Cedar Park considers its rail stop options
Possible feasibility study discussed by city, Capital Metro

BY CHRISTI SNOW

Cedar Park might become home to a MetroRail station even though the city is not in Capital Metro’s district. City staff met several times this spring to discuss a possible Capital Metro-led feasibility study that would explore adding a station in Cedar Park.

The possibility of becoming a stop on the new commuter rail line was first considered in 2004 when then Mayor Bob Antle explored options for Capital Metro to add a station in Cedar Park for the commuter line that will run from Leander to downtown Austin. Voters in Austin and Leander had just approved the MetroRail. Since Cedar Park was not a member of Capital Metro’s district, there would be no stop in the city. Antle believed his residents needed the same transportation alternatives.

“We already have a rail line owned by Capital Metro and a bus facility, literally right behind it,” Antle said. “We have everything we need but a ticket booth.”

Capital Metro’s policy is that in order for a city to receive public transportation, the city must pay one-cent per sales tax dollar. Cedar Park citizens voted to withdraw from Capital Metro in 1999, choosing to designate the $4 million contribution for capital improvement and economic development projects.

While mayor, Antle met with Leander’s Mayor John Cowman and Capital Metro President Fred Gilliam. At the time, they discussed different compensation possibilities, but never found a mutually agreeable option.

Antle decided not to run for mayor again in 2005 after learning of his father’s terminal illness, which took him out of the state for most of the next year, and the initiative never progressed. However, he still feels strongly that his city needs MetroRail.

“Capital Metro is a great fit for Cedar Park,” he said. “We could have a tremendous amount of ridership.”

He said the other stops north of RM 620 do not have immediate population density. “We have 50,000 anxious potential riders.”

CONTINUED ON [8]

Police departments prepare to expand as cities grow

BY SUSAN VANDEWATER

With the opening of new toll roads and shopping centers, comes the need for more city services. Due to recent bonds and the support of city councils, both Leander and Cedar Park police departments are ready to expand.

New building in Leander

To accommodate the growth, the Leander Police Department is building a new facility. Scheduled to open in late 2008, the new 27,000 sq. ft. building will satisfy the department’s needs for the next 10 years. The facility will be located across from the Leander Post Office, at 701 Leander Drive. This centralized location eventually will house other important city services, including the public works department and a new fire station. The three buildings will encompass one city block.

A $1.4 million bond, approved in May 2006, provides some of the funding for the construction of the facility, as well as a fitness center for officers and city staff, construction of a road connecting the police department to US 183, an upgrade to the training facility, expansion of the department’s firing range and the addition of a physical agility course. The building also will feature safe rooms for victims of crime and true holding cells.

“This new facility will allow us to stay ahead of the curve with the projected growth of the city,” said Lt. Greg Min- ton, commander of LPD’s Uniformed Division.

Bicycle Patrol

In addition to a new facility, LPD is working to establish a bicycle patrol unit.

“With the city’s parks and the planned TOD, a bicycle
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- Discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
- Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

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Transportation concerns

Last month I received an e-mail from local resident Kevin Sanford expressing his concern with the lack of a commuter rail station in Cedar Park. He and most of his neighbors are new to the area and are not aware of the city’s history with Capital Metro and the events that led to voters opting out of the service area in 1999.

This is a story that we have always wanted to cover, but Kevin’s e-mail flipped the switch. As we met with Jose Madrigal, assistant city manager, we realized the timing couldn’t be better. We learned that city officials had just met with Capital Metro that morning to discuss a possible plan to include Cedar Park in its service area through a unique arrangement, the plan to include Cedar Park in its service area

“After visiting with several business owners in recent weeks, it seems the headline has taken on a different meaning. Since the toll road opened in March, many area business owners have told us of the hit they’ve taken as commuters who once passed by their businesses daily are now taking 183A to avoid congestion. Right now the toll road is free, and it will be interesting to see if these businesses continue “taking the toll” once drivers begin paying the tolls. Regardless, it is important that residents keep their local businesses in mind when deciding where to shop, eat and play."
Texas Magic Supply is full of tricks and slight of hand, but its foundation is sincere. Owners Cyrus Albertson and Diane Klinetob Weirich want to nurture the art of magic as a legitimate form of entertainment for adults as well as children.

“Magic teaches so many things: presence, dexterity, confidence, how to recover from a mistake,” Albertson said. “Whether you buy something from us or not, we want to make magic known.”

Thus, the business pair stocks the magic shop with everything from simple trick kits and gags to books delving into the human psyche, and how a magician can manipulate it. Often, area magicians stop by to swap stories and regale shoppers, and the person behind the counter is always willing to demonstrate.

Albertson and Weirich also invite top performers from across the country to visit and show off their skill, including a 95-year-old magician who has appeared in more than 40 movies and a card handler who can pick up any deck and immediately identify the four aces – despite being completely blind.

“One of our strengths is that we have a national reputation among magicians as a great shop, but we still have small town charm,” Albertson said.

Part of that charm is their willingness to help out in cases of “magic emergencies.” The answering machine at the shop gives out a special phone number for magicians who are able to make an elephant disappear, but ran out of an essential prop at the last minute before a show.

“The middle of the night, whatever, we’ll open up the shop for them when they’re desperate,” Weirich said.

Before magic, Weirich and Albertson were involved in two seemingly unrelated fields: music and technology. As jet-setting high tech executives, they spent their non-working hours exploring the magic shops in the cities they visited. Later, they ditched the tech business to open Albertson School of Music, drawing on Cyrus’ more than 30 years as a student, teacher, performer and conductor.

Observing the businesses around the music school’s six locations profiting from student foot traffic, Albertson and Weirich were inspired to provide the Austin area with something it lacked. “Austin had the second-largest Society of American Magicians group, but no major magic shop,” Albertson said.

As a bonus, the music school’s student retention rate went up after the magic shop went in next door. The nuggets of magic wisdom gleaned before and after lessons serve as an extra incentive to keep children coming,
Dog Leg Golf Tournament
The second annual golf tournament benefiting the Humane Society of Williamson County is now accepting registrations for play at Cimarron Hills Golf Course, a Jack Nicklaus signature course. Single players may enter for $150, foursomes for $450 and fees include green fees, cart, beverages and snacks, lunch, raffle tickets, awards, contests and more. For more information, visit www.hswc.net or call 260-3602, ext. 103.

