

Lake Watch

Lake Level
on July 5

533.11'

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

Lakeline

Garden Club to
meet at park

Lake Whitney Garden Club will hold its monthly meeting Thursday, July 9, at Lake Whitney State Park. The group will meet in the parking lot next to the front entrance, at 433 FM 1244 in Whitney, for a guided birdwatching hike at 10 a.m. The regular meeting will be at the park's recreation center at 11 a.m., when Ranger Lory Alaniz will present a program on birds in the park. A shared lunch is planned; second-time visitors and members are asked to contribute with a salad dish. The meeting is open to all interested in the mission to beautify Whitney.

Paw Pals seeking
garage sale site

Hill County Paw Pals is seeking a site to hold its annual garage sale, which is a major fundraiser to support the animals in Paw Pals' care. A large, indoor space is preferred. Paw Pals needs the space for about two weeks to set up and hold the sale. Call Debbie Ford at 972-351-2524.

City-wide garage
sales Sept. 4-6

The City of Whitney is waiving all garage sale permit fees the weekend of Friday, September 4, through Sunday, September 6, for a city-wide garage sale. Everyone is encouraged to set up sales or shop for treasures all across Whitney. Sales will be included on a city-wide garage sale list. To be included, get your permit by 5 p.m. Thursday, September 3. For more information, call Whitney City Hall at 254-694-2261.

Call 2-1-1 for
assistance

Texans can call the Texas Health and Human Services Commission information number at 2-1-1 for information about state and local health and human services programs. The 2-1-1 hotline is a free, anonymous social service available 24 hours a day. No matter where you live in Texas, you can dial 2-1-1, or 877-541-7905, and find information about resources in your local community. This includes finding food or housing, child care, crisis counseling or substance abuse treatment.

Commissioners continue fire marshal discussion

The Hill County Commissioners Court continued discussing the establishment of a county fire marshal's office during a special meeting Tuesday, June 30.

With Hill County facing increased interest from large-scale industrial developers planning data centers, battery energy storage systems and power generation facilities, the court has been discussing establishing the office to ensure that developers are complying with safety standards.

Hill County Judge Shane Brassell said that a fire marshal would conduct fire investigations, coordinate with local fire departments and emergency responders, review fire protection and safety concerns associated with major developments, assist with emergency planning and serve as a technical advisor to the court.

Commissioners workshopped ways to implement the program, including hiring a dedicated fire marshal or contracting with a municipality or private firm.

Covington Fire Chief Chris Lidster told the court that the simplest way could be adopting fire codes and hiring a private firm, with applicant fees funding the program.

The discussion follows earlier conversations in which commissioners said that they wanted to ensure any fire code adopted by the county would not inadvertently create mandates or high insurance costs that would burden the county's small, volunteer fire departments.

Precinct 1 Commissioner Jim Holcomb said that Johnson County is in the process of adopting National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) fire codes, which include 500 pages that are inter-related. For instance, Holcomb said that if the county adopted one section that addresses data centers, another section would have to be adopted for enforcement purposes.

"(That section) would essentially bankrupt our volunteer firefighters because of insurance requirements," he said.

Holcomb said that Johnson County has been going through the codes for over a year, and it is an arduous process to get it right. He said that using a private firm or established fire marshal could be a faster way to get the program up and running.

Brassell said that he planned to schedule a meeting with the City of Hillsboro to see if there is a possibility of the county and city working together, although some municipal fire codes would

see COURT on back

County settles lawsuit over moratorium

The Hill County Commissioners Court approved a settlement agreement with RCM Hill in a special meeting Tuesday, June 30, after the developer sued the county over its data center moratorium.

After convening in executive session, the court unanimously approved settling the lawsuit by paying the plaintiff's legal fees of up to \$100,000.

The court also agreed to revise its industrial development review policy, but Commissioner Jim Holcomb said that the change just involved clarification of the document.

RCM Hill sued the county, County Judge Shane Brassell and Commissioners Jim Hol-

see LAWSUIT on back

DPS identifies victims of SH 171 crash

The Texas Department of Public Safety has released the identities of the adults killed in a two-vehicle crash on State Highway 171 Saturday, June 20, that claimed six lives.

The crash occurred near Farm Road 3155 between Bynum and Malone when a northbound Nissan passenger vehicle attempted to pass another vehicle, crashing into an approaching Ford van. Both vehicles were fully engulfed in flames when first responders arrived.

DPS Sergeant Ryan Howard said that the occupants of the

see CRASH on back

Cedar Creek VFD formalizes name change



Members of the Cedar Creek Volunteer Fire Department gathered for a ribbon cutting Saturday, July 4 as the department—formerly 2604 VFD—formalized its name change. The Lake Whitney Chamber of Commerce was on hand to welcome the department, which also held a barbecue fundraiser the same day. Pictured is Fire Chief Robert Matthews and his team of volunteers.

ESD 1 president explains resignation

The Hill County Commissioners Court observed and recorded the resignation of the president and treasurer of Hill County Emergency Services District (ESD) 1 during a meeting held Tuesday, June 23.

