

Commission requests more time, money

BY ROLANDO GARCIA
The Battalion

An exhaustive interview process and insurance premiums for the consulting firms are driving the cost of the bonfire investigation past the \$1 million mark, investigators said.

The Special Commission on the 1999 Aggie Bonfire Collapse met Tuesday to assess the progress of the accident inquiry and were informed that the investigation team, composed of four engineering and consulting firms, would also need an extension of the March 31 deadline.

"Clearly, we'll need additional funds to complete the investigation, but there's a few uncertainties preventing us from having an exact figure," Jon Zagrodzky, co-chief of staff to the commission said. "The final deadline will slip by weeks, not months. The nature of investigation and research is such that future work is difficult to plan and findings can extend schedules."

Zagrodzky added he would present more precise budgeting and timeline information to the commission later this week.

"Our team has been quite frugal in their approach to this when you look at the complexity of the task," Commission Chairperson Leo Linbeck, Jr. said. "We all wish this investigation could be completed faster, but our goal is to find the truth of what happened, and we cannot jump to conclusions with quick answers."

Additional funds for the investigation must be approved by the Texas A&M Board of Regents.

Among the factors fueling the need for more money, Zagrodzky said, were the premiums for insurance poli-

cies that would cover the legal expenses of the firms if they are called to testify or give depositions in accident-related lawsuits.

Investigators had planned to conduct at least 250 interviews, but that figure could balloon to 400 or more. "If there's a new lead, we have to follow up with an

analysis and will review interview reports and documents to reconstruct precisely what occurred immediately before and during the collapse.

Performance Improvement International (PII), a firm hired to examine the human factors that may have contributed to the accident, is continuing its study of documents, interview reports and the procedural manuals students used to build bonfire. All the information PII collects will be entered in a database, Lietzau said, and will then be verified before the data is entered in a separate data base to be shared with the other teams.

"We won't just take the information at face value. It will have to be validated and corroborated by other evidence before we draw any conclusions," Lietzau said.

Kroll Associates is in the process of conducting interviews, and has so far completed nearly 100 interviews.

Among those present at the meeting was Dominic Straus, a sophomore agricultural business major who was injured in the bonfire collapse. He said he attended the meeting because he was curious to see how the investigation was progressing.

Straus, who has already returned to classes, suffered torn muscles on his upper arm, shoulder and chest, and is still undergoing treatment.

While he is taking a wait-and-see attitude toward the investigation, Straus did not hesitate to share his thoughts on the future of bonfire.

"I'm looking forward to see the tradition continue as a memorial to those who died," he said.

AGGIE 99 BONFIRE

interview, and that adds time and cost," Zagrodzky said.

Kent Lietzau, co-chief of staff to the commission, delivered progress reports from the four teams working on the investigation to the commission.

Fay Engineering, which was tasked to study the historical design of bonfire, has compiled the specifications, such as stack dimensions, log strength and density, and rope tension, from recent bonfires.

"They've been able to construct a composite design as to how bonfire should have been built," Lietzau said.

Packer Engineering reported that they have completed a comprehensive examination of centerpole, the log at the center of the bonfire stack that served a critical support function, by evaluating the quality of the wood and analyzing the fracture points.

Packer has also collected samples of the soil at the bonfire site. In particular, Packer will be looking at the soil around centerpole and the four perimeter poles.

In the coming weeks, Packer will complete the soil

Thompson, RHA meet

BY RICHARD BRAY
The Battalion

Bonfire yellow pot and crew chief positions will not exist until the investigation into the cause of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire Collapse has concluded and decisions have been made about the future of bonfire.

Bonfire adviser Rusty Thompson will speak to the Residence Hall Association [RHA] during the RHA meeting Wednesday night about a temporary hold on planning for a bonfire next year.

Thompson said bonfire organizers are waiting now for the decision to be made as to whether bonfire will actually be held next year.

"We just want to make it clear that we do not have any plans for Bonfire 2000," he said. "We are acting as if there is not going to be a bonfire next year until we hear otherwise."



THOMPSON

RHA will also be discussing the possibility of bringing the College Television Network [CTN] on campus.

The CTN is a television-programming option available to college campuses free of charge. It consists of music videos, news from CNN, commercials and announcements for upcoming events on campus.

Tara Gray, the RHA vice president for programs, said RHA will vote on CTN's use on the campus.

Gray said that if RHA approves CTN, it must still be approved by other organizations on campus.

"Our approval is not going to be the deciding [factor] that brings it on campus," she said. "It still has to go before MSC Council and the Student Government Association."

The channel consists of about 40 minutes of music videos, five minutes of news, eight minutes of commercials and one minute of campus announcements every hour. CTN currently reaches 700 colleges and universities and 1.7 million students each day.

McCain wins in both primaries

DETROIT (AP) — John McCain thumped George W. Bush in a two-state sweep Tuesday night, rallying a "new McCain majority" of independents and Democrats in Michigan and winning his home state of Arizona to seize momentum for a two-week blitz of Republican primaries.

"As I look more electable, we'll start drawing more Republicans," McCain, who received just one fourth of the GOP vote, said in an interview with the Associated Press. "What I believe we are assembling is the new McCain majority."

Humbled by defeat, the Texas governor said, "This is a marathon and I'm going to be in it all the way to the end — and some primaries you win and sometimes you don't."