Park at Aspen Lake, Prominent Pointe II
Aspen Properties began construction last month on the Park at Aspen Lake, a development to offer 1.79 million sq. ft. of office space surrounding a lake and park. Located on a 47-acre site off the southeast corner of US 183 and RM 620, the new space is part of the former Tower of the Hills development, which Aspen renamed. Prominent Pointe, 8310 N. Capital of Texas Highway, is also being expanded by 105,000 sq. ft. Both plan to be ready for tenants in the spring of 2008.

New State Farm Office
Dave Schara’s State Farm Insurance office, 12001 West Parmer Lane, plans to move into its new building and out of temporary quarters on the property during the latter part of April. Call 259-7700 for more information.

Doggie Delight
Doggie Deli & Spa, a boutique featuring accessories, super premium foods, raw food and a self-service dog wash, celebrated a March 17 opening. The shop is located at 2051 Cypress Creek Road, Ste. G. Call 249-8300 or visit www.DoggieDeliandSpa.com for more information.

Library acquires new database
The Cedar Park Public Library now offers the U.S. Residential and Business databases. The U.S. Business database includes corporate information, such as management directories with human resources contacts, stock information, company news, area information and more. The U.S. Residential database lists more than 135 million U.S. households. Either can be accessed from the library or remotely for anyone with a library card. For more information, call 259-5353.

First Cedar Park Heritage Festival features Duck Soup
The Texas band commonly called “The Unofficial Band of the PGA Tour” will headline Cedar Park’s first Heritage Festival April 28 at Elizabeth Milburn Park. The festival, scheduled from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., will include a hamburger cook-off, a crafts fair with more than 50 participating vendors, a “Big Wheel 500” race for kids younger than 10, a washer tournament and historical displays. For more information on the free event, call 401-5500 or visit www.cedarparktx.us.

Mobility Authority donates to Hope Alliance
The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority recently presented the Hope Alliance with a check for $4,700. The money was raised during the 183A toll grand opening celebration March 3. Entry fees from the Road to Hope Fun Run, event sponsors and raffle ticket purchases all contributed to the donation. The Hope Alliance, formerly known as the Williamson County Crisis Center, provides emergency shelter and assistance to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and other violent crimes.

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News or questions about Cedar Park? E-mail us at news@impactnews.com.
As a fifth-generation nursery owner, Jonathan Howell is rooted in plant knowledge and the gardening business. Strolling through his greenhouse at Browne & Howell Nursery in Leander, the scientific names of various annuals and perennials roll off his tongue, as do planting and care tips.

“You’ve got to watch out for any plants potted in glazed ceramic,” Howell said. “Clay pots allow plants to breathe, but ceramic locks the moisture in, so plants potted in them tend to get soaked.”

Howell opened his own version of the family business last Mother’s Day weekend. After years of selling plants with his family in Waxahachie, Howell and his wife, Kathy, moved to Leander to restore the Pickle-Mason house, a Texas Historical landmark that Kathy’s family has owned since 1913. The nursery sits behind the home on Old 2243.

Howell and a staff of three raise annuals, perennials, flowering shrubs, vegetables and ornamental grasses for both wholesale and individual customers.

While the nursery has plenty of the plants locals are accustomed to seeing and planting, Howell makes sure to stock less common varieties that have the potential to become his customers’ new favorites.

“’You’ve got to watch out for any plants potted in glazed ceramic,” Howell said. “Clay pots allow plants to breathe, but ceramic locks the moisture in, so plants potted in them tend to get soaked.”

Howell’s unusual garden varieties include the chicken gizzard plant, *Iresine herbstii*, with a distinctly crimson-colored, variegated leaf, and rainbow daisies, *Gazania*, which have brightly colored, striped petals in several shades.

In the future, Howell said he wants the nursery to include a much larger greenhouse and greater selection of plants and trees on the 3.6 acres of land adjacent to H-E-B Plus!

He also has plans for a rainwater collection system. The system would not save him money - the thousands of gallons of well water he uses now are basically free - but rainwater is more conducive to gardening than the hard ground water.

Howell said he’s extremely pleased with the nursery’s success over the first year of business. “We’re going gangbusters right now,” Howell said. “My vision is to stay here and expand.”

THE PICKLE-MASON HOUSE
Built in 1871 by Master Carpenter Andrew Porter Pickle for his family, the house was sold to Augusta K. and Zora Mason Davis in 1913 and has remained in the family. In 1988, it was recorded as a Texas Historical Landmark, having been the first home in western Williamson County with screened windows.

The home consists of two structures under one roof. The rear portion is sided with shiplap and the front with milled siding and a five-bay façade.
Hill Country Community Ministries plans a four-person scramble golf tournament with a 1 p.m. shotgun start April 27 at Crystal Falls Golf Club. The fee is $300 per team or $75 per individual and includes a barbecue dinner. First, second and third place team prizes will be awarded in addition to other prizes. Sponsorship opportunities are available. The registration deadline is April 20. For information, visit www.hccm.org or call 259-0360.

New shops in The Forum
Twin Liquors, Jack Brown Cleaners, Papa Murphy’s and Fantastic Sams are all coming soon to The Forum shopping center, 651 US 183, anchored by H-E-B Plus! CK Nails and Subway are now open for business. Papa Murphy’s is a take and bake pizza chain recently voted the “Best Pizza Chain in America” for the fourth year in a row in Restaurants & Institutions magazine’s annual consumer survey. Fantastic Sams is the world’s largest full-service hair care franchise.

New digs for pool and spa
Total Pool & Spa moved into its new location at 303 Sonny Drive March 15. The shop provides pool and hot tub service and repair, eco-friendly products (salt pool experts), rainwater collection and deck sealing. Call 260-7854 for more information.

LEEF classic car show
The Leander Educational Foundation plans a classic car show and parade in conjunction with the Heritage Festival at Milburn Park April 28. The parade begins at noon at the Austin Community College campus and ends at Cedar Park High School, where the car show is scheduled from 1 to 6 p.m. For more information, visit www.leanderedfound.org.

