New life coming to the Square

Pilot Point Meat Processing is moving into the same building the Golden Triangle Meat Plant occupied just off of the Square on Jefferson Street.

Abigail Allen/The Post-Signal

Pilot Point works on bringing more businesses to town

By Rowan Lehr
Staff Writer

The Pilot Point Economic Development Corporation is on a mission to put the word out about vacant buildings on the Square, EDC Executive Director Denise Morris said.

“We are certainly in every way trying to help get the word out,” she said. “If you want to sell your building or find a tenant, we’re trying to help connect dots.”

Creating a flyer and having buildings listed online and by realtors helps, she said. Going from for sale by owner to commercial listings creates a broader reach.

“It creates chatter, really, and people talking about it,” she said. “You never know where you’re going to spark an interest.”

The problem with the buildings that are only listed as for sale or lease by owner is they are dependent on people driving through the city, she said.

“That’s why it’s great to have two listed,” she said.

It helps bring people into town. Even if they don’t buy the building they came to look at, another one might fit their needs.

The Golden Triangle Meat Plant building is being reoccupied, Director of Development Services John Taylor said. The building has a history of being “a slaughterhouse where they slaughtered animals,” he said.

The city has been using the demolition by neglect order, which was something the current staff had to puzzle out how to properly apply it to two properties on the Square.

Demolition by neglect does not mean the city plans to demolish any buildings itself, according to the Post-Signal archives. It means, instead, that a building’s owner has allowed the building to fall into such disrepair that it is in danger of being structurally unsound.

To administer the order, Taylor had to find a document somewhere else to use as a template, he said.

“So, I did and sent it to the attorney for review and never heard back from them,” he said. “We had the meeting scheduled, so we went ahead and had the meeting and they went ahead and approved those orders. But I still hadn’t heard back from the attorney yet on reviewing them.”

The order had already been approved by the time the attorney got back to him, he said. And, the attorney recommended alterations to the order.

“Long story short, at our last Historic Review Board meeting, ... they approved new orders,” he said. “So, basically it says all the same things, but some of the wording’s different.”

Therefore, the 90-day clock started after the most recent order was approved, not the original, he said.

“The board, I think, has intentions of looking at other buildings; there’s plenty to choose from probably, but they haven’t identified what those are,” Taylor said.

Taylor believes the vacant building ordinance has helped, he said. The goal of the ordinance is to get buildings registered.

“How many do we have registered? Well, none,” he said.
Some incomplete applications have been submitted.
If a building or property has no certificate of occupancy, it’s defined as vacant and therefore has to be registered by the owner, he said.

“That means you have to fill out a form, you have to have liability insurance and you have to have a plan of action as to how you’re going to meet the 16 standards of care that are laid out in the vacant building ordinance,” he said. “Again, it goes back to maintenance and taking care of your building. There’s also a $500 registration fee.”

The fee increases by increments of $50 annually, he said. The purpose of the increase is to keep owners from letting properties sit.

“If the goal of that was to get buildings registered, then it didn’t work because we don’t have any buildings registered,” he said. “If the goal is to get buildings listed for sale, get some buildings better maintained, it has worked.”

The owner of the building at 130 Washington St. has been notified about needing to register the building as vacant, he said.

“Go by that building and look in the window, which is broken, and you can easily look in,” he said. “It’s impossible to make that building meet standards of care without a whole lot of money. So, the owner wants to tear it down.”

For the owner to tear the building down, they would have to get a certificate of appropriateness from the Historic Review Board because it’s a part of the historic district, he said.

“A lot of that’s coming from the vacant building ordinance,” he said.

The Historic Review Board scheduled a workshop February 5, he said. And in that meeting, the members talked about the Historic District ordinance and the design guidelines that were approved last year.

“When you look at those two documents, they don’t work together so well,” he said. “There’s some things that needed to be modified in one or the other, or both.”

The idea is to make things as clear as possible, he said.

Several buildings throughout the Pilot Point Square have for sale signs posted.
The new 200,000 square-foot Chandler Cabinets facility allows the business to cut down on the time and waste it uses to manufacture its products.

### Under one roof

**Chandler Cabinets centralizes production in one large facility**

By Rowan Lehr

Staff Writer

Expanding to 11 different buildings all over the Pilot Point Industrial Park became too much of a headache for Chandler Cabinets, Buster Chandler said. Now, there’s one big building.

The 200,000-square-foot facility was built on the northern edge of the city limits next to the Dave and Buster’s Industrial Park on 377 on JC Lane.

“My wife and I and two sons decided to expand,” he said. “And, we’ve been expanding, adding new buildings all over the Pilot Point Industrial Park. Finally came to a point where we’re so scattered out in 11 different buildings that it was hard to maintain and get to be too expensive to maintain the quality and the waste factor and employees. So, we decided to build the big building, put everybody under one roof.”

Over the three months it has been in use, the output has already improved, he said. The waste factor improved, too.

“Overall, it was a great decision to do so,” he said. “It was a big decision and wasn’t taken lightly. In doing so, we were in there 100%, in the cabinet and paint shop.”

However, some of the office work is being done from the old building.

“We should be in the new office within 60 days 100%,” he said.

There were about a dozen buildings left, he said. One of the metal buildings behind the offices at 911 E. McDonald Drive has been used by the Pilot Point Fire Department for some live action training drills.

On three different days, including Jan. 16, the Pilot Point Fire Department spent a couple of hours training in a warehouse setting, Assistant Fire Chief Bryan Cox said.

“I did it for all three shifts, so we’ve done it three times,” he said. “My guys work 24 hours at a time. I have three different shifts—A, B and C—so they’re on 24 off 48.”

Firefighters spent about two to three hours out there, he said, and the department has been granted standing access to the property for future training.

“As long as the training we’re doing needs it and as long as Buster is willing to let us play in it, then we’ll continue to utilize it until he no longer has it or we no longer need it,” he said.

Cox spoke with the office manager about setting up the deal, while taking care of other business, he said.

“Any time we can get access to a building that we’re not real familiar with, it helps us hone our skills of search in houses with zero visibility and buildings we can’t see in,” he said. “It helps us better prepare for those scenarios. We don’t get to crawl around in large warehouse spaces and learn search techniques for large warehouse spaces often. It was a training opportunity that presented itself, and we were able to take advantage of it.”

Buster lets us use the property free of charge as a show of support, Cox said.

“He just lets us use the building so that we can get better at our jobs,” he said. “Buster very much supports and helps the fire department in any way he can. We try and do right by him and in return he tries to do right by us.”

Any time he hears of a building that will be vacant for awhile he allows us to set up a deal, he said. Western Son took four of ‘em,” he said. “Buster’s is not the only building we’ve ever trained in,” he said. “But it just happens to be the one that’s currently available to us.”

On the first day, some of the office employees thought playing victims of a fire would be a fun way to help out, he said. He gave the women who volunteered some bunker gear for safety from his truck, and the employees took the place of the training dummies.

