

## State briefs

**LUBBOCK** — Federal spending went haywire for a moment, and for once — city officials weren't complaining. A federal check designated for Community Development projects arrived on schedule Tuesday, but in an unusual form. The amount was left blank. The check should have been made out for \$43,000. City Manager Larry Cunningham said he will take the check back to federal officials in Austin later this week. Mayor Dirk West had suggested the city might meet all the pay demands of its firefighters, who are seeking a 12 percent salary boost, plus those of any other group seeking higher pay. Cunningham added that the check seemed ideal as a means of financing a \$109 million water project.

**HOUSTON** — Enrollment in Houston Independent School District this year will decline as much as 16,000 pupils from last year's total of 210,000, officials said today. Superintendent Billy Reagan attributed the drop in enrollment to a declining birth rate. He said movement from HISD to the 18 suburban districts "is very slight," Reagan said.

**AUSTIN** — A man waiting in a room filled with out-of-work laborers went berserk Tuesday and held a dozen people at knifepoint, then slashed an attorney in the back near the Capitol minutes later, police said. Billy Ray Conner, 21, was charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and was held on \$5,000 bond. Leonard Reese, an attorney with the Legislative Council, said he was on his way to pick up his paycheck when a man cut his back with a knife. He was reported to be in good condition.

## Agencies advised to buy planes

**AUSTIN** — State agencies, which must share their aircraft rather than owning them individually, should move toward outright purchase of any planes currently being leased, the Aircraft Pooling Board has decided.

"I feel very strongly that the long-term goal should be to get the state out of leased airplanes, so I think any lease agreements should include some kind of lease-purchase agreement," member Doug Brown said Tuesday at the board's first meeting. Board Member Bob Cargill suggested they investigate the possibility of renegotiating existing airplane leases to lease-purchase

agreements. "Buying airplanes outright is the obvious option for the state of Texas," he said. "Barring that, a lease-purchase agreement is the second best option. But the lease of airplanes is not feasible for the state of Texas." The board agreed, however, to approve the two-year lease of a plane by the attorney general's office for \$137,000. Cargill said the state had leased the plane for about five years, and each year had paid into a fund for engine overhaul. He said extension of the lease would

allow the state to take advantage of the costly engine overhaul.

Under the pooling arrangement, the plane will be available for use by other agencies.

The board chose Rep. Pete Laney, D-Hale Center, as its chairman for a two-year term. Laney was sponsor of legislation creating the board. Cargill and Brown drew lots to determine the length of their terms on the board, Brown drawing a four-year term and Cargill a six-year term.

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## Davis tape accepted by judge

**FORT WORTH** — State District Judge Gordon Gray Wednesday ruled prosecutors could submit audio tapes of an Aug. 20, 1978, meeting between T. Cullen Davis and an FBI informant into the millionaire businessman's murder solicitation retrial. Gray ruled the tapes were admissible as evidence despite objections of defense attorney Richard "Racehorse" Haynes, who said the recording was dubbed in later.

The tapes showed Davis talking to David McCrory, his one-time partner, in the parking lot of a Fort Worth restaurant. A few minutes later, Davis was arrested for attempting to arrange the murder of his divorce judge, Joe Eidson. McCrory testified he showed Davis a picture of Eidson lying in the trunk of a car, pretending to be dead, and Davis gave him \$25,000 that allegedly was to be given to a hitman. In the tape, McCrory is seen placing a towel-wrapped object in the trunk of Davis' car. McCrory said the towel contained the silenced-equipped gun that Davis requested.

## \$136 million rate increase recommended for SW Bell

**AUSTIN** — Southwestern Bell Telephone Co., on a plea that it too is a "victim of higher costs," has won a Public Utility Commission staff recommendation for a \$136 million rate increase, only \$9 million less than the company had requested.

"It's too much. It's almost everything they wanted," said Don Butler of Austin, attorney for the Texas Municipal League, after the PUC's proposal was announced Tuesday.

More than 100 members of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now staged a noisy protest at a public hearing and cried out against the increase that will raise basic residential telephone rates between 75 cents and \$1.10 a month. Southwestern Bell had asked for a \$1.55 per month hike.

"One, two, three, four. Don't you care about the poor?" the protestors chanted as they filed into the hearing. "ACORN says not 1-cent more," was the chant outside the building.

But N. Carlton Baker, South-

western Bell's vice president for revenues, testified Texas' growth and continuing demand for increased telephone service strained the utility's financial resources and made rate increases necessary.

"The telephone company is the victim of higher costs," he said. "Rates cannot be adjusted fast enough — or in sufficient amounts — to keep up with inflation."

PUC economist Julie J. Parsons submitted written recommendations on behalf of the PUC staff that:

—Endorsed Bell's plan to continue current rate differentials in basic service charges for residents of the state's major cities.

—Said increases in basic rates for residential and small business customers should be offset by raising charges for special services such as Centrex systems, touch tone phones and switch board setups.

—Proposed a new rule to restrict Bell from back-billing customers who have been undercharged for a period not to exceed six months and

provide for a deferred payment option in such cases.

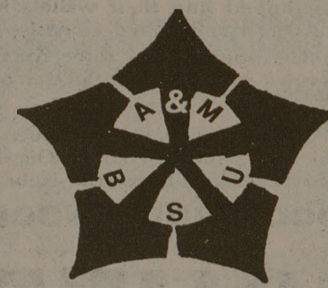
—Called for reducing monthly charges for extension lines from 50 to 40 cents as a step toward gradually eliminating that charge.

—Suggested Bell's overall request for a \$145 million increase statewide be trimmed to \$136 million.

PUC attorney John Bell said the staff recommendation would shift more of the raises to users of specialized equipment and services.

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