Golf tournament
Hill Country Community Ministries plans a four-person scramble golf tournament with a 1 p.m. shotgun start April 27 at Crystal Falls Golf Club. The fee is $300 per team or $75 per individual and includes a barbecue dinner. First, second and third place team prizes will be awarded in addition to other prizes. Sponsorship opportunities are available. The registration deadline is April 20. For information, visit www.hccm.org or call 259-0360.

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Capital Metro considerations

CONTINUED FROM |1

literally within three miles of our stop,” Antle said.

With the commuter rail service set to begin in 2008, Capital Metro has begun discussions with the city again.

4A/4B Corporation

Shaune Haas, owner of Cedar Perk Coffee Company and former president of the city’s 4A Corporation, believes the city must consider the importance of gaining a rail station.

She fears the city might isolate itself because of traffic congestion and with little employment opportunities remaining in the city, residents could move to the north or south.

“Cedar Park has to be very direct in what their direction is or Leander is going to be way ahead of us,” she said. “We have no growing room, and if we don’t plan, we will not have any partnerships.”

Voters decided in 1999 to dedicate their one cent to a 4A Corporation, which promotes economic development, and a 4B Corporation, designed to fund capital improvement projects.

These entities support potential employer incentives and funds for a future entertainment center in addition to transportation systems, streets, roads, public parks and sports facilities.

Because the state legislature caps how much a city can collect in sales tax and Cedar Park has reached its limit, that leaves no money to give Capital Metro, Haas said, which makes joining the Capital Metro district a non-viable option.

“A partnership with Capital Metro would be very valuable,” Haas said. “How we make it work, I don’t have an answer to that.”

According to Jose Madrigal, assistant city manager, the city already tried paying Capital Metro the required amount and found it too expensive.

“We’re not interested in joining Capital Metro,” Madrigal said. “We are okay with partnerships. In the 2005-2006 fiscal year we received around $2 million for both 4A and 4B—$4 million is a lot to give.”

The Past

In 1985, Cedar Park joined the newly organized Capital Metro, along with other cities like Austin and Leander. Of the 178 votes cast, 101 favored joining with Capital Metro, while 77 opposed the venture.

Once more than a decade, Cedar Park, continued to participate and a park-and-ride was built behind the old Albertson’s store on US 183.

Then in 1999, the city conducted a survey and learned they had 120 riders during the week with 36 actually living in Cedar Park.

“It became the joke, and I am not sure how much truth there is to it, that we could buy each rider a BMW cheaper than working with Capital Metro,” Madrigal said.

The city projected they would contribute more than $1 million dollars to Capital Metro. According to their ridership survey, each rider cost $160,000 per year. These studies led voters to leave Capital Metro in 1999.

The Future

Now Cedar Park is considering how to evolve a new and unique relationship with Capital Metro.

It may be a few months before Capital Metro begins the feasibility study, if they even decide to do it, but Madrigal hopes they will find a compatible solution outside the traditional model.

“One cent is a lot to give up,” he said.
Praise Team.

"Participating in the relay is a fun opportunity to fight back against cancer so that we can one day reach our goal of no one having to hear the words ‘you have cancer,’” Mallernee said. “Everyone is welcome to attend the relay for Life, even if they aren’t going to participate. People don’t have to register to enjoy the fun, and the event benefits all who are involved.”

Each year, 91,000 Texans will be diagnosed with cancer, and 34,000 will lose their battle. The relay serves as a reminder of those who have lost their lives to cancer and honor survivors.

“Relay for Life is a catalyst to get the message to the community. Every individual comes together to fight cancer,” Central Texas Region Community Manager Meredith Maples said. “It is a catalyst to celebrate survivors and caregivers. It shows that the community supports and welcomes them with open arms.”

Money raised from the relay goes toward funding research, education, advocacy, services and programs in the community.

“We are here for all cancer patients, survivors, families and friends who have been touched by the disease. We offer guidelines for early detection and prevention,” by Katherine Kennedy

The relay is held through the night because cancer does not stop for nighttime.

- The light and darkness parallel the physical effects, emotions and mental state of a cancer patient undergoing treatment.
- The relay begins in the evening, symbolizing when a person is diagnosed with cancer.
- The 2 a.m. hour represents the patient starting treatment. They become exhausted, sick, not wanting to go on, possibly wanting to give up.
- The 5 a.m. hour symbolizes the end of treatment. The light can be seen and life will go on.
- The end of the relay signifies the cancer patient leaving their last treatment. Both the cancer patient and the relay participant are weak and exhausted, but resolved to make it through.

American Cancer Society started the relay to raise money to help prevent cancer, save lives and diminish suffering from the disease.

“There is a survivor celebration, which includes a dinner and a survivor lap in which all survivors walk around the track together while the community cheers them on, a luminary ceremony, to remember those whose lives have been touched by cancer, local entertainment, on-site fund-raising and community fellowship,” Mallernee said.

Entertainment for the relay includes entertainer Spirit of Elvis, UT Bike Group Texas 4000, Blue Howlers band, soloist Shawn Davenport, speaker Lily Gross, soloist Judy Arnold, Pflaming Glory and the Good Shepherd Church.

Volunteers are an important part of the organization and contribute to its success.

“Without volunteers, we could not be successful. We are the largest volunteer driven non-profit organization in the United States,” Central Texas Regional Director of Communications Flor Zapoteche ne said.

The relay is the #1 volume dealer in Central Texas again in 2007!

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“Come let my family show your family what a car buying experience should be. Call 345-4343 and ask for Kenny and I’ll get you the best deal on the car or truck you want.”

-Kenny Covert

The American Cancer Society Relay for Life serves as a community event in the fight against cancer.

“Relay for Life represents the hope that those lost to cancer will never be forgotten, that those who face cancer will be supported and that one day cancer will be eliminated,” said Rachel Mallernee, the Central Texas Region community manager. “It is a community-owned event; each community owns their relay and is able to give in their own way to survivors. The participants who have been survivors for 10, 20, even 30 years provide a great deal of hope for those who have recently been diagnosed.”