“We used a couple of our ladies in the office for them to work on and drag out of a fire,” Chandler said. “They put smoke in the building; it was a real cool deal. They’ve done it two or three times, and they’ve still got access to that building until it sells.”

Two of the buildings have been sold, he said, and five have been rented. The rest are listed for sale and or lease.

“Western Son took four of ‘em,” he said.

It costs more to do everything separately, he said, and cost of operations has gone down.

“We’re hoping it’s going to be as much as 20-25%,” he said. “It’s going to be a large amount. We’ve noticed a bunch; our trash haul off is probably down about $10,000 a month.”

Productivity is up, he said. The waste factor is down to very little, and employees crank out more cabinets in fewer hours.

“We’re still putting machinery in the new building; not that we’re not operating at 100%,” he said. “But we have stuff in the future that we’re looking at to make things better.”
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By Rowan Lehr  
Staff Writer

Both the new roughly $1 million police station and $4 million fire station are in the works in Pilot Point and making progress.

The new Pilot Point police station is gaining some traction after weather delays, Pilot Point Capital Projects Manager Matt Kaminski said.

“We just need the weather to cooperate,” he said. “That’s the big thing.”

There are bi-weekly meetings, he said. One was held Feb. 7, and everything seems to be moving along with the police station. Things are moving forward for the fire station too, he said, which had its groundbreaking Tuesday.

“It’s going to be a brand-new facility once they move out of that building, then public works is supposed to be able to move into that building,” he said.

There’s been a need for a police station for a while, Pilot Point Police Chief Conner said, and the new police station was a big priority of the previous chief.

“After I came on and took over, I continued on the push for a police station that functions as a police station,” he said. “This building does not function as a police station is intended.”

The new police station will be about 5,280 square feet, and the fire station will be roughly 14,100 square feet. Those “are simply building footprints,” Kaminski said.

The police station is deteriorating, he said. The department plans to move their furniture, office supplies and gear to the new building, vacating the old building.

“The idea was to retrofit that building for development services, so they can be all centralized in one area, so that way John Taylor’s office isn’t separate from … all the other developmental portions of that,” he said.

“They want to kind of create one specific building, so that way when people come in, they can go directly there and get all their information in one spot.”

It won’t be move-in ready without work, he said.

“It is an old building that needs some work,” he said. “... I haven’t seen anything as far as a project scope.”

The new fire station is set to be on North Washington Street, near the assisted living facility, Kaminski said.

“They will also have a more functional space to utilize with five extended bays for the equipment, a decon room in facility, laundry area and upgraded living quarters for overnight on-call shift employees,” he said.

The existing fire station is about 7,000 square feet, Assistant Fire...

Construction for police, fire stations progresses

The location is also more ideal for access to the most frequent call areas in Pilot Point, the assisted living facility on Washington Street and the intersection of Washington Street and U.S. 377, he said.

“The Chandler family has been designing and manufacturing custom cabinetry for more than 40 years, and our growth and success is not marked by an assembly line. Chandler Cabinets sets the standard and continues to lead the DFW Metroplex with the highest quality of custom cabinetry. Family owned and operated since 1976, we personally guarantee the superiority of our cabinetry.
Stations make progress

The Pilot Point Fire Department is getting a new facility for the first time in decades.

Abigail Allen/The Post-Signal

Chief Bryan Cox said.

“Chief Hudson and I figure this building’s been added onto seven or eight times best we can count through our memory,” he said.

Bay doors at the old station have been enlarged three times out of necessity to accommodate modern firetrucks, he said.

“The brush trucks on the end and the medics, those bays are so close that you can’t open doors fully without hitting walls,” he said.

The old station only has one common bunk room, but the new station will have individual dorms to better accommodate the station being co-ed, he said. Right now, there’s two bathrooms and one shower.

“If the guys come back from a fire, from a car wreck, they’re dirty, only one person can shower at a time,” he said. “So, it may be 40 minutes before the last guy in line gets to go clean up.”

The new building will have four showers, he said.

“Cancer prevention is a big push in the service industry right now,” he said. “So, the faster we can clean and get all the soot and contaminates off of us the better [chance] we have of avoiding cancer.”

Another upgrade the department will be getting is an extractor for the bunker gear, he said. Used gear gets cleaned immediately after use by an extractor, which the fire station doesn’t have or have space for, he said.

Both Aubrey and Denton “are kind enough to let [Pilot Point] use theirs on occasion,” Cox said.

“So, not having an extractor in house, ... exposes us to carcinogens more than we should be in today’s modern fire services,” he said.

There’s not much workable maintenance shop space, he said, but the new facility will have a room for that.

The new building will give the fire department, “a little more elbowroom across the board and just some features that will be nice to have that we haven’t had for the 40 or 50 years we’ve been in this building,” he said.

Kaminski agreed that the fire department needs “a little bit more shoulder room inside their building.”

“They’re getting cramped,” he said. “As the city grows, they’re just going to have that much more to deal with.”

The budget for the new police and fire station is one and the same, he said.

“That comes out of the total bond that was approved in November 2018.

“Building costs have gone up since the conception of the idea, so it’s kind of pushed that budget just a little bit higher, but we’re still within the $4.5 million total,” he said.

Contract details are still being finalized on the fire station, he said. And, the cost is being budgeted.

The police station, which had its groundbreaking in November, was delayed due to weather and the holidays.

“The police station, as you can see, is finally starting to see some movement,” he said.

Residents should expect to see more progress on both buildings throughout the spring, so long as the rain doesn’t slow things down.
Gist said.

At the Dec. 9 PPISD school board meeting, the trustees voted 6-0 to send off for a state identification number, which got the ball rolling on the formation of the district’s police department. Gist met with Pilot Point Police Department Chief Tim Conner and reported that the Pilot Point Police Department is in full support of the district’s decision to start its own police department, according to the Post-Signal archives.

“We’re waiting on a TCOLE number,” he said. “We’re waiting for them to give us a number for our department. Once they give us a number for our department, we’re going to start immediately searching for a chief.”

The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement number means the district is authorized to have and operate its own police department, Gist said.

“We have a budget going forward, but we want to bring in a chief to help us redefine that,” he said. “We want a chief in here because we want their expertise in refining that budget.”

The budget is subject to change based on the chief’s involvement in the planning, he said.

“As soon as we get our number, we’ll open up the position,” he said.

This is a new process for the district, but the number was sent off for in January, Gist said.

“We had to send in some subsequent additions and just policy things,” he said. “So, now we’re just waiting on the answer back.”

The PPISD Police Department will welcome all applicants.

“We’ll welcome any and everybody to apply,” Gist said. “And, we’ll evaluate and get the best person in here for our chief, whoever that may be.”

As soon as the district receives the TCOLE number, it will start the search for a chief of police, he said.

“They may not be the official chief until July 1,” he said. “Our current SRO’s contracts end June 30, so at that point we’ll have our chief take over from July 1.”

A budget will be set at that time, he said, and the chief will be involved with the budgeting.

