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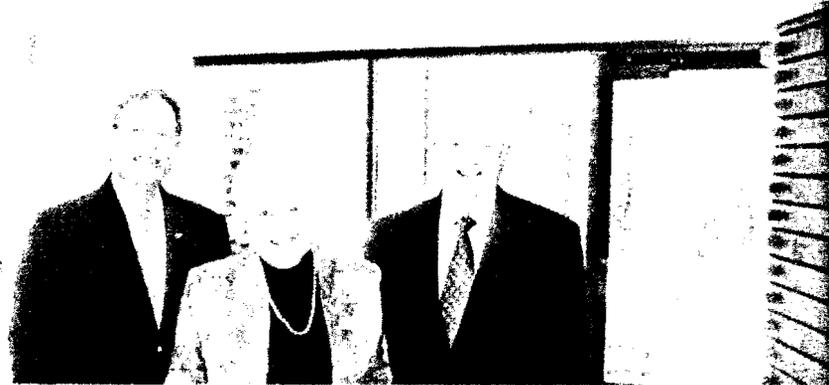
ARLINGTON AND
NORTHEAST TARRANT

Friday, August 12, 2011

Texas Health Harris Methodist Foundation

Donors, volunteers, community members and hospital employees gathered for the dedication of the Payton Family Lobby, Helen Payton Chapel and Anderson Meditation Garden at Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital H-E-B. The dedication honored Jimmy and Helen Payton as well as Edna Anderson for their philanthropic gifts to the expansion and renovation of the lobby, chapel, gift shop and meditation garden.

Photos courtesy of Mike Lewis



Doug Hawthorne, Helen Payton and Jimmy Payton

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Many NE Tarrant cities eyeing employee raises

Sunday, August 14, 2011
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As budget deliberations continue, Bedford, Watauga and Haltom City may be the exceptions.

By Terry Evans
tevans@star-telegram.com

With chaos ruling Wall Street and an economy that is uncertain at best, many cities in Northeast Tarrant County are holding the line on raising property taxes.

Bedford, Watauga and Haltom City may be the exceptions.

Bedford officials are considering raising the tax rate from 49.16 cents to 50.64 cents per \$100 of assessed property value, which would result in the owner of a \$145,765 home — Bedford's average — paying \$19 more per year, Mayor Pro Tem Ray Champney said.

Watauga is proposing a tax rate of 62.52 cents per \$100 of valuation, an increase of 4.4525 cents from this year. If the rate is approved, it would result in additional tax of \$27.52 annually on an \$89,901 home, the average in Watauga, according to budget documents.

Haltom City is considering increasing the tax rate about a half-cent, from this year's 64.63 cents to about 65.17 cents.

But homeowners could see lower tax bills because of a slight drop in property values. The owner of the average \$72,909 home would pay \$475.18, city documents show, compared with this year's tax of \$475.50 on the average \$73,564 home.

The public can weigh in on Haltom City's budget at the city's first hearing Aug. 22.

Watauga holds its first public hearing on the budget proposal Monday night.

Bedford's budget is up for public hearing the first time Aug. 23.

Cities must set tax rates in time to file them with the state by Sept. 14 for fiscal 2011-12.

Below is a look at what a number of cities in Northeast Tarrant County are considering. Fort Worth is looking at a \$1.4 billion budget that would maintain its existing tax rate of 85.5 cents. The proposal includes 3 percent pay raises for general fund employees, as well as raises for police and firefighters.

Bedford

Council members would have preferred no tax increase, Champney said. But he added, "Our job is to maintain the lowest tax rate we can in a manner that is in the best interest of the city."

Not all on the council agreed. Councilman Chris Brown said he pushed for a rate of 49.4 cents. That would raise the same amount of money as last year — known as the effective tax rate.

"That would make sure that the average tax bill in Bedford would be the same as it was last year," he said. "The city has adopted the effective tax rate the last three years."

Brown introduced a combination of budget cuts and revenue increases that include shaving \$5,000 from the Community Powered Revitalization program, cutting a \$140,000 software upgrade for the Police Department and increasing admission at the Bedford Splash Aquatic Center by \$1 to add \$26,405 to the city's coffers.

Bedford council members won't vote on the tax rate until Sept. 13, after public hearings Aug. 23 and 30.

Colleyville

Some property owners may see a decrease in their tax bills. The city plans to maintain this year's tax rate of about 35.59 cents. But a slight decrease in property values means the average homeowner would see a tax payment reduction of \$2.32, city spokeswoman Mona Gandy said.

Still, the proposed 2012 budget calls for a \$72,606 increase in spending, for a total of \$35,469,313.

Proposed public safety initiatives include the midyear hiring of two firefighters and one police officer, and the budget would also provide funds to create the corporal classification in the Police Department. Overtime funds also have been included for the Fire Department.

Other proposals include \$1 million for pavement maintenance, \$50,000 to restore funding to install and repair sidewalks and \$12,000 to resurface two tennis courts at City Park.

