



Ryan: Settles to serve as legacy



\$75,000 tab for historic hotel paid by developer

By THOMAS JENKINS

Staff Writer

They had questions, and he had answers.

Area residents with questions regarding the planned renovations to the historic Settles Hotel had their questions answered face to face Monday night, as former Big Spring resident and project mastermind Brint Ryan met with citizens during a special meeting of the board of Directors for Moore Development.

"I appreciate the overwhelming amount of support we've received," said Ryan, who serves as manager of the Settles Hotel Development Company. "I've received dozens of e-mails and letters from citizens throughout the city who support this very complex, difficult and ambitious project.

"I was born and raised here, just north of town in the Luther community. This is my home and I have fond memories of Big Spring. I had spent about 20 years being

"So, why am I doing it? I've been very fortunate in my career — some would say I've had some financial success — and I can't think of a better way to invest it in a legacy I feel will be tremendous for this community."

—Brint Ryan



HERALD photos/Thomas Jenkins
Brint Ryan speaks to those attending Monday's Moore Development meeting about his devotion to the Settles Hotel project.

away from this community when I received a call from Troy Tompkins about the heritage square project... It was initially thought that I might assist individuals investing in the project with tax abatement agreements and things like that. When I got here, I asked Troy if the Settles was going to be included in the project, and he told me it wasn't because it was just too expensive. Not being of

sane mind, I suggested this might be something I would want to undertake."

And while financiers might scoff at the monetary gain from such a project, Bryan said renovating the Settles Hotel isn't about the money.

"I can promise you, at that time I

See RYAN, Page 3A

Jail progress moving along, officials state

By THOMAS JENKINS

Staff Writer

Progress.

That was the report received by Howard County commissioners regarding the two-fold effort surrounding the county jail — to bring the current jail into state compliance and the design and construction of a new facility — during the court's Monday morning meeting.

According to county officials, contractors have been hard at work in the existing jail, located in the county courthouse, in hopes of bringing the facility into compliance with state regulations.

"There's been progress made, at least by some of the contractors," said Sheriff Dale Walker.

"Anthony Mechanical has



Walker

been working very diligently with the smoke evacuation system, although I understand the alarm company (Lubbock Sound) has held them up somewhat. There was also a problem at one point with the electrical contractor, who shut down power to the jail. But I feel like we're getting those things out of the way and making progress."

The jail was shut down by the Texas Commission on Jail Standards in November, after the facility's smoke evacuation system failed to meet requirements during a

See JAIL, Page 3A



HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins
Ashley Piercy, assistant coordinator for the Colon Cancer Task Force out of Lubbock, discusses the importance of regular exams and testing with Howard County Commissioners Monday morning. Commissioners voted unanimously to designate 2007 Colon Cancer Prevention and Awareness Year.

Constable's future falls to TCLOSE

By THOMAS JENKINS

Staff Writer

The future of Howard County Constable Mark Winn remains uncertain following Monday morning's meeting of county commissioners, as the court struggles with funding questions surrounding his state-mandated peace officer certification.

Winn met with commissioners for the second time in two weeks, asking the court to fund the remaining three college courses he must complete to meet requirements set forth by the state for county constables.

"I'm asking for \$800 to finish the courses," Winn told the court. "I still have three courses I need for my peace officer certi-

fication. Two of those I should be able to pass with a departmental exam since I taught them several years ago in Odessa. I'm still waiting to find out if the instructor for the third course will allow me to take a departmental exam for the course. If he doesn't, then I'm still at least one semester away from completion of the course."

Commissioner Jerry Kilgore and County Judge Mark Barr both said they have a problem with the funding because it sets a bad precedent for the county.

"We don't pay for certification classes for any of the deputies we hire," said Kilgore. "They have

See WINN, Page 2A

College anticipates funding cuts

By THOMAS JENKINS

Staff Writer

Plan for the worst and hope for the best.

Those are the words Howard College President Dr. Cheri Sparks uses to describe ongoing preparations for the coming year's budget, as the board of trustees eagerly awaits funding totals from the Texas Legislature.

Sparks reported on the mat-

ter to the college's board Monday afternoon, as preliminary figures from the legislature show that the junior college district may receive between \$120,000 and \$170,000 less in state revenue next fiscal year.

