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Mayor: 'Let's be bold'

Residents urged to work together for betterment of Howard County

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
 Staff Writer

Big Spring Mayor Russ McEwen described the past year as "interesting times" during his State of the City Address at the Dora Roberts Community Center Tuesday afternoon, and encouraged local residents to look to the coming year with hope and optimism.

"We have witnessed unprecedented events in the past year. We have elected a black man as our president. We have witnessed an economic downturn the likes of which most of us have never seen," McEwen told the audience. "We have watched while the price of oil went above \$145 and came back to approximately \$30, and have endured near record consecutive days without rain. We live in interesting times.

"Just after I made this speech last year, the unthinkable happened. The Alon Refinery experienced a catastrophic explosion. It's impossible to describe the devastation we saw



HERALD Photo/Thomas Jenkins
Big Spring Mayor Russ McEwen delivers his State of the City Address Tuesday at the Dora Roberts Community Center.

the following day... That afternoon Jeff Morris, CEO of Alon USA, came to Big Spring, and I knew everyone was OK and the fire was under control, and Jeff could tell from my face what my next question was. And he told me at that point, 'Russ, we're going to start tomorrow rebuilding this

refinery.' He said they would have the plant up and running in less than a year, and I thought he was crazy, and I was wrong."

McEwen went on to thank a number of local residents and volunteers for their efforts during the past year, and reflected on ongoing renovations at the historic Settles Hotel he hopes will revitalize the downtown area.

"When Brint Ryan took this project on, I truly don't think he had any idea how much it was going to cost, and I'm very thankful he did not," said McEwen with a grin. "When it is completed, the Settles Hotel will be the centerpiece for downtown Big Spring. Kris Ryan, who is heading the project up for the Settles Hotel Development Company, has done an outstanding job. In the next year, the

"While others are scared, let's be bold. Let's go out and do things differently and change the landscape. Please join me in looking to the future with a new sense of optimism and a new sense of hope."

See **ADDRESS**, Page 3A

All-City Honor Choir to perform Thursday

By **STEVE REAGAN**
 Staff Writer

Big Spring's best elementary school singers will be on display Thursday evening during the All-City Honor Choir performance, scheduled for 7 p.m. in the high school auditorium.

Admission is free to the event.

Darrell Ryan, director of federal programs for Big Spring Independent School District, said the honor choir will consist of about 75 students in grades four through six. The students were selected for the choir through a month-long audition process.

BSISD used to host an elementary honor choir concert, but discontinued the event several years ago in favor of

See **CHOIR**, Page 3A

Sea containers and signs to get second look from council

By **THOMAS JENKINS**
 Staff Writer

Members of the Big Spring City Council agreed to a "do-over" Tuesday night, as the council threw out new ordinances governing signs, billboards and sea containers in favor of rehashing the issues in a special session slated for next week.

The council allowed final reading of a pair of items — approval of a revamped sign and billboard ordinance, as well as amendments to existing ordinances to govern the use of sea containers in the city limits — to fail for lack of a motion during

the meeting, as McEwen asked the council to rethink the impending measures.

"We talked about it and discussed it at length, but can we get to a point where we really sit down and have a work session and iron out everything to do with those two items," said McEwen. "In addition, we have a grant writer we're contributing to, and I've talked with her — Stacy Payne is her name — and I have her scheduled tentatively to meet with us Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.

"That way we can talk about the grant writer and these two areas (signs and sea containers), because

I know I've looked around and had some second thoughts about some of the things. I just feel like it would be good, in a little more informal setting, sit down and decide what we want to do. Does anyone have a problem with that?"

Discussions concerning both issues were harried two weeks ago, as the council remained divided over how to handle them.

In the end, the council agreed to allow the use of sea containers — large metal structures used by freight lines and railroads to ship goods —

See **CONTAINERS**, Page 3A

INDEX

Comics	8B
Classified	5-7B
Features	5A
Obituaries	2A
Opinion	4A
Sports	1-4B

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Budke bound for state art contest



By **STEVE REAGAN**
 Staff Writer

Daniel Budke saved the best for last.

Budke, a senior art student at Big Spring High School, finally realized his dream of qualifying for the state

Herald file photo
Daniel Budke looks over his drawing which won him a trip to state competition April 16-19 in Houston.

art meet at the regional University Interscholastic League art exhibition in Odessa.

