



**INSIDE**  
Garden City wins, heads to regional tournament in Fort Worth

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50 CENTS DAILY/\$1.25 WEEKEND

## McEwen says city's rebirth is possible

By **THOMAS JENKINS**  
Staff Writer

Rebirth. That's the word Big Spring Mayor Russ McEwen used to describe the current condition of the city Tuesday afternoon, as he delivered the annual State of the City Address during a community luncheon in the Dorothy Garrett Coliseum East Room.

*"There is much to celebrate, yet there's much to be done."*

"It is time we become realistic about what is going on in Big Spring. No spin needs to be put on this," said McEwen. "A strong case can be made that we are in a better situation today than at any time since Webb Air Force Base was closed... We need to come together as a community on the issues, come to a conclusion and agree to disagree, agreeably. And when we're through, we're going to take a vote and then we're going to move on."

"Big Spring is actualizing its rebirth. We're enjoying prosperity we haven't witnessed in decades. There is much to celebrate, yet there's much to be done."

One of the major focuses of McEwen's look back on 2006 was the victory local officials and state leaders enjoyed in getting the Big Spring VA Medical Center removed from the Veterans



HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins  
**Big Spring Mayor Russ McEwen delivers his State of the City Address Tuesday afternoon during a community luncheon at the Dorothy Garrett Coliseum East Room.**

Administration's hit-list of possible closures.

"We received word last spring that only was the VA going to stay open, it would expand," said McEwen. "And the amazing thing about it is the expansion takes the direction our ad hoc committee from Big Spring was recommending to the Veterans Administration. To date, ours is the only veterans hospital in the United States that has had any kind of announcement made."

"Due to the hard work of our local citizens and our elected representatives, we have witnessed a success story for Big Spring, but more importantly a victory for the veterans of West Texas."

McEwen said the Crossroads area avoided disaster again when the Federal Bureau of Prisons announced it would be making changes to its contracting that could have closed several local

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## LOCKED IN

*County will shell out \$250,000 for smoke evac system*

By **STEVE REAGAN**  
Staff Writer

If all goes to plan, the Howard County Jail will be back in business by early June.

During their meeting Tuesday afternoon, Howard County Commissioners voted to enter into an emergency contract with Anthony Mechanical Inc. of Lubbock to install a smoke evacuation system in the jail, which has been closed by state order

since November. The \$223,000 contract is expected to be signed Friday and installation of the system is expected to be completed within 75 days, officials said. Commissioners also voted to contract with Southwest Control Systems to install the electrical wiring for the project at a cost of \$24,650.

The county could have put the system out for bids, but commissioners

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HERALD photo/Steve Reagan  
**Nick White, right, of the Abilene-based engineering firm of N.D. White and Associates, talks with Howard County commissioners during their meeting Tuesday afternoon in the county courthouse.**

## Council mulls more oversight of Moore Board

By **THOMAS JENKINS**  
Staff Writer

Does the board of directors for Moore Development need more oversight from the Big Spring City Council?

That was the question posed during Tuesday night's council meeting, as city officials begin looking at various options to possibly limit spending by the board or require council approval for certain items.

Discussions were limited, however, as city attorney Linda

*"What good does it do to go to the Moore Board and get its blessings when it won't mean anything because it still has to go before the city council?"*

—Larry McLellan, Moore Development board president



Sjogren asked the council for more time to get her information on what the council can and cannot do in relation to the economic development firm.

"I would like more time to

continue my research into this matter," said Sjogren. "I've managed to talk to a few cities that have placed certain limitations on their boards, but I need more time to complete this. I

feel like I can have it ready in time for the next city council meeting."

Mayor Russ McEwen asked the council if it was willing to wait two weeks to resume the discussion, and while the council was willing to do so, former Moore Board member Joyce Crooker was not.

Crooker told the council she was concerned with the board's recent decision to fund the planned renovation of the Settles Hotel by the Dallas-

based Settles Hotel Development Company.

"My concern is the Settles Hotel project," said Crooker. "I feel that it does not fall within a Section A corporation... As a Section A corporation they cannot sign letters of intent and proceed without the council's permission. You can approach the Settles Hotel project as a Section B project, and a Section B project can use Section A

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## Third candidate files for local mayor's post

By **THOMAS JENKINS**  
Staff Writer

A third candidate will be on the ballot in the race for Big Spring mayor May 12, as local resident James "Jim" Hicks recently filed to run for the office.

Hicks, who will join incumbent Russ McEwen and fellow challenger Shannon Thomason in seek-



Hicks

said Hicks. "The night the

See **MAYOR**, Page 5A

## BSISD board of trustees to have contested race

By **STEVE REAGAN**  
Staff Writer

For the first time in three years, Big Spring school district voters will decide a contested election.

