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WEDNESDAY
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City moves to take over Senior Center

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

The Big Spring City Council voted to move forward with possible acquisition of the Spring City Senior Citizens Center from Howard County Tuesday night.

The council voted unanimously to allow Mayor Russ McEwen — along with council members Jo Ann Staulcup and Gloria McDonald, and several city administrators — the opportunity to begin negotiations.

“There have been some talks and this would allow us to move forward with this,” said McEwen. “This is a matter I really feel strongly about. The people who are seniors in this community deserve a place to

See **CITY**, Page 3A

Where are the angels?

As deadline nears, more than 200 children without gifts in Angel Tree program

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

Desperate. That's the word local Salvation Army Capt. Linda Keeney used to describe the charity's annual Angel Tree program, which provides Christmas gifts for area low income children.

“Here we are, only a few days from the program deadline, and we still have 200 children still on the tree,” said Keeney



“I know we've gotten worried a few times in years past, but this year has me genuinely scared.”

Keeney

gravely. “I know we've

See **ANGELS**, Page 6A



Work crews were busy at the Big Spring Tuesday, installing a trio of security cameras which officials hope will help combat vandalism and other criminal activity at the historic site.

HERALD photo/Steve Reagan

Reaching out for the little ones

Spring Tabernacle Toys for Children set Friday morning

By BILL MCCLELLAN
News Editor

Mona Lue Tonn may be a pastor, but that doesn't keep her from shining shoes. She doesn't do it for tips at the barbershop though. She does it for the children of Howard County.

“We've been busy, busy, busy,” said Tonn, taking time out from washing Teddy Bears, sorting clothes and the aforementioned shoe shining.

It's Toys for Children time at Spring Tabernacle Ministries, and for the 12th year, church members and volunteers are busy readying hundreds of toys and articles of clothing for one purpose — to make Christmas brighter for the area's youth.

Most of the items to be distributed are used, but all have been cleaned and refurbished, and look as if they've been taken out of the box for the first time.

“I wouldn't give anything to these children that I wouldn't give to children of my own,” said Tonn. “We work very

See **TOYS**, Page 6A



Council approves pact for Settles Hotel

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

“This is a great day for Big Spring.”

Big Spring Mayor Russ McEwen made that claim several times during Tuesday night's meeting, as the city council unanimously approved \$3 million in funding and a 10-year tax abatement for the Settles Hotel Development Company.

The funding — which will come from Moore Development for Big Spring Inc., which approved performance and escrow contracts with SHDC Monday night — does include a guarantee, according to City Attorney Linda Sjogren.

“It essentially provides for a 2-to-1 matching setup, where SHDC must spend \$2 for every \$1 Moore Development spends, up to a maximum of \$3 million plus the interest on the escrow

See **COUNCIL**, Page 3A

BSISD trustees to consider selling Runnels

By STEVE REAGAN
Staff Writer

Big Spring Independent School District may be on the verge of ending a 90-year association with the Runnels Junior High School building.

School trustees will consider selling the Runnels complex when they hold their regular monthly meeting at 5:15 p.m. Thursday in the high school board room.

The school board voted during its November meeting to put the complex up for sale; since that time, two bids have been received for the area, BSISD Business Manager Sandra Waggoner said.

The building was constructed in 1916 and served as the local high school until the 1950s, at which time it became Runnels Junior High.

See **BSISD**, Page 6A

INDEX

Classified 5-7B
Features 5A
Obituaries 2A
Opinion 4A
Sports 1-4B

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Big Spring native killed in Iraq

By STEVE REAGAN
Staff Writer

A former Big Spring police officer has been killed in Iraq, officials announced Monday.

Steven Evrard, 36, of Big Spring, was among three men killed when their vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device. A military spokesman said the casualties occurred when a roadside bomb went off as a security convoy was traveling on a road south-east of Baghdad.

A fourth man was injured but is in stable condition, military officials said.

Evrard and the other men worked as security specialists employed by SOCE.

See **EVRARD**, Page 6A

“He was very well-respected and well-liked, the kind of guy who would do anything for anybody else.”

