

WEDNESDAY

February 18, 2026



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Lake Watch

Lake Level
on February 15

531.54'

Normal Elevation 533.00'
Lake Watch is provided by the
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
on Lake Whitney

Lakeline

MHMC to host free clinic Sat.

Mission Hillsboro Medical Clinic, located at 120 East Franklin Street in Hillsboro, will be open Saturday, February 21, for its third-Saturday clinic. Registration begins at 6 a.m., and the clinic closes at noon. Residents of Hill County without medical insurance are eligible to be seen. Patients are seen on a first-come, first-served basis with proof of address. Leave a message at 254-479-1489 for more information or to make a dental appointment.

Chamber chili cook-off Feb. 28

Lake Whitney Chamber of Commerce will hold its second annual chili cook-off Saturday, February 28, at Thousand Trails, 102 Lakeview Drive in Whitney. The event is open to the public. Contact the chamber at 254-625-2387 for more information or to register to cook.

Blum Masons plan fish fry

Blum Masonic Lodge #607 will hold a fish fry Saturday, March 7 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., or until the fish is sold out. All are invited.

Lake Whitney FISHING REPORT

(Feb. 11) Fair. Water normal stain; 50 degrees; 1.54 feet below pool.

Catfish are good using punch bait or cut bait in 30 feet of water. Catfish will be beneath roosting birds.

Striped bass are good on live bait and swimbaits in 50-60 feet of water.

Crappie are good up in the main lake in brush 30-40 feet of water.

White bass are slow on slabs in 30 feet of water.

Largemouth bass are fair using soft plastics on deep structure and around docks.

Report by Captain Cory Vinson, Guaranteed Guide Service.

VOTE

THE LAKELANDER & TACKLEBOX....TO ADVERTISE CALL: 254-582-3431 OR EMAIL:LAKELANDERNEWSPAPER@YAHOO.COM



Please Support Our Local VFDs

May city, school ballots set

The filing period for Whitney's city and school election ended at 5 p.m. Friday, February 13, and enough candidates filed that an election will be held Saturday, May 2.

There are three positions available on the Whitney City Council, with the seats held by Valery Peacock, Cheryl Taylor-West and Vicki Wilson expiring in May. Eight candi-

dates are seeking a position.

Taylor-West and Wilson both filed for reelection, and others on the ballot will be Jason Sneed, Natalie Brennan, Rigo Farias, Teresa Wyatt, Ken Scales and Frank J. Baker III.

Whitney ISD has two full three-year school board seats available and one unexpired term. Incumbent Brent Marbut was the only candidate to

seek the one-year unexpired term, and three candidates are seeking the two full-term board seats. Incumbents Nicole Corson and AJ Marino both filed, along with Connie Terry.

Early voting in the joint city and school election will be conducted April 20-28. See future editions for more information.

Commissioners to consider burn ban Friday



The Hill County Commissioners Court is set to meet in a special session Friday, February 20 to consider a burn ban after County Judge Shane Brassell's emergency burn ban expired at 6 a.m. Tuesday, February 17. The judge issued the emergency ban Tuesday, February 10, after volunteer firefighters responded to 10 fires the previous day, eight of which began as attempted controlled burns. Commissioners will consider weather data, drought conditions and recommendations from emergency management and fire officials at Friday's meeting. Brassell encouraged residents to continue exercising caution and to monitor official county communications to stay aware of changing conditions. Pictured above is a large brush fire on HCR 1145 Loop North last week. Photo courtesy White Bluff VFD

Commissioners approve Hubbard data center reinvestment zone

The Hill County Commissioners Court held a public hearing before approving a reinvestment zone for a Hubbard area data center project Tuesday, February 10.

Creation of a reinvestment zone is an initial step that must be taken by the county before it can consider a tax abatement agreement with a company.

The Nexus Data Center campus will be situated on approximately 2,000 acres of land between Highway 171 and County Road 3369 just outside of Hubbard. The development is ex-

pected to include four data center buildings of 400,000 square feet each, along with a power plant to produce enough power to run the data centers.

Site preparation has been underway at the data center site since November.

Megan Clayton, senior vice president of finance and com-

mercial at Nexus, said during a Hubbard town hall in November that the company will invest billions of dollars in Hill County through the project.

At the same meeting, Clayton said that the company is not seeking a tax incentive agreement with any entity except Hill County. "You might hear of a tax abatement with Hill County, but I want to make it clear that is not a free ride we are looking for," she said. "We want to be a part of this community and give back resources; we don't want to take resources."

Clayton said at that time that

the company was planning to negotiate a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program, which she said would allow the company to have predictable tax bills for 10 years and the county to have predictable revenue from the project for 10 years.

Details of any tax abatement agreement were still being negotiated as of last week's court meeting, and that issue was not on the agenda. With approval of the reinvestment zone, the next step will be a public hearing on a tax abatement agreement once it is negotiated.

Several Hill County residents spoke during the public hearing last week, asking questions about water use, environmental impacts, noise levels, job creation, changing the rural landscape and other concerns.

Amy Teal of Whitney specifically questioned why recording was not allowed at the November town hall and asked the court

to delay action until a public meeting with recording allowed is scheduled. A Nexus representative said that he did not know who requested that recording not be allowed, but said that the company has been accessible, is scheduling regular town halls and spoke to 250 people who attended November's town hall.

In response to the water questions, Nexus representatives said that the site will capture rainwater, use treated effluent from Hubbard's wastewater treatment facility and a groundwater well that has been approved by Prairielands Groundwater Conservation District.