“Again, it’s going to be pretty similar to what we proposed before,” he said. “We’ve got several other police departments that just started up, and we’ve got good numbers on that budget.”

The district will investigate what the best means to find and recruit candidates is based on the nature of the new role, he said.

“We will search out a forum of police authorities,” he said. “We’re obviously not going to search on what we normally do to find teachers or staff. We’ll obviously have it on our website, but we’ll try to find where they post their current positions and post them in that network.”

The literal construction that comes with forming the PPISD Police Department is the evidence room, Gist said.

Current Pilot Point ISD school resource officers Chase Raines and Barry Pennell have more or less the same stance on the Pilot Point ISD Police Department.

Switching to a district police department will mean Pilot Point schools will no longer be using school resource officers through the Pilot Point Police Department.

“They’re in lockstep,” Conner said, referring to the SROs. “… They are likeminded on the subject.”

Raines has been the district’s SRO for more than five years, he said. He has an office at Pilot Point High School, and Pennell has his set up at Pilot Point Middle School.

“I will be sad to not have the daily interaction with the kids after the end of this year,” Raines said. “I have made some really good relationships with the kids and also their families and the siblings which has been very helpful in investigating offenses involving the kids and also being able to help them with life problems and being someone they could come to for advice about things they might not have felt comfortable asking anyone else.”

Raines also said he likes being a positive representation of police for students. They got a chance to develop that trust without the uniform creating a barrier, he said.

“I also really enjoyed having the kids see police officers are human and not just what music and media say we are,” he said. “They got a chance to develop that trust without the uniform getting in the way.”

To his knowledge, neither he nor Pennell have been offered positions as ISD officers, Raines said.

“Neither of us has been approached that I know of about staying or continuing on as an ISD officer,” he said. “We will roll back into the department, which will actually be helpful to our patrol staffing which is way below the national average for a city our size. So our being back full time will help handling calls and accidents and routine patrol and allow for other officers to attend additional training.”

The city will have to absorb a position-and-a-half at the Pilot Point Police Department because of the change, Conner said.

Two officers, Chase Raines and Barry Pennell, work for both the district and the Pilot Point Police Department; Pilot Point ISD pays 75% of their salary and benefits, and the city picks up the other 25%, Conner said.

It’s fine until the end of the fiscal year, when the current contract runs out, he said. However, what to do with one-and-a-half positions that are not currently funded by the police department is now a discussion for the next fiscal year’s budget.

“If we don’t lose any personnel to outside agencies, then the city will have to find one-or-one-half positions to maintain our current staff,” he said.

If one officer left, then only half a position would have to be funded by the city in the next budget year to avoid the loss of any more personnel, he said.

“If we don’t lose anybody, the council and the budget process are going to have to make some pretty difficult decisions,” he said.

Council recently gave the PPPD approval to add another position, which it filled, he said. An officer who recently left PPPD to take a job in Frisco was replaced.

“We would’ve held the vacancy for the position we lost to an outside agency, and we would not have filled the position council gave us, and our SROs would have rolled back into the PD and filled those two positions,” Conner said.

There would have been no budget issue had it worked out that way, he said.
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Building up

Pilot Point subdivisions gain ground on getting approval

By Rowan Lehr
Staff Writer

The weather has delayed a lot of progress on the two new subdivisions Lakeview Estates and Mustang Creek, Pilot Point Capital Projects Manager Matt Kaminski said.

In January, there were a total of 12 days of lost production because of the weather, he said. Half the month was lost due to weather delays.

“It’s not just necessarily the day it rains, but it’s the few days following the rain because it’s not as wet. But if it’s visibly wet, you can’t work it,” he said.

A general allowance for production loss days is accounted for, he said; it happens.

For instance, they have days budgeted in with the capital improvement project for the police station to account for “days of lost production days due to weather,” he said.

There are always variables, like an unseasonably wet spring, he said. Accounting for weather, everything is still where it should be.

“Everything is slowly on track,” he said. “Lakeview Estates is slowly on track. This past two weeks has hit them pretty hard because they were getting ready to be accepted, and a portion of Yarbrough Farms is the same way.”

Weather delays have postponed the acceptance and turning over to the city of public infrastructure, he said.

“They have right around 45 or 50 lots that are available,” he said, referring to Lakeview. “I think like 10 or 11 are already sold.”

Lakeview received its public infrastructure acceptance on Feb. 10.

“That project started from roughly around May,” he said. “Then Mustang Creek is 64 lots. They’re still a ways off; they still have to complete roads; they have to do a few other things. It’s a bit bigger of a project.”

Mustang Creek is in a lower lying area and has therefore had more weather delays, he said.

“Yarbrough Farms is the only subdivision so far that has vertical structure that’s up,” he said.

There are more than 20 houses vertical between parts of Carroll Street and College Street combined, he said. Yarbrough Farms is divided into phases, and phase 1A is where the majority of the vertical construction is currently.

“That’s good,” he said. “More rooftops equals more money. So, they are slowly coming along. They’ve been hampered by weather, and they’ve

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Subdivisions gain ground on getting city’s approval

The process of gaining city acceptance is being revised, he said.

“The city before was very [un]organized, as far as the paperwork and the acceptance process and making sure everything has been double-checked and signed off for an acceptance letter,” he said.

Kaminski has worked with Public Works Director Trent Vandagriff and Development Services Director John Taylor to create a more streamlined acceptance process, he said.

“The acceptance process is now in an actual paper format where it’s going to be signed,” he said. “It’s actually the first acceptance process we’ll have for the city.”

The idea is to have something that can be checked later that includes the acceptance dates and signers, he said.

“It’s pretty much finalized,” he said. “We were going to use it on Lakeview Estates and Dorothy Court for the first time [Jan. 27] but due to the weather it [was] pushed back.”

This is a step in the right direction, he said.

“It’s good to have an actual reference point of where you can come back and look at when was this accepted, especially for the maintenance bond portion of a project,” he said. “Once it’s been accepted, that starts the maintenance bond which is generally a two-year program.”

Maintenance bonding is a two-year warranty system where possible issues are warranted by the builders, he said. After maintenance bonding is expired, Public Works takes on the responsibility if repairs are needed.

“For three years after the acceptance date, that’s when your warranty basically expires,” he said. “Having a firm date, with a written date with who inspected it and approved it, is pretty critical to a project’s success.”

In reference to Mustang Creek, the streets need to be completed, inspected and up to construction standards, he said. And, the public water and public sewer systems need to go through the same process before the project can be turned over to the city.

“With Lakeview Estates, they have a separate item that is not normally attached to subdivisions,” he said. “But they have an industrial-sized lift station for the sewage to be able to come back out. So, that one is like a little asterisk next to their project.”

Lift stations are fairly common in most cities, he said. A sewage system has to be gravity-fed to the lowest point and then lifted to a treatment facility.

“Mustang Creek is all gravity-fed,” he said. “They have enough topography change, and that’s a small enough development, footprint wise, that they can have everything gravity-feed back into the regular system. So, it’s no lift station required.”