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Scene from the 2006 Cedar Park Relay for Life

Cedar Park Relay
April 27, Running Brushy Middle School
www.acsevents.org/cedarparktx
American Cancer Society Relay for Life
2433 Ridgepoint Drive, Ste. B • Austin TX
919-1800 • www.cancer.org • 1-800-ACS-2345

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We have a brand new policy - Yours. Now you can have access to some of the finest doctors and specialists in America – with your current insurance coverage. In addition to our #1 rated Scott & White Health Plan, we now accept most major insurance plans providing health care coverage across the State of Texas. That is great news for Texans who want to utilize Scott & White’s world-class facilities with their current health insurance. So no matter who has you covered, you’re covered at Scott & White.
Police Departments  
Continued from previous page

patrol will be a good community tool,” Lt. Minton said. “We are always actively recruiting new officers, driving to all areas of the state to find qualified candidates.”

Cedar Park adds to force

The Cedar Park Police Department is also expanding to keep up with the city’s growth. By the end of the 2007 fiscal year, the department will have added 10 sworn officers to its ranks, including one night platoon lieutenant, one patrol sergeant, one patrol corporal, two patrol officers, one criminal investigations detective, three traffic officers who will focus on the 183A Toll and one school resource officer exclusively for Vista Ridge High School. This is the largest single year increase in the history of the CPPD.

With growth comes new and sometimes more serious crime. We are always actively recruiting new officers, driving to all areas of the state to find qualified candidates,” Lt. Minton said. “Of course, another challenge to hiring officers is finding the funding to do so.”

Lt. Minton has created a five-year staffing report that outlines the needs of the department over the coming years.

New Programs

In addition, through the Meet and Confer process, a joint effort of the city and the Police Officers’ Association, the upper age limit of 45 years has been eliminated and two new programs created — a lateral entry program and a cadet program.

The lateral entry program offers experienced police officers additional incentive to join the CPPD by allowing them to transfer in at a higher pay rate. Previously, all officers, regardless of experience, started at Step 1 on the established pay scale.

Through the department’s lateral entry program, applicants without law enforcement certification may be eligible to join the CPPD. The department hires the applicant at the cadet salary level and pays for him or her to attend a basic peace officer training course.

Once the training is complete and the cadet has been certified by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education, the officer is required to serve with the CPPD for two years or he or she must repay all costs associated with the academy.

“With growth comes new and sometimes more serious crime. We are always actively recruiting new officers, driving to all areas of the state to find qualified candidates,” Lt. Minton said. “Of course, another challenge to hiring officers is finding the funding to do so.”

Lt. Minton has created a five-year staffing report that outlines the needs of the department over the coming years.

Cedar Park adds to force

The Cedar Park Police Department is also expanding to keep up with the city’s growth. By the end of the 2007 fiscal year, the department will have added 10 sworn officers to its ranks, including one night platoon lieutenant, one patrol sergeant, one patrol corporal, two patrol officers, one criminal investigations detective, three traffic officers who will focus on the 183A Toll and one school resource officer exclusively for Vista Ridge High School. This is the largest single year increase in the history of the CPPD.

Even with the addition of new officers, the department remains mindful of the anticipated growth of the city.

“We have created, and presented to the city council, a five-year staffing plan that will help us maintain our growth and achieve a ratio of 1.5 officers to every 1,000 residents,” said Cedar Park Police Chief Henry Fluck. “We will revisit the plan every year to re-evaluate and adjust as needed.”

The CPPD continues to focus on improving recruitment efforts and is experiencing success.

“The city approved an increase in compensation, as well as a hiring incentive of $2,000,” said Chief Fluck.

The department’s staffing ratio to 1.4 officers per 1,000 residents,” said Cedar Park Police Chief Henry Fluck. “We will revisit the plan every year to re-evaluate and adjust as needed.”

Despite the recent growth, Cedar Park continues to have the lowest crime rate in Williamson County.

“We are starting to see an increase in crimes, such as burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft and assault,” Fluck said. “But by using proactive police patrol, we can help deter crime and keep our citizens safe.”
Pulte Homes' Summerly
Amenity Center Grand Opening
May 19, 2007, 11a - 2p

Don't miss this chance to be part of this GREAT Leander community! Discover the variety of floorplans and prices Pulte Homes offers to suit your needs! With oversized homesites to accommodate 3-car garages, a generous landscaping package, a wealth of upgrades included standard in every home and proximity to Austin via the new 183 Toll, Summerly in Leander offers you a place to call HOME.

Join us on Saturday, May 19th from 11a - 2p to celebrate the grand opening of this beautiful pool facility and learn why you should become part of this GREAT community.

For directions and event details, contact a sales associate at 512.778.5372.

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Amendment reduces senior citizens’ and disabled citizens’ school property tax

A constitutional amendment added to the May 12 ballot would extend a school property tax reduction, approved in 2005, to senior citizens and people with disabilities. The one-third reduction in school property taxes was not initially available to homeowners whose taxes are capped because of age or disability. Senate Joint Resolution 13 would correct the oversight and affected property owners would see the reduction in taxes reflected on their next tax bills.

The wording of the resolution is as follows: “The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for a reduction of the limitation on the total amount of ad valorem taxes that may be imposed for public school purposes on the residence homesteads of the elderly or disabled to reflect any reduction in the rate of those taxes for the 2006 and 2007 tax years.”

Election day information

EARLY VOTING APRIL 30 - MAY 8

Sites:
Cedar Park Public Library, 550 Discovery Boulevard, Cedar Park
Pat Bryson Municipal Hall, 201 North Brushy, Leander

Times:
Monday, April 30 to Saturday, May 5 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Sunday, May 6 Noon – 6 p.m.
Monday, May 7 to Tuesday, May 8 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Election day voting
Both voting locations will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Election Day.