At November's meeting, Jerry Schafer, Nexus Data Centers' director of regulatory affairs and community outreach, said that the primary source of water at the facility will be rainwater, with studies showing 2 billion gallons of rainwater will be captured per

see COURT on back

City Council to meet Thursday

The Whitney City Council will meet in a regular session Thursday, February 19 at 6 p.m.

The council is expected to review library board applications and make appointments.

There will be discussion about the America 250/Texas250 event in the City of Whitney.

The council will discuss an ordinance amendment to establish a water leak adjustment process.

A legal services agreement

The council will also consider requesting proposals for city banking services, discuss a poster contest sponsored by the city, and consider amending the city's financial policy.

The meeting will be held at the Lake Whitney Public Library's meeting room.

HCSO issues warning after cat tests positive for rabies

The Hill County Sheriff's Office notified the public of a confirmed rabies case in the Covington area last week.

According to Hill County Sheriff Hunter Barnes, his office received a report Thursday, February 5 regarding an individual being bitten by a stray cat on private property in the 1600 block of Farm Road 67.

The sheriff said that the individual sought medical attention at an area hospital and was later released.

The involved animal, a stray female calico cat, was captured by the individual and sent to the Texas Department of State Health Services, where it tested positive for rabies.

The sheriff said that the area in question is not highly inhabited, but anyone in this area who believes they may have been

exposed to the cat is encouraged to see their physician if they feel they have been directly exposed to the animal.

The sheriff's office also encouraged area residents to closely monitor their pets and livestock for any changes in health or behavior that may be indicative of rabies exposure.

The sheriff's office would like to remind everyone to obtain rabies vaccinations for their animals on a regular basis, as directed by their veterinarian and by state law.

If additional exposed or infected individuals or animals are located, the sheriff asked the public to report the issue to the sheriff's office at 254-582-5313 and the Texas Department of State Health Services Zoonosis Control Program at 254-778-6744.

Comptroller releases Feb. sales tax to cities, counties

Acting Texas Comptroller Kelly Hancock announced last week that he will send cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose districts \$1.5 billion in local sales tax allocations for February, 2.5% more than in February 2025.

The City of Whitney's February payment was \$106,472, down about 14% from the same time last year. For the first two months of 2026, the city's allocations totaled \$202,355, up about 5% over 2025.

In the county seat, Hillsboro's February allocation came to \$598,493, down about 2% from the same time last year. So far in 2026, the city's allocations come to \$1,083,734, up about 3% from the same time last year.

Hill County's February allocation was \$464,455, down

about 6% compared to last February. Year to date, the county's 2026 allocations have totaled \$831,744, up about 1% from last year.

Allocations and changes from last February for other Hill County cities included:

Abbott - \$14,615, down 14%; Aquilla - \$3,064, down 9%; Blum - \$7,316, down 6%; Bynum - \$1,239, down 34%; Carl's Corner - \$4,185, down 35%; Covington - \$11,166, up 9%; Hubbard - \$35,203, down 31%; Itasca - \$30,929, down 14%; Malone - \$4,616, up 57%; Mertens - \$905, up 16%; Mount Calm - \$3,709, up less than 1%; Penelope - \$1,594, down 13%.

Bosque County's February allocation was \$128,768, up about 7% compared to last year. For

see SALES TAX on page 2

Hill Co. Grand Jury returns February indictments

A Hill County Grand Jury that convened Friday, February 6 returned or unsealed the following indictments:

Shelly Kay Beatty, 43, of Bynum, credit/debit card abuse

Edward Joseph Bland, 47, of Refugio, possession of THC between one and four grams

Elmer Josue Cardenas Martinez, 20, of Lancaster, evading arrest/detention with vehicle

Bradley Cash Clark, 19, homeless, possession of methamphetamine under one gram

Deshawn Ezrian Emory, 18, of Hillsboro, possession of THC between one and four grams; possession of psilocybin between four and 400 grams

William Brian Fennell, 49, of Lorena, assault family/household member with previous conviction

Yerlin Caballero Gonzales, 18, of San Antonio, unauthorized use of a vehicle, theft of a firearm, possession of methamphetamine under one gram

Charlie Neal Harris Jr., 31, of Longview, unlawful possession of firearm by a felon; tamper/fabricate physical evidence with intent to impair

Jimmy Dale Hunt, 64, of Teague, possession of methamphetamine between one and four grams

Robert Marion Jarrett, III, 38,

of Whitney, continuous violence against the family

Jacob Quinton McKee, 39, of Whitney, possession of methamphetamine under one gram

Xavier Thomas Rangel, 24, of Whitney, unlawful possession of firearm by a felon

Tamarcus Jerome Scott, 23, of Waco, unlawful possession of firearm by a felon

Krystal Dawn Seward, 40, of Whitney, possession of methamphetamine under one gram

Ty Joseph Smith, 18, of Itasca, aggravated sexual assault of a child

Triston Anthony Stone, 26, of Coolidge, possession of marijuana between five and 50 pounds

Jason Jovan Thompson, 35, homeless, criminal mischief between \$2,500 and \$30,000; possession of methamphetamine under one gram

Charles Ronrico White, 45, of Hillsboro, assault family/household member with previous conviction

Robert Mitchell Wood, 34, of Hillsboro, possession of THC under one gram

Christa Blankenship, 52, of Carl's Corner, bail jump and failure to appear felony

District Attorney Mark Pratt presented the cases to the grand jury. Judge Justin Lewis presides over the 66th District Court.

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