"We're only half way through the legislature's budget process, so it's really still too early to tell," said Sparks. "However, as we begin working on the college budget

we'll certainly keep this in mind and be very conservative about our numbers. You have to plan for the worst and hope for the best."

Also during Monday's meeting, the board of trustees approved a contract with Parkhill, Smith and Cooper for architectural services in a re-roofing project for the Diagnostic Center at the SouthWest Collegiate Institute for the Deaf.

"We had originally planned to contract with local architect Phil Furqueron on this," said Sparks. "However, Phil contacted us Friday to let us know he was taking a position with Parkhill, Smith and Cooper in their Midland office. So we have contracted with the firm, and Phil will act as the lead architect on the project."

See HC, Page 2A

INDEX

Classified 3-5B

Features 5A

Obituaries 2A

Opinion 4A

Sports 1-2B



Find us online at:
www.bigspringherald.com

To reach us:

Please call 263-7331. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you miss your paper, please call (432) 263-7335 before 7 p.m. weekdays and noon Sunday.

Big Spring Get Your Local Channels

200 All-Digital Channels
Including Your Local Channels

*Prices Valid For 10 Months (After Mail-In Redemption)

\$49.99 Mo.
\$39.99 Mo.

CATCH EVERYTHING. MISS NOTHING

DishDVR Advantage.
It's About Time.

DishDVR Advantage. An all-inclusive TV package loaded with our most popular options for one low price. No worries. No extra fees. Plus, your everyday price is guaranteed through January 2009.

Come By And See Us!
1702 E. FM 700, Suite B
(432) 264-7603

Don't Wait
Another Minute.
Switch To Dish Network Now!

*Source: www.cableone.net, 09/15/06

Programming offers require participation in Digital Home Advantage. Savings on standard-definition programming requires subscription to America's Top 50 package or higher. Customer must mail in redemption form and copy of first bill. Customer receives one \$10.00 credit each month for up to 10 consecutive months. Visit www.dishnetwork.com for more information. After 3 free months of qualifying movie package, customer must call to downgrade or their current price for selected package will apply. Digital Home Advantage. Pay \$49.99 activation fee. Requires Social Security Number, valid major credit card, credit approval and qualifying programming purchase. Equipment must be returned to DISH Network upon termination of qualifying service. Limit 4 tuners per account. Monthly package price includes an equipment rental fee of \$5.00 or \$6.00 for first receiver, based on selected model. In addition, a monthly equipment rental fee of \$5.00 or \$6.00 will be charged for each receiver beyond the first, based on selected model. A \$5.00/mo. additional outlet programming access fee applies for each dish-tuner receiver. Fee will be waived monthly for each such receiver continuously connected to Customer's phone line. Lease upgrade fee will apply for HD DVR receiver and may apply for a second DVR receiver (based on model). Offer ends 01/31/07 and is available in the continental United States for new, first-time DISH Network residential customers. All prices, packages and programming subject to change without notice. Local and state sales taxes may apply. Where applicable, equipment rental fees and programming are taxed separately. All DISH Network programming, and any other services that are provided, are subject to the terms and conditions of the promotional agreement and Residential Customer Agreement, available at www.dishnetwork.com or upon request. Local channels packages by satellite are only available to customers who reside in specified local Designated Market Area (DMA). Local channels may require an additional dish antenna from DISH Network, installed free of any charges with subscription to local channels at time of initial installation. Social Security Numbers are used to obtain credit scores and will not be released to third parties except for verification and collection purposes only or if required by governmental authorities. All service marks and trademarks belong to their respective owners.

dish
NETWORK
Mailbox TV too will.

RYAN

Continued from Page 1A

was not aware of the difficulty or complexity of this project," said Ryan. "But at the same time, I think it probably the single most important legacy that I could personally provide to the community. It gives me an excuse to come here, and it's given me an excuse to reconnect with many of the people I grew up with. For that reason, it is very important to me."