Ballot by mail
For information on voting absentee by mail, or to request an application for ballot by mail, contact the elections department at 943-1630. Info from http://wilcogov.org/elections.
Citizen Involvement Opportunities

- Leander Community Club, 259-9119, www.leandercommunityclub.org
- Leander Lion’s Club, 260-1820
  o Focuses on eyeglasses recycling, the mobile health screening unit, sponsoring children for the summer camp, and helping neighboring clubs with their projects (re: track meets).
- Cedar Park Rotary Club, 259-0855
- Town and Country Optimist Club, 331-0438, www.townandcountryoptimist.org
- American Cancer Society, 744-8851, www.cancer.org
- Central Texas SPCA, 260-7722, www.centraltexasspca.com
- Leander Citizen’s Fire Academy, 528-2856, www.leanderfire.org
- Leander Citizen’s Police Academy, 528-2800
- Cedar Park Citizen’s Fire Academy
- Cedar Park Citizen’s Police Academy, 259-3600 ext. 238, www.cpcpa.net
- Meals on Wheels, 259-0288
- Samaritan Health Ministries, 331-5828, www.samaritanhealthministries.org
- Williamson Burnet County Opportunities (WBCO), 763-1400, www.wbco.net
  o Non-profit Community Action Agency serving Williamson and Burnet Counties. Operates federally sponsored programs such as Head Start and Meals on Wheels. Provides services which include adult day care. Affordable housing at Cedar Ridge Apartments.
- Senior and Law Enforcement Together (S.A.L.T.), 260-1496
- Literacy Council of Williamson County (LCWC), 244-8445, www.literacycouncil-wc.org
- Leander Educational Excellence Foundation (LEE), P.O. Box 358 Cedar Park, Texas 78630-0358, www.leanderedfound.org
  o Formed by citizens in the Leander Independent School District in cooperation with the Leander I.S.D. Board of Trustees and the District Administration. Mission: To provide resources to support innovation, enrichment, and Equity in pursuit of academic excellence within the Leander Independent School District community. “Everything we do is aimed at helping our students succeed.”
- Williamson Burnet County Opportunities (WBCO), 763-1400, www.wbco.net
  o Non-profit Community Action Agency serving Williamson and Burnet Counties. Operates federally sponsored programs such as Head Start and Meals on Wheels. Provides services which include adult day care. Affordable housing at Cedar Ridge Apartments.
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- City Involvement:
  - Citizens interested in serving on a Leander committee contact City Secretary Debbie Haile at 528-2743
  - Leander City Council, meets the first and third Thursday of every month
  - Leander Planning and Zoning Commission, meets the second and fourth Thursday of every month
  - Leander Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, meets the first Monday of every month
  - Leander Board of Adjustment, meets on an “as-needed” basis
  - Leander Ethics Commission, meets on an “as-needed” basis
  - Citizens interested in serving on a committee mail or e-mail the application from www.cedarparktx.us to City Secretary LeAnn Quinn at 600 North Bell Blvd., Cedar Park, TX 78613 or quinn_l@ci.cedar-park.tx.us
- Cedar Park City Council, meets the second and fourth Thursday of each month
- Cedar Park Planning and Zoning, meets the first and third Tuesday of each month
- Cedar Park Tourism Board, meets the second Friday of every month
- Cedar Park Historic Preservation, meets the fourth Wednesday of each month
- Cedar Park 4A Board, meets the third Monday of each month
- Cedar Park 4B Board, meets the second Tuesday of each month
- For a complete city meeting calendar, visit www.cedarparktx.us
- TV Coverage:
  - Cedar Park, Channel 10. All scheduled City Council meetings will air live at 6:30. For a complete list of re-airing, visit www.cedarparktx.us.
  - Leander does not have television capabilities.
  
  A Faith in Action volunteer prepares to take a participant to an appointment.
When speaking of the success of Leander ISD, Superintendent Tom Glenn never takes credit. He recognizes the people who work for him as the true success-makers for the district.

“I am proud to have led a set of people who know what they are doing, go about their jobs and improve on them everyday to try to make this a better place for children to learn,” Glenn said. “I have had the good fortune of working with fine board members in our community and was able to listen to them to make a difference.”

He moved from College Station almost 30 years ago to start his career with LISD and was appointed superintendent nearly a decade later. When he became superintendent, the district was in danger of losing its accreditation. Today, Glenn acknowledges that it is a place people choose for their children’s education.

“In the past 20 years, we have built lots of campuses, changed many programs and developed a way of going about improving education, ourselves and our system,” Glenn said.

Dealing with continuous growth has remained an issue throughout Glenn’s time as superintendent. He was able to work with the community in developing and staffing new campuses and passing bonds. All LISD schools except one have been either constructed or renovated since Glenn was named superintendent. In school construction bonds, $807 million was approved by voters in five bond elections in the last twelve years.

“We introduced and developed the continuous improvement philosophy which looks at the organization and the way we go about things as a system and trying to improve ourselves everyday,” Glenn said. “This is one of numerous programs that have changed the reputation of our district.”

Glenn says there has been a significant gain in educational achievements in the district that can be seen by the number of students enrolled in advanced classes and the closing of the gap between low socio-economic status and academic performance.

“I am proud of what has occurred in the past 20 years. I am proud of our buildings; they are moderate, up to date, well-kept and will last,” Glenn said. “We have introduced all kinds of programs that have helped make learning better, like the 10 ethical principles and creating a world-class curriculum.”

Glenn pays tribute to his boards, administration staff, teachers, cafeteria staff and custodians involved in the everyday process of improving LISD.

“Picking the right people, laying out the vision, establishing the parameters for what to accomplish and guiding them to get things done was the most important part of my superintendancy,” Glenn said.

Glenn plans to continue living in Leander after he retires in December.

“This is an interesting and enjoyable place to be. The community is full of great people who have valued education and it shows,” Glenn said. “My grandkids will be a part of LISD, and I plan to stay involved in the district.”
Real estate pros weigh in on future of the local market

Importance of buyer credit score increases with loan shortage

BY CHRISTI SNOH

In the last decade, the subprime market became a growing demand. Financers liked the option because they could increase their charges to offset the risk of working with clients who had bad credit scores.

Potential homeowners with less positive debts or past debts liked it because they still had an opportunity to purchase property.

Round Rock lender James Copeland of Austin Mortgage Associates said his community, along with Pflugerville, is “highly dependent” on subprime financing, with around 20 percent of local buyers using the loans.

However, too many of the loans foreclosed and lenders became wary. To create subprime loans, a bank purchases a whole sale line of credit from an investors group. Banks quit buying the loans in the last few months because of too many foreclosures and want the investors to buy them back—meaning some investors, starting in December and January, have opted to move away from subprime financing, making the loans unavailable.

Impact on the Community

Helen Edwards, manager of the Coldwell Banker sales offices in Round Rock from 1998 to 2004, where she watched the local market increase and then correct itself due to job losses.

