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City responds to coronavirus warnings

By Taylor Messick

Bel Aire city government took steps to protect its workers and residents during the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus on March 17. The decision was made to move forward with these actions after evaluating how other local governments and businesses have responded to the situation.

"We're obviously monitoring the situation and my role is to determine how that affects the city as an organization and the services we provide," said City Manager Ty Lasher. "I created three levels and there is nothing magic to them. It's just things that we are doing in level one and what I see as level two and ultimately level three."

As of the March 17 meeting, City Hall was still open with regular business hours and employees who weren't ill were reporting to work. Employees who were ill were expected to stay home. The city had already tried to limit in-person meetings. The recreation center was still open but activities were limited to 50 people or less. Senior activities had already been suspended.

Lasher said public works contracted peer groups in the private sector to perform line repairs or other types of work in case employees became unavailable.

The police department provided personal protective equipment to officers and suspended fingerprinting, ridealongs and tours. The department has also taken other safety and security measures.

The utility department suspended water shut-offs for

See VIRUS, Page 5

City's first beer license?

Chris Strunk

The Dollar General at 4554 N. Woodlawn received a beer license from the City of Bel Aire in February. The city said it was the first such license issued by the city. A former mayor remembers it differently.

Former mayor remembers issuing license for city 'gathering spot'

By Taylor Messick

In February, the Bel Aire City Council voted to issue a beer seller's license to Dollar General at 4554 N. Woodlawn. Staff said they thought it might be the first time the city issued such a license.

But former mayor and city council member Lyle Ackerman has a different recollection.

Ackerman moved to Bel Aire in 1969. He served as a city council member from 1985 to 1989 and as mayor from 1989 to 1991. Sometime during Ackerman's tenure a beer license was issued to an establishment called Hammer and Nails, which was located at the same site where Dollar General now sits.

"I recall that it was during that time because occasionally, after a rather lengthy meeting, some of us would go over to get a snack, a beer or a soft drink," said Ackerman.

There was originally a convenience store at the site when Ackerman moved to town in 1969. That convenience store eventually moved across the street where the former Bob & Luigi's Pizza is now located. The convenience store closed when another opened at 37th North and Rock.

Hammer and Nails got its name in a rather opportunistic fashion. Ackerman said he recalls the owner, Dwayne Johnson, purchasing the signage for Hammer and Nails from an old lumber yard.

"Apparently the lumberyard had

See BEER, Page 2

City offers student a business experience

Bel Aire native turns to community for internship

By Taylor Messick

Crayton Bina grew up in Bel Aire and attended Kapaun Mt. Carmel High School. He is a freshman at Emporia State University but he has returned to Bel Aire to work on an internship opportunity for the summer.

Bina

Bina has a passion for athletics. He ran track and cross country and also played basketball at Kapaun. He is currently majoring in marketing at Emporia State and hopes to someday combine his love of basketball with his education.

"I'm really interested in sports marketing," said Bina. "What I would like to do is work with a basketball team in the future. It could be for a college basketball team, but my dream is to work with a team in the NBA. I will definitely have to work for it but that is really my dream."

A group named College Works Painting visited one of Crayton's classes this semester and presented a unique internship opportunity. Bina saw it as a chance to get some experience in the marketing field while helping folks in his hometown.

"My division hired 13 interns across Kansas," said Bina. "Our job this summer is to basically run our own branch of this painting company with the help of this corporation. They are a nationwide

See STUDENT, Page 3

City council appointment finalized

Courtesy photo

John Welch takes an oath of office March 17.

By Taylor Messick

The Bel Aire City Council unanimously voted to confirm Mayor Jim Benage's appointment of John D. Welch to the city council on March 3. The 4-0 vote followed some lengthy discussion.

Welch was originally presented as Benage's top choice to fill the seat he vacated when he was elected mayor in November. Welch was the third leading vote-getter in November with 643 votes (25.5 percent). He missed out on being elected by just one vote to council member Diane Wynn.

Welch's first nomination failed with a 2-2 vote on Feb. 4 after he stood before the council to answer questions. Another candidate who was not present also failed to be confirmed by the council and Benage said he would not nominate another candidate at the meeting.

Benage announced Feb. 18 that the appointment of the final member of the council would again be postponed. He said he would not attempt to nominate another member for the council until there was a consensus on a plan to go forward. The item was added to the council's workshop for discussion. The mayor said he did not want to put other candidates in an awkward or embarrassing situation again and discourage people from applying for such positions. He also said the city's policies in these situations are flawed.