Former ESD 1 President Greg Brown appeared in person to announce his resignation to the court, saying that increased public scrutiny and repeated complaints against the district had led him to step down after more than five years of service.

Brown submitted his resignation during the ESD's June 18 meeting and read a statement explaining his decision to the court.

A retired U.S. Marine Corps veteran, Brown said that he moved to Hill County after his 25-year military career to continue serving the community. He served as a volunteer firefighter, fire chief and, for the past year, president of the ESD board. Brown emphasized that the position is unpaid and said that he routinely devoted 20 to 30 hours each week to district business, taking time away from his family and business.

In his statement, Brown highlighted accomplishments during his tenure, including the purchase of property and an office for the district, acquisition of a firefighter training facility, increased support for volunteer fire departments, repairs to fire apparatus, improved radio communications and expanded training and equipment for firefighters.

Brown also pointed to the district's recent audit, noting that it received a clean opinion with no findings of fraud, misuse of funds, procurement violations or compliance issues. He said that the only finding involved the district's reliance on its outside auditor to prepare technical financial statements because it does not employ a full-time certified public accountant.

Brown said that his resignation was prompted by what he described as the "weaponization of transparency" by a small group of individuals. While stating that he supports open government and citizens' rights to request public records and hold officials accountable, he said that repeated complaints and records requests had become an effort to find wrongdoing rather than improve government operations.

According to Brown, complaints were submitted to multiple agencies, including the sheriff's office, Texas Rangers, Attorney General's Office and Texas Ethics Commission,

but no findings of fraud, corruption or criminal conduct resulted.

"Complaint after complaint was filed. Investigation after investigation was requested," he said. "After all of that, there has been no finding of fraud, corruption, theft, criminal conduct or misuse of public funds."

He also cited extensive public information requests and repeated communications with the district's independent auditor during the audit process as examples of what he characterized as harassment.

"One request sought virtually all communications involving expenditures, reimbursements, policies, contracts, discussions outside meetings and quorum-related communications without any meaningful time limitation," Brown said.

"Think about that. That means searching through years of emails, text messages, records and communications involving multiple commissioners and district operations."

He said that another example involved repeated communications directed towards the district's independent auditor while he was actively conduct-

see ESD on back

Smith Foundation announces opening of grant applications

The Board of Directors of the George G. and Alva Hudson Smith Foundation has announced the opening of the 2026 grant application process. Applications for grants to be awarded this year must be received on or before September 1. Grant awards will be announced in October.

Applicants can access grant information and required supporting documents at the Smith Foundation website (www.smithfoundationhillcounty.org) under the "Application Documents" tab on the website's homepage.

These include the application guidelines, cover sheet, publicity plan and the publicity permission form. Applicants will need to provide five copies of their application materials to the address shown in the application guidelines and at the bottom of this news article.

The foundation will consider requests for operating budgets, special projects, building and capital campaigns, research and academic scholarships from organizations that are classified as 501(c)(3) non-profit entities in Texas, a political subdivision or governmental entity; or a corporation organized

under the Texas Non-Profit Corporation Act.

The foundation does not award grants to individuals, organizations outside of the State of Texas or religious organizations. In considering requests for funding, the board places priority on organizations and programs serving Hill County.

In 2025, the Smith Foundation awarded \$110,000 in grants to organizations across Hill County.

Grant recipients in 2025 included eight organizations across Hill County—including Hillsboro, Hubbard, Itasca and Whitney. In the 31 years of its existence, the foundation has awarded over \$3,100,000 to area organizations that serve the community.

The George G. and Alva Hudson Smith Foundation was established in 1992 by the late Ruth Smith Moorman in memory of her parents for the purpose of enriching the lives of citizens in Hill County.

Information about the foundation is available on its website or from: The George G. and Alva Hudson Smith Foundation, P.O. Box 1245, Hillsboro, TX 76645.

THE LAKE LANDER & TACKLEBOX....TO ADVERTISE CALL: 254-582-3431 OR EMAIL: LAKE LANDER NEWSPAPER@YAHOO.COM

4P

STORAGE

910 E Jefferson Whitney right off of Hwy 22
large units 12.5' x 45' x 14'
817-472-1111 or 817-994-6197
discounts avail for 6 month and 12 month
4PSTORAGE.COM

RV & BOAT
STORAGE

Edward Jones

Member SIPC

Stocks. Bonds. CDs.
IRAs. Mutual funds.

Craig G Montgomery, ChFC®, AAMS™
Financial Advisor
P O Box 1591
Whitney, TX 76692
254-694-6964

MKT-5894P-A AECSPAD

edwardjones.com

B & C
EXTERIORS Inc.

We install Mueller Metal Roofs

• All Types Roofing • Room Additions • Interior & Exterior Paint
• Siding & Gutters • Windows
FREE ESTIMATES
RESIDENTIAL • FREE INSPECTION • COMMERCIAL
(888)726-4322 • (254)399-9061

BBB

BBB