

Residents of Pasadena protest opening of new parole offices

PASADENA (AP) — Residents, angry that the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles did not hold public hearings on the planned opening of its regional office near a high school and skating rink, are mounting opposition to the plan.

"It just surfaced Saturday," Bob Doley, leader of the Parkview Estates Community Association, said. "That's the first anybody really heard about the facility. There was no public hearing or anything."

"It's horrendously bad planning. We don't want ex-convicts mixing with our children. Some won't have cars and there's no public transportation, so they'll be walking right through our subdivision."

City officials, including Mayor John Ray Harrison, say they too were uncertain until recently who the tenants of the new office building would be.

Parole officials, however, say they were not required to hold hearings on the matter and are simply opening a much-needed office in an area already heavily populated with parolees.

The office will be less than a block from Skating America, a popular teen-agers' hangout, and several houses. It also is about one-quarter mile from Sam Rayburn High School.

An overflow crowd turned out for a Pasadena City Council meeting Tuesday, when several anti-office petitions were presented to the panel.

Residents and city officials say the parole office took them by surprise mostly because city records only mention plans for an "office building."

The city on Aug. 12 granted McAllen-based Williamson Construction Co.'s request for a permit to build a 12,000-square-foot, \$230,000 building. The records make no mention of the parole board or its specific construction plans.

Mayor Harrison, who is studying the parole board's plan, said: "I drove up the street three or four times and saw the building, but didn't know a whole lot about it. I was glad someone was building an office building."

Robert Tapscott, parole supervision director for the parole board, said the state recently awarded the construction project to the low bidder in a public bidding process, and that no public hearings are required.

Tapscott said his decision to place a regional office in Pasadena was

based on economic reasons and the population of parolees in southeast Harris County.

"The parolees are already there," he said. "We are not bringing parolees into the area. People go to the pen from Pasadena every day; and when they leave, they go back to Pasadena, whether it be under mandatory supervision or parole."

He said state law requires home and office visits between ex-convicts and parole officers, and that the Pasadena office will reduce parole officers' travel expenses.

The office will not handle inmates freed under the Texas Department of Correction's early release program. Those inmates are sent to halfway houses, said Jack Sutton, director of the parole board's regional office in Houston.

First City Bancorporation stockholders critical of \$1.5 billion restructuring plan

DALLAS (AP) — Several stockholders of First City Bancorporation have criticized a \$1.5 billion restructuring plan designed to rescue the ailing organization, a newspaper reported Wednesday.

Some of the largest holders of two issues of the Houston company's preferred stock — including San Antonio banker and rancher Frederick Erck — are unhappy with the plan First City announced Sept. 9, according to the *Dallas Morning News*.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., under the rescue plan, would contribute nearly \$1 billion to the transaction, and Chicago banker A. Robert Abboud and his investment banker — Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette Securities Corp. —

would raise \$525 million through the sale of securities.

The plan, if successfully completed, would be the largest bank bailout since the \$4.5 billion rescue of Continental Illinois Corp. of Chicago in 1984.

In the deal, preferred stockholders would receive \$30 million in cash, plus the right to purchase \$10.7 million of First City common stock and 40.5 percent of the common stock of a new workout bank that would be created to hold at least \$1.79 billion of First City's bad loans.

The newspaper said one of the larger preferred shareholders said the \$30 million cash payment equals about \$8.50 a share, an amount he said is far shy of the \$45 and \$48.50 that First

City would be required to pay to redeem the shares normally.

When the bank announced the restructuring, federal officials said First City was "clearly in danger of failing."

If the Abboud proposal is rejected, Keim said, he believes the FDIC will be forced to present shareholders a better deal.

"I do not believe they (FDIC) would let First City go down because of the rippling affect in Texas and throughout the country, especially during this time when the capital markets are in such an uneasy condition," he said.

First City has about \$12 billion in assets and 62 separate subsidiary banks.

Police charge SWTSU student with hazing

SAN MARCOS (AP) — A Southwest Texas State University student has been charged with engaging in hazing after being found in a rural area wearing no shirt and covered with motor oil, authorities said.

The student, Joseph D. Christian II, 20, was arrested after he refused to tell police about other fraternity pledges who officers believed were in the area.

University officials said Christian was a sophomore from Georgetown and was pledging Kappa Sigma fraternity.

Police said Christian was charged under a law enacted earlier this year requiring anyone with firsthand knowledge of hazing to report it.

John Garrison, Southwest Texas dean of students, said the fraternity chapter faced "severe" penalties if a university investigation finds it sanctioned hazing.

Bureau questions firm's offer of free recreational vehicle

DALLAS (AP) — Better Business Bureau officials caution that a company's offer of a free Winnebago Chieftain with purchase of three dozen imprinted ballpoint pens will net customers a sleeping bag, not a recreational vehicle.

Businesses around the country have made 243 inquiries since June asking if the offer, which requires a purchase of up to \$498, is legitimate, bureau president Ronald P. Berry said Tuesday.

No written complaints have been filed with the bureau against the Dallas firm, International Promotions, which is offering the package.

"There is nothing wrong with companies offering premiums as an inducement," Berry said. "What is wrong is when they mislead prospective customers about the nature of the prize or the value of the prize."

Michael Farnsworth of the company's customer relations division declined comment Wednesday. A spokesman for the firm said Monday

the company sells business gifts and gives away trips and other items as an inducement for people to make purchases at the company.

International Promotions told the BBB that in addition to receiving a sleeping bag, customers get a chance to win a Winnebago recreational vehicle, Berry said.