The elevation change is close to 20 feet at Lakeview and it drops off from a large hill, he said, which creates the need for a lift station.

Lakeview Estates is the only subdivision that has been accepted at this point, he said. However, there are completed portions in other developments.

Completion dates, and construction in general, are affected by a lot of factors, he said.

The subdivisions being worked on at the moment are all within the city limits of Pilot Point, he said.

“So, that’s increased tax revenue and everything else back to the city, once those homes go vertical, due to property taxes, water, sewer, the whole nine yards,” he said.

All the subdivisions will be on public water and sewer systems, he said.

“The Hills, which is going to be behind Lakeview Estates, those ones will have public water; they’ll be within city limits, I believe,” he said. “But they will not have city sewer; there’s no way to access city sewer from that point, it’s too remote.”

Public infrastructure work is being done for the Mustang Creek development, one of the proposed subdivisions in Pilot Point.

Rowan Lehr/The Post-Signal

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OUR STUDENTS ... OUR FUTURE!
Aubrey plans for future growth

City looks forward to involving community in master plan

By Daniel González
Staff Writer

Aubrey is growing, and it’s growing fast.

Nestled between two major intersections, and north of one of the major booming districts in Texas, the once peaceful and quiet town is rapidly changing into a busier place.

For City Administrator Mark Kaiser, the biggest challenge for the city of Aubrey right now is to figure out who they want to be as a city, as a community. Many changes are coming, Kaiser said, including the update to the city master plan. He is hoping the census, along with updating the master plan and the possibility of changing the government type to a home-rule type, will propel Aubrey into the future.

“We need to identify who we wish to be,” he said. “Everybody’s tired of hearing me say this, but we need to figure out who we are going to be as a community. We obviously strive really hard to try to maintain our heritage and essence as a small town. We have a large farming population, and we are trying to take care of that rural environment, but at the same time deal with this blending of the growth that’s coming, which is more and more urbanized.”

Aubrey will be updating all of its city master plan in the next three to six months. That’s a process that will begin with a meeting on Monday that will include the City Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Municipal Development District. The update is required every five years and the last one took place back in 2015, and “a lot has changed since 2015,” he said.

“We anticipate having a lot of meetings the next few months,” he said. “It will be the big kickoff for the entire process. Citizens are going to be encouraged to participate.”

Kaiser said defining Aubrey jurisdictionally will be the challenge because of all the growth the city has experienced. The city officials will look at everything from roads, transportation and leisure to the library, parks and emergency services, he said.

“We will take all of these things into perspective and identify what services we as a city want to provide and which services we as a city are willing to pay for,” he said. “Now some of the things that have changed from 2015 to 2020 are obviously going to be identified, but we’re not going to spend too much time talking about what has happened. We’re trying to say, ‘Hey! Where are we going?’ And that’s a big difference, we are going to be asking everybody to look and see which direction we want to go.”

The city is hoping not only to use the census data to plan and improve the master plan but also to look at the possibility of switching from a general law city to a home-rule government type. That’s something the city has been eying for the last few years because its population has increased tremendously since the 2010 census was taken.

“The census will tell us where we are at,” Kaiser said. “We will see if our numbers are stagnant or growing, and we will get all the demographics that come with that data. We will get, you know, things like household incomes, ethnicities, job characteristics and such things. We strongly encourage it, especially for a community of our size.”

According to city-data.com, the population in Aubrey back in 2017 was 3,391. That number has since gone up for sure, and that is why the census is crucial to figuring out where the city stands, Kaiser said.

By reaching the 5,000-resident mark, the city has the ability to become a home-rule city instead of general-law city. Under general law, small cities are guided solely on the standards of the state of Texas. If Aubrey were to meet the 5,000-resident mark and switch to home rule, it would gain flexibility and freedom because it would become self-regulatory. It would allow the city to set its own laws.

This flexibility, Kaiser said, would help accommodate the changes needed to allow the city to grow.

“As we go in that direction later on, we need to ask ourselves how the change is going to benefit us,” he said. “I know before I ever got here, there was a desire on behalf of the council, and I’ve already seen residents that have wanted to go home-rule. It’s more of a self-governance. It gives us a little bit more independence to deal with our challenges as a city, but we are still playing by the same set of [state] rules.

“With all of this being said, there’s kind of a real sequence of events that we’re really putting in place here. The council elected that we start last fall, and then we backed off with the census coming up. We didn’t want to create doubt. We want to make sure that everybody feels very comfortable with voting on something that will affect everyone.”

The emergency services are a vital part of updating and reviewing the master plan and defining Aubrey’s extraterritorial jurisdiction. Aubrey provides police and emergency services to certain surrounding areas within its ETJ. In essence, Aubrey provides such services to a population that’s larger than what is stated for the city. This is where becoming a home-rule city becomes beneficial for Aubrey.

The switch in government type would allow Aubrey’s leaders more control as they define what services should be offered and how to accommodate those surrounding areas in their ETJ.

“These are the kind of things that we have to work together and figure out,” Kaiser said. “Everything is changing in this area. We’re having to all work together to identify who’s responsible and who’s going to be the one providing all these services. It goes back to who we are and who we are going to be. All of those questions are not just about one piece. It’s a partnership of planning for this entire area for the future.”
By Daniel González

Aubrey’s growth is inevitable, and the projects completed in 2019 are a prime example of it.

The city began phase one of a long-term water plan design, and 10 employees were added in various emergency response departments, an increase of 27%.

An automotive parts store was approved and built off of U.S. 377, as well as a bakery on Main Street.

The city is in the latter stages of 16 street renovations throughout the city. Aubrey approved and issued 1,297 permits, an increase of 30% over 2018; 556 new single-family homes were built, an increase of 12% over 2018.

“We are blessed and fortunate to be in this situation,” City Administrator Mark Kaiser said. “I believe it’s because we are geographically blessed. We are in a location that allows us to maintain our rural way of life but at the same time get close enough for urbanized services.”

Aubrey residents will continue to see growth as the city continues to make a push to bring in new development and commerce. Blue Diamond Industries is in the final stages of construction for the manufacturing plant that was approved to be built off U.S. 377. The plant will add 147 full-time jobs, and Kaiser hopes those jobs will come from local residents.

“We are trying to make it as easy and seamless as possible for people to develop and do commerce,” he said. “Hopefully, those jobs will complement the rooftops and the retail. We are trying to balance out this growth as we move forward. Developing the area and adding more jobs gives us an opportunity to review and update our infrastructure.”

With the addition of the new manufacturing plant, the city is having to review the roads around it because other businesses will be affected by the expected traffic that will move in and out of the plant. The city has successfully negotiated the construction of Red Fearn Road, which will run parallel to Highmeadow Drive to the north and connect to the Aubrey Creek Estates housing development to the south via Crocket Street. The new road will give the plant additional traffic flow on the south side of the plant once Red Fearn Road is paved.

“It’s exciting to see all that developed area back there,” Kaiser said. “We’re going to get it concreted wide to encourage the transportation to move east and west. As our city grows east, this will allow us to have more commercial or industrial lots available. We hope to see additional growth on that side of town in the near future.”

