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Board member should resign, Thomason says

*Others contend mayoral hopeful
doesn't have his facts straight*

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
Staff Writer

Mayoral candidate Shannon Thomason called for the resignation of Moore Development for Big Spring Inc. Board of Directors member Raul Marquez Wednesday, citing claims that Marquez "has a considerable amount of unpaid property taxes."



Shannon Thomason

Thomason issued a press release Wednesday morning, calling Marquez's appointment to the Moore Board "unbelievable."

"It is unbelievable that the mayor and council would approve Mr. Marquez's appointment to the board of directors of Moore Development," said Thomason's release. "While I believe that Mr. Marquez probably does have the best interests of the Big Spring business community at heart, his inability or unwillingness to pay his property taxes don't speak well of his ability to oversee the spending of the taxpayers' money."

"As such, I believe that Mr. Marquez should do the honorable thing and resign from the board. That being said though, the ultimate responsibility for appointing a delinquent taxpayer to the Moore Board falls squarely on the shoulders of Mayor McEwen and the council."

According to the Howard County Tax Assessor's Office, Marquez

"As for Mr. Thomason attacking me to get at one of his opponents in the election, Mayor McEwen, I think it's just a really low-down blow. I've never seen anyone do this."



Raul Marquez

currently owes \$97,440 on property located at 1010 N. Lamesa Highway.

"The taxes owed on the property date back over 20 years and two separate lawsuits have been filed against Mr. Marquez in district court in an attempt to recover the unpaid taxes," Thomason claimed in his release.

However, local attorney Drew Mouton, who handles delinquent tax cases for Howard County's taxing entities, said Thomason's description of the situation is anything but accurate.

"The tax situation should not be disparaging to Raul Marquez," said Mouton. "The property he owes the \$97,440 on was deeded to him and five other relatives, and at the time it was deeded, the back taxes owed on it were a great deal more than it was worth. It's not fair at all to blame him for this."

Mouton said he and the attorney representing Marquez and his five brothers, who are all named in the delinquent tax suit, are in the process of remedying the case.

"Their attorney has expressed a desire to deed the property to the taxing entities in lieu of foreclosure," said Mouton. "So that's where we're at with this."

Thomason also alluded to a second tax suit filed against Marquez, a situation Mouton said was cleared in March.

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HERALD photo/Steve Reagan
Howard County Volunteer Fire Department personnel battle a fire at a West Texas Gas Co. plant east of Vealmoor Wednesday morning. No injuries were reported in the blaze.

"It is my opinion as an attorney that Mr. Marquez has handled these matters and done the honorable thing in every case."



Drew Mouton,

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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.

Ambra Cole and Erin Griffin perform a dance routine during practice for "The Audition," a production to be staged by the Howard College Fine Arts Department Friday and Saturday at the Hall Center for the Arts on the HC campus. See article, Page 3A.

HERALD photo/Steve Reagan



Board approves \$3 million letter of intent for Settles development company

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
Staff Writer

The board of directors for Moore Development voted unanimously in favor of a \$3 million letter of intent Wednesday night, as they moved forward with funding for the Settles

Development Company and efforts to renovate the historic structure.

After more than two hours in executive session, the board members emerged from the Moore Development conference room with a document

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Talent show slated Friday

The Big Spring High School Choir is sponsoring the annual High School talent show Friday at 7 p.m. in the High School auditorium. Admission is \$3 for adults and \$2 for students. There will be a variety of talent consisting of vocal and instrumental solos, rock and heavy metal bands, comedy skits, and gospel singing. Snacks and drinks can be purchased during the intermission.

'The Audition' set for HC stage Friday and Saturday evenings

By STEVE REAGAN
Staff Writer

Just about everybody in the Howard College Fine Arts Department will have a hand on this weekend's production of "The Audition."

"The Audition," which runs Friday and Saturday at the Hall Center for the Performing Arts, will feature a little bit of everything, it seems. There will be dancing, singing, jazz bands and even sketch artists, said Eulaine McIntosh, dance instructor at the college.

McIntosh and Drama Department Director Clay Grizzle developed the show, which will feature McIntosh's dancers, Grizzle's thespians, Ross Litman's Nighthawk Jazz Band and students from Stacy Slaten's visual arts

department.

The production was inspired by the popular Broadway musical "A Chorus Line," McIntosh said.

"At first, all the actors and dancers are coming in for an audition. The production is based on that," she said. "And our ending segment will be a big production number."

In addition to singers, dancers and musicians, visual artists will be sketching the action, as well, McIntosh said.

About 50 students will take part in the production, which is free to the public.

Performance times are 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday in the Studio Theater in the Hall Center.

For more information, contact the college at 264-5000.



Bobby Cathey, right, is presented a plaque recognizing his 35 years of service as a district director for the Howard Soil and Water Conservation District. Presenting the award is John Wayne Metcalf, district director. The award was presented during Monday's annual Howard SWCD Banquet.

MARQUEZ

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"There were taxes delinquent for his personal property, but that suit has been dismissed," said Mouton. "We have entered into a payment agreement, and since that time Mr. Marquez has made every payment on time. It is my opinion as an attorney that Mr. Marquez has handled these matters and done the honorable thing in every case."

Marquez, who has served on numerous local boards and committees, said the tax matters Thomason referred to were discussed by the Big Spring City Council shortly after his appointment.