However, she said as a whole, the area sustained itself because it relied on the subprime market. Now that will not be an option.

“Certain areas like Round Rock and Pflugerville, Pflugerville especially, are prime areas for construction, but unless we see ample numbers change in the subprime market, we’re not going to see a growing housing market,” she said.

K.C. Whetstone with Keller Williams Realty in Round Rock has seen similar trends. In 2006, he said he felt a cooling period, but now expects the market to become “quite robust” because of employment availability.

At the same time, he also acknowledges subprime loans may be a problem. He is just not sure how much.

“It will always be cyclical,” he said. “There will be tightening of the belt like it has happened in the past. Then it will get better. For the next several months, it will become more difficult for subprime loans.”

For the last four to five years, Larry English, a RE/MAX realtor in Pflugerville and Round Rock has seen the residential resale real estate market remain flat.

However, now part of Austin is exploding.

“I would be shocked if we didn’t have a good two years,” English said. He anticipates local real estate will inflate with a five to 10 percent increase by the end of the year.
Gardening center roots itself in Austin history

BY RACHEL YOUNG

Working at a plant nursery was something Emelie McDaniel, Red Barn company president, was supposed to try while she figured out what to do with her life. Now she has figured it out and it’s working at a plant nursery.

“You really have to love this business. It’s not big money, so you need to love helping people garden,” McDaniel said. “We’re really just glorified farmers, but this is a rewarding way to make a living.”

Red Barn was founded by Scottie Gosn in 1978. He taught McDaniel his gardening secrets, such as growing organics and xeriscaping. When he was ready to sell the business in 1993 he turned to McDaniel.

“I was sort of his right-hand-man and he gave me the opportunity to own a Red Barn by allowing me to pay over time,” McDaniel said. “I’ve taken that opportunity and given back to the local community and offered people a decent-paying, pleasant place to work.”

McDaniel’s love of plants began as a child, growing up in a small town in Mississippi. There were no plant nurseries there, so gardening was a social affair where neighbors shared plant cuttings and seeds. Today some of her family members still have ferns growing from cuttings given to them by her mother. Her favorite part of the job isn’t the plants so much as the people.

“I like that everything in this business is always changing: the season, the plant type, the care,” McDaniel said. “I also like offering a peaceful place for people whose lives are full of gadgets and fluorescent lights where they can reconnect with nature.”

The property that houses Red Barn has always been home to green businesses—although they were putting greens. Holes from the Green Acres putt-putt golf course still dot the land and lend Red Barn some of its appeal, not to mention a perpetual lawn of lush green AstroTurf.

“All the time I have people tell me how they used to golf here at Green Acres or work at Red Barn as kids,” McDaniel said. “We would hire on teens for seasonal help and now they bring their kids here to hop in the wagons and buy plants.”

THE HISTORICAL THOMPSON HOME

Originally built by William H. Thompson in the 1870s, the house that sits in the middle of Red Barn Garden Center is not only a part of the store’s charm, but a part of Northwest Austin history.

• At one point the Thompson family owned nearly 900 acres in the Jollyville area. The house is constructed of native cedar from the surrounding land.
• Under the Red Barn parking lot lies the remains of the stagecoach trail, and settlers used the Thompson house as a rest stop.
• The house and the land may be haunted. McDaniel says some employees claim to smell a lady’s perfume at times, and others say they have seen ghosts moving through the trees.
Museum uses trunk of costumes, period objects to teach the lessons of history

BY BETH WADE

Armed with a trunk packed with period clothing, food items and toys, the Williamson County Historical Museum takes a new approach to teaching history.

Traveling Trunks began in 2004 to help reach children throughout Williamson County and educate them on the history of Texas with a focus on the county.

“We realized we had a small museum facility,” Chris Dyer, museum director, said, “and we wanted every kid in the county to have interaction with the museum, but we can’t do that in person. These trunks help spread the word of the museum along with education.”

The museum currently has two trunks that feature pioneer and cowboy life. The trunks provide children with history, as well as an opportunity to touch and feel actual items used in that time period.

The trunks are focused on third, fourth, fifth, seventh and eighth grade lessons and help teach information from the TAKS test.

Each trunk can come to the classroom with a full week’s worth of lessons and activities, or trunks can be reserved along with museum staff to teach the lessons. Trunks are available to stay for two weeks at a time.

Currently the museum is working to expand the trunks to include lessons on Texas immigrants and archæology. These trunks will be available in schools in October.

“We are going to keep working on them,” Dyer said. “As we gain more staff and volunteers, and as new ideas are passed down, we will definitely be adding more trunks.”

The trunks are available for schools throughout Williamson County, but Dyer said they would consider requests in other areas.

“We are happy with the response to [the trunks],” Dyer said. “We are hoping the new trunks will take off like the other two did.”

Trunks can be reserved from the museum by calling Dyer at 943-1674.

For more information on the Williamson County Historical Museum, visit www.wchm-tx.org.
RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE REPORT

Cedar Park & Leander MLS Area

On The Market

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Area HOMES

January 1, 2007 – March 31, 2007

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Monthly Home Sales

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KeyStats

+$25,518 Change in avg. selling price over last year
-2 Change in homes on the market since last month
-45 Change in number of homes sold over last year

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3. Cedar Park
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512-259-2843

4. Brushy Creek
7500 Crossroads Dr
512-246-6010

5. Pflugerville
1600 West Pecan (FM 1825)
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April 183A FREE all month
May 183A FREE with TxTag
June 183A HALF PRICE with TxTag

Pick up a TxTag at an event in your area:

April 21, 11am-1pm
Sonic on Hwy 183 at Park St, Cedar Park

April 28, 9am-2pm
Hill Country Water Gardens, Cedar Park

May 2, 10am-4pm
Lakeline Mall

For more information about special TxTag events—or to open a TxTag account—visit www.TxTag.org or call 1-888-468-9824.

Pay tolls the fast, easy way with TxTag.
This month's corridor highlights the mix of development taking place along Brushy Creek Road between Parmer Lane and 183A Toll. The road will also be home to a major employer once BMC Millworks completes construction on their lumber yard this year.