In that same vicinity, the construction of the Aubrey Creek Estates housing development is in its early stage of construction.

The housing development sits on 66.28 acres and will add around 320 single-family homes to the area, in addition to the 556 homes that were built in other areas of Aubrey in 2019. The housing development will be completed in two phases. Phase one will see the completion of 180 homes, then, as homes are being sold, phase two will see the construction and sale of the rest of the homes.

Aside from working on and updating the master plans, Kaiser said, Aubrey has the plant and the housing development set as two of the major projects it’s wanting to see completed in 2020, but the city is always looking at ways to grow.

“We are open for business,” he said. “We will continue to support our equine industry; it is a strong mainstay, and it’s a significant amount of our retail. But we don’t have many restaurants. We don’t have a lot of shopping, so we want to continue to grow. We want to create an environment of opportunities for additional commerce and growth.”

The Aubrey Creek Estates development going in on the southern edge of town is one of several developments, both commercial and residential, that has come into the city over the course of the last year. City officials are anticipating continued growth throughout 2020.
By Amy Ruggini
Contributing Writer

The residents of the Silverado housing development in Aubrey have seen a school building emerge from the dirt over the last few months.

A little over a year ago, the 15-acre lot off FM 2931 was just grass and dirt. First beams and walls were raised. Then, wings of the school were visible. A roof was added, and neighbors can now see two large steel cylinder frames at the front of the building.

Those cylinder frames are silos, and they are an important and unique design aspect to Jackie Fuller Elementary School, Aubrey ISD’s third elementary school, which is set to open in August 2020. The silos were inspired by the peanut dryers that overlook Main Street in Aubrey. The architects from Huckabee, who worked on the design of the school, visited the Aubrey downtown area and wove various images of the town into their design.

“A big part of what we talked to Huckabee about was that we wanted to connect Aubrey and the heritage of Aubrey with the new school and new neighborhood,” Aubrey ISD Superintendent David Belding said. “We all are Chaparrals, and we all want to be interconnected. That’s a major focus for us as we grow is to help people feel connected to being a Chaparral.”

The exterior of the building, which includes brick, stone and metal siding, are also reminders of the heritage of Aubrey. Interior features such as brick walls, exposed wood and metal beams will give the building a country feel.

Another connection to Aubrey’s history is the name of the school: Jackie Fuller Elementary School. The school is named after a retired teacher from Aubrey ISD.

“Mrs. Fuller was a teacher here that has a long legacy of excellence and making a difference for students,” Belding said. “She is very involved with the community and the history of Aubrey.”

Fuller taught 21 years at Aubrey ISD from 1974-1995. She volunteers with the Aubrey Education Foundation and is a frequent visitor to the elementary schools, reading to the younger children.

“The school board really wanted to honor an educator,” Belding said. “There were several names that were discussed, and her name rose to the top.”

The Jackie Fuller Elementary School building is just shy of 93,000 square feet. Its initial capacity of 735 students will be slightly larger than the other two elementary schools. That decision was made based on the expected growth in Silverado, Belding said.

The 735-student capacity, which includes pre-K, can be expanded to 835.

“We already designed where we would build 10 additional classrooms when it’s needed,” Belding said.

Along with traditional classroom space, the school will include large collaboration areas and a science and art room that will look out into a courtyard.

“I’m really proud of the work that Huckabee did with our design committee on helping us realize the vision for that building,” Belding said. “It combines some tried-and-true design elements of schools that we know work really well with design elements that offer modern learning opportunities and experiences for students. I think we achieve a great blend.”

In addition to housing the kindergarten through fifth grade classes, Fuller Elementary will also be the pre-K center for the district. The pre-K is currently in the Early Bird Learning Center at the Aubrey ISD administration building.

Kari Abrams was named the principal of Fuller Elementary last June and is the current EBLC administrator. She has been working with the pre-K teachers and families, and she is a familiar face to the district.

Abrams worked at Brockett for four years, first as an assistant principal and then as a principal for two years.

“This spring I’m looking forward to meeting our future Fuller families at registration and other upcoming community events,” Abrams said. “The building is beautiful, but what I’m most excited about is creating a school culture that will be the heart of the community, a place where our kids are loved, learning is ignited by a dynamic staff and a place where kids are empowered to become the best version of themselves.”

Inside Jackie Fuller Elementary

Construction Cost - $22,978,245
This was part of the $51 million bond package passed in November 2017.

Features of Jackie Fuller Elementary:

•A gymnasium designed as a Texas certified storm shelter, consisting of 12-foot concrete walls and a concrete topping.

•Academic wings, each with a large collaboration area with ceilings exposed to the deck.

•A large library.

•An elevated stage with adjacent music room on the east side of the dining room.

•Science and art rooms with circular walls and storefront windows, looking out into the courtyard.

•An exterior courtyard at the center of building with student seating and artificial turf.

•Two exterior playgrounds.
Aubrey Middle opens auxiliary gym, facilities

By Amy Ruggini
Contributing Writer

On Jan. 13, four girls basketball games were played at Aubrey Middle School on Sherman Drive in Aubrey.

At first glance, there wasn’t anything out of the ordinary about the games. The Lady Chaps wore white basketball uniforms; the Melissa teams wore red. Parents sat in bleachers and cheered. What was notable was that two basketball games were played at the same time, one in the main gym and one in the new auxiliary gym.

The auxiliary gym was part of phase one of the AMS additions project included in the 2017 Aubrey ISD bond package. Pogue Construction finished phase one of the AMS additions over winter break on Dec. 30, and the new gym was put to use when students returned to school in January.

The new additions will keep all AMS students at one site rather than having to use other facilities for practice.

“It is such a huge step for our athletic program,” Aubrey ISD athletic director Keith Ivy said. “It truly is a game changer for us in the developmental side of our athletes, boys and girls.”

The new auxiliary gym allowed all four girls basketball games to be played at the middle school on Mondays and four boys basketball games to be played at the middle school on Thursdays.

Before the additions, the two B teams played over at the Aubrey High School auxiliary gym. Buses would transport the teams from the middle school to the high school, an eight-minute drive.

When the students returned to school in January, the hallway that ran from the back of the school was a little longer. A big Chaparral logo along the new wall led to the new auxiliary gym. On the opposite side was a short hallway that opened to a new weight room, complete with new equipment. New boys’ and girls’ locker rooms were next to the weight room along with coaching offices. Two trophy cases ended the hallway before leading to the back doors, which opened to a new parking lot.

Phase two of the additions is a new track and football practice field behind the parking lot. Construction has been slowed by the rainy winter, but the project is close to completion.

“Kids will be able to go outside and get on the track and work on their speed development and then go inside and work on the strength side,” Ivy said.

Previously, parents would drop off their middle-school boys at the high school for morning workouts at the track, football field or in the weight room. Buses would transport the kids back to school for second period. For seventh period, girls were bused over to AHS, and parents would pick them up there instead of the middle school.

