

News & Notes

June 14, 2011

Honoring Our Flag

Girl Scouts Demonstrate Flag Etiquette

As Americans raise their flags on June 14 for Flag Day, many Girl Scouts have already performed several flag ceremonies and are already practicing their skills for the big day.

Although most citizens don't have to worry about performing in a flag ceremony, they do need to be aware of disrespecting the flag by not showing proper flag etiquette.

This holiday everyone can commemorate the adoption of the American flag with the proper honor and respect by following the essentials of flag etiquette, taken from the United States Flag Code:

- Display the flag only from sunrise to sunset on buildings and on stationary flagstaves in the open. When patriotic effect is desired, the flag may be displayed for 24 hours if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.



- The flag should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.

- The flag should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when a number of flags of states or localities or pennants of societies are grouped and displayed from staffs.

- When flown at half-staff, the flag should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should be raised again to the peak before it is lowered for the day.

- The flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, the floor, water or merchandise.

- The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.

- The Flag Code does not specify how the flag should be folded, but a standard flag will require 13 folds. To specify there should be two lengthwise folds and eleven triangular folds, ending at the union.

Also, make sure your flag is dry prior to storing it, as mold can form in damp environments. For more in-depth information about flag etiquette, GSSJC recommends visiting usflag.org. To request Girl Scouts to perform a flag ceremony for your organization, contact Mona Tolbert at (713) 292-0361 or mtolbert@sigs.org.



Bellaire Will Proceed with Baldwin Drainage Project, May Buy Detention Space from Houston

By Craig P. Howard
Bellaire City Council unanimously agreed last week to move forward with a \$10.7 million drainage project along Baldwin Avenue even though it will demand cuts in the city's operational budget.

Work to protect the Southdale neighborhood east of Newcastle and south of Bellaire Boulevard against an "extreme event" will require the sale of \$6.5 million in bonds and increase the debt service tax rate by 6 cents per

\$100 valuation, or about \$195,000 in 2012.

Because Council has agreed in principle not to increase the overall city tax rate, the increase must come from budget cuts.

Kyle Simpson, a resident of Ione, called his Southdale section one of the city's worst in terms of flooding and urged Council to move forward with the bond sale to fund the project.

Part of the 2005 Rebuild Bellaire bond issue, the project will also receive \$3.2

million in Metro mobility funding and \$1 million in "pay-as-you-go" funds from Rebuild Bellaire. Another \$1 million has already been spent on project design work.

"Given that our residents overwhelmingly approved this in 2005, would they want to postpone this improvement in this economy?" asked Council Member Mandy Nathan. "I'm not prepared to say they would. I think they'd want us to proceed with this drainage program."

"The voters have been manifestly clear," Council Member Phil Nauert said. "Government exists for a certain few objectives, and public safety is one of them."

"Personally, this isn't a difficult decision," said Council Member Andrew Friedberg. "This is something the city is committed to. The only question is when."

"The time is now," said Mayor Cindy Siegel. "I am committed to the Southdale
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Westbury Wants To Keep Platou Center Open

By Craig P. Howard

Westbury residents are actively resisting the closing of Platou Community Center, staging a rally there, launching a petition drive, and arguing their case before City Council.

The rally June 3 attracted about 40 people, said Becky Edmondson, president of the Westbury Civic Club. She said she will also lead a small delegation to Houston City Council for public comments Tuesday, June 14, at a hearing on the proposed budget.

The center is currently open from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. weekdays through June 30, particularly to provide a children's lunch program. After that, the city plans to close Platou and six other community centers.

"I'm absolutely shocked they're closing it down and not even using it to feed kids," said Cindy Chapman, director of community relations for the civic club. *See Platou page 9*



Connor Edmondson and Hailey Falk, both two years old, protest the proposed closing of Westbury's Platou Center.

Police/Firefighters Hold Car Wash

Bellaire Police and Firefighters will hold a fundraiser on Saturday, June 18, washing cars at the Community National Bank parking lot, 5120 Bellaire Blvd. Drive by between 9 a.m.-1 p.m. to get your car shiny! Donations of any amount will be accepted. A bake sale with homemade goodies, many made by police and fire spouses, will also be for sale.

Roman Reed Elected to Bellaire City Council

Bellaire candidate Roman Reed overcame a nearly 20 percentage point deficit following May 14th's initial election to fill an unexpired term on city council, winning the run-off Saturday with 52% of the vote.

Brenda Cauthen, Reed's opponent in the run-off, finished with 45% of the vote in a field of five May 14; Reed

finished with 27% of the vote.

But in an amazing turnaround, Reed this time carried the early and absentee vote so strongly that Cauthen's strong showing on election day Saturday could not overcome his lead.

