

House approves new \$800 million Texas water deal

Associated Press

AUSTIN — The Texas House on Tuesday approved and sent to the Senate a proposed constitutional amendment allowing the state to sell \$800 million in bonds to pay for an ambitious statewide water program. The House also tentatively approved legislation that would implement the plan if the constitutional amendment is approved by voters in November.

The votes came quickly and with relatively little debate, but not before the Northeast Texas representative mentioned the topic Speaker Gib Lewis did not want to hear — moving water from East Texas to West Texas.

Rep. Smith Gilley, D-Greenville, asked bill sponsors whether the package includes water transfers. Rep. Chip Staniswalis, R-Amarillo, said it did not, but Gilley was not convinced. East Texans' fear that someone wanted to steal their water has helped kill previous water plans.

After voicing his concerns on the floor, Gilley said, "One thing they're trying to accomplish is to make water much more available. In doing so, I have a fear this will mean there will be numerous lakes built in northeast Texas to cover up some of the richest farmland in the United States."

"It will displace homeowners and will ultimately mean water will be transported from Northeast Texas

and East Texas to other portions of the state."

It took less than two hours for the House to debate the package that took months to put together. Lewis attributed the quick House action to "maybe a year-and-a-half of hearings across the state of Texas, a great deal of work by the (House Natural Resources) committee and a great deal of knowledge shared by members of the House."

The constitutional amendment approved 134-11 by the House includes \$200 million for flood control projects, \$200 million for water quality projects, \$200 million for reservoirs and \$200 million for other use.

The enabling legislation — which faces a final House vote today — drew relatively little debate.

Lewis fended off some attempted amendments during a planning session in his office before the floor session. The House Committee on Natural Resources had sifted through scores of amendments. Only about eight — none major — were offered on the floor.

"Everybody had to give a little and take a little," Tom Craddick, R-Midland and sponsor of the constitutional amendment, told the House.

The Sierra Club felt it had to give too much and yanked its support. The group wanted more stringent protections for bays and estuaries.

Lewis said, "As far as I'm concerned, I'd like to see them stronger. But as far as an even balance statewide, I think they're sufficient."

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Council proposes 5-year MSC plan

By ANN CERVENKA
Staff Writer

The Memorial Student Center Council has developed a five-year plan to give insight into the future of the MSC.

Included in the master plan are proposals to expand the MSC and change its current funding.

Cory Courtney, executive vice president for administration, emphasizes the importance of the planning process.

"Planning is still the unpolished ox, but the process is what we are really proud of," he says. "We try to incorporate the process into the way the organization already works."

Currently the programming consists of four areas: cultural, educational, entertainment and recreational.

Long range goals are focused on getting more faculty assistance in exploring these four areas through more effective marketing and public relations efforts, Courtney says.

With increased campus and community awareness, more programs with better quality could result. Courtney says the best aspect of the plan is its flexibility.

"It's not set in concrete," he says. "It's made to change."

The plan must be general enough to allow new student leaders freedom to develop their own ideas.

Each year the plan must be changed and updated, Courtney says.

The current plan, which the MSC Council has been using for 35 years, differs from the new proposal because it is merely a set of goals made each year.

"It's never really a coordinated effort," he says.

However, with the physical expansion of the MSC in 1973 to serve 22,000 students, more committees were created and more students have become involved. Now with more than 36,000 students to serve, the MSC Council needs a documented approach.

Included in the master plan is a proposal to expand the MSC again. "I think we have a legitimate concern," Courtney says. All committees are hindered by a lack of space. The council has researched the proposal and thinks an addition would be a good investment.

The plan also calls for a change in funding. Currently the three sources of revenue are from generated revenue, student service fees and donations. As the largest student union in the world, the MSC is the main user of student service fees. The council hopes to become more self-supporting from generated revenue and donations.

The council will vote on the plan at its Feb. 18 meeting. Courtney is confident of its approval.

Building almost vacant for lack of telephones

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The City of Houston spent \$3.1 million to move easily each out and touch its water customers from a new service center. But the renovated building has sat almost vacant since September because there are no telephones.

City officials said the renovated building, a modern-appearing structure of glass and brick, will not be fully occupied now until June 1, at the earliest. In the mean time, some water department employees continue to work in rented offices.

The new building, the former home of a neighborhood bank, was purchased by the city in 1980 for 1.05 million. By last September, the 5,000 square-foot structure was

renovated and ready — except for the lack of telephones.

Jane Cater, acting director of the city's public service department, said the breakup of AT&T is partially to blame for the delay.

"We were no longer able to simply call up Southwestern Bell and order new phones," she told the Houston Post. "There were lots of questions, because we were treading on new turf."

The renovated building was scheduled to house the water department's entire customer service department, including billing and record-keeping computers, field investigators and customer-complaint operators.

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