“It’s big for parents,” Ivy said. “Parents are picking up and dropping off at the middle school; some of them are dropping off at the high school. We’ve had people all over the place. Coaches have had to bus back and forth. This is going to streamline everything. Next year, we will all be in one location.”

Buses will continue to transport AMS students over to the high school for some spring season workouts at the track. Starting in the fall, AMS students will be on campus all day. One exception would be for football games and track meets, which will still be hosted at the high school.

For Aubrey ISD Superintendent David Belding, it came down to time.

“You lose time when you are transporting,” Belding said. “You lose workout time. That puts our kids at a competitive disadvantage. The safety will also be improved.”

Belding also talked about reduction of transportation costs, wear and tear on the buses and the confusion for parents in knowing where their kids were on certain days.

The AMS additions have been a long-term goal for the Aubrey ISD school board, whose members have been studying an addition for several years.

“I know the weight room, track and second gym have been on the radar all along, and the school board did an amazing job,” Ivy said.

Belding echoed Ivy’s praise of the school board.

“The board wanted to do it right,” Belding said.

“I’m so proud of our community for supporting those additions at AMS and being willing to provide these facilities,” Belding said. “We appreciate our staff and middle school families for accommodating and changing routines during construction. Everyone worked together to make that go as smoothly as possible. Everyone can be very excited about the final product.”

Inside the Numbers

All together, the AMS expansion project added 19,000 square feet. The construction costs for phase one totaled $5,088,498. The construction cost of phase two is $1,288,370. This was part of the $51 million bond package passed in November 2017.

Phase one included a 10,000-square foot gym that features six basketball backboards, volleyball courts, a sound system, bleachers and scoreboard. It also included a 3,000 square foot weight room with rubber flooring, mirrors, a sound system and a large electric roll-up door.

Phase one also included female and male locker rooms, coaching offices, a large janitorial room, two storage rooms and two trophy cases.

The back parking lot was removed to make room for the additions, but new lots were added to the south and west side, totaling 131 new parking spots and parking lot lights.

Phase Two of the AMS projects is a new four-lane track that includes a shot put pit, discus ring, long and triple jump lanes and pits, pole vault lane and pit on the west side of the track and a high jump area on the east side of the track, all surrounded by a fence. It will also include new lighting and a new full-sized football practice field.
By Amanda Mchenry  
Contributing Writer  

Though the Aubrey Police Department’s jurisdiction reaches beyond Aubrey, it’s just business as usual for the officers.

In addition to providing services to Providence Village since October of 2017, the subdivisions of Winn Ridge, Sandbrook and Silverado are included in the department’s jurisdiction. They serve a population of around 15,000.

“We look at it as a whole,” Aubrey Police Chief Charles Kreidler said. “It’s a seamless operation for us. A call in Providence is just like a call in Aubrey. We handle it the same way. It’s just an extension of our jurisdiction.”

Personnel was added October 2019 to help keep up with the growth, bringing it up to 17 officers. Kreidler stays informed about growth and assesses the department’s needs on a monthly basis, he said.

“If I don’t know about growth, I can’t advise the city on what I see as potential issues in the future,” Kreidler said.

He is working on reorganizing the department to help handle the growth.

“But as we grow, we have to add services that we didn’t do before that we relied on others for,” Kreidler said.

Investigators will need to be added in the future because the department only has one, he said. There are currently no plans for a bigger building for the department so far. There is space available in Providence Village in what used to be the town hall.

“Most of our work is done in the street,” Kreidler said. “The officers have assigned vehicles and they’re out in the neighborhoods, in the city dealing with calls for service and meeting with citizens.”

There has been an increase in calls for service but less than 20% are of a criminal nature, Kreidler said.

“We support our citizens reporting issues in their neighborhood,” Kreidler said. “We want to know about those things. If we’re not receiving the information, we may not know it’s occurring.”

The biggest way that the department communicates is through Facebook. The page is growing, and more information is being distributed as the page is improved and new features added, Kreidler said.

One of the goals for 2020 is starting a neighborhood watch program. It will not be a neighborhood patrol, but it will instead be about neighbors looking out for each other. The plan is to have a concerned group of people who notice when things are out of place and can alert the police to issues.

There are also big plans for the National Night Out in October. The goal is to have multiple block parties with a little work and support from the community.

“We get a lot of support from our citizens,” Kreidler said. “It’s easy to talk to our citizens. They are good about telling us when there’s a problem, and they are good about thanking us when we have corrected whatever the problem was or we have assisted them in some fashion.”

Relationships with other police departments are vital for supporting the communities and providing services. The departments in Pilot Point, Aubrey and Northeast are supportive of each other’s missions, he said.

“We couldn’t survive without each other,” Kreidler said.

Kreidler is proud of the residents and of the department as well.

The Aubrey Police Department serves more than the city of Aubrey.

“Aubrey police treat jurisdiction ‘as a whole’”
Looking to the future

Providence Village,
EDC budget
$80,000 for comprehensive plan

By Abigail Allen
Managing Editor

Providence Village is looking to the future, and it’s attempting to get some help on planning the best way for it to progress.

Established in 2010, the town has been working toward developing as more than just a bedroom community for its first decade of existence.

“For so many years, developers would come in, and they’re like, ‘How can we put as many houses on every piece of dirt in town?’” Town Manager Brian Roberson said. “It’s like, ‘That’s not what we see.’ Well, what do you see? ‘We see commercial.’”

To get there, though, the town needs to set that course.

“We’re taking steps in a new direction that we haven’t been before, and we need to have a plan,” Roberson said.

Those new steps officially started with the formation of the Providence Village Economic Development Corporation, which was established in 2019.

After the EDC began meeting and the members started sharing ideas, the town administration saw a demonstrated need for greater community input in the way the town should be shaped and what residents want to have access to, if possible.

“This is the perfect opportunity to get that on so many different items to find out what’s important to the residents and have a nice—this is like a 20-year comprehensive plan, so here’s where we’re going for the next 20 years,” Roberson said.

The town and the EDC are splitting the cost of the plan 50-50, with both paying $40,000 to total $80,000.

Another change that happened in 2019 was working with the state to officially call FM 2931, which is the road that courses through the center of the town, Main Street.

The state road is already on TxDOT’s radar as one in need of expansion thanks to the efforts of local leaders like Roberson, Denton County Commissioner Hugh Coleman and state Rep. Jared Patterson, R-Frisco, as well as leaders from Aubrey.

“This isn’t always going to be a little two-lane, asphalt road,” Roberson said. “It’s going to be four-to-six lanes all the way up to [FM] 428 from [U.S.] 380, and now we know it’s going to be probably within the next 10 years.”

Having that represented in the comprehensive plan, Roberson said, will potentially help developers and residents see the potential for more than houses.

The plan will answer how much property is available to develop.

“Hopefully we’ll get some new visual aides to help with that, too,” Roberson said.