On March 3, Benage laid out the city's options: nominate one of the remaining two candidates, reinstate one of the two nominations that already failed, open the process back up for more applicants, leave the seat open until the 2021 election or hold a special election later this year. He said

See COUNCIL, Page 6

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Mayor's corner

By Jim Benage

By now you know, Sedgwick County has imposed a stay-at-home order for the citizens of Sedgwick County. This includes Bel Aire.

I support this decision for the common good. Peoples' lives are at stake. We need to follow the county's lead on this.

I'll not try to give all the ins and outs of this decision. The actual order can be accessed on Sedgwick County's website. You can read the details there. Basically, it says to stay at home unless you work in a critical industry (26 are defined In the order) or you need to address a need at home — for example, get food, medicine, medical attention, etc.

If you need to be out, please make certain you practice six feet distance for social interaction. Yes, that includes the clerk at the store and the visit with your neighbor.

A citizen expressed concern about kids at city parks. In the order concerning parks, one may "engage in outdoor activity, provided the individuals comply with social distancing requirements." One may engage in "walking, hiking or running. Individuals may use parks or other public areas. However, use of playground equipment is discouraged."

I understand this virus stays active on surfaces for hours. I would not allow my grandchildren to play on park equipment at this time. Please do NOT allow your children to play on the playground equipment.

The city is still conducting business. I believe the Breeze has covered city business in other articles of this paper.

This is a very fluid situation. This article is written on March 25, which is later than normal deadline. Please pay attention to other forms of communication to know the latest on city services.

A warning was received that we may experience an increase in "flushable wipes" in the sewer lines. These run a high risk of clogging your plumbing and the sewer system. The only things that should go in the toilet are the normal body eliminations and toilet paper. Nothing else.

As you know, stores are out of stock on several products. Please be kind with each other, do NOT buy and stock more than you need. You may actually deprive someone of something they truly need. Let's be charitable with one another during this emergency.

Please be safe. Let's support each other while we go through this nightmare.

Lastly, pray. Pray that the good Lord will rid the globe of this virus quickly. If we turn to him, he is always faithful to us. I do not know how he will restore us; I just know he will. There are numerous examples in the scriptures and history where God restores his people when they turn to him. Science and government will not be able to do this on their own. Pray morning, noon and night. Pray without ceasing.

Champions

Courtesy photo

The Resurrection Ravens eight-grade girls' basketball team finished the season with a record of 13-2 and won its post-season tournament. It's the second championship for this group of athletes. They also won the post-season tournament in sixth grade. Located in Bel Aire, Resurrection Catholic School plays in the Catholic Schools Activity League, which organizes extracurricular and athletic activities for Wichita-area Catholic and private elementary schools.

Beer

Continued from Page 1

gone out of business or was upgrading," said Ackerman. "And he had gone there and seen these big, overhead signs. They weren't just little plastic or metal signs — these were rather huge and almost ornate looking signs. He thought they were too good to go to waste and so he bought one and brought it over to the new establishment."

Ackerman recalls that Bel Aire was a dry township before issuing a license to Hammer and Nails. He said the license was actually denied the first time around because there was so much resistance in the community.

"There were some people in the community who felt like Bel Aire probably didn't need to have a beer joint," he said. "They even put some pressure on us as council members and I think somebody even got to me. I voted against it the first time."

The owner of the bar got a lawyer and argued that the business was properly zoned and put more pressure on the city to issue the license. They did the second time around. Johnson eventually also operated an ice cream store and a golf shop at the same location.

While some weren't fond of the thought of the establishment, Ackerman has good memories of one of the city's early gathering spots.

"Bel Aire didn't even have a gathering spot," he said. "There was nowhere to get coffee and there was no pizza place. So you could go there to get a burger, a coffee or a beer and visit. It was an establishment that you walked in and there were your friends and neighbors. When you drove by, you'd know who was inside because you got to know people's cars."

CHURCH HIGHLIGHTS

Christ Lutheran-ELCA

Christ Lutheran is at 53rd North and Hillside, across from Wichita Heights High School.

Worship services are held at 9 a.m. (contemporary) and 11 (traditional). Communion is offered at both services. Sunday School for all ages begins at 10:10 a.m.

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services will be at 7 p.m.

Easter Sunday services will be at 8:30 a.m. (contemporary) and 11:00 a.m. (traditional).

For more information about the church and its activities, find us online at www.christ-lutheran.org, on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/CLCwichita/ or call 744-1242.

Chad Langdon is the pastor.

