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Thursday, June 6, 2019



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When It Rains, IT POURS A deluge of 3.92 inches of rain turned Jefferson streets into rivers Monday night over the course of three hours according to the National Weather Service in Shreveport. The parking lot between First Baptist Church and Moore Insurance Agency flooded with water finding its way into the insurance office. The severe thunderstorm came on the third day of June, a month with an average rainfall of 5.5 inches. Total rainfall for 2019 is now 34.3 inches, 62% above the normal cumulative rainfall for the year at this time of 21.17 inches.

Jimplecute Quest for Sheriff's Text Messages Prompts Attorney General to Open Inquiry

By **BOB PALMER** *Jimplecute News Editor* **Editor's Note:** This is an updated report of the initially published story on *Jimplecute1848.com* Friday, May 31 at 4:46 p.m.

JEFFERSON - An assistant Texas attorney general said Friday her office will open an investigation into Marion County's failure to provide copies of Sheriff David McKnight's text messages and other forms of electronic communication requested by the Jefferson Jimplecute within the 10-day period provided by Texas law.

On May 15, the Jimplecute, acting under the provisions of the Texas Public Information Act, requested Marion County Auditor Shanna Solomon furnish the Jimplecute with "billing records for all electronic devices purchased or leased, paid for or expensed to Marion County for Sheriff David McKnight and Chief Deputy Frank Carson (sic) for the billing period that includes Wednesday, April 24, 2019."

Additionally, "records and copies of any electronic communication created, transmitted, received, or maintained on any device if the communication is in connection with the transaction of official business by Marion County for Sheriff David McKnight and Chief Deputy Frank Carson (sic) from April 17, 2019 through May 12, 2019."

The name of the Marion County Chief Deputy is Frank Cason rather than Carson.

Although Solomon did furnish billing records, copies of text messages and other forms of electronic communication were not delivered to the Jimplecute by May 30, the tenth business day following May 15.

Tamara Smith, an assistant attorney general in the Open Records Division, said she had received copies of correspondence between the Jimplecute

and county officials, as well as, the Jimplecute's Texas Public Information Act request.

"We will be looking into it," Smith said.

Assistant County Attorney William Gleason told the Jimplecute Wednesday that he had reviewed text messages from McKnight on Cason's telephone.

"There are some that are embarrassing," Gleason said. Gleason said he would deliver copies of the messages before 5 p.m. Thursday to the Jimplecute, but the deadline passed without the requested copies being delivered.

Attempts to reach Gleason on Thursday and Friday were not successful.

The Jimplecute contended in a letter dated May 31, "cell phone text messages and other electronic communication requested by the Jimplecute can only be requested from Verizon by (Solomon), the auditor and custodian of the Verizon account, or any other county official that supervises official business conducted by the Marion County Sheriff's Office."

County Auditor Shanna Solomon did attempt to obtain copies of the text messages, County Attorney Angela Smoak asserted late Friday after an earlier version of this report was published on *Jimplecute1848.com*. Solomon also verbally told the Jimplecute that the county's cell phone provider had emailed that she could not ask for the copies. Smoak confirmed in writing Verizon's refusal to provide the text messages to Solomon and advised the Jimplecute she would still try to locate the public records.

"We are attempting to locate the information requested through other means and if that information is obtained we will forward," Smoak wrote.

More on SHERIFF, see page 8

MCAD Budget Approved Despite County Objections, Again

JEFFERSON - In a vote reminiscent of Yogi Berra's "it's deja vu all over again," county commissioners rejected the Marion Central Appraisal District budget last week for the fifth consecutive year.

Commissioner Charlie Treadwell's angst over CAD employees earning more than county employees doing similar work is hardly new, but the county's action failed to derail the approval process for the fourth straight year.

Jefferson ISD, for the fourth year in a row, and the and Avinger ISD have approved the budget. The City of Jefferson tabled the matter and Chief Appraiser Ann Lummus heard Wednesday that Ore City ISD will not vote on the issue.

According to Lummus, three no votes from the five entities served by the CAD will kill the budget, forcing the district to redraft a budget.