"I want to tell you there is no possible way — and I have hired the very best advisors on this project — it will ever achieve a market rate of return. That's important for everyone to understand because, as you all know, the legacy of this project isn't good. We've had a number of people come to the community, made a lot of promises, fell flat on their faces, then left. In all of those cases, the underlying premise of the project was to achieve a market rate of return. We're going to figure out how to bring this online and someone is going to make some money. Folks, I have no aspirations of making a bunch of money on this project. I would

like to limit the amount of money I lose on this project, but it's clear to everyone that's looked at this that it will never achieve a market rate of return.

"So, why am I doing it? I've been very fortunate in my career — some would say I've had some financial success — and I can't think of a better way to invest it in a legacy I feel will be tremendous for this community," he said with a grin. "And I think it will be a lot of fun. Although it's complex and challenging, we're looking forward to it."

Ryan said he has been frustrated with the lack of visible progress on the project since it was announced several months ago, and understands the community's frustration as well.

"I'm as frustrated as anyone, but when I got into this and looked at all the aspects of it, there are a couple of key things you should understand," said Ryan. "We're going to do this with the understanding the building will be eligible for inclusion in the National Registry of Historic Places. This is critical for two reasons. First, I'm doing this to get into the real estate build-

ing and rent spaces. I want to make sure the project is a trophy property in the end. That it will be something that's a destination, something people in the community will be proud of. Just putting another building online has no interest to me at all."

"Second, by putting this in the National Register, we can let Uncle Sam help pay for part of it. That's through the smart use of what are called new market credits, and historical restoration credits. That's a 20 percent federal tax credit that we can use and monetize and let outside investors defray the costs of this. Because of that, we have had to take steps to assess what it will take to get it into the National Register."

The absence of payment for the building — \$75,000 to the city of Big Spring, which was placed in escrow by SHDC Monday afternoon — was just one of many details Ryan said required a slow, careful approach.

"We've been told by our advisors we can not immediately take title of the building," said Ryan. "Even though we've escrowed the funds today, we probably won't take title of the building for a

few months. The reason for that is we're going to ask the city — at no cost to the city — to deliver the building at a certain point so that becomes our measurement point for the National Registry."

"Right now, if we had those folks come in and evaluate it the way it is today, our costs would go up significantly, and it might not be economically feasible to do it. So the delays have been there because we want to do it right. We want to use every possible means to fund it, because the funding opportunities and avenues we have, the better chance we have for a full completion and bringing the building online in about 24 to 36 months. It may look like we're slow to move, but there have been a lot of things going on behind the scenes to ensure we do the project, and we do it correctly."

While the project will never attain the level of prosperity most investors would require to even give the project a second look, Ryan said it can work, and there are plenty of success stories to support his theory.

"For those that doubt, visit the Wooten in Abilene. Visit the Cactus in San Angelo," said

Ryan. "This has been done before, and it's been done well. These are magnificent restorations that make those communities proud... I feel like this is our best, last hope. If we don't do something today, if this building continues to deteriorate and be exposed to the elements, in not too many years you're going to be forced to take it down."

"I have an appraisal from a well-known appraiser here in town that the building is worth a negative \$250,000. So if anyone thinks I got a deal on this building, I want you to talk to my accountant. Why did I pay \$75,000 for a building that's worth negative \$250,000? Because the project is that important to me. I wanted to make sure that when the bid went out, I won the bid. Am I crazy? Perhaps. But the point is, if we don't do something now, we're going to be in a situation where we have to take this building down, and you are going to have to pay for that. The cost of taking it down is more than \$250,000, and the taxpayers will be forced at some point to pay for that."

So, is the renovation of

the Settles Hotel a sure thing at this point? Maybe.

"I believe it's a sure thing," said Ryan. "We have met with all of the constituencies that play a potential deal-killer role in this, and I believe subject to working out some finer details and legal issues, we're all committed to the project. Everyone that could create a situation that would stop this from going forward I think is onboard. Is anything ever a sure thing? Probably not. But I believe and I'm confident that we're very close to being in a situation where we can break ground."

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

Fred Cole, 63, died Saturday. Funeral services will be at 2:00 PM Thursday at Mt. Bethel Baptist Church with burial at Trinity Memorial Park. The family will receive friends from 6:00 until 7:00 PM Wednesday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Elaine Cox Armstrong, 83, died Friday. Memorial Services will be held at a later date.

Ronnie Freeman, 49, died Friday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

JAIL

Continued from Page 1A

pair of tests in 2006.

