of another agenda item.

The council is expected to grant permission for the city to advertise for a full-time city attorney position.

According to McEwen, the advertisement was requested by the council during budget session in an attempt to see if there is room for improvement in the position.

"I want to make it very clear that this is not due to dissatisfaction with the job being done by Mr. Shotts," McEwen said firmly. "During budget session the council discussed whether or not we would be better off with a full-time city attorney. Mr. Shotts contracts with the city and works here a couple of days a week."

"We may very well be in the perfect situation right now with our contract with Mr. Shotts. However, we want to see what's out there. It's all

just part of the evaluation process."

Also during the meeting, the council is expected to canvas the results of the recent bond election, which yielded approval for a pair of multi-million dollar projects.

Big Spring citizens voted in favor of a \$5 million upgrade to the Roy Anderson sports complex. They also approved more than \$9 million in improvements to downtown streets.

Proposition 2, \$5.08 million for improvements to youth sports facilities, didn't pass overwhelmingly — just 2,125 for to 1,891 against. But the \$9.2 million for improvements to streets and roadways was approved by a margin of 2,614 votes to 1,420.

Proposition 1 will allow reconstruction of Scurry and Main streets from First Street north to near FM 700 and the reworking of First and Second streets in the downtown area, to include sidewalks and period lighting.

Also on the agenda is discussion pertaining to the possible termination of the city's animal con-

trol board.

The council voted during its Oct. 10 meeting to table the discussion on whether or not the city's animal control board should be continued, a subject McEwen brought up during the council's previous meeting.

"I'm expecting this matter will be tabled once again," said McEwen.

The meeting is slated for 5:30 p.m. Thursday in the City Council Chambers, located at 307 E. Fourth Street.

Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-7331 ext. 232 or by e-mail at citydesk@bigspringherald.com

MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL

24th & Johnson 267-8288

Pedro A. "Pete" Carrillo, 69, died Saturday. Funeral Mass will be at 10:30 AM Wednesday at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church with burial at Mt. Olive Memorial Park.

Jesse Reed, Jr., 69, died Thursday. Funeral Services will be at 11:00 AM Saturday at Mt. Bethel Baptist Church with burial at Trinity Memorial Park.

Bobbie Alexander, 72, died Sunday. Graveside services will be at 2:00 PM Wednesday at Trinity Memorial Park. William "Willie" Hull, 74, died Tuesday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Chuck Landers, 35, died Tuesday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

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