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It's time to party!

Gregg Street businesses to celebrate end of construction

By STEVE REAGAN

Staff Writer

The Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce and several Gregg Street merchants are having a block party covering a lot of blocks — Saturday.

To celebrate the completion of Gregg Street renovations, the cham-

ber and various merchants are hosting various activities, including discounts, drawings, kids' crafts, ice cream and more, Chamber Executive Director Debbye ValVerde said.

Even Elvis is making an appear-

The year-long construction proj-

ect was tough on merchants along Gregg Street, ValVerde said.

"Some of the merchants said people found an alternate way to get to their businesses," ValVerde said. "but for some, there was definitely some hardship."

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Tax error fuels debate at council meeting

By THOMAS JENKINS

Staff Writer

What could have been a simple budget amendment turned into a pre-election debate Tuesday night, as incum-

Mayor Russ McEwen and challenger Tommy Duncan squared off concerning problem with the municipality's certified taxable values



Duncan

for the 2009-2010 tax year.

According to City Finance Director Peggy Walker, the miscalculation which cost city coffers approximately \$68,400 - was made by an Abilene based tax management company which incorrectly rendered a drilling rig valued at \$6.6 million in Howard

"A few months ago we had a \$9 million appraisal value that came off of our certified values. This is now a second correction to those original appraised values," said Walker. "There was a company that basically indicated they had a drilling rig that should be taxable within Howard County, therefore it was appraised and included in the certified values.

"Once the tax bill went out it was determined that it (the drilling rig) was

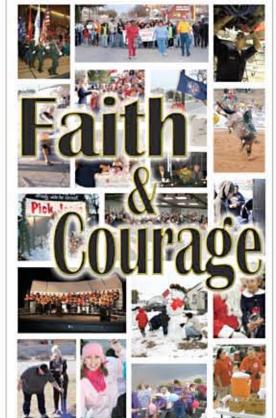
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HERALD Photo/Thomas Jenkins

A construction worker prepares a window sill on the second floor of the historic Settles Hotel for the installation of windows Wednesday morning. According to officials with the Settles Hotel Development Company, restoration of the downtown landmark is moving along at a good pace, although recent high winds have hampered some work on the windows and painting.

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Valuation mistakes haven't hurt BSISD much

By STEVE REAGAN

Staff Writer

A second error in the certified tax values for this fiscal year will have little effect on Big Spring Independent School District finances.

Officials recently reported that Aquilla Drilling misreported more than \$6 million of taxable property to Howard County, meaning that county taxing entities face potential revenue shortfalls.

That mistake comes on the heels of other late last year, when it was learned that a clerical error resulted in a

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Experts: Health care suit will fail

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BRENDAN FARRINGTON

Associated Press Writer

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - The White House says it isn't worried that 13 state attorneys general are suing to overturn the massive health care overhaul, and many legal experts agree the effort is futile.

But the lawsuit, filed in federal court seven minutes after President Barack Obama signed the 10-year, \$938 billion health care bill, underscores the divisiveness of the issue and the political rancor that has surrounded it.

Florida Attorney General Bill Mc-Collum led the effort to file the suit

"The Constitution nowhere authorizes the United States to mandate, either directly or under threat of penalty, that all citizens and legal residents have qualifying health care coverage."

that claims Congress doesn't have the constitutional right to force people to get health coverage. It also says the federal government is violating the Constitution by forcing a mandate on the states without pro-

viding resources to pay for it. "To that I say, 'Bring it on," said White House domestic policy chief Melody Barnes, who cited similar suits filed over Social Security and the Voting Rights Act when those were passed. "If you want to look in the face of a parent whose child now has health care insurance and say we're repealing that ... go right ahead."

A 14th state, Virginia, did not join the bigger lawsuit, but filed its own,

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