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Closing Spicewood campus on table

Superintendent, however, says district would have to be in 'dire straits' before shuttering school

BY THOMAS EDWARDS
Tribune Editor

MARBLE FALLS — As budget discussions heat up in the next few months over the \$3 million deficit faced by

the Marble Falls Independent School District, there are no off-limits topics — including putting the closure of Spicewood Elementary School on the table.

Closing the school, which

has never met its enrollment projections, could save MFISD as much as \$1 million, board President Martin McLean said this week.

But he and interim Superintendent Jim Boyle

said they hope the situation never comes to that.

"It would sure cause a lot of problems, but it has to be on the table," McLean said. "In a time of need, you have to do what you have to do."

McLean said he doesn't want the school to close, but trustees have told the public the district has no "sacred cows" when it comes to balancing the budget, and they have to honor that pledge.

But Boyle said the district is still a far cry from the financial "dire straits" it

would take to trigger a shut-down of the campus, which opened in 2004 at a cost of \$5.48 million.

"Currently, our position is that it will be maintained as is," Boyle said. "The growth has not occurred. But we

See SCHOOL / Page A10

Ex-teacher in student sex incident kills himself

Former BHS band director faced indecency with child charges

BY DANIEL CLIFTON
Tribune Staff

LEANDER — A former Burnet High School assistant band director charged with having an improper relationship with a student killed himself Wednesday at his home.

He was scheduled for a status hearing Feb. 25.

Burnet County District Attorney Sam Oatman confirmed Friday that Roger Michael Williams, 32, apparently took his own life.

In April 2010, Burnet police charged Williams with having an improper relationship with a stu-



WILLIAMS

dent. He was arrested at the school.

According to the allegation, the band instructor was involved a relationship that included sexual contact with a female student who was younger

See STATUS / Page A10

A 'MAJOR' SENDOFF



The Anderson family (top) — Kristine (left), Ellie, Jenna and Brian — help send off Meadowlakes resident Army Maj. Mike Williams (bottom) Thursday as he leaves on his fourth deployment to Iraq. Williams will be gone for 10 months — previous assignments lasted 12-18 months.

Staff photos by Daniel Clifton

MFalls' credit rating falls slightly

BY RAYMOND V. WHELAN
Tribune Staff

MARBLE FALLS — The city's credit-rating score dropped slightly because of continuing financial problems and the uncertainty posed by homestead tax exemptions, according to a financial report.

In addition, negative financial factors in the wake of the disastrous 2007 flood also led the Marble Falls credit rating to slip a notch, according to a global rating agency.

However, the economic outlook for the city is stable, financial experts said.

Fitch Ratings (which has offices in Austin as well New York and London) recently dropped the Marble Falls credit rating from A-plus to A.

"The downgrade to 'A' from 'A+' reflects the city's weakened financial position, following consecutive years of unbudgeted net deficits," said a report in the online version of Business Wire. "The city's flexibility is further constrained by recent approval of optional homestead exemptions, which led to a modest decline in taxable assessed value."

Mayor George Russell said he isn't worried.

"With all the issues the city has faced recently — especially since the 2007 flood — to be downgraded from A-plus to A shows the strength of the community and the faith Fitch has for our area," Russell said.

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LCRA tells investors utility systems for sale

BY RAYMOND V. WHELAN
Tribune Staff

BURNET — The controversial sale of 32 water and wastewater systems by the Lower Colorado River Authority is open to private investors and any affected communities, officials said Friday.

That news came to light on the same day as a water

issues meeting in Burnet County, just a couple of days after several communities and agencies claiming the authority is moving too fast on the sale showed up at an LCRA meeting in Austin.

"The process to identify buyers for LCRA's water and wastewater systems and two of its raw water pumping systems has begun," stated a release issued by LCRA

Friday night. "Interested buyers should contact LCRA's financial consultant, BMO Capital Markets, to engage in the process."

Also, LCRA officials indicated the authority plans to request bids for purchase of the water and wastewater systems by the end of the month.

Bids may come from communities who are served by

the systems, as well as other interested buyers.

"Any community is free to compete with other potential buyers," LCRA chairman Tim Timmerman said earlier this week.

Several issues are tied to the sale of the systems, Burnet County Judge Donna Klaeger said.

"There is a lot of concern," Klaeger said. "We don't know

what is going to happen."

Community leaders are anxious to know whether potential buyers plan to raise service rates for systems, as well as how they plan to maintain water quality, Klaeger said.

Klaeger spoke during the Burnet County Water Issues

See PROCESS / Page A3

Judge Guilford Jones won't seek re-election

BY DANIEL CLIFTON
Tribune Staff

BURNET — Judge Guilford "Gil" Jones announced Friday he will not seek another term on the 33rd state District Court, a position he's held since 1997.

"There's still a lot of things I'd like to do," said Jones, a Republican and

avid fitness buff.

While announcing he won't run for office in 2012, Jones during a press conference in the Burnet County Courthouse Annex before family, friends, attorneys and court staff outlined much of the progress made during the past 14 years and the challenges for the future.

"I was blessed to have



JONES

inherited the bench with a lot of resources," Jones said, adding any advances in the court are the work

See JURIST / Page A7

Report shows no racial profiling in Marble Falls, says police chief

BY RAYMOND V. WHELAN
Tribune Staff

MARBLE FALLS — An annual report required by law finds no evidence of racial profiling on the part of the Marble Falls Police Department, the chief told City Council this week.

"I am confident the reports show the Marble Falls Police Department does not and has

not exhibited racial profiling," Chief Mark Whitacre said Tuesday.

In other business during the Feb. 15 meeting, the council approved a moratorium on flashing business signs and discussed acquiring a bridge from Burnet County.

The chief released the MFPD "Annual Contact Report" for 2010 to council members during the meeting.

As required by state law, each Marble Falls patrol officer records the ethnicity of a driver during motor vehicle "contacts" or traffic stops, the chief said.

The records are compiled into an annual report to show how many stops police made per ethnicity or race during a year.

See REPORT / Page A10

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INDEX

Classifieds C4
Comics B5
Community A6

Obituaries A8
Sports C1
Weather A2

SPORTS

Olympian and former Mustang pushes fitness.
— Page C1

EDITORIAL

Unfunded mandates from state hurts local communities.
— Page A4