Commercial development is already planned for the frontage along Main Street in the developments of the Liberty Village and The Lakes at Running Branch. In addition, two businesses are joining Aldi along the U.S. 380 frontage, Jiffy Lube and a medical spa, and another is in the works at the corner of Main Street and Fishtrap Road, 7-Eleven.

Part of the process of creating the comprehensive plan will include a community survey, a strategic plan and an economic plan.

“It’s a pretty big project,” Roberson said. “It’ll take somewhere between six and nine months to complete all the components of it, but it will be incredibly valuable for us for not just how we do budget and determine what projects to include and things like that, but also from an economic development side to help developers see what we believe our vision is for this community.”

The town received two submissions for its request for qualifications on a comprehensive plan, one from Ideation and one from Gap Strategies, both of which were opened Feb. 14.

“At a glance, it looks like they’re both very qualified to do what we need done and help move us forward, so that’s exciting,” Roberson said.

Members of the council and other town boards will be asked to go over the proposals to “help weigh in,” Roberson said.

“This is very much going to be one of those, ‘Are we comfortable?’” Roberson said. “Because this is a big deal, this is setting our plan for the next 20 years, and so we want to make sure we’ve got the right partner.”

*Abigail Allen is a member of the Providence Village EDC.
Big change on the horizon

Cross Roads lot zoned to become planned development

By Abigail Allen
Managing Editor

Right now, the 33-acre spread sandwiched between the Bloomfield property and the line of businesses on the south side of U.S. 380 in Cross Roads is an open field.

It’s likely to be quite different soon, however.

That lot is the site of the proposed Cross Roads Market Square, a planned development that includes a hotel, a 286-unit apartment complex, a family entertainment venue, a dog park, and several businesses and restaurants.

“We’re in one of those unique situations where—I know it’s challenging for some of the residents but—it’s not the residents that are financing these decisions,” Town Administrator Becky Ross said, “Of course my residents shop and eat here in Cross Roads, too, but if the only people visiting my shops and restaurants were the people that live in Cross Roads, then they simply wouldn’t exist.”

The zoning change was made for the property at the January Town Council meeting. It wasn’t the first time the rezoning came before the council. The council rejected the rezoning in August in a 3-2 vote.

Before the rezoning was proposed again, and ultimately accepted 3-1, a key feature was changed.

“The first [proposal] was covering, I think, 10% of the current cost estimate for the public safety building, and then when they came back the second time, it was, the agreement that got signed was covering 100% of the current estimate for constructing a public safety building,” Ross said.

That will be funded through the use of a public improvement district, which will allow the developer to recoup some of its costs from the eventual property owners.

Another added feature will be the inclusion of public art pieces.

Fred Nichols, the owner of the property, wants to use the art to represent the history of the area.

“At the entrance to the development, we’re going to have longhorn steers and cattle out there, and strategically located throughout the development; we’re also going to have cows and horses and men on horses,” Nichols said.

That plan is in response to the feedback from the community, he said.

“One of the comments we had was people like the country; they want to keep the country,” he said. “And so that’s going to be our theme. Let’s keep it country, so we’ll put those monuments and those things in there just to enhance that.”

He has lived in the area for more than 20 years, specifically on the same farm for 25 years.

“We’re here to stay,” he said.

He also donated the land to the town for a connector road to run between Naylor and FM 720.

Part of the plan for the planned development includes a property owners association, which is similar to a homeowners association.

Every road within the development will be managed by the association, Ross said, as will be the infrastructure inside the 33-acre complex.

The surrounding businesses, such as Sonic and even Prairie House across Naylor Road, are hoping to benefit from the improved water and sewer infrastructure, Ross said.

And all of that will be “held to public standards” and the town will not “allow something to just crumble,” she added.

“That’s a similar situation we have in all of our newer subdivisions,” Ross said. “The town has the ability if for some reason the POA, the HOA is not maintaining their roads, their drainage, their infrastructure to town standards, the town can take over, assess the payments to the property owners, be the recipient of those payments and get everything back above board.”

Cross Roads as a town is completely dependent on sales tax because it levies no ad valorem tax on either business or residential properties. Typically, ad valorem taxes are used to pay for expenses in municipalities, including road and infrastructure maintenance.

“If we ever did start charging a property tax, we would then be in charge of the maintenance of our subdivisions and our roadways, which would be wildly expensive, which is why we’re not trying to do that any time soon,” Ross said.

About five years ago, Ross said, the town put a hotel occupancy tax on the books in preparation for possibly having hotels that would provide that revenue stream to the town, Ross said.

There are specific things that tax revenue can be spent on, usually centered on things that bring people in to the town to stay for a visit.

Between Denton to McKinney along U.S. 380, as of mid-February, there are no hotels, which creates “a void here on 380,” Ross said.

“When you think about driving past places with hotels, you rarely just see one hotel,” Ross said, adding that usually more than one hotel comes into an area once one breaks into a market.

The one for the development is set to either be a Marriott or a Hilton, but which type and the number of rooms are not yet decided.

And there’s at least another property owner looking into putting in a hotel.

“The day after the Cross Roads Market Square meeting, I had a meeting set; they were waiting to see what the Cross Roads Market Square vote did to come in and have a conversation with me,” Ross said.

The apartments were a major bone of contention during both rezoning proposals.

The complex will have a mix of one- and two-bedroom units that are intended to appeal to either young professionals who don’t have families or older residents who no longer want to have to care for property.

“PGA, Toyota, all of those big developments, there’s certainly going to be some people that can’t quite afford to live there but aren’t looking to buy a house, necessarily, so that’s kind of the clientele that they’re looking for in these apartments,” Ross said.

The complex is going to have “resort-style living.”

An acre-plus dog park will be available to both the residents of the apartment complex and to the public who comes to the businesses and restaurants in the development.

“They had seen a restaurant concept where there was a back patio that many restaurants shared and it overlooked a dog park environment, which a lot of people are super into taking their dogs with them everywhere,” Ross said.

The dog park is a way of making the space around the natural drainage structure usable and beneficial to the overall system, Ross said.

Another feature that Ross is excited about, she said, is Fat Cats, a chain with several locations in Utah, Arizona, Idaho and Colorado.

“When Cross Roads Market Square is constructed, we will have a place where people can go park their car and spend a few hours,” Ross said.

“...We’re thinking of just somewhere where you can load up the family or go on a date night or something like that and you can get a bite to eat, also have some entertainment, take a stroll and just spend a few hours in Cross Roads and not have to go into Denton to spend a few hours for an evening out or go into McKinney or Frisco. “You can come right here.”
Northeast Police Department gets station funding

By Abigail Allen
Managing Editor

The Northeast Police Department no longer has to look for funding for its new station.

The owner of the property for the Cross Roads Market Square planned development, Fred Nichols, has promised the money for the facility, which will cost roughly at least $2.1 million.

“Since there’s no ad valorem tax, no property tax, we’re still at an even keel with other competition in other cities, so I think it’s great,” Nichols said.

He added that he has communicated with the developers and businesses he wants to bring on board for the project and “they are 100% supportive” of having the public improvement district in place for the planned development.