**Future Land Use**

- **F1** The Brushy Creek Recreation Park is scheduled to open this fall. The park will have baseball/softball fields, hike and bike trails, picnic tables, benches and a pavilion. Phase II will include additional fields, a playscape and a disc golf course.

- **F2** A 2.5 mile extension of the Williamson County Regional Trail is currently in the planning phase. This section of the trail will begin at the Brushy Creek Lake Park just east of Parmer Lane, run through the Brushy Creek Recreation Park and ultimately end at the Twin Lakes Park in Cedar Park. A construction timeline has not been established.

- **F3** A total of 362 acres on Brushy Creek Rd. are part of the city’s Development Reserve, which means it has not been assigned a particular zoning classification but is being reserved for future development.

**Residential Real Estate**

- **R1** Construction on Verde Brushy Creek Apartments, a 272-unit complex on 14.3 acres, began last December. The complex is expected to be complete in the second quarter of 2008.

- **R2** Portrait Homes is building the Silver Oak Townhomes at 700 Mandarin Flyway. The property will include 22 buildings with 82 units ranging in size from 1,325 to 2,464 sq. ft. The townhouses are expected to be completed by Fall 2008.

**Commercial Property**

- **C1** The BMC Lumber Yard is relocating from north Austin to a new 18-acre site. Site work began in December and the lumber yard is scheduled to be complete at the end of this year with a move-in target at the end of 2007 or early 2008.

**Transportation Update**

- **T1** Brushy Creek Road will be improved to a four lane divided roadway with raised median, curb and gutters, sidewalks and street lighting. The project will also include a traffic signal at Brushy Creek Road and Lynnwood Drive. Construction is dependent upon the timeline for the TxDOT review and oversight process, but is estimated to begin in April 2008 and end in September 2009. The total project cost is approximately $8 million with $3.4 million in federal funds and $4.6 million from the combination of the city’s General Obligation bond funds and the 4B Development Corporation.

- **T2** BMC Drive is currently under construction with an expected completion in early July.

**History**

- **H1** Between 1885 and 1887, 50,000 tons of granite were hauled to Austin to be used in the construction of the State Capitol building. During that time, a train carrying granite blocks from a quarry in Burnet lost its load as it crossed Brushy Creek. The large blocks were too heavy to hoist back up to the train so they were left behind and remain under the train trestle today.

- **H2** Cox Elementary was named after Charlotte Ann Cox, a former school teacher who taught in Leander ISD for more than 24 years and died of cancer in 1999. Mrs. Cox taught at Faubion Elementary, the Giddens Sixth Grade School, and at both Leander and Cedar Park middle schools.
Eighty-six years ago, when Ernest and Fannie Mason took their young daughters, seven-year-old Charlie Bess, and five-year-old Christine, from Leander to Austin on the train, it was an all day trip. It started early with the family horses, Tom and Nell, pulling the buggy three miles to the Leander Train Depot. The girls eagerly watched and listened for the train to come down the tracks.

Even today, 91-year-old Christine Mason remembers how exciting it was to travel to Austin by train. She remembers how clean and nice the depot was. On the train, the girls sat in the straight-backed seats in front of their parents, taking turns by the window and ate the lunches and snacks packed by their mother.

As the train made its way, it stopped at a small landing in Cedar Park to pick up riders. The next stop before arriving in Austin was Rutledge, just north of Pond Springs, where the only building was the Petri Store.

Downtown Austin was busy on Saturdays with families shopping on Congress Avenue at the new Kress 5 & 10 cent store, F. W. Woolworth store, or Scarborough's. This type trip called for buying goods not always available in Leander such as shoes, clothes, fabric, gloves, hats and handbags.

Christine and Charlie Bess were tired by the time they boarded the train for the return trip home to Leander. It was a full day indeed, by the time the horse and buggy arrived home, the girls were ready for bed.

The Austin & Northwestern Railroad was incorporated on April 29, 1881, to build a narrow gauge railroad from Austin northwest to Burnet. The board of directors included four men from Iowa, Dr. M.A. Taylor, Rudolph Bertram, Leander Brown, Frances B. Forster, and W.H. Westfall, all of Austin.

The company named one of the depots Bertram, and the depot a couple miles east of Bagdad, Leander, after Leander Brown. Mr. Brown served as the mayor of Austin from 1867 to 1871. He was also involved in starting the first saving and loan company in Austin, and in 1864 his building on the corner of Bois d’Arc and Brazos Streets was used to jail three Willis Brothers arrested for murdering three men in East Austin. A mob took the men and hanged them from three oak trees north of Pecan Street.

On November 9, 1881, the State Capitol building in Austin caught fire and burned down in two hours. Plans were begun to build a grand Capitol, and this time use granite.

The Austin & Northwestern Railroad would be used to haul the huge chunks of granite, from Granite Mountain near Marble Falls, to Austin. During the years of 1885 to 1887, they hauled 50,000 tons of granite to build the current State Capitol in Austin.
I am not sure if it was the vibrant exterior, the brilliant bouquet of spices, peppers and aromatic dishes, or the festive artwork on the stucco walls that first got my attention, but I knew right away that our dinner party was in for an enjoyable dining experience at the Texican Café.

The original Texican Café opened in South Austin in 1988. The second location, Texican Café Lakeline, opened in Cedar Park four years ago when owner Mourad Belkacem found that there weren’t many locally-owned restaurants in the area.

“We live in a sea of chain restaurants and we wanted to bring something unique to this area,” Belkacem said.

The restaurant is famous for its El Paso-style Mexican food, described as a fusion of southern New Mexico ingredients with a traditional Mexican style of cooking. The food has been recognized for excellence in numerous publications including being named Best Cabrito by Texas Monthly.

We munched on a fantastic salsa roja – a refreshing tomato-cilantro blend with just the right amount of spiciness. Their most popular appetizer is the jalapenos stuffed with cream cheese fried in a potato batter and served with a homemade jalapeno jelly. ($5.25)

The Texican Dinner ($9.95) arrived piping hot and filled the plate with a crispy taco, homemade tamale, and a well-seasoned beef enchilada along with traditional sides of refried beans, Mexican rice, guacamole and Pico de Gallo.

The Cabrito (young goat) was slow-roasted in a marinade of herbs, spices and chiles topped with tomato and bell pepper slices ($14.95). The result was a delicious, falling-off-the-bone tender meal.

