

Council rejects Northgate garage petition

By SUSAN E. ATCHISON
Staff writer

College Station voters will decide in a special election May 2 on the design and construction of a \$6.8 million Northgate parking garage. The College Station City Council last night rejected a citizen's petition aimed at development of the garage project.

"This fact is certain — more public parking is needed in Northgate for businesses, churches and citizens if that area is to continue to prosper with the rest of the city," said Mayor Pro Tempore Hub Kennedy.

"Otherwise, the blighted conditions of that area will continue to worsen."

The proposed 750-space garage would be located on a 1.5-acre space at the middle block of College Main Drive.

Citizens presented the council with a petition Feb. 17 containing 549 signatures against the garage project.

Mike McMichen, who helped circulate the petition, addressed the council last night. "Probably the most disturbing thing is the \$6.8 million that comes out to \$9,000 per parking space," McMichen said.

"Every parking garage that has been

built on the A&M campus came in at under \$7,000 a space."

McMichen said that a Texas A&M parking official had reported to him that the University has over 5,000 parking spaces either on the drawing board or under construction.

McMichen said the city must consider A&M's plans before constructing the Northgate parking garage.

A parking consultant hired by the city to evaluate the need for the new parking garage determined a need for off-street parking.

Council member Steve Esmond said the city's consultant recommended Northgate

"This project in its early years, will be a financial disaster to this city."

Dick Birdwell
Council member

parking expansion, but not a parking garage.

"This was not the project that the consultant recommended," Esmond said. "He recommended we proceed first with developing surface parking and go from there."

Council member Dick Birdwell said the city's consultant also pointed out problems with paid parking in areas that were previously free parking.

"It is very unlikely, until we educate people, that any kind of facility like this is going to pay for itself," Birdwell said. "This project, in its early years, will be a financial disaster to this city."

SLOT conference to begin

Aggie Leaders of Tomorrow brings 275 high-school students to A&M for weekend of leadership training and taste of college experience

By SUZANNE M. RIGGS
Staff writer

The MSC Aggie Leaders of Tomorrow (ALOT) committee has given 275 Texas high-school seniors the opportunity to stay on campus and explore aspects of leadership Friday and Saturday during the first annual Student Leaders of Tomorrow (SLOT) conference.

The SLOT conference is designed to encourage high-school seniors to enroll at Texas A&M and to introduce them to the leadership opportunities available, particularly within the MSC.

"We want them to be excited about A&M and realize what a special place we have here,"

said Bill Anderson, ALOT executive chair and a junior mechanical engineering major.

"We also hope to make them feel like they have a chance to succeed and will be able to come here and take on leadership opportunities."

He said the idea of the SLOT conference was planned last summer.

Anderson emphasized that the conference could not

have happened without the devoted teamwork of the ALOT members.

"It was a great learning experience for everyone and provided a good opportunity to promote leadership," Anderson said.

Russ Bair, ALOT public relations executive and a junior computer science major, said students are coming from a

variety of Texas cities including College Station. He said the students were selected after ALOT sent out 1,200 applications to students in schools within a 200-mile radius of Bryan-College Station.

The applications were targeted to students already admitted, but undecided on whether to attend the University.

Bair said he anticipates that the conference will be successful and that ALOT plans to invite more students next year.

"We had a very high demand this year so we hope we can do it in two separate weekends next year," he said.

"It was a great learning experience for everyone."

Bill Anderson
ALOT executive chair

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Black History Month concludes with a look toward A&M's future

By JENNIFER WILSON
Staff writer

Black History Month provides an opportunity to recognize the struggles and contributions of African-Americans at Texas A&M University.

Mitchell Rice, director of the Center and Ethnic Studies Institute and a professor of urban sociology, said to appreciate African-Americans and their culture we must understand their contributions.

Rice noted the inclusion of the comb and the traffic light as examples of contributions made to the world by African-Americans.

Rice said that diversity should be related to A&M students because the real world is diversified and A&M must see it-

self as part of the world.

"Diversity is a benefit to all," he said. "One role of the University is to provide students with the education and background necessary to compete in a diverse world."

Rice also said that A&M cannot base everything on the views of alumni.

"A&M cannot exist in a vacuum," he said. "It needs to be guided by those who can provide diversity experiences so students can compete in the real world and in the future."

Earnest Obadele-Starks, a professor of history, said that although A&M is making progress in becoming diversified, it still lags behind many universities and institutions.

"From my experience, A&M is behind in having a good representation of cul-

tures in the faculty and student body," he said. "This is a problem Black History Month helps address to bring awareness to the campus to the need of a better commitment in moving forward in these areas."