“There’s kind of an opportunity that’s still being batted around that Cross Roads was planning on spending this much money to go towards the police version of the public safety facility,” Ross said. “Well, if it’s now going to be covered by a developer, we still have that money on the table.

“Can we do some improvements as far as an additional ambulance bay or maybe start preparing for fire equipment or something on that, because we do still have designated funds for a public safety building?”

That amount is $250,000 to the town.

Part of the funding is coming from the Bloomfield planned development, which abuts the property that will become the connector road between Naylor Road and FM 720.

“Roads and public safety are our two big expenses,” Ross said.

Bloomfield donated the 5-acre strip of land touching Naylor for the public safety building, and it pledged $3,000 per rooftop (397 at buildout) for the town’s public safety budget, which is paid out as the plats are accepted in three phases.

So far, just over $400,000 has come in from that pledged money.

“Those are funds that we have to use on public safety,” Ross said.

The public safety building project does not yet have a definite timeline, but she added that she would prefer for it to be “sooner rather than later.”

“The police department has made it work in the building they have been in, but there’s lots of room for improvement,” Ross said. “It’s something that has been talked about for years and years and years.”

While police coverage is provided by NEPD, fire and EMS coverage is provided by the Aubrey Fire Department.

Adjusting the plans to accommodate more of the fire and ambulance equipment would provide a way to have an AFD presence in Cross Roads, even though it’s not a full station at this point.

“The [police department] plans themselves will stay the same, it’s just what we do for the fire department and the fire apparatus that’s going to change,” Edland said. “... You can back an ambulance in, you can back the brush truck in, that’s fine, but when you start talking about the big fire trucks, you don’t need to be backing that in, that’s tough for the guys, so it needs to be a pull-in and pull-out.”

Some concerns have been shared by residents that the location is too far from Krugerville, which is also served by the NEPD, and where the current police station can be found.

“This land is already owned by the town of Cross Roads, so it’s leaps and bounds ahead of any other location in town that we don’t own,” Ross said.

The most recent figures released by the police department said that 70% of the calls come from Cross Roads and 30% originate out of Krugerville.

Most of the wrecks happen along U.S. 380, U.S. 377 and FM 720, Ross said.

Moving the headquarters for the department won’t change the quality of service or the path of the patrols for the police department, NEPD Chief James Edland said.

“We have a lot of administrative duties, follow-ups, stuff like that where people actually come to the police department, so that might be a little different for people, but as far as guys on the road, they’re still on the road; they’re still staging in the same areas,” Edland said. “So, that itself I don’t think will be affected at all.”

Ross agreed.

“Of course, they go back to the building for this, that and the other, but 95% of their job they can do from their Tahoes, so it’s not the location of the building that’s going to affect anyone’s service or response,” Ross said.

“You’re going to get the closest officer no matter where the closest officer is in the jurisdiction.”

And integrating the first responders into one facility could be helpful for the area and for the departments as they work together.

“It’s not unheard of for police and fire and ambulance and all that to be together,” Ross said, adding that having the Northeast Municipal Court move to the same complex could be an option in the future.
Leaders of Tioga PTO prepare to turn over reigns to new leadership

By Amanda Mchenry
Contributing Writer

The Tioga ISD Parent Teacher Organization is continuing to improve their program as they support two schools in Tioga.

One of the challenges that Tioga PTO President Tawny Hurst has seen with the organization is essentially starting over as old leaders transitioned out of their roles.

“They’ve all done a fabulous job. You just learn from the positives and the negatives of each other’s leadership,” Hurst said of past leaders.

Hurst hopes to change that trend and keep the old leaders involved even after new leaders come aboard.

This year’s elections have been moved to March so that the new leaders will have an opportunity to shadow and learn from the old leaders. Hurst hopes this will help with training and transitioning new leaders.

“I’m hopeful that this time it will be a little bit more consistent and that person can focus more on growing and however they want to grow it without trying to learn everything from scratch,” said Hurst.

The PTO is always in need of volunteers, but one committee that is thriving is the Teacher Hospitality committee. The group is responsible for the teacher appreciation week, teacher luncheons and anything that involves taking care of the teachers.

“I just cannot say enough great things about them,” Hurst said. “They are really an extraordinary group of ladies.”

Some ways the PTO has given back to the school is through contributing to field trips and putting in water fountains that allow the students and teachers to refill their water bottles throughout the day. The previous PTO team bought awnings for the playground to help protect everyone and the equipment from the hot sun.

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Tioga parents work together to prepare for future

Another project was funding a sex-education course that focused on abstinence.

The Fall Festival is the big fundraiser that provides a great way to give money to teachers for whatever they need for the school year.

“All the proceeds go directly to the teachers that participate in fall festival,” Hurst said.

The teachers run a booth or game and get an equal amount of money from the festival proceeds. Each teacher who participated last year received $500, Hurst said. In the past, it wasn’t made known that the money was going to help teachers with classroom needs that are not covered by the budget.

A lot of parents don’t know that teachers spend $300-$500 of their own money getting their classrooms ready for the year, Hurst said. The festival helps with that, and it is the teachers who make the festival possible.

The live and silent auctions at the Fall Festival bring in the most money. The festival is typically the Saturday before Halloween and is open to everyone. Auction items are greatly appreciated, Hurst said.

Hurst brought the Tears and Cheers breakfast to Tioga ISD. It is open to all parents on the first day of school. They can share about dropping their children off at school and how it makes them sad and happy. Additionally, they can get information about what’s going on and how they can be involved.

The PTO always wants more parents to be involved, Hurst said. Sign-Up Genius has made it easier for parents to sign up and get involved. There are plans to put together a welcome committee for new families.

“We never want anyone to feel like we’re a clique or closed group,” she said. “We want everybody to feel welcomed. And we want them to feel like no matter what they can contribute, we are thankful to receive it.”

PTOs can sometimes have a reputation for drama and that can deter parents who might otherwise want to be involved. Hurst says the Tioga PTO discourages gossip, drama and being an exclusive club. She said they do encourage conversation and healthy debate.

“If you want your children to enjoy the perks of what PTO offers the school such as programs, supplies, materials, field trips, parties, don’t not get involved in that just because you’re worried about the drama,” Hurst said. “We are all in it because we believe in it from the bottom of our heart.”

Regular meetings are the third Monday of the month at 5:30 p.m. in the middle school library. All parents and teachers are welcome. Other family members and guardians are welcome as well.

One teacher from each grade is encouraged to attend the meetings. Hurst says their input is needed and the members appreciate their time since they know it is a long day for the teachers.

The PTO is open to having outside speakers come and educate the group, Hurst said. As her time as president comes to a close, she plans to continue her involvement with the PTO. One project she wants to devote time to is a program for girls to work on cohesion and relationship building. It will help them deal with and avoid drama as well as give them an opportunity for some fun.

If anyone is interested in speaking to the PTO, getting involved or asking questions, contact Hurst at tiogapto@gmail.com.
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