More on MCAD, see page 8

State Sen. Hughes Calls Legislative Session Productive Mineola Republican Helped Craft New Laws On Hog Hunting, Teacher Pay, Timber Taxes

By **BOB PALMER** *Jimplecute News Editor* AUSTIN - State Sen. Bryan Hughes, R-Mineola, saw a key bill he sponsored to curtail election fraud flounder in the House this year, but more than 300 bills and resolutions with his fingerprints on them were sent to the governor.

"I would say it's definitely one of the more productive sessions I've seen," Hughes, Texas state senator for District 1, which includes Marion County, said in an exclusive interview with the Jimplecute Monday.

"We came in with three big bills - doing something about teacher pay, school finance and property taxes," Hughes, a 16-year Austin veteran, said. "A lot got done on those three, so that's a win."

Hughes also authored a bill for lower valuations on timber acreage.

"Timber is a big deal where we're from," Hughes said. "The bill makes sure folks are treated fairly on their taxable value. We should think about agriculture in general, but especially timber. Would that land be in production if it weren't for the fair treatment for appraisal purposes?"

In another measure of local interest, Hughes penned a bill to permit shooting feral hogs without a hunting license that will become law Sept. 1.

Hughes, who told the Jimplecute he plans to seek reelection in 2020, found himself in the center of controversy over what some disparaged as the Chick-fil-A bill, since one goal of the legislation was to overturn a San Antonio city councilman's objections to Chick-fil-A locating in the San Antonio airport.

Hughes said the alderman's protest was based on claims that Chick-fil-A supports hate groups since the company donated to the Salvation Army.

"If you follow the debate on that bill, people tried to make it all kinds of things it wasn't," Hughes said. "The bill itself is so straightforward and so simple, and just says that your government can't discriminate against you, can't punish you because you give money to a religious organization or because you affiliate with one."

Hughes said opposition to the bill indicated "all the more reason it needs to be passed."

Serving his first term in the upper body, Hughes observed, "there are always disappointments and missed opportunities."

A bill expected to address alleged voter fraud was one of those disappointments for Hughes.

"SB [Senate Bill] 9 was a result of the senate's select committee on election security," Hughes said. That committee met, took testimony, investigated, did a lot of research over the course of a year and a half."

Hughes considered SB 9 an important bill. "Elections security, right? Making sure that every vote counts, and is counted accurately and that every legal vote counts? That's something most people agree on."

The senator's high hopes were dashed, however. The measure died in the House and attempts to attach parts of it to other bills also failed.

"That was for us the biggest disappointment of

the session," Hughes said. "We didn't see success on election integrity. Senate Bill 9 was aimed at people that cheat and so we're very disappointed that partisan politics derailed that bill."

Hughes is looking forward, however to Gov. Gregg Abbott signing his SB 27.

"The bill says that if the government pursues a frivolous regulatory action against you, and you beat them in court, and the court finds they were frivolous in what they did, then they have to pay your attorney's fees," Hughes said.

The thinking behind the bill is, if an individual or small business person are in a dispute with a state agency, you have the right to appeal and you have



State Sen. Bryan Hughes makes a point on the floor of the Texas Senate last month. Photo by Juan Figueroa/The Texas Tribune

the right to fight them, but of course, you have to pay for your own attorney's fees, and you're also paying their attorney's fees, as they're using your tax dollars, an unlimited mound of tax dollars, to fight you.

Although Hughes did vote in committee against an earlier version of a bill to promote school security, he found the final text acceptable.

"Obviously, the frequency of school shootings we're seeing is horrifying, and it is unacceptable," Hughes said. "Senate Bill 11 is the response to that. It provides help for schools for physical security for protecting the physical structure of the school, also having more security personnel."

School guardian programs like the one at Jefferson ISD also received a boost.

"We also took steps to make sure the school marshal program or the school guardian program, those programs that allow schools, if they want, to have school employees trained and armed are strengthened," Hughes said.

In under-the-dome dynamics, Hughes appears to emerge from this session with more heft.

"This is my second session in the Texas Senate, and I'm still learning, but yes, I am very thankful to be in a place in the senate where we can get things done, important things for our district and for Texas," Hughes said. "So yes, we're very thankful to be where we are."

In the unending buffet of bills, acts and resolutions on just about every imaginable subject, Hughes was able to use his power to pass a necessary resolution.

The senate adopted a resolution by Hughes to congratulate Longview High School on winning the AAAAAA State Football Championship.

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