—BSPD Lt. Terry Chamness

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CITY

Continued from Page 1A

go and congregate, and in many cases, it's the only meal they get each day.
"What we're talking about doing is the city would take over the operation of the Senior Citizen Center. Our structure in municipal government lends itself to these types of opera-

tions because we have professionals with management structure that can do this."
County Commissioner Bill Crooker recently laid out the financial details of the proposed transfer, explaining the county would still be responsible for the same fiscal totals through this budgetary year.
"I've given you (the commissioner's court) a proposal for the transfer of management of the Senior Citizens Center,"

said Crooker. "There is the matter that we would guarantee for the 2007-2008 fiscal year the \$108,000 we have in our budget for operational costs, and that we would turn over the funds from the grants — approximately \$84,000 — and all money and accounts held by the county for the Senior Center would be given to the city of Big Spring.
"That would include all lawn and maintenance equipment, as well as the two vehicles that are

being used to deliver meals. I visited with Jackie (Olson), and she's had a chance to review this proposal and this is acceptable to her, and we feel it pretty much covers the subject."
Commissioners, facing a \$1 million budgetary shortfall for the coming year, approved a resolution in November that shows the court's intent to begin negotiations on the matter, but did not provide for any financial details.

The council also approved the sale of property at 1200 Utah to the county during Tuesday's meeting — land that is expected to become part of the site for a new \$11.57 million jail facility commissioners have planned for the location.
According to city officials, the property is being sold to the county for \$14,500 — the price, plus attorney fees, the city invested in the lot.

COUNCIL

Continued from Page 1A

account," Sjogren said. "SHDC would then have to spend \$6 million plus two-times whatever the interest amount is on the account to receive the maximum financial payment.
"Payments will only be made for eligible 4A expenditures, as determined by Moore (Development's) council... Reconciliation requires that once they reach substantial completion or three years after the effective date, there will be a reconciliation to make sure the payments have kept the correct ratio."
Sjogren said the interest accrued by the \$3 million, which will remain in escrow, was a bargaining point in negotiations between Moore Development and SHDC.
"The repayment and clawback agreement is the reason Moore Development requested

the guarantee from Mr. (Brint) Ryan (SHDC manager)," said Sjogren. "And, in exchange for that, they were able to work out the situation on the escrow. That way, if negotiations were to fail or the deal were to fall through, we have a little more than just the ethics of SHDC to fall back on."
McEwen said although SHDC will get the interest from the escrow account, it's not a situation where the company could simply take that money over the next three years and walk away from the project.
"If we reached that three-year mark and no work has been done, the contract would not allow Mr. Ryan to keep the interest accrued by the escrow account," said McEwen.
City Councilman Troy Tompkins, who, before being elected to the council acted as spokesperson and contact point for SHDC, implored the council to pass the measure by unanimous vote.
"I would respectfully

request the council unanimously support this item at this time," said Tompkins.
Because the agenda item was an emergency reading, it would have to be passed by a unanimous vote to avoid going to a final reading during the council's next meeting.
McEwen said the reason for the emergency reading was a time crunch Ryan faced with the closing of 2007.
"He said he'd like it done by the 21st (of December), and the reason for that is they are in a position where he has some obligations for buildings that he has optioned, and those options will run out Dec. 31," said McEwen. "And he doesn't want to exercise options on large buildings if he doesn't know for sure he has this agreement. So, it's logical that we do it that way, and that's the reason for the emergency reading. He has things that have to be taken care of by the end of the year, and this

is our only meeting in December."
McEwen said a renovated Settles Hotel could be the rallying point for downtown Big Spring, and eventually, the city as a whole.
"This is a day I have been looking forward to for what seems like three or four years, even though it's only been a little over a year," said McEwen. "This is a good day for Big Spring, for considering this, because the Settles Hotel could be the crown jewel of downtown redevelopment."
"I've said it many times before, I know of no rural community that has a viable economy that doesn't have a revitalized downtown. They just go hand in hand. This is awfully important and I've had a lot of comments about spending \$3 million of taxpayer money, but the fact of the matter is if we do not revitalize the Settles Hotel, we're going to spend in the same range to tear it down. I'd rather spend \$3 million

and have something to show for it — a revitalized Settles — than to tear it down and have another parking lot downtown that doesn't need to be used."
SHDC announced plans for a \$12 million renovation project in December 2006. According to SHDC officials, the project

includes plans for commercial and residential use of the property, with retail space available on the first and second floors.
The council also approved a tax abatement contract during the meeting that would grant the company a 10-year, 100 percent suspension of taxes on the Settles and any other properties owned by the company.

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