

Lake Watch

Lake Level
on August 16

532.30'

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

Lakeline

Carter blood
drive August 25

The Carter BloodCare Bus will be at King Memorial Methodist Church, 502 North Colorado Street in Whitney, Tuesday, August 25, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Donations are always very low during the summer months. Your donation is greatly needed. Call 1-800-366-2834 to schedule an appointment.

Pioneer Days
vendor sign-up

The Lake Whitney Chamber of Commerce is now accepting vendor applications for the 51st annual Pioneer Days festival scheduled for Saturday, October 3. Sponsorship opportunities are also available for this year's festival. For more information, call the chamber at 254-625-2387 or email info@lakewhitneychamber.com.

Senior center
open Tuesdays

Lake Whitney Senior Center is open every Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Meals are provided without charge, but donations are accepted. Participants enjoy activities, guest speakers, crafts, games and fellowship. A Bible study is also offered. To reserve lunch, call Jean at 254-694-2599. The senior center is located at 503 North Colorado Street in Whitney.

Farmers market
open in Whitney

The Lake Whitney Farmers Market is operating on Saturdays through September from 8 a.m. to noon. The market is located along South Brazos Street in downtown Whitney. Shoppers can find produce, fresh jams and jellies, baked goods and other items. The market will be held each Saturday, weather permitting. For more information, follow Lake Whitney Farmers Market on Facebook.

Senior exercise
classes offered

Senior exercise classes are offered at Open Range Community Center, located at 759 FM 1713. Seniors are invited to attend for 45 minutes of exercise with videos. The group meets Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8:30 a.m.

TEA releases school ratings

Intermediate campus improves 17 points...

Local school districts received their state report cards when the Texas Education Agency (TEA) announced the release of 2026 A-F Accountability Ratings for public school systems and campuses across the state Friday, August 14.

There was improvement in Whitney's scores this year, with the overall district grade still a C but rising from a 75 last year to 78, the elementary/intermediate rising from an F (57) to a C (74), the middle school maintaining its D (68) rating, and the high school rising from a 91 to a 94 while maintaining its A rating.

Superintendent Todd Southard said that Whitney High School has been doing very well the past couple of years and has strong leadership and staff. "I think they do a remarkable job working with the kids," he said. "I really thought it was going to be hard for them to score an A again, and yet, they ended up scoring higher than last year. Very impressive."

The high school campus also received distinction designations for postsecondary readiness and top 25% in "closing the gaps," which measures differences in performance among student groups.

WISD ACCOUNTABILITY RATINGS			
CAMPUS/DISTRICT	2026 RATING	2026 SCORE	CHANGE FROM 2025
WISD OVERALL	C	78	+3 ↑
ELEM./INT.	C	74	+17 ↑
MIDDLE SCHOOL	D	68	— NO CHANGE
HIGH SCHOOL	A	94	+3 ↑

The superintendent said that the intermediate school, which is combined with elementary for scoring purposes, has made major progress under new leadership.

"The intermediate school has been our main focus for the past couple of years," said Southard. "I could not be prouder of Mrs. Seely and her staff, because I've seen how hard they've worked. Yes, there's still more to do, but the campus is headed in the right direction."

The superintendent said that the change at the intermediate campus over the past year is about more than improvement in scores. "Communication, discipline and the climate of the building have all improved," he said. "That campus has the possibility of getting really good really fast, and that's exciting."

Southard said that the

middle school is receiving more focus this year. "We've added an instructional coach to assist teachers and to improve reading and writing scores," he said. "We're also going to be working with Region 12 to help us improve the math scores."

The only school in Hill County that received a failing grade this year was Malone ISD, which received an F, a sharp decrease from last year's B rating.

Ratings for other area districts were: Abbott - A; Aquilla - B; Blum - A; Hillsboro - B (elementary - C, intermediate - B, junior high - A, high school - A); Hubbard - C; Itasca - C (elementary - D, middle school - C, high school - B); Penelope - A; West - B (elementary - B, middle school - A, high school - A); Milford - C; Covington - C; Mount Calm

see RATINGS on back

Commissioners continue salary, tax rate discussions

The Hill County Commissioners Court continued discussing elected officials' salaries and other budget matters in meetings held Tuesday, August 11 and Wednesday, August 12.

The previous week, commissioners voted to forego a cost-of-living increase for elected officials and only include employees in this year's adjustment. At that time, County Treasurer Rachel Parker and others expressed concerns about closing the pay gap between department heads and employees, which was one of the issues addressed in the county's recent salary studies.

County Judge Shane Brassell, who was originally in favor of the proposal, said that after spending more time with the numbers he wanted to make sure that commissioners were aware of the unintended consequences of that decision.

The judge said that leaving elected officials out of the adjustment would destroy the framework that was adopted after the last salary study.

Commissioners ultimately voted to propose a 3.5 percent cost-of-living increase across the board. The proposed salary schedule also includes the previously approved increase for constables and justices of the peace.

Another issue that may have to be addressed is the sheriff's

pay, as the department is looking at a raise for sworn deputies on top of the 3.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment. Because there is not a large gap between pay for sheriff's office positions, that could result in some employees making more than the sheriff.

Brassell said that he also wanted to revisit the court's discussion from the previous week about capping longevity pay for employees.

Auditor Amy Peavy reported that the county paid \$254,600 in longevity pay last year, and the projected payout over the next year is \$279,000. After a discussion during the August 4 meeting, Brassell said that a \$4,000/20-year cap was being considered on longevity pay.