“Cabrito is something very few restaurants do and do well,” Belkacem said.

The House Special Chicken Enchilada plate ($7.95) oozed with melted cheese mixed with shredded chicken tucked inside a tortilla and covered with a mild sour cream sauce.

For dessert we chose the smooth and delicate vanilla flan with a warm, caramelized sugar base. ($3.25)

The fluffy sopapillas dusted with cinnamon and drizzled with honey had just the right amount of sweetness to complete our meal. ($1.25 for two)

In addition to offering a unique combination of ingredients and cooking styles, the Texican Café provides the perfect combination of ambience, prompt and friendly service and authentic, flavorful food.

“We are confident our customers will not be disappointed,” Belkacem said. “We guarantee their satisfaction.”
**Henry Fluck**

From an early age, Henry Fluck knew he wanted to be a police officer. After serving as a police officer in Baltimore, Md., for more than two years, he moved to El Paso, where he eventually became the Assistant Chief of Police.

Fluck stayed in El Paso for 25 years before retiring from the department in 1996. He eventually returned to the El Paso Police Department to serve as the director of Training for the Police Academy.

His hobbies include long distance running and racing. Fluck recently qualified to run in the 2008 Boston Marathon.

**Q.** How and when did you become Cedar Park Chief of Police?

**A.** After serving on the El Paso Police Department for 25 years and retiring as the Assistant Chief of Police, I was invited by a consultant to apply for the Chief position in Cedar Park. I was selected and began serving the city in December 1999.

**Q.** As Chief of Police, what are your duties?

**A.** I oversee all the operations of the Police Department, including my favorite part of my job, which includes honoring officers by presenting them with awards and commendations, as well as promoting deserving officers and swearing in new officers. I’m also involved in the department’s new mentoring program for officers interested in one day becoming police chief. I speak to the officers on the leadership, management, administrative and political aspects of the job. We begin our second semester this month.

**Q.** How is the department meeting the increasing needs of the city and citizens as Cedar Park experiences growth?

**A.** We have developed a five-year staffing plan that is matched up with the projected growth of the city. We currently have a ratio of 1.4 officers per 1,000 residents. By October 2007, we hope to be at a ratio of 1.5 officers per 1,000 residents. Additionally, we utilize proactive patrolling methods to deter crime and prevent traffic accidents. Through the Texas Department of Transportation’s Selective Traffic Enforcement Program, Cedar Park police officers are paid to work overtime at high-accident locations to reduce the number of traffic accidents, injury accidents and fatalities. We also have added three officers to patrol Cedar Park’s first controlled-access turnpike, 183A.

**Q.** What does the future hold for the department?

**A.** We are facing some big challenges – the growth of the city and a highly-competitive market for recruiting police officers. But we are proud of Cedar Park’s low crime rate and hope to continue that success.

**Q.** What is the craziest call that has ever come into CPPD?

**A.** A convenience store clerk called that she found a “python.” When Animal Control arrived on the scene, the clerk showed them what appeared to be a “pipe bomb.” CPPD Communications personnel misunderstood what the clerk had said. Upon seeing the actual pipe bomb, Animal Control summoned the police. The responding CPPD patrol officers evaluated the scene and requested the assistance of the Austin police department bomb squad. The bomb squad arrived and rendered the pipe bomb safe.

**Education:** Bachelor’s degree in Criminology from Indiana University in Pennsylvania, Master’s degree in Sociology.

**Family:** Chief Fluck and his wife Meredith are expecting a new baby in September. They have a 27-year-old daughter, Bianca, and an 8-year-old stepson, Micaleb.

**Contact Information:** 259-3600

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**Lt. Greg Minton**

Lt. Greg Minton comes from a family of public servants, including his grandfather, who served as a police officer until he was killed in the line of duty in 1965.

“It was something I always wanted to do,” Lt. Minton said. “Law enforcement is something I truly love.”

Originally from San Antonio, Lt. Minton has been with the Leander police department for 12 years and is passionate about his work and his community. He and his wife Michelle were responsible for starting Leander’s Blue Santa. Lt. Minton also played a large role in LPD’s National Night Out program before being promoted to Commanding Officer.

**Q.** How and when did you become Commanding Officer of LPD’s Uniformed Division?

**A.** Leander is the first law enforcement job I received. After earning my police officer certification, I joined LPD as a reserve officer – an unpaid position – and then became a part-time warrant officer. In 1995, I was hired as a full-time patrol officer. I was promoted through the ranks, serving as a corporal and sergeant before receiving my current post of lieutenant.

**Q.** As Commanding Officer, what are your duties?

**A.** I supervise 20 employees, including Uniformed Patrol, Animal Control and Leander’s School Resource Officers. Additionally, I am responsible for my section’s budget and other administrative duties.

**Q.** How is the department meeting the increasing needs of the city and citizens as Leander experiences growth?

**A.** We have created a five-year staffing report to help us keep up with the growth. We currently have one officer for every 1,000 residents. Our goal, through the staffing plan, is to reach a ratio of 1.4 officers per 1,000 residents. In order to meet that goal, we hope to add 46 officers within the next five years to reach an overall strength of 71.

**Q.** What does the future hold for the department?

**A.** The word that comes to mind is growth. Our new building and the five-year staffing report can attest to that. Additionally, we are working on an accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). We already have been recognized by the CALEA, which is a great accomplishment for a department of our size.

**Q.** What is the craziest call that has ever come into LPD?

**A.** A call came in at 3 a.m. that a resident had seen some kids fighting another individual, who they threw into the back of their truck before driving away. I found the vehicle in question and pulled it over. I could see an arm reaching up out of the bed of the truck. I called out to this person. When the person didn’t respond, I became a little spooked and told the driver and passenger to step outside. After they were secured inside the patrol car, I approached the pick-up to check on the victim. I discovered that my “victim” was actually a statue of Santa Claus. The teenagers had stolen the statue and while lifting it into the truck, dropped and broke it, resulting in what looked like a scuffle.

**Education:** Associate’s degree from Austin Community College. He is currently working toward his bachelor’s degree at Texas State University.

**Family:** Minton and his wife have two children, Madison, 6, and Mason, 4.

**Contact Information:** 528-2800