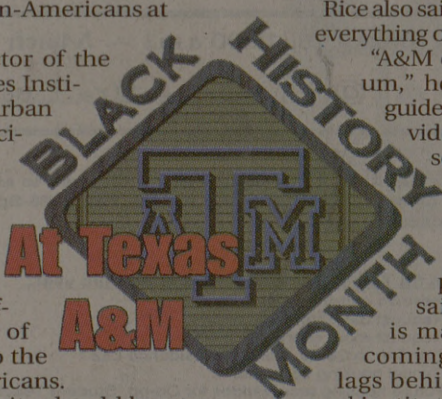
Several departments at A&M such as the journalism department are moving forward by their efforts to recruit more minority professors.

Rice said A&M is committed to having a diversified staff and is making positive strides in this area.

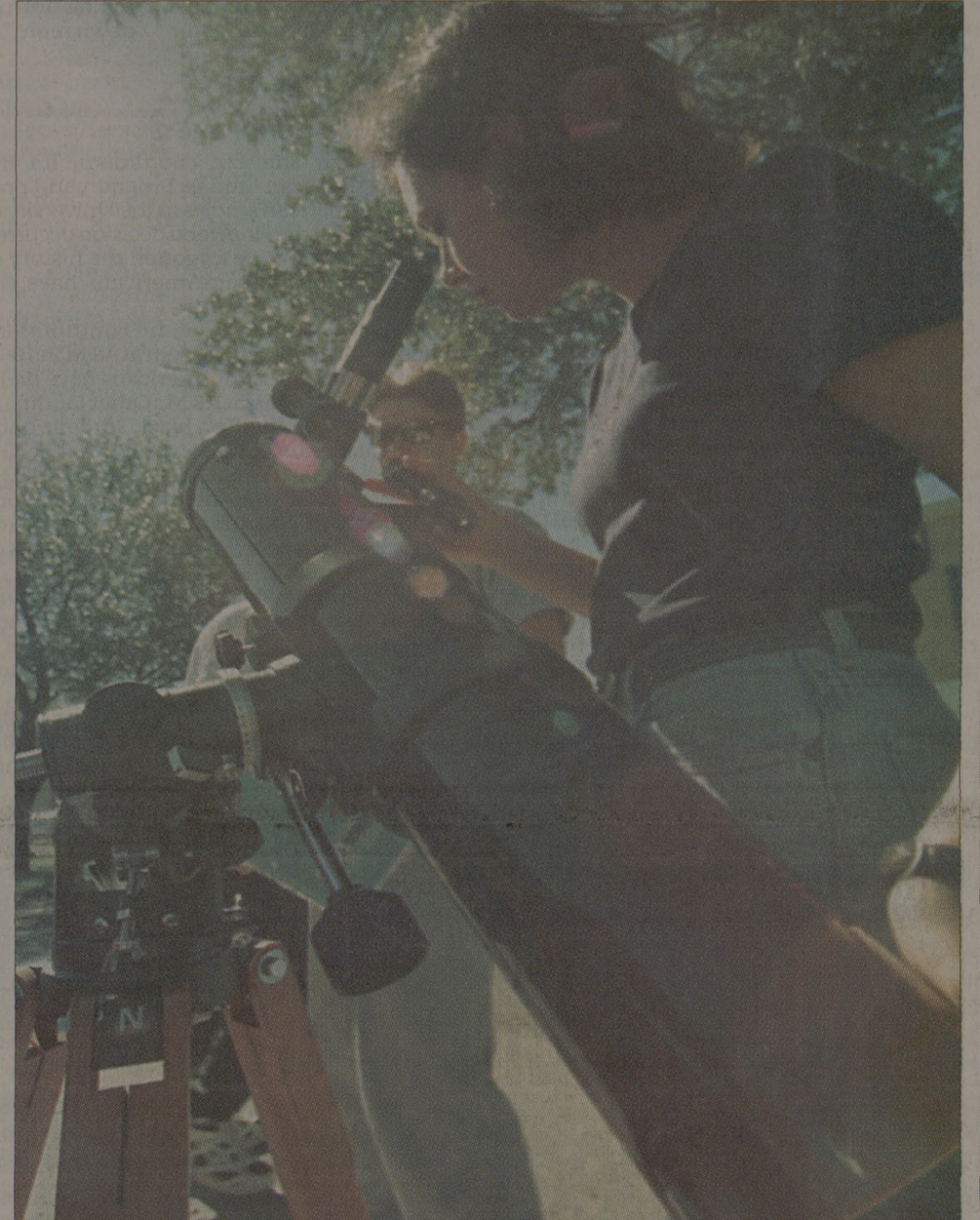
"A benefit of having minority faculty is that it helps students deal with the reality of a world composed of many ethnic backgrounds," he said.

Rice said that although the need for more minority students and faculty is being pursued by the University, the implications of the Hopwood decision have hindered the progress.

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Total eclipse of the heart



Leslie Jackson, a junior mechanical engineering major, observes a partial solar eclipse Thursday. The eclipse blocked between 18 and 22 percent of the sun in the area.

Oprah slaughters suit

AMARILLO (AP) — Oprah Winfrey beat Big Beef to cheers and champagne in the heart of Texas cattle country Thursday.