Terri Myrick, mother of a local student and proprietor of Mom & Pop's Tattoo Shop, has filed her candidacy for the BSISD District 5 seat, currently held by Mike

Dawson.

Dawson earlier filed for reelection, as have the other incumbents whose positions are up for election this year, Ricky Robertson of District 6 and Phil Furquerson of District 7.

Big Spring, Coahoma, Forsan, Stanton and Sands school districts will hold

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**FUTURE**

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Cornell prison sites.

"Again, Big Spring was faced with the possibility of losing a major employer," said McEwen. "A lot of work was done over the following months, but ultimately the good guys prevailed. The Bureau of Prisons awarded the contract to Cornell Corrections and the Big Spring Facility. And again, the new contract calls for more than \$20 million in new construction at their facility. Again, a potentially devastating situation has turned out best for us."

And while McEwen touched on a large number of local accolades — from the Big Spring High School Cross Country team taking the state title to the World Hang Gliding Championships coming this year — but it was obvious the mayor's sights were set on downtown Big Spring.

"This time last year we were talking about Heritage Founders Square in downtown

Big Spring," said McEwen. "We were excited at the prospect of having our downtown area transformed. As most of you know, circumstances changed and the project was abandoned. I was extremely disappointed and I was afraid that things would not continue."

"However, a small flame had been kindled. There was a new vision of what our downtown can be. Some local investors — most notably Max and Kay Moore, Leslie Elrod, Clyde and Beverly McMahon and Frank Parker — decided the idea shouldn't die, and have invested in buildings in the downtown area. Already, things are looking better. Turn of the century buildings are being renovated."

McEwen said ongoing efforts by former Big Spring resident Brint Ryan, leader of the Dallas-based Settles Hotel Development Company, to renovate the downtown landmark are also under way.

"He (Ryan) told me it was his vision to renovate the Settles Hotel in a way that brought back the grandeur it had back in the 1930s," said McEwen.

"As with any project of this magnitude, things have not progressed as quickly as we would like it to. But I will tell you today this project is moving forward. Progress is moving on all fronts, and I fully expect to see new construction taking place in the near future. They have set up a Web site at [www.settleshotel.com](http://www.settleshotel.com) and they only have their home page up right now, but will be posting concepts and drawings from their planners and architects in the future."

"This project has profound consequences for Big Spring and Howard County. The renovations of downtown will make us a more desirable destination for travelers. The added benefit is it will be easier to recruit businesses and employees to a renovated downtown."

"There are those among you who are skeptical about this project. Many of you are afraid to get your hopes up because of the people who have come our way with unfulfilled promises concerning the Settles Hotel," he added. "I am absolutely convinced this is

the last, best hope for the renovation of the Settles Hotel."

McEwen also touched on the \$21.6 million bond election Howard College trustees approved Monday, urging area voters to support the effort.

"I participated in one of the staff-conducted tours of the college, and can tell you these renovations are needed and will provide a better environment for learning," said McEwen. "I urge each and every one of you to vote for this bond."

The ongoing effort to design and construct a new county jail is moving in the right direction, according to McEwen, who said the citizens of Howard County should get behind the project as well.

"I'm convinced at this point the county is moving toward a plan that will allow us to solve our jail crisis," said McEwen. "We've been talking about this since the 1980s. Lets allow the commissioners to complete their study, bring a proposal to the voters, and when that proposal is brought to us let's rally behind the commissioners court and get our jail built."

**RACE**

Continued from Page 1A

school board elections May 12. Glasscock County and Grady districts will hold their trustee elections in November.

In Coahoma, incumbent James White has filed for re-election to one of the two at-large seats to be contested. No other candidates have filed, including Sissy Franklin, whose term expires.

At-large seats currently held by Allen McDowell and Tom Bill Kuykendall are up for election in Forsan ISD this May. Both incumbents have filed for re-election.

Stanton ISD has two single-member districts to be decided.

Daniel Ramos has filed for the District 1 seat, which is currently open, while Darren Patrick has filed for District 5, currently represented by Terry Shanks. Shanks has not yet filed for re-election.

Incumbent Michelle Zant has filed for re-election to the Sands Consolidated Independent School District board of trustees. At-large seats currently held by Zant and Stan Blagrove are to be contested.

Prospective candidates have until March 13 to file.

**JAIL**

Continued from Page 1A

decided to make the contract an emergency matter because the life safety issues which forced the jail's closure continue to threaten personnel in the facility, which is currently being operated as a temporary holding facility.