At the August 11 meeting, Brassell said that he had changed his mind, calling longevity pay a way to reward loyal employees. The judge said that he is open to reducing the payment slightly to lower how much the county is paying out, if commissioners opt to go that route.

The longevity pay policy is expected to be on a future agenda for discussion.

Commissioners revisited tax rate discussions after proposing the no-new-revenue tax rate for the general fund and the voter-approval rate for FM lateral (road and bridge) the previous week.

Precinct 4 Commissioner Martin Lake again said that he believes the county needs to consider a tax increase as costs continue to rise.

Precinct 3 Commissioner Martin Dudik also questioned whether the county needs to consider increasing the rate, noting that the proposed 3.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment for county employees would require the county to use some of its new-construction revenue. Both the county auditor and treasurer have advised against relying on new-construction revenue for recurring expenses.

Brassell said that he does not foresee new construction declining in the near future but agreed the county needs to be cautious about using the revenue for ongoing expenses.

Precinct 1 Commissioner Jim Holcomb said that while raising taxes is "unpalatable and unpopular," there may come a point when increasing the rate becomes necessary, even if that point is not this year.

Brassell said that he was comfortable using some new-construction revenue this year but does not want the county to make it a recurring practice.

He also pointed to the Hubbard data center development, which he said is moving forward despite the county's

see COURT on back

Comptroller releases sales tax allocations

Texas Comptroller Don Huffines distributed \$1.4 billion in sales tax allocations for August, 13.6% more than in August 2025.

The City of Whitney's August allocation was \$122,776, up about 25% compared to last August. Year-to-date figures show the city receiving about 20% more sales tax revenue than the first eight months of 2025, with allocations totaling \$838,661 in 2026.

Hill County's August payment was \$551,856, up 31.68% compared to last August. So far in 2026, the county's allocations have totaled \$3,479,005, up about 7.5% over the first eight months of 2025.

In the county seat, the City of Hillsboro's August allocation was \$594,939, up 6.17% compared to last August. Year to date, the city's payments have totaled \$4,148,191, up about 2.5% over the same period last year.

Allocations and changes

over last year for other Hill County cities in August included: Abbott - \$10,258.39, down 21.67%; Aquilla - \$2,290.74, up 12.09%; Blum - \$3,557.58, down 20.39%; Bynum - \$1,349.38, up 22.85%; Carl's Corner - \$4,133.99, down 21.99%; Covington - \$9,377.74, up 29.53%; Hubbard - \$50,944.56, up 47.74%; Itasca - \$45,263.03, up 25.14%; Malone - \$5,024.13, up 100.51%; Mertens - \$700.87, up 49.51%; Mount Calm - \$1,816.69, down 0.88%; Penelope - \$1,424.78, up 11.61%.

Bosque County's August allocation came to \$170,789, up about 73% compared to last August. Year to date, the county's sales tax proceeds are up about 38%, with \$1,008,089 received to date in 2026.

Allocations and changes for Bosque County cities in August included: Clifton - \$188,889.60, up 64.43%; Cranfills Gap - \$4,618.86, up

see SALES TAX on back

Hill Co. grand jury returns August list of indictments

A Hill County grand jury that convened Friday, August 7, returned the following indictments:

Danny Lee Brisbon, 27, of Whitney, possession of THC between one and four grams

Amy Leigh Burke, 49, of Hillsboro, theft of property between \$30,000 and \$150,000

Michael Shane Dunlap, 36, of Hillsboro, sexual assault of a child (two counts); indecency with a child - sexual contact

Trevor Daniel Endtricht, 41, of Abbott, failure to comply with sex offender's duty to register life/annually

Guadalupe Gutierrez, 36, of Saginaw, driving while intoxicated with a child under 15

Geoffrey Morris Hayden, 64, of Woodway, possession

of cocaine between one and four grams

Alleysander Iglesias, 44, of Oakland Park, Florida, violation of motor fuel tax requirements

Mikkala Rae McGill, 30, of Princeton, possession of cocaine between one and four grams

Jonathan David Nunez, 20, of Cedar Hill, organized retail theft between \$750 and \$2,500

Tristan Anthony Price, 27, of unknown, harassment of a public servant, theft of property between \$2,500 and \$30,000

Anthony Sanders, 32, of Whitney, evading arrest/detention with a vehicle

Caylin Grace Smith, 24, of Hillsboro, sexual assault of a child - prohibited person,

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Gaines Foundation opens 2026 grant applications

The Board of Directors of the Dorothy Gaines Foundation is now accepting grant applications for 2026.

The foundation was established in 2003 by Dorothy Gaines as a private foundation with the primary purpose to promote quality of life in Hill and Tarrant counties.

Applications for grants to be awarded must be received on or before October 1.

Applicants can access grant information and required supporting documents at the Dorothy Gaines Foundation's website: www.dorothygainesfoundation.org.

The foundation awards grants annually to nonprofit, charitable organizations and institutions that are exempt

under Section 501(c)(3) of the Texas Internal Revenue Code or to certain governmental units.

The foundation will award grants for specific projects, building and capital improvement campaigns and general purposes. All funds must be used in Hill or Tarrant counties. The maximum grant awarded will not exceed \$10,000.

In 2025, the Dorothy Gaines Foundation awarded \$68,500 in grants to 11 nonprofit organizations. It has awarded more than \$949,500 in grants since 2012.

For more information about the foundation and grant applications, visit the foundation's website.

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