The final tally on Saturday was 507 votes for Roman Reed and 455 for Brenda Cauthen. A total of 962 votes

were cast, 241 more votes than were recorded on May 14.

Reed carried Pct. 128 by only 2 votes, 134-132. In Pct. 182, Cauthen led with 114 votes to Reed's 100.

Pct. 214 gave Reed 71 votes over Cauthen's 50 votes. Pct. 215 gave Cauthen 80 votes to Reed's 66.

Pct. 268 threw 63 percent

of its votes to Reed, with 136 for Reed and 79 for Cauthen.

In the May 14 vote, only 298 voters cast an early ballot, but Saturday, 498 voters voted early. They cast 284 votes for Reed with 214 votes going to Cauthen.

Reed will be sworn in as the Position 1 City Council member on June 20.

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The Lovett Elementary PTO honored Nurse Thomas as Faculty Member of the Year and Amy Schneider as Volunteer of the Year at their last general PTO meeting. Nurse "Nursie" Thomas and Amy Schneider contribute so much to Lovett and the PTO is truly honored to work with them.

Meteorologist Talks About the Weather

Anthony Yanez, KPRC week-day morning meteorologist, will speak at the Bellaire City Library, 5111 Jessamine, on Thursday, June 23, from 7-8 p.m. Yanez, experienced in all areas of news journalism, started at KPRC Channel 2 in July, 2003, as Hurricane Claudette moved through the Gulf. An Albuquerque native, he graduated from the University of New Mexico, and received his meteorologist certification from Mississippi State University.

The whole family is welcome to attend this free program. For information call Terri Mote, Reference Librarian, at (713) 662-8166.

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project. Flooding is something we're trying to address. It is an investment in our future. The time is now."

Tropical Storm Allison flooded 350 Southdale homes, and Friedberg asked how a delay would be viewed in Southdale after the city has proceeded to perform drainage improvements in many other areas.

Siegel pointed out that most north-south trunk lines have been replaced, citing new stormwater sewer lines on Ferris, Avenue B, Newcastle, and Fifth Street, among others.

James B. Andrews, senior vice president of city engineering consultant HDR, said the Baldwin project was part of a citywide system that would benefit because Baldwin drainage would free stormwater capacity along Newcastle to the west and the Southern Pacific Railroad ditch to the east.

Andrews said construction costs were at an all-time low, and the city's bond consultant, James Gilley of Coastal Securities, noted that interest rates were near a 50-year low, but he said interest rates were not a good basis on which to pin a decision to proceed.

"My crystal ball needs a lot of Windex," he said. He said interest rates could be affected by an improvement in the economy or a proposal in Congress to increase the amount required for bonds to be "bank qualified."

Realizing that another referendum on this issue was unrealistic, both Siegel and Council Member Corbett Parker urged residents to gather information about the budget and express their views as the document emerges this summer.

A budget workshop June 27 offers an opportunity to hear Council discuss possible cuts but does not allow public comment. However, the budget document will be presented July 18 and posted online at the city web site, with the first public hearing on the budget scheduled for Aug. 15.

Platou from page 1

"In my opinion, the highest priority is children's programming."

At the end of the month, Westbury residents will be encouraged to go to Godwin Community Center, 5101 Rutherglen.

"I'm not begrudging that Meyerland's Godwin Center was (remodeled) just two miles away, but I don't want it used as an excuse to close Platou," said Edmondson.

She says Gasmer apartment dwellers and Chimney Rock residents walk to Platou. Many, like a woman recovering from cancer who has no car, rely on programs that are within walking distance, she said.

Two Westbury High School students who attended the rally, she said, called Platou an important after-school resource and plan to be part of the group attending the public comment session on the budget.

The Platou neighborhood has a diverse population, Edmondson said. At Anderson, the nearest elementary school, for example, 96% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches and 71% have limited English proficiency, she said.

The petition, both physical and online, contained 530 signatures by the middle of last week, and Civic Club members were still collecting them online at www.westburycrier.com/hottopics.

"We're (also) looking for partners willing to support community programs," said Chapman.

"The bottom line for the Platou Center is that, if the city can't keep it open, we'd like the chance to partner with Friends (of Chimney Rock Park) to keep it open," Edmondson echoed.

The Friends group is a 501(c)(3) organization, but Chapman indicated that it did not have deep pockets. With few major businesses in the neighborhood, corporate sponsorship seems more a wish than a real possibility, she added.

"We're always open to ideas and partnerships," Parks and Recreation Department spokeswoman Estella Espinosa said last week, and she encouraged the civic club to submit a partnership plan to Deputy Director Doug Earle.

Park officials continue to stress the \$135,000 annual cost to keep a community center open. However, Westbury Civic Club officials have said they would be satisfied if they could keep Platou open even on a limited basis.

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