"Free speech not only lives. It rocks!" the talk show host proclaimed outside the courthouse to a crowd of townspeople after a jury rejected an \$11 million lawsuit brought against her by a group of Texas cattlemen.

The cattlemen blamed a collapse in prices on a 1996 "Oprah Winfrey Show" that they said falsely warned American beef could spread mad-cow disease to people.

"I come from a people who struggled and died to use their voice in this country and I refuse to be muzzled," the talk show host, referring to her black heritage, said as a few members of the crowd drank champagne.

The cattlemen's lawyer said the jurors clearly were swayed by Winfrey's star power.

Winfrey's arrival was the biggest thing to happen to Amarillo in years. Whatever beef the cattlemen had against her, the people of Amarillo showered her with affection, waited in long lines to hear her testify, and fought for tickets to tapings of her show, which was moved from Chicago to Amarillo during the trial. By the end of the five-week case, buttons, banners, caps and T-shirts proclaiming "Amarillo Loves Oprah" were everywhere.

"You'd have to be blind to say (jurors) weren't influenced by one of the 25 most influential Americans," said cattlemen's attorney Joe Coyne, referring to a 1996 Time magazine article. He said the cattlemen will appeal.

The jury took six hours to reach a verdict. Juror Pat Gowdy said deliberations turned on the First Amendment. "We felt that a lot of rights have eroded in this country. Our freedom of speech may be the only one we have left to regain what we've lost," he said.

The verdict came in red meat country, where 25 percent of the nation's grain-fed cat-

tle is produced, where the city's biggest private employer is a slaughterhouse, and where the "World Famous" Big Texan Steak Ranch offers a 72-ounce steak free to anyone who can wolf it down in an hour. Even the courthouse had a mural of cattle above the elevators.

"I was scared to come here at first," Winfrey said. "I saw where there were bumper stickers that said, 'The only mad cow in Texas is Oprah.' That hurt my feelings."

Also exonerated were Winfrey's production company and Howard Lyman, a vegetarian activist who was a guest on the show.

The lawsuit had been expected to be the biggest test yet of the "veggie libel" laws enacted in Texas and 12 other states in recent years to protect perishable agricultural products from false and disparaging remarks.

But last week, in a big victory for Winfrey, U.S. District Judge Mary Lou Robinson ruled that the case could not go forward under the veggie libel law and would instead be tried as a conventional business defamation case.

That meant the cattlemen had to meet a higher burden of proof: They had to show Winfrey deliberately or recklessly hurt their business by way of false statements.

In explaining her ruling in documents released Thursday, Robinson said the plaintiffs had not proved that cattle are a "perishable food" or that "knowingly false" statements were made.

During the April 16, 1996, show, Lyman said that including processed cattle in cattle feed — a practice banned last summer — could spread mad cow disease to people in the United States.

"You said this disease could make AIDS look like the common cold?" Winfrey asked. "Absolutely," Lyman answered.

"It has just stopped me cold from eating another burger!" Winfrey exclaimed to applause from the studio audience.

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Draft carves warning for Iraq of 'severest consequences'

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Britain and the United States are pushing the entire Security Council to warn Iraq of the "severest consequences" if it breaks its deal with the U.N. chief, according to a draft resolution obtained today by The Associated Press.

The draft, crafted by Britain in close consultation with the Americans, also expresses regret that Iraq's lack of cooperation with U.N. weapons inspectors "has further delayed the moment when the council can consider the lifting" of economic sanctions.

Security Council members still were working on the draft today. Three of the five permanent council members, Russia, France and China, have said they wouldn't accept any resolution threatening force for Iraqi noncompliance.

Any of the five can veto council resolutions. The draft doesn't spell out the use of military force.

"It's obviously going to be subject to some evolution because colleagues will have their own views and we need to have that discussion," said Britain's U.N. ambassador, John Weston.

"I think we're now talking about getting the draft right and it in the form that everybody can subscribe to," Weston said. "And I hope that that will happen fairly quickly."

The resolution was drafted to back an accord Annan signed over the weekend in Baghdad.

The agreement pledges to open all sus-

pected weapons sites in Iraq to U.N. inspectors provided that a team of diplomats accompany the inspectors to the presidential sites.

Baghdad's failure to open those sites to U.N. inspectors prompted the most recent crisis, in which the United States and Britain were threatening military strikes.

The inspectors must certify that Iraq has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction before sanctions imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait can be lifted.

According to the draft, the council "reiterates its intention to consider action to lift" sanctions once Iraq has eliminated all of its weapons of mass destruction and weapons programs.

The draft requests that Richard Butler, the executive chairman of the U.N. Special Commission that oversees weapons inspections, report to the council to finish setting the inspection procedures relating to the eight presidential sites as soon as possible.

Butler said today he looked forward to "testing in practice what is written on paper."



Clinton