The jail also failed to meet state requirements that call for a standpipe in the jail to deliver water to firefighters and a door that swung in the wrong direction. However, these pair of problems have since been corrected, leaving the smoke evacuation system the lone obstacle standing in the commissioners court's way.

According to county officials, the contractors have 75 days to complete the work in the jail, with commissioners hoping to have the facility re-opened by the state soon thereafter.

Since the jail's closure, inmates have been housed in other counties, including Dickens, Glasscock and Lamb counties.

According to Commissioner Bill Crooker, efforts to find a site suitable to build a new jail have also seen some progress since the court's first choice — the old Kmart building at Birdwell Lane and FM 700 — was optioned for purchase by a local church.

"Commissioner (Gary) Simer and I have come up with 13 different sites for the court's consideration," said Crooker. "We're just getting the list to the commissioners this morning, so they haven't had a chance to look at them yet. The hope is that we'll take this list and begin to narrow it down to several sites, and then work from there."

A re-opening of the county jail can't come fast enough, according to Walker, who presented commissioners with a report on the toll the expense of housing inmates out of county has had on the department's budget and the county's coffers overall.

"We still haven't received inmate housing bills from Glasscock, Bailey and Lamb counties, so next month's bill is going to be extremely high," Walker told the

court. "With those bills excluded from February, we've gone \$62,527 above our budget for the jail."

"That translates into more than 12,000 miles we've driven to transport inmates, \$1,200 in fuel and more than \$54,000 in housing costs. There are also medical costs to consider, as well as the overtime for the jail staff, which was more than \$5,000."

Walker requested the court allow his office to go out for bids on two new vehicles, citing his office currently has approximately a half-dozen vehicles with more than 100,000 miles.

The request did not meet a positive reaction from commissioners.

"I think we need to hold

off on this until we at least get the jail re-opened," said County Judge Mark Barr. "We're going to have to stay away from any major purchases until then, because we may not have the money we need."

Walker said he disagreed with the judge's appraisal of the situation.

"Do you want to put the citizens of Howard County at risk?" Walker asked Barr. "What happens when we don't have an emergency vehicle and a citizen calls us and is in need? I suggest you don't play with emergency vehicle funding."

Barr said it was simply a matter of seeing the issue from "both sides."

"I see what your saying, but I have to look at this

from both sides," said Barr. "Let's see what's left in the budget once the jail is re-opened."

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

CINEMARK
The Best Seat In Town
CINEMA 4
1801 East FM 700 (432) 263-2232
ADULT MATINEE BEFORE 4PM \$4.00 / ADULT \$6.00 / CHILD/YS \$4.00
• WILD MOGS (PG-13) 4:20 7:10
• THIRT (PG) 4:40 7:30
• PROMOTION (PG-13) 4:30 7:20
• 300 (R) 4:10 7:00
VALID 3/28/07 thru 3/29/07
ADVANCE TICKET SALES • NO PASSES-NO SUPERSAVERS
Showtimes available at cinepark.com

Excellent Rehab-to-Home Program
Call or come in for details.
MVL Mountain View Lodge
A Nursing & Rehabilitation Center
2009 Virginia Avenue Big Spring, TX 79720
(432) 263-1271 ~ (432) 263-5338 Fax
Jessica Paredez Director of Marketing & Admissions

2 Large 1 Topping Pizza \$17.99
Delivery • Carry-Out • Dine-In
1 Medium 1 Topping Pizza \$6.99
(Pick Up Only)
Pizza Inn
1702 Gregg 263-1381

For those people who want to win the battle over Acid Reflux Disease, we'd like to say "Bravo."

The area's only Bravo pill system is now available at Scenic Mountain Medical Center for the treatment and diagnosis of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (also called GERD). The new Bravo pill procedure allows you to monitor your acid levels without the insertion of tubes or cameras, and without drinking unpleasant barium solution. It's as simple as wearing a pager and as easy as using a TV remote. Talk to your doctor or call 432-263-6018 for more information.

SCENIC MOUNTAIN MEDICAL CENTER
Caring People, Caring for People
432-263-6018
www.smmccares.com

Amy E. Reese, D.D.S., P.C.
432-267-4102