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Safety concerns prompted improved campus lighting

PTTS used surplus money from its 1995 budget to improve lighting and security.

By Greg Fahrenholt
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Department of Parking, Traffic and Transportation Services (PTTS) spent \$500,000 in the past few months to improve lighting and security in campus parking lots.

PTTS upgraded lighting in areas they considered substandard or potentially unsafe, such as the Olsen Field parking lot where two rapes occurred in 1995.

Tom Williams, PTTS director, said more lighting makes campus a safer place.

"If students park in the dark

in a student lot, they should feel more secure with the new lighting," Williams said. "We feel that we've done all that we can to make our lots as safe as possible from a lighting standpoint."

PTTS focused on repairing parking lot surfaces last year, but a surplus in their budget made lighting improvements possible too.

"We budget about \$1 million a year for maintenance, and over the past few years we haven't spent it all," Williams said. "It was a surplus that we had earmarked all along to do the lighting projects. We didn't use any special dollars to do this."

PTTS first installed fixtures in areas that had no lighting, such as the staff lots along Agronomy Road on West Campus. Lots with substandard lighting were upgraded next.

Wednesday night lights were

placed in the temporary 450-car gravel lot located behind the West Campus power plant, which will be used until a West Campus parking lot is completed.

Stephanie Kohl, a sophomore business major, said she feels safer parking at night now.

"It was pretty scary trying to park on campus at night before," Kohl said. "This doesn't solve everything, but at least it is a step in the right direction."

But Melanie Plaisance, a junior English major, said she is still nervous about returning to her car when it is parked on campus late at night.

"It doesn't matter how much lighting there is in the parking lots, because I still wouldn't be willing to walk across campus alone," Plaisance said. "If I park on campus at night, I'll get someone to walk with me to my car. You never know what is out there."

A&M to begin construction on animal complex

Brushy Creek residents are seeking a temporary restraining order against construction of the complex.

By Michelle Lyons
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M administrators decided, despite community dissent, to begin construction of a controversial 580-acre animal teaching and research complex in early January.

The Animal Science Teaching, Research and Extension Complex is being built in the Brushy Creek community, 8 1/2 miles southwest of College Station on Highway 60, and is scheduled to be completed by Summer 1997.

Many residents of the Brushy Creek community have publicly opposed construction of the complex since the summer, when they filed for a still-pending court injunction against it.

The complex will include the Beef Industry Center already in operation, as well as a Sheep and Goat Center, an Animal Euthenics Center and a Nutrition and Physiology Center.

Dr. John Beverly, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences deputy vice chancellor and associate dean, said students have needed this facility for awhile.

"Most of the (current) facilities are pretty much depreciated," Beverly said. "Most of them are not contemporary facilities."

"Our students didn't really have access, locally, to a physiology center."

Dr. Edward A. Hiler, vice chancellor and dean for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, said in a press release that the complex has been in the works for several years.

"This complex is the product of 10 years of planning and development," Hiler said. "Over that time we have worked openly with the designers, contractors and area residents to ensure the complex will be an excellent research and educational facility that will be in conformity with environmental and regulatory requirements."

Dr. Ruth Schaffer, Brushy Creek resident and A&M sociology professor, said the University has not seriously considered the feelings of the residents, many of whom are past and present A&M employees.

Schaffer said she remains concerned that the complex will lead to water pollution, animal odor and disruption to the community.

Joe Estill, A&M facilities planning and construction manager, said research shows these worries are invalid.

"The main concern is that the facility will cause water pollution, but we have no indication that will occur," Estill said.

Yet Schaffer and other residents in Brushy Creek are seeking a temporary restraining order, in addition to the injunc-

tion, to stop construction.

"We are appalled the University would not wait for a court decision," Schaffer said. "Usually, a temporary restraining order lasts 10 days. Then a hearing will have to be held. We begged them to do an environmental impact study."

"We have been assured by geologists that the animals they want on this very small, fragile piece of land will contaminate the water aquifer."

Hiler said University officials met with residents several times in order to modify complex designs and address their concerns.

The University and the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board will establish a plan to monitor the complex's surface and ground water systems and maintain high air quality.

Hiler said A&M has the largest animal science department enrollment in the country. Because of this, he said, it is important to provide leadership in animal production industries nationwide.

"This will help us serve the new kind of agriculture student that we are seeing more of these days," he said. "The complex will allow us to provide these students with the most comprehensive educational experience in working with technology and livestock."

"Once completed, the complex will be an environmental and educational showplace. We have the technology, faculty and managerial staff to ensure that we have an environmentally sustainable facility."

Challenger schoolchildren: 10 years later, there's anger, doubt

The third-graders who witnessed the disaster in 1986 are college-age now.

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Holding a tiny Challenger T-shirt to his chest, Ben Provencal chuckled to think it fit him 10 years ago when he and his third-grade classmates traveled to Florida to watch their friend's mom rocket into space.

Most of those youngsters are in college now. But they still carry memories of the trip and the shuttle explosion on Jan. 28, 1986, that plunged them from innocent excitement into unspeakable shock for the whole world to see.

Provencal, then 8, was photographed in a Young Astronauts cap that was too big for him. He was staring at the sky, his jacket sleeves pulled over his hands be-

cause of the cold, trying to comprehend what he had just seen.

"I see the absolute shock," the freshman at Springfield College said this month as he looked at a framed copy of the photo. "My face is saying, 'How could they let something like this happen?'"

His question is repeated by former classmates, who said that while the experience did not scar them, it shaped their outlook on life, risk-taking and trust — especially trust in government.

"That was the first time that I had seen the result of how something can go terribly wrong," Trip O'Shea said. No longer would he automatically assume that "you are going to come home and sleep in your bed," even after something as mundane as driving somewhere or walking to school.

"I never really took things for granted from then on," said O'Shea, 19, a freshman at Colgate College.

"That was the first time that I had seen the result of how something can go terribly wrong."

— Trip O'Shea
Challenger disaster witness

The third-graders had gone to Florida because Scott McAuliffe was in their class. His mother, Christa, was on the shuttle, having been selected to be the first teacher in space.

The children shivered on the metal VIP bleachers and watched Challenger lift off, streak through the brilliant blue sky for a little more than a minute, then explode high over the ocean.

Provencal still has the hat he

wore. It's still adjusted to the smallest size and covered with pins from the space program and Florida tourist sites.

"I have really good memories about the whole trip and the whole class and how much fun we had," the 18-year-old said. "I dwell on that stuff more than the ending."

Provencal is studying to be an elementary school teacher. He said it is a coincidence, not an attempt to follow in McAuliffe's footsteps.

But McAuliffe has followed him to college. He said talk among his new friends often turns to famous people from their hometowns.

After major league pitcher Bob Tewksbury, Provencal usually mentions McAuliffe, and "all of us all want to know."

Some remember little about the disaster; others recall it vividly. But they agree they did not suffer the long-term emotional harm some had predicted.

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