Church of the Resurrection

Church of the Resurrection (Roman Catholic) is located at 4910 N. Woodlawn in Bel Aire.

Masses for the Lord's day are 5:30 p.m. Saturday and 8:30 and 11 a.m. Sunday. Weekday masses are at 8 a.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

Resurrection Catholic School has students from preschool through eighth grade.

The parish/school website is www.resurrectionwichita.com, and the telephone number is 744-2776.

The Rev. Michael J. Schemm is the pastor.

Community Bible Chapel

Community Bible Chapel is located at the corner of 45th North and Arlene.

If you have any questions about our church, please call Amy Smith at 323-2819.

Cornerstone Christian

Cornerstone Christian Church is at 5531 E. 37th North, Wichita KS 67220-2037. The phone number is 686-0208.

Sunday worship is at 10:15 a.m. A nursery is provided.

Wednesday study groups at 6:30 p.m. include adult studies, youth and Awana.

Cornerstone Christian Church will host a free family fun event from 4 to 6 p.m. the third Saturday of each month. See you there.

Pastor is Jim Rackham, and youth pastor is Tate Strasner.

Gospel Assembly

Located at 4230 N. Oliver in Bel Aire, Sunday services are 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Prayer service is at 7 p.m. Tuesday.

Praise and worship is at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Youth activities are on the first Saturday evening of each month.

Phone number is 744-1502. The Rev. Gary D. Green is the pastor.

Greenwich United Methodist

Greenwich UMC at 5500 N. Greenwich Road is one mile south of K-254 and five miles north of 21st North.

Sunday worship is at 9 a.m. with Life Studies for all ages from 10 to 10:30.

Pastor Paula Scott is available at the church each Wednesday for prayer and fellowship.

United Methodist Women meet at 10 a.m. the first Wednesday of each month and host a church brunch quarterly.

Special events are announced on the church sign, Facebook and by mailings. Please call to be added to our mailing list or email shage meister@sbcglobal.net.

Greenwich UMC missions support large local charities like Open Door, Grace Med or Youthville, as well as small charities like Flint Hills Therapeutic Riding Center and Wichita Children's Home, to name a few.

Like us on Facebook at Wichita Greenwich United Methodist Church. Call us at 744-0203.

Kechi United Methodist

Located at 4533 E. 61st North in Kechi. Sunday worship is at 9:03 a.m. (contemporary) and 11 (traditional), with Sunday school at 10.

Bingo is at 1 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month.

Men's Bible study is at 6:30 a.m. Wednesdays.

Our pastor is Michelle Gowin. Find us online at www.KechiUMC.org and "Like" us on Facebook.

The church phone number is 744-1221.

LifePoint

A fellowship of the Assemblies of God, LifePoint is located at 400 S. Abilene in Valley Center.

Life University/Sunday school meets at 9 a.m., with Kids Church at 10:30. There is no regular Sunday night service. For special activities, check online at www.lpcag.org.

Wednesday evening's Launch children's program is at 6:30 p.m., with Velocity Student Ministries for youth meets at 7.

Adult small groups meet throughout the community.

Senior pastor is Steve Rains. Youth pastor is Jacob Soyez. Children's pastor is Nathaniel Thurman. Call the church at 755-2331.

Risen Savior Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod

Located at 6770 E. 34th North in northeast Wichita.

You can reach us at 683-5538 or via email at postmaster@risensavior.net.

Sunday morning services in our Worship Center are at 8 and 10:30, with a nursery and Children's Church during the 10:30 service. We provide adult Bible classes and children's Sunday school beginning at 9:15 a.m.

During the Lenten season, Wednesday Evening Ministries are from 6:30 to 7:05 p.m.

Lenten service will be held from 7:15 to 7:45 p.m. on April 1.

Palm Sunday services are at 8 and 10:30 a.m. April 5.

Easter Family Fun will be from 3:30 to 5 p.m. April 5.

Maundy Thursday service is at 7 p.m. April 9.

Good Friday service is at 7 p.m. April 10.

Easter Sunday services are at 8 and 10:30 a.m. April 12.

Each month we provide options to participate in a variety of Bible studies, fellowship and service opportunities for all ages.

Find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter — search RisenSaviorICT! Find out everything Risen Savior has to offer on our website www.risensavior.net.

Senior pastor is Tom Harmon. Assistant pastor is Nick Cordt.

Saint Michael Western Orthodox Christian

Saint Michael's Orthodox Christian Church is at 2710 E. 61st North, Park City.