He said the bureau contacted the company that manufactures Winnebago recreational vehicles and officials there said the sleeping bag is an authorized product made by another company with their permission.

"They also are aware that this product has been misused by certain companies," he said.

Regardless of whether the sleeping bag was connected with Winnebago, "the bureau would object to the offer of the Winnebago Chieftain without an affirmative disclosure that it is a sleeping bag, not a recreation vehicle," he said.

The bureau began investigating International Promotions in June when it received calls that the firm was offering a trip to Hawaii, Berry said. But the bulk of the calls did not come until after the first of November.

"That led us to believe that the Winnebago offer was relatively recent, since we've been deluged with calls, just in the last few weeks," he said.

In a bureau questionnaire, International Promotions said the firm was established in 1986 and is a "telemarketing company marketing office products by phone nationwide."

A request by the bureau for copies of the company's promotional material has gone unanswered, Berry said.

Companies have been told that they must pay \$290 to \$498 for the pens to qualify for the Winnebago Chieftain offer, Berry said.

Nutritionist studies eating habits, diet of various animal species at Dallas Zoo

DALLAS (AP) — To look at Demba the gorilla, who sits innocent and Buddha-like before a dinner of celery, the casual observer might not notice that she is uniformly tubby, monstrously pot-bellied and a thief.

But there is no mistaking the grumpiness manifest in her mate. Fubo has suffered the indignity of having his own Demba steal his primate biscuits in the morning.

He has taken his irritation out on his keepers at the Dallas Zoo and has beaten up Demba. At feeding time, Demba and Fubo have sustained minor wounds — all over sweet potatoes and spinach.

The problem confounded Bonnie Raphael, the zoo veterinarian. After

an unsuccessful attempt with a reduction diet for Demba, she called Dave Baer, a prominent animal nutritionist from Silver Spring, Md.

Recently, Baer roamed the zoo with a duffel bag of weighing scales and clipboards, trying to get to the bottom of dietary problems such as Demba's.

"People think of nutrition at zoos as being real simple," Raphael said. "But it's complicated."

The 401 species and 1,519 animals at the Dallas Zoo kept Baer busy. But this was not his first visit. He came to the zoo two years ago to help train some keepers.

Baer has a bachelor's degree in zoology and a master's degree in animal

nutrition. He is also well-versed in the latest research.

Take Papa the hippopotamus.

"He is looking a little thin," Baer said. "This is something I wouldn't see, but the keepers have."

Weighing Papa is almost impossible. He's close to several tons, and it would take a truck scale to do the job. But his keepers have noticed his backbone and hip bones are protruding. Normally, he is completely spherical.

Papa is about 32 years old, which for a hippo is rather old.

Baer said his teeth could be going bad, or his system may be less efficient. Most hippos in captivity live only into their 40s.

"We can give him a diet easier to digest," Baer said. "We'll sample different feeds and see what happens."

Baer is not sure what to do about Demba and Fubo.

At 17, Demba is getting up in years and she has yet to bear offspring. Fubo, who at 20 has fathered two gorillas, cannot be blamed.

"Gorillas spend 40 percent of their waking hours foraging for food," Baer said. "Demba doesn't move enough and I think she's bored."

Demba's obesity may be contributing to her infertility, Raphael said, and the zoo would like the gorillas, which are a vanishing species, to bear some progeny.

Man lives up to promise to become 'river rat'

SILSBEE (AP) — Pete Reed always told his kids that as soon as he got them grown and married off, he was going to become a river rat.

A man of his word, he started building a houseboat not long after that happened and has been on the water ever since.

He and his wife, Lois, stay on the floating home underneath the Neches River bridge on U.S. 96, and their two years there have convinced them of one thing:

"If I ever had to live on land again, I wouldn't know what to do," Lois says, echoing Pete's views.

It's easy to see what they mean. Inside the modest houseboat, the lazily flowing brown water and tree-lined shores are visible through every window but one. Ferns wave gently in the breeze on the fenced-in porch, decorated with flower boxes and furnished with rocking chairs for evening philosophizing.

A gentle, barely noticeable rocking motion reminds you you're on the water, not land. And the

minute you step aboard, although you're just feet from the shore, you feel different.

"There's a peace on this river, it's something about the river," Pete says slowly, looking out his kitchen window. "You don't have some things other people have, but you sure have something they don't have."

The rent may be free, but the Reeds must haul their drinking water and wood for their wood-burning stove. Their biggest expenses are coal oil and butane, and, of course, materials for their ongoing carpentry projects, one of which starts right after the last one is finished.

"How long did it take to build this thing?" Pete echoes a visitor's question. "Heck, we're still not finished."

While most people start from the ground up, the Reeds started from the water up. Once they built the basic barge, or what is now the floor,

they stayed in a tent on board as they built the walls and finally the roof.

They located a butane-powered refrigerator so they didn't have to make trips to the grocery store every day.

And they have running water, sort of. Pete's father, Charlie Reed, while trotting to the sink, says, "See, you run over here, and then you pump your water and then you run back." The water he pumps into the sink, though, is river water used for baths and washing dishes. Their drinking water is in a yellow cooler by the door, next to a large glass jar full of candy.

The candy is for Molly Moore, "the youngest river rat," as Lois calls her 4-year-old granddaughter who spends as much time as she can on the houseboat with her grandparents.

"It's nice being out on the water and all because it is so peaceful," Lois says, watching the sun stretch colorfully over the water at dusk. "But the best part is the freedom. We're free."

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