Budke, who made his fourth and final trip to the regional meet, said reaching the state exhibition was his major goal this year — and high marks for his drawing of a woman enjoying a cup of coffee helped him realize his dream.

He earned regional and area medals.

See **CONTEST**, Page 3A

Look In Friday, February 27th Edition Of The Big Spring Herald For The Health & Fitness Section

Information Related To YOUR Health!

HEALTH & FITNESS

ADDRESS

Continued from Page 1A

city will be repaving Main Street, Scurry and the side streets downtown.

"During that project, we will also be doing street-scaping and landscaping so we'll have a better environment for all of Big Spring. Main Street will really turn into a boulevard with medians in the middle, and as you drive down the street, we feel like visually, it will take you into the downtown area. It is my strong belief there will be great economic changes in downtown, and it will extend up Main and Scurry."

McEwen also noted the recent rash of vandalism at Comanche Trail Park, saying how the community responded to the unkind acts reflects the best of Big Spring and Howard County.

"In this past year, we have found out the worst and the best about

who we are," said McEwen. "Some people decided what great fun it would be to chop down the totem pole (in Comanche Trail Park)... to chop down an icon to our community. Many people would go to that totem pole, and it had great meaning to them. But someone decided to take an ax to it and fell the totem pole. I can remember thinking it can't get worse than that. Boy, was I wrong.

"Within days someone — and I call them idiots, or an idiot, and I give them credit for more than they deserve — set the Kid's Zone on fire. And what I saw for the first time since I've been mayor was a righteous indignation from people... They said we will not let this stand. And within days, contributions were pouring in. David Justice with Cornell Corrections called and told me he had people out there who could carve a new totem pole. We will have a new totem pole, and we will erect a sign... acknowl-

edging (the pole's original artist), how it came down and how it went back up. And when we open the Kid's Zone, it will be bigger and better than ever."

And with the word "stimulus" being batted heavily around the nation's capital's these days, McEwen said it was time for Big Spring and Howard County to come up with their own fiscal lifeboat.

"It's time we began a Howard County stimulus package," he said. "We've had enough stimulus packages from the state and federal government. When we are spending our money, I ask that you make sure you spend it locally unless that product can not be bought locally. Make it a habit to shop Big Spring first. Make it a habit to do business with our merchants."

McEwen recounted recent travels that took him through the heart of United States, pointing out a painful difference between communities in other states

and communities in the Crossroads area.

"There is no litter in Nebraska or South Dakota, and you know what? It's not because they pick it up so often. It's because they don't litter," said McEwen. "They care enough about their environment that they will not allow their landscape to look terrible. Keep Big Spring Beautiful does a wonderful job of going out and trying to keep our community beautiful, but it's an impossible task.

"Every year we get into a situation where we have a clean up day, and they say, 'We just picked up 40 tons of trash.' Is that not tragic? What if we got clean and those volunteers were freed up to plant and make things look better, as opposed to picking up trash? What a difference we could make. And, to that end, it is our challenge to do everything we can. We need to quit being slob, because that's what we are."

McEwen closed his ad-

dress encouraging local residents and officials to make needed changes to the Big Spring area and not be afraid to move forward.

"I began this speech by noting we live in interesting times. We're faced with difficulties that we heard our parents and grandparents speak of," said McEwen. "There can be two responses to these times. Pull in your horns, hunker down and prepare for the worst. Or we can use this as the opportunity of a lifetime. We, as a community, have the opportunity to do the latter, thus changing the future of Big Spring and Howard County. Let's learn to spend our dollars here. Let's change the face of education in Howard County. Let's find a new sense of community. Let's make certain that all entities in Howard County are working together to be certain we're spending your money wisely.

"We will weather this storm, and we will emerge stronger. We

will take this opportunity and turn it into a day our children will look back on and not ask why more wasn't done, but rather look with pride at what we did for them. This is literally an opportunity that comes once in a lifetime. While others are scared, let's be bold. Let's go out and do things differently and change the landscape. Please join me in looking to the future with a new sense of optimism and a new sense of hope."

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

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Doris Alexander, 89, died Monday. Funeral Services will be at 2 p.m. Thursday at Myers & Smith Chapel with burial at Trinity Memorial Park. The family will receive friends from 7 p.m. until 8 p.m. Wednesday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

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CHOIR

Continued from Page 1A

a Christmas concert involving choirs from each elementary campus.