It is a congregation of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

Worship with us Sunday Adult Class at 9 a.m., morning prayer at 9:45 a.m. and Holy Eucharist at 10 a.m., and Wednesday Holy Eucharist at 6 p.m.

Men's Bible study group meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Monday.

Women's Bible study group meets at 10 a.m. on the second and fourth Friday.

Wednesday service is at 6 p.m.

Saturday Vespers are at 4:30 p.m.

The Very Rev. Dr. John Flora is archpriest and pastor. The Rev. Deacon Basil Anderson is assistant. Frank Tritschler is head chanter. Readers are James Finneran and Moses Rothenberger. Mrs. Sally Buxon is organist.

For more information call 734-6248 or go online www.saintmichaelorthodoxchurch.com. Email inquiries to jfflora@icloud.com.

Wichita Three Angels Seventh-day Adventist

Located at 4558 N. Hydraulic, Wichita.

Birger Draget is pastor. Sabbath school at 9:30 a.m. with worship service at 11.

For more information, go online at www.godscloset.com or on Facebook (Gods Closet - Wichita).

For God's Closet, call 778-0474.

Send your church's upcoming events and service times to legals@arkvalleynews.com or call 755-0821.

The Bel Aire Breeze

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HIGHLIGHTS

Bel Aire woman finishes med school

Jessica Fisher, M.D., of Bel Aire, graduated March 20 from KU School of Medicine–Wichita with her medical doctor degree.

Fisher

She will complete her residency training in pediatrics at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Neb.

— The Breeze staff

Agency owner receives Star award

Rachel Fenske, an American Family Insurance agency owner at 8343 E. 32nd North Suite 150 in Wichita, was recognized for providing an outstanding customer experience under the American Star Excellence in Customer Experience Certification Program.

"At American Family Insurance, we understand our customers deserve an exceptional and consistently outstanding experience, day in and day out, and our agency owners are on the front lines, honoring that commitment," said Ann Hamilton, American Family Insurance customer experience vice president. "The select group of agency owners who have attained the American Star Excellence in Customer Experience Certification have, according to their customers, consistently provided that outstanding experience and service that makes them clearly stand out among other insurance providers."

The service excellence distinction was determined through an evaluation process conducted under guidelines established through the company's American Star Excellence in Customer Experience Certification Program. The process consists of a customer satisfaction survey which measures customers' overall experience with their current American Family Insurance agency owner.

Fenske has been an agency owner for American Family since July 2006.

— The Breeze staff

Neighbor avoids fight

Silence won.

On Feb. 17, Bel Aire police responded to the 5900 block of East 45th North where a man reported that his neighbor was picking a fight with him.

The man said the neighbor drove a Jeep into his driveway, exited the vehicle and put his hands in the air, saying, "Let's go." The neighbor invited the man into his residence to fight him.

When the man did not respond, the suspect drove away.

— The Breeze staff

Student tows parked car

A student at Northwest Magnet High School became his own tow service.

On Feb. 20, Bel Aire police responded to the high school in the 5500 block of North Lycee where a student found a car parked in his reserved parking place.

Instead of getting assistance from school administration or the School Resource Officer, he hooked a tow rope to the vehicle and remove it from the parking place himself.

— The Breeze staff

Police try to ID pants-less man

Bel Aire police are trying to identify a man who allegedly went into a Bel Aire business with no pants on.

On March 7, police were called to the 4500 block of North Woodlawn where a woman reported that a customer was "touching himself" while at the register buying items.

The man then went out of the door and came back in without pants.

The store had surveillance footage that is being used to help identify the subject.

— The Breeze staff

Road rage ends in Valley

A road rage incident that started on I-135 ended in Valley Center early Feb. 25 when a woman reported another driver raised a handgun toward her.

Valley Center police were called to assist Park City police with an aggravated assault that was reported at 77th North and Broadway. The incident apparently started on the highway in Wichita. The woman told Valley Center police that as her vehicle approached the stop sign at 77th and Broadway, a man got out of his truck and approached her vehicle with a gun.

By the time police arrived, the suspect was gone.

No one was hurt.

— The Breeze staff

Man claiming to be brother arrested

A Wichita man was arrested on multiple charges after claiming to be his brother March 7.

Valley Center Police Officer Jerry Ezell stopped a vehicle for driving without headlights at 69th North and Meridian. During the stop, the driver gave his brother's name to police, according to a report.

Police later found out that wasn't the suspect's name.

Marcus Phillips was arrested on four Sedgwick County warrants, a warrant through the City of Wichita, driving with a revoked license, driving while a habitual violator, possession of marijuana and interference with a law enforcement officer.