If the budget is adopted, city employees with a rating of satisfactory or above on their last performance evaluation will get a one-time payment equal to 1 percent of their regular salary.

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Eules

Eules is poised to approve a 47-cent tax rate that hasn't changed since 2007.

The city must conduct public hearings Aug. 30 and Sept. 6 because the proposed rate is higher than the 45.16-cent effective rate.

State law makes cities hold public hearings if the proposed tax rate is higher than the effective rate, Eules spokeswoman Betsy Deck said. "You are going to see some advertisements for a tax rate increase," she said. "The actual tax rate is not increasing. It's something we are required to do because of the truth-in-taxation law"

Deck said that the tax rate has been reduced or maintained since 1995 without a reduction in service.

The proposed budget of almost \$32 million avoids layoffs and furloughs and gives employees a 3.25 percent raise. The city is holding 29 positions open, Deck said.

Grapevine

Grapevine's tax rate could decrease from 35 cents to 34.8 cents, resulting in a \$3.51 savings for the owner of a \$175,213 home, the city's average.

According to budget documents on the city's website, the tax rate will bring in close to \$50.4 million, which will be augmented from special funds for a budget of almost \$53.3 million. That's an 8 percent increase over this year's budget. A fund balance of more than \$8.9 million is projected at the end of the fiscal year.

The city won't add positions, but the proposed budget includes a 1 percent "market adjustment" in pay to ensure that salary ranges stay competitive with those of other cities. The raise may not go to every employee, said John McGrane, director of administrative services.

Haltom City

Council members voted unanimously Aug. 8 to recommend a budget calling for the increased tax rate. The Aug. 22 public hearing begins at 7 p.m. at 5024 Broadway; the second hearing, at the same location, is 7 p.m. Sept. 12, according to a city notice.

Hurst

In Hurst, the proposed rate of 57.8 cents per \$100 of assessed value is the same as last year and is lower than this year's 58.47 cents effective rate, spokeswoman Ashleigh Whiteman said.

Whiteman added that the rate dropped annually from 60.6 cents in 1992 to 49.9 in 2001, where it stayed until it was raised to 51.8 cents in 2007. It went up to 53.5 cents in 2008 and to 57.8 cents in 2010.

"We've been able to weather the storm by maintaining a fiscally conservative approach, cutting back in places," she said.

Hurst eliminated five vacant positions from its workforce of a little under 400 employees, Whiteman said. The city avoided layoffs and furloughs, and even managed a 1.75 percent salary increase for its employees in the 2011-12 budget.

Keller

Keller doesn't anticipate increasing its 44-cent tax rate. Nor are employee layoffs or furloughs expected next year, City Manager Dan O'Leary said.

The \$70.3 million proposed budget to be presented Tuesday to the City Council includes a "modest" raise for those employees, O'Leary said.

He added that one of the biggest issues the council will face is restructuring employee benefits such as medical and retirement plans to save money. The next budget workshop is scheduled for Aug. 26.

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North Richland Hills

City Manager Mark Hindman said that spending reductions over the last two years made it possible for the council to adopt the same tax rate for the 19th straight year.

Council members called for an Aug. 22 public hearing for the 57-cent rate they're set to vote on Sept. 12.

Hindman said the budget cuts are beginning to affect city services.

"There are some areas we can get by with for a while," he said. "But they start to show up after a couple of years. For example, we cut out two park maintenance workers. Now we're getting calls from residents asking why some issues haven't been taken care of in a couple of parks."

Hindman said 13 positions have been cut from a workforce of 520, and other positions haven't been filled. The city also trimmed back on special events. Net taxable values in the city showed a minor increase, but to collect the same amount of money the city would have needed to raise the tax rate by 1.2 cents,

budget documents show. The average home is valued at \$149,930, up from \$149,482.

The budget included an option to provide funds for 2 percent raises that could be implemented in January, if sales taxes meet projections.

The budget proposal also calls for increases in city water and sewer rates.

Watauga

Sizable decreases in property values in recent years have squeezed the city. In the past year alone, total property value dropped about \$10.2 million.

This year's average taxable home value, \$89,901, is down from \$91,183 in 2010. The proposed tax rate is a 6.16 percent increase, and if it is adopted the average the homeowner would pay \$557.08, compared with \$529.56 last year.

The budget proposal does not include wage increases, but it adds five full-time positions and eliminates two, according to the proposal, signed by City Manager Scott Neils and Finance Director Sandra Morgan.

Council members voted 5-2 to consider the tax increase. Monday's hearing is 6:30 p.m. at City Hall. A second hearing is scheduled for Aug. 24, also at City Hall.

The budget also calls for 30 percent increases in both water and sewer rates and a doubling of the drainage rate.

Staff writers Adrian McCandless, Susan McFarland, Steve Norder and Nicholas Sakelaris contributed to this report.

Terry Evans,
817-390-7620

Southlake

Southlake, which releases its proposed budget Monday, has committed to giving employees raises for the first time since 2009, while maintaining the current tax rate of 46.2 cents.