McCain's is the latest victory in a see-sawing Republican nomination race. The Arizona won New Hampshire's leadoff primary in a landslide, lost the followup showdown in South Carolina and won Michigan by a narrow margin.

In each case, Bush and McCain forged mirror-image coalitions: Bush with an overwhelming majority of bedrock Republicans and McCain reaching outside the party for a similar-sized force of Democrats and independents.

Open to all comers, Michigan's primary actually drew more non-Republicans who outnumbered Republicans.

Bush supporters bitterly dismissed McCain's victory.

"John McCain isn't party building, he's party-borrowing," said three-term Michigan Gov. John Engler, who accused the senator of "renting Democrats" for the night. Engler had promised to carry Michigan for Bush, and took blame for the defeat.

McCain won all of Arizona's 30 delegates with his victory there. His statewide victory in Michigan earned him 10 at-large delegates, with the remaining 48 delegates to be allocated according to the winner of each congressional district.

Interviews with voters as they left polling places showed that more than half of the Michigan voters were non-Republicans — independents and Democrats who voted in far larger numbers than in 1996. Three-quarters of McCain's vote came from the non-Republicans, and three-quarters of Bush's vote came from bedrock Republicans.

Voter News Service, a consortium of the Associated Press and television networks, conducted the interviews.

In a whirlwind 48 hours after the South Carolina primary, Bush and McCain traded accusations of negative campaigning in Michigan. Each complained that the other was using automated phone calls to voters to make inflammatory religious attacks.

The negative talk did not turn off voters, who showed up in far higher numbers than in 1992 and 1996.

Safe



GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION

A&M freshman centerfielder, David Evans slides into second base during the baseball game against Sam Houston State University Tuesday afternoon. The Aggies lost 2-1 to the Bearkats. Refer to story on page 9 for more details about the game.

ELECTION 2000

Michigan and Arizona Primaries

REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES

(TOP THREE CANDIDATES)



Michigan 49% George W. Bush 45% Alan Keyes 4%
Arizona Won all delegates

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Bush drew fewer number of bedrock Republicans than in South Carolina. McCain's mixed breed of voters — blue-collar economic conservatives, union members and Baby Boomers — voted in far larger numbers. His coalition was reminiscent of the voters who put Ronald Reagan into the White House then became a battleground for Democrats and Republicans in subsequent presidential elections.

McCain did better among veterans than in South Carolina, and appeared to have greater success convincing voters that he was the race's true reformer and straight talker. In addition to his success among Democrats and independents, McCain earned the support of an overwhelming percentage of new voters, two-thirds of the people who had never before participated in a GOP primary.

In the Michigan battleground, McCain supporters said they liked him because he stood up for his beliefs. In exit polling, they split their top issue between Social Security and moral values.

Bush voters were younger, more affluent, anti-abortion and strongly conservative. They cited his conservative values as their top reason for voting for him. Religious right voters also preferred Bush.

Four in 10 voters said both candidates attacked unfairly, though the bickering seemed to leave Michigan voters with a more negative impression of Bush than McCain. That is a reverse of polling from South Carolina.

Fair shows off-campus living

Housing event invites property owners, students

BY BRADY CREEL
The Battalion

For Amber Smith, a sophomore psychology major, the decision to come to Texas A&M led to another decision facing all incoming freshmen and transfer students — "Where should I live?"

Every semester, students like Smith face the question of whether to live in a residence hall or off-campus.

Students will have a chance to look at housing options at the sixteenth annual Housing Fair, being held in the MSC from 9:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.

Over 50 property owners will be on hand to represent over 80 apartment complexes and other housing choices in Bryan-College Station.

Jennifer McReary, coordinator of Off-Campus Student Services, said staff from Off-Campus Student Services will be available to assist students who are looking for housing. The new 2000 Off-Campus Living Manual will also be available.

Smith said she enjoyed her freshman year in Legett Hall, but her decision to ultimately move off-campus in College Station was decided by the offer of easier access to restaurants and shops while still being near campus.

"You feel like you are part of a college life because you are here in the middle of everything — and it is central," Smith said.

One question many students are concerned with is the location of their residence — "Should I live in Bryan or College Station?"

Smith said she chose to live in College Station and, although it is notably more expensive than living in Bryan, she said the close proximity to campus and greater feeling of safety justified the additional living expense.

"I feel safe when I go out to run at midnight because it is all college students," Smith said. "I would not feel safe doing that in Bryan."

Other students elect to remain on campus beyond their freshman year. Texas A&M University has an on-campus housing capacity of 10,490. The residence halls can house 8,096, Corps of Cadets housing has a capacity of 2,184 and Cain Hall can hold 210 students.

The Princeton Review's Complete Book of Colleges reports 32 percent of Texas A&M students live on-campus, whereas Texas Tech University only houses 23 percent of its students on-campus and the University of Texas houses 15 percent.

"The greatest asset is the close proximity and the ease of becoming involved in campus activities," said Sue Foster,

See HOUSING on Page 2.

averages FOR		off-campus HOUSING		
		in Bryan/College Station		
		1 bedroom 1 bath	2 bedrooms 1 bath 2 bath	3 bedroom 2 bath
9 month	\$461	\$493	\$630	\$794
12 month	\$442	\$475	\$610	\$774

RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

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