"This situation was addressed a long time ago, when I was appointed to the board," said

Marquez. "And it's also being addressed right now by our attorney and Drew Mouton. If Mr. Thomason had done his homework better, he would have known that, and he would have known it was an ongoing thing. It takes time to straighten out tax matters, but the situation concerning my appointment was taken care of a long time ago. Mr. Thomason is simply trying to bring it up again."

Marquez said he was saddled with the vast majority of the delinquent taxes due to a mistake, but he is doing everything he can to have the situation resolved.

"The property was deeded to myself and my five brothers. So, the taxes should be divided among all six of us," said Marquez. "However, there was a big mistake where most of the taxes were put on me. That's where that large number comes

from. Our lawyers and Drew Mouton have to straighten that out before we can move on to negotiations concerning the property. I am complying with everything I can possibly comply with on this matter."

"I feel like Mr. Thomason is really attacking my character on this matter," Marquez added. "For a man who hasn't voted in an election to attack me and my character like this, I think not. It's not going to happen, and I'm not going to allow it to happen. As for Mr. Thomason attacking me to get at one of his opponents in the election, Mayor McEwen, I think it's just a really low-down blow. I've never seen anyone do this. I wouldn't do this to him, and I wouldn't expect him to use me like this to get to his opponent. That's just the type of man he is."

McEwen confirmed the coun-

cil was aware of Marquez's tax problems.

"We did our job in this matter," said McEwen. "Raul is a good and honorable businessman who has volunteered his time to the community in so many different ways. He's done an outstanding job on the Moore Board. I hate to see his name dragged through the gutter because someone simply doesn't have the facts. This is simply an unfounded accusation."

McEwen declined to comment on speculation Thomason is using the issue as a platform to attack him with the May 12 election looming.

"That gets into trying to speculate what Mr. Thomason's motivation in this matter is," said McEwen. "I have no doubt

what he's doing is a disservice to Mr. Marquez, but I simply can't speculate why he's doing this."

Wednesday's call for Marquez's resignation isn't the first attempt to remove a public figure from office for Thomason, who was one of the driving forces behind the petition to recall McEwen. Because the petition, which also targeted several council members for their parts in the passage of a no-smoking ordinance within the city limits, was successful, McEwen will face a recall for an already-expired term during the May 12 election.

McEwen will face Thomason and James "Jim" Hicks in the mayoral election.

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

SETTLES

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they feel is on target.

"I move that we accept and direct the president (of the Moore Board) sign the new letter of intent with the Settles Hotel Development Corporation for Moore Board to provide up to \$3 million on projects we can do as a 4A company upon the Settles Company coming up with \$6 million," said Moore Board member Frank Parker.

According to Larry McLellan, board president, the agreement will allow Brint Ryan, the manager of the Settles Hotel Development Corporation, room to tailor the construction to meet market demands.

"I feel like Big Spring is still a winner with this," said McLellan. "It makes sense that you wouldn't take a project of this magnitude and try to market or forecast the condition of the final project. If you look at market conditions, I think it's something most developers would consider and then move toward. You don't just put it out there and hope the conditions come to you."

McLellan described the required \$6 million from SHDC as a claw back agreement, which will allow Moore Development to recoup funds if Ryan doesn't meet a two-to-one dollar ratio.

"Moore Board will pay 4A expenses that we can legally pay. As the project progresses, we will reimburse for those expenditures, up to \$3 million,"

said McLellan. "Keep in mind, these could come in early because of infrastructure. We will have a claw back agreement that will require Mr. Ryan to spend \$6 million or reimburse Moore Board for any funds that do not meet that two-to-one ratio. So, if this project is finished at \$6 million, Moore Board would receive money back."

"The original letter of intent was simply an agreement to start the process," said McLellan. "And we mentioned at that time the process would continue on with even multiple letters of intent, until we get to the construction document. Then it will be more of a binding contract that will lay out the plans and the specifics of the project."

Ryan's company has

placed \$75,000 in escrow to pay for the building, according to city officials. Ryan said it was necessary for the company to wait to take control of the title to the building due to "timing issues" in efforts to renovate the structure and have it added to the national registry of historic places.

According to Ryan, SHDC is preparing for 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.

The board also discussed ongoing efforts to hire an executive director during the executive session. However, no action was taken on the matter.

Contact Staff Writer

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

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD
By Eddy Pitchford

It is tempting to view the Virginia Tech tragedy from a wordly viewpoint. Such a view declares the culprit to be the medical profession and the legal system. Had the right doctors and medications been in place, this would not have occurred. Had the proper laws been implemented, this would have been prevented.
Mental illness is real and medication is useful. Law is valid and helpful. However, the Virginia Tech massacre remind us that the real war is between good and evil. The Bible speaks of the devil as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour. Jesus declared this enemy to be a thief that steals, kills and destroys.
Virginia Tech was only one battlefield of a much bigger war. I assure you that the outcome of this spiritual war is not in doubt. Life triumphs over death because of Jesus Christ, the cross and the resurrection. Indeed, that good news has encouraged many families bidding farewell to loved ones this week. That victory will motivate others to comfort hurting families in weeks ahead. The hope found in Jesus will prompt some to love and good works, thereby preventing additional killings and reminding all of us that love for one another is a powerful weapon in our daily battles.

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