Also of vital concern for commissioners is costs

incurred by the jail's closure. The county is spending about \$2,000 a day to feed and house prisoners elsewhere, enhancing the need for speed in getting the jail back up and running.

"The clock is ticking," County Judge Mark Barr said. "And every time it ticks, it costs us \$2,000."

Commissioner Jerry Kilgore said the mounting costs outweighed the higher-than-expected esti-

mate from Anthony Mechanical.

"We're spending roughly \$75,000 a month with the jail closed," Kilgore said. "If we go out for bids, we're looking at a two-month process before we even award the contract ... It's just cheaper in the long run to do it this way."

Nick White, the Abilene-based engineer hired by the county to oversee the jail's rehabili-

tation, said Anthony Mechanical is ideally suited to install the smoke evacuation system.

"They've done this kind of thing before, many times," he said. "This work is going to be complex enough. You need someone with experience in this area."

While White would not promise the work would be completed within the hoped-for goal of 75 days, he did assure commis-

sioners the work, when complete, would satisfy state demands for the system.

"I guarantee that this will work," he said flatly. The other major safety concern, a standpipe system to deliver firefighting water to the jail, will be completed within the next few weeks, officials said.

Contact Staff Writer Steve Reagan at 263-7331, ext. 234, or by e-mail at

[reporter@bigspringherald.com](mailto:reporter@bigspringherald.com).

**MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL**

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Manuel Vargas, 83, died Monday. Funeral Mass was at 11:00 AM Wednesday at St. Thomas Catholic Church with burial at Mt. Olive Memorial Park.

Carlos "Charlie" Rodriguez, 81, died Monday. Vigil Services will be at 7:00 PM Wednesday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Graveside Services will be at 11:00 AM Thursday at Trinity Memorial Park.

Lorenzo "Larry" Martinez, 47, died Wednesday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

**MOORE**

Continued from Page 1A

money, but it has to be put to a vote."

Crooker, who has served two separate terms on the Moore Board, said she believes the community will support the effort if it's put on an election ballot.

"I think everyone can look at the downtown area and see the progress that has been made by the volunteers, and if you put it on a ballot, I'm sure it would pass," she said. "I think the people want to see this. But that would be the proper way for the Moore Board to go about this project."

Moore Development for Big Spring Inc. directors voted unanimously Dec. 8 to provide up to \$3 million to help Brint Ryan — manager of the Dallas company and the founder and CEO of Ryan & Company — renovate the Settles Hotel, which he agreed to purchase for \$75,000 from the city of

Big Spring.

According to city officials, Ryan has not yet paid the \$75,000 tab.

SHDC has announced a \$12 million renovation project which includes plans for commercial and residential use of the property, with retail space available on the first and second floors.

McEwen said the discussion was brought on by Councilwoman Jo Ann Staulcup, who voiced similar concerns as Crooker.

Councilwoman Staulcup asked that we look at Moore Board and its expenditures and see if we should be more actively involved in that particular issue," said McEwen. "Our city attorney is looking at that very thing and we just need to have a more firm position on what we can and cannot do, and what we must and must not do."

"So that's the question that comes up at this point. I think we can pretty well do whatever we want, but there have been some questions as to what we must do. And that's the clarification I want to have. What constitutes oversight?"

Moore Board President Larry McLellan, who was present at the meeting, said putting limitations on the body will only defeat the system of checks and balances already in place.

"The council has a say in the members on the Moore Board, and the makeup of the board changes annually, so it's not a lifetime thing," said McLellan. "If the Moore Board is going to function to create economic development, I think that's what the board should do. The council approves our budget and our minutes,

and I feel like that's working out really well."

"However, if it ever got to the point the council actually had to be a part of every decision process, I think we're going to muddy the water so much the corporation won't be effective. What good does it do to go to the Moore Board and get its blessings when it won't mean anything because it still has to go before the city council?"

"I'm not taking anything away from the city council," he added. "They have to put the people on the board that they believe will do the job. The checks and balances are working well, and I think that's the way it should be for the board to create jobs. I think it would be pretty cumbersome for the board to do something like that, and if you're taking authority

away from the board, you're really defeating the reason it was created in the first place."

Also during Tuesday's meeting, the council:

- Conducted a public hearing on the proposed annexation of property.
- Approved final reading of resolutions dealing with the May 12 council election, upcoming projects authorized in the November bond elections and a contract agreement with Western Container.
- Approved first readings of resolutions dealing with bond projects and approval of the city's investment policy.
- Discussed possible revisions to the city charter.

Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-7331 ext. 232.

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