

State and Local

Bryan council rejects landfill site because of possible risk to water

By Todd Riemenschneider
Staff Writer

The Bryan City Council voted Monday to withdraw from a proposed landfill site east of Bryan. The landfill, which was to be located at the intersection of Sandy Point Road and the Old San Antonio Road, drew much opposition because the location is near existing water wells for Bryan-College Station and Texas A&M. There was also opposition because the Bryan Utilities Lake is located on Sandy Point Road. City Manager Ernest Clark said the city and an independent hydrologist found the site to be safe. However, an analysis by Texas

A&M showed there might be a threat to the water supply. "The data and analysis provided by Texas A&M indicate a risk to the public water supply," Clark said. "While these are professional differences of opinion, we must weigh them very, very heavily," he said. Dr. Kirk W. Brown, a professor of soil sciences at Texas A&M, believes the council made the right decision. "There were wells within a mile to a mile and one-half of the site," Brown said. Brown also helped Citizens Against Water Contamination in studying what could happen if the landfill was placed over the aquifer. "There was a potential, if the landfill was placed there, it would

have leaked and contaminated ground water resources," he said. The citizens group, which collected over 4,000 signatures on a petition, did not believe the land was suitable for its intended purpose. CAWC also sought alternatives to the landfill problem. "Composting is an option suited for a community this size," Brown said. He said composting is the taking solid waste and removing the metal and glass from it, which can be recycled. The leftover refuse is then ground and it sits for six to eight weeks and is turned about once a week. The refuse becomes a stab-

lized product which can be reground and used. Brown said composting does not threaten the water resources. "This also cuts the possibility that a landfill will contaminate a water supply," he said. James Bond, deputy chancellor for legal and external affairs for Texas A&M, said he was pleased the council had withdrawn from the site. "We feel like the right decision was made," he said. "We will want to be as helpful as we can, so while we are grateful they have chosen not to pursue that site, we want to be as supportive as we can in helping them to solve the problem," Bond said.

Regents approve merit pay raises in new fiscal year

By Richard Williams
Senior Staff Writer

Many Texas A&M employees will find their paychecks getting fatter later this year. Monday the A&M Board of Regents approved merit pay raises not to exceed an average of eight percent for faculty in the general academic institutions and for faculty-equivalent professionals in the services and agencies. The Board also approved pay raises not to exceed an average of five percent for professional staff, including non-classified administrative personnel and classified personnel. All system employees, except those paid in whole or in part from teaching salaries appropriations, will receive a state mandated two percent salary increase. The policy guidelines for the 1988-89 operating budget as adopted by the regents state, "The basic salary schedule for classified employees and student workers should be increased by two percent."

The raises will become effective at the start of A&M's fiscal year which starts Sept. 1. The regents set reimbursement rates of \$0.21 per mile for personal auto mileage and a maximum meals and lodging reimbursement for in-state travel at \$70.00 per day. During the meeting the regents also:

- Authorized the chancellor of the Texas A&M University System to negotiate the purchase of property adjacent to the campus of A&M-Galveston.
- Appropriated \$512,000 for the purchase of two parcels of land adjacent to the Tarleton State University campus.
- Adopted resolutions in appreciation of the A&M and Tarleton football teams. The A&M squad won its third consecutive Southwest Conference championship in 1987. The Tarleton football team won the 1987 Texas Intercollegiate Athletic Association championship.

Worker fired after helping elderly flee fire

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — A hotel maintenance worker says he was fired because he helped evacuate elderly residents after smoke from a nearby fire filled the hotel. But his bosses say he was fired for being unreliable and because he hung around with the evacuees having breakfast instead of helping with cleanup efforts. Rodney Feese, 51, said he returned to the downtown Travelers Hotel after helping evacuees from a Sunday morning fire only to find his boss was angry. "He was mad at me, saying I shouldn't have left the hotel," said Feese, who had worked as a maintenance man at the hotel for about three months. "He said he didn't need me anymore," Feese said. "I told him I was helping some people, and he said I shouldn't have left." Martin Vega, the hotel's maintenance supervisor, said Feese was fired because he didn't help with cleanup work after residents were allowed to return to the hotel.

The maintenance man said he accompanied the guests he evacuated to St. Mark's Episcopal Church and had breakfast with them. Vega and hotel manager Clark Gillespie said Feese should have returned to the hotel immediately and helped in the cleanup effort instead. "Everybody else was pitching in to help, but he just wanted to stand around here and drink coffee," Vega said. The hotel suffered smoke damage in the fire, which destroyed three nearby businesses and caused an estimated \$550,000 in damage. About 84 residents in the 106-room hotel were evacuated but allowed to return about two hours later, hotel officials said. Investigators believe an arsonist may have started the fire in a nearby business. Feese said he was just getting to work Sunday morning when he saw the fire and smoke and began helping guests out.

"I carried one gentleman about two blocks. He can walk but he's real slow," Feese said. "I helped four people, and the firemen came and got everyone else." "I guess I'm gone," Feese said later. "I've always believed in helping someone. I guess I'll look for another job." Assistant Fire Chief Charles Shaw said more than 100 firefighters worked about two hours to extinguish the blaze, which is suspected to have been started by an arsonist.

Officials try to return beach to parks systems

BRAZOS ISLAND (AP) — Negotiations begin this week to return a 216-acre piece of beach near the mouth of the Rio Grande to the state parks system, but a developer apparently will retain a road easement granted by the General Land Office, a parks official said. The Brazos Island area was the subject of controversy in 1986, when Land Commissioner Garry Mauro attempted to lease it to Brownsville-based developer Playa del Rio Inc. Playa del Rio plans a 12,500-acre, \$8 billion resort development to include areas north and south of Bra-

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zos Island, which actually is a peninsula. "We would very much like to take it (Brazos Island) back and manage it on some basis as a park or a preserve," said Andrew Sansom, coordinator of land acquisition and management for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Sansom described Brazos Island, known locally as part of Boca Chica Beach, as "one of the nicest sets of intact sand dunes anywhere." Environmentalists have fought development of the area, which they maintain is a sensitive wetland and part of a shrinking wildlife habitat in the lower Rio Grande Valley. Others, however, see the ambitious development as a source of jobs and economic stimulus. Yet the developer, as well as a leading South Texas environmentalist, welcomed news that the parks department hopes to take it back — even though they envision different uses for the island. The state Legislature in 1957 proclaimed the area as a state park, and it has been known since then as the Brazos Island State Recreation Area. But in 1986, the General Land

Office, whose purpose is to earn money from state lands, took the land back. The 1957 transfer to the parks system had been deemed invalid because the parks department never paid the land office for the property, as required by the state. Then in May 1986, after the land office's plans to lease the Brazos Island area to Playa del Rio brought sharp protests from environmental groups, the company revised its plans, and Mauro offered to return the land to the parks department.

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