On Aug. 2, the council unanimously approved an average 3.9 percent raise that's retroactive to July 1. Salary comparisons with other benchmark cities showed that Southlake wasn't keeping up, especially in pay for firefighters and police officers.

Mayor John Terrell acknowledged that budgets are tight for households, businesses and government.

"You can only tighten belts for so long before you start losing great people to other cities," Terrell said before the council voted on the raises. "I don't want to encourage our best people to leave."

The budget for fiscal 2012 also includes six new firefighter positions that have been delayed for years.

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OBITUARIES

Monday, August 15, 2011

L. Don Dodson Sr.



BEDFORD — L. Don Dodson Sr., 76, left his house to go to God's house on Saturday, Aug. 13, 2011.

FUNERAL: A celebration of his life will be held at 2 p.m. Tuesday at First Baptist Church of Hurst. Interment: Mount Olivet Cemetery. Visitation: The family will welcome visitors from 6 to 8 p.m. Monday at Mount Olivet Funeral Home.

L. Don was born May 26, 1935, in Gunter to R.D. and Lillian Dodson. He was raised in Fort Worth and graduated from Carter-Riverside High School, and went on to earn a business degree from Baylor University. He married his high school sweetheart, Peggy Abel. Don worked his way up in the oil and grease business, ultimately owning his own company, Lubrical, Inc. He later served as business development consultant for Harris Methodist

Health System. However, Don's passion was community service. He served as mayor of Bedford from 1972 to 1992. He also served tirelessly in a multitude of other capacities at the local and state level.

L. Don Dodson was a man of many names. To his family of origin he was "Leslie Don." To his wife and close friends, he was "Big Don." To his children, he was "Daddy," and to his many friends, he was simply "Mayor." However, his favorite name, "Grandman," was coined by his grandchildren.

Don was larger than life! He never met a stranger. Throughout his life, he was always helping people, mostly when nobody knew it. Everybody loved Big Don. He was full of joy and laughter, and he commanded the room when he walked in. His long, full life is a legacy to the people he loved and the lives he touched. Don was a man of deep faith, and he served his Lord unselfishly. God used Big Don to touch people and change lives. We see this as the measure of a Godly man.

He was preceded in death by his parents and brother, Bobby Gerald Dodson.

SURVIVORS: Wife of 55 years, Peggy Dodson; daughters, Tammy Dodson Cobbs and husband, David, D'Aun Dodson Lagrone and husband, Joel; son, L. Don "Duce" Dodson Jr. and wife, Michelle; grandchildren, Travis Dodson Cobbs and wife, Anna, Shayla Lagrone Redwine and husband, Chris, Aaron Don Lagrone, Trevor Ross Cobbs, Tanner Scott Cobbs, Savannah Jade Dodson, L. Don "Trea" Dodson III.

Mount Olivet Funeral Home

2301 N. Sylvania Ave., 817-831-0511

View and sign guestbook at

www.star-telegram.com/obituaries

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OBITUARIES

Ned Kenneth Burleson



 **EULESS** — Ned Kenneth Burleson, 72, passed away Saturday, Aug. 20, 2011, at his home surrounded by his family.

MEMORIAL SERVICE: 1 p.m. Thursday at Shannon Rose Hill Funeral Chapel. Visitation: The family will receive friends 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday at the funeral home.

Ned was born in Fort Worth on April 24, 1939. He received his doctorate in environmental health science from the University of Texas at Austin after completing his undergraduate work in civil engineering at Texas Tech University.

Ned was a registered professional engineer in the environmental space. After a distinguished career at the EPA, he established Ned K. Burleson and Associates in 1980. Ned was a member of the NSPE, TSPE, ASCE, SAME, SAVE, WPCF, AWPA and others. His civic memberships included Fort Worth Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce. He received EPA's bronze medal for commendable service in 1976 and the Award of Excellence from the Society of American Value Engineers (SAVE) in 1994. In 1995 he was named Engineer of the Year by the Texas Society of Professional Engineers (TSPE).

Ned was a loving father and husband who cherished his family. He also cherished his close friends and the game of golf. In 1994, he achieved the rare feat -- he aced the 173-yard hole 17 with his 1 iron, not once but twice, at Ridgley Country Club North Course.

He will be missed but never forgotten.

Ned was preceded in death by his parents, Harold and Jessie Burleson.

SURVIVORS: Loving wife of 50 years, Martha Burleson; daughter, Linda and her husband, Andy, and children, Katie and Alex; son, Ken and his wife, Lynnette, and their son, Cooper; and other daughter, Donna Gonzalez and her husband, Luis, and children, Bobby, Gracie and Samuel.

Shannon Rose Hill Funeral Chapel
 7301 E. Lancaster, 817-451-3333

View and sign guestbook at
www.star-telegram.com/obituaries

Ned Burleson was on the Economic Development Advisory Board from 2001 to 2006.