"This year, we decided to go back to something we did several years ago," Ryan said. "It's just a little different approach than we've had the past couple years."

Music to be performed includes "Laudate Dominum Omnes Gentes," by Drennan; "Let There Be Peace" by Beck; "Every Time I Feel the Spirit" by Unterseher; "Humpty

Dumpty" by Perry; and "Furaha" by Albrecht.

Jeannie Fishback, high school choral director, will be master of ceremonies, while elementary and middle school music directors Elesha McMeans and Tamara Sneed from Goliad, Connie Earp from Bauer, Ruth Jackson from Kentwood, Stacy Barr from Marcy, Bobby Mills from Moss and Betty Downey from Washington, will serve as directors during the concert.

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

CONTEST

Continued from Page 1A

als during the Odessa meet for his work, aptly titled, "Coffee Break." Those honors qualify him for the Texas Visual Arts Scholastic Exhibition, scheduled for April 16-19 in Houston.

Budke also earned a regional medal and perfect score for his sculpture, "Balance of Nature," although that work did not advance to the state meet.

Although he is the only BSBS art student to qualify for the state meet, several of his colleagues did quite well at regionals,

according to Art Teacher Judy Tereletsky, who called this year's entries among the best in BSBS history.

Seniors Joe Garcia and Shane Allen earned regional medals — Garcia for his sculpture titled, "Conflict Within" and Allen for a drawing and a painting.

Harvey Gimenez and Cody Saldivar, also seniors, captured regional medals, as well, for their respective drawings.

Junior Gracie Enriquez's oil pastel earned her a regional medal. Other BSBS students medaling at the regional meet included second-year art student Victor Garcia and first-year art

student Leslie Leal.

Receiving "Excellence in Art" ratings were Hector Diaz, Gracie Enriquez, Joe Garcia, Jimmy Garrard, Audrey Hagland, Edward Jaime, Adam Jimenez, Brandi Rigdon and Tony Stuckert.

"This year's competition was difficult and I am proud of our winners and representation at this year's event," Tereletsky said.

CONTAINERS

Continued from Page 1A

within the city limits, giving the go-ahead for both commercial and non-commercial use of the containers, which are sometimes used in the place of sheds or other storage receptacles.

One of the stipulations originally in the ordinance that would call for residents wishing to use the containers to secure a special use permit was rejected by the council, which approved the revised version on a unanimous vote.

Also during the previous meeting, the council approved first reading of an overhauled billboard code that was originally developed to address the use of LED billboards in the city limits.

The ordinance, as it was originally presented to the council, would

have cut the maximum square footage of the billboards from the existing 300 square feet to 150 square feet, a step local billboard merchant Skip Burcham said would hurt local businesses.

Council members agreed during the Feb. 10 meeting, nixing the 150-square-foot limitation in favor of the existing 300 square feet. However, disagreements regarding how the signs — sometimes displayed in one 300-square-foot sign or in two 150-square-foot signs stacked vertically or horizontally — can be stacked brought proceedings to a halt.

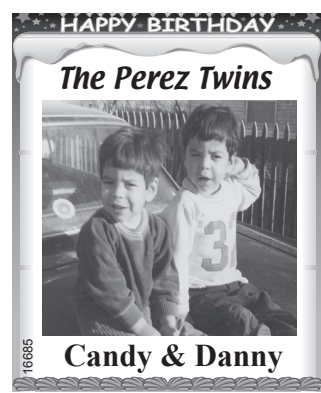
With motions made and then rescinded, the council then met a 3-3 deadlock on an ordinance that would allow two 150-square-foot signs, stacked vertically, with Mayor McEwen and council members

Stephanie Horton and Manuel Ramirez Jr. voting against it.

With the prospect of starting over on the issue during the next council meeting at hand, Councilwoman Gloria McDonald changed her vote, defeating the motion 4-2. A second motion was then made to allow the signs — at a maximum of 300-square-foot — to be divided or stacked, however the sign owner sees fit. The council voted unanimously in favor, but with the final reading of the revamped ordinance failing Tuesday

night, city lawmakers will have to go back to the drawing board.

The council is set to hold a special session to discuss both matters Tuesday in the Council Chambers at 5:30 p.m.



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