— The Breeze staff

Man pours fuel on car, himself

A fuel-soaked man was taken to the hospital March 13 after Park City police said he threatened suicide.

Police responded to the 6500 block of North Kingman in Park City early March 13 after receiving a report of an assault. They found a man who soaked himself and his vehicle with fuel and threatened to set himself on fire.

Officers said the man had mental illness. He was taken to the hospital, and police are planning to serve a criminal complaint against him.

— The Breeze staff

Store employee deemed sober

Apparently, the convenience store worker was sober enough to ride a bicycle.

On March 8, Valley Center police were called to Kwik Shop at 110 E. Fifth. The store manager asked Officer Rasheed Berry if he could do a sobriety test on an employee, who apparently was suspected of being drunk.

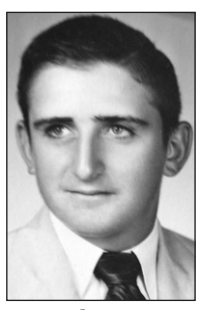
Berry watched the employee ride his bike down the block without any problems.

— The Breeze staff

DEATHS

CHARLES McNOLTY

Charles Edward McNolty, 82, of Newton, died March 19, 2020.


McNolty

He was born October 20, 1937, in Newton.

He was preceded in death by his parents Charley McNolty and Hazel Yocum; sister Patricia Hiebert and brother Michael McNolty. Survivors include daughters Julie (Chris) McLendon of Gainesville, Fla., and Diane (Tom) Tessendorf of Newton; sons Pat (Debbie) Manning and Jesse (Sandy) McNolty, all of Santa Paula, Calif., Steven McNolty of Olathe; sisters Charlotte Wiebe of Newton, Bonnie Siemens of Bel Aire and Peggy Williams of Kechi; brother Jerry McNolty of Olathe; many grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren; and many other family and friends.

A private graveside service will be held, with a celebration of life at a later date. Baker Funeral Home of Valley Center has charge.

VERSA RUNKLE

Versa Dee Runkle, 81, of Bel Aire, died March 13, 2020.

Runkle

She was born Feb. 24, 1939, in Kinsley to Ira and Hazel (Ricketts) West. She married Dan Everett Runkle on Feb. 8, 1959, in Dodge City. They were original Sonic Drive-In franchisees, at one point owning many restaurants. After retirement, they moved to Lake Texoma in Oklahoma and then to Aransas Pass, Texas.

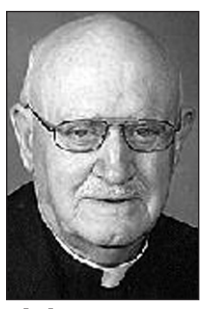
She was preceded by her husband of 60 years; her parents; sisters Vivian, Velma and Venita; and brother Virgil. Survivors are children Shawn Runkle (Ron Yuscavitch) of Aransas Pass and Kevin Runkle (Christa Henderson) of Derby; grandchildren Gavin Runkle and Shelby Runkle; great-granddaughter Eva Valdivia; special niece Tonya (Steve) Markel of Highlands Ranch, Colo., and their children, Josh and Miranda; and many other nieces, nephews and cousins.

A private family memorial service will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Catholic Care Center in Bel Aire. Downing & Lahey East Mortuary have charge.

REV. DERMOT TIGHE

The Rev. Father Dermot Francis Tighe, 89, of Bel Aire, died March 17, 2020.

He was born Aug. 4, 1930, to James and Sarah (McDermott) Tighe in Strokestown, Ireland. He was educated in Ireland and ordained as a priest June 6, 1954. He moved to the Dodge City Archdiocese and because a U.S. citizen in 1959. He was an army chaplain from 1967 to 1976, retiring from the Army in 1990. He returned to Great Bend and held numerous posts until retiring from the priesthood in 1998.


Tighe

He was preceded in death by his parents and siblings, James, Bridie, Mary, Tom, Annie, Alice, Brendan, John and Michael. Survivors include 33 nieces and nephews.

A private Mass hsa been held, and a public memorial Mass will be held at a later date. Memorials to the Birthright, Holy Family School Endowment Fund or Prince of Peace Parish, in care of Bryant Funeral Home, Great Bend.

Student

Continued from Page 1

organization, and we are in the Great Plains division. They worked with many of the universities in Kansas to find interns. The person who came into my classroom said the program would allow us to learn a bunch about running a business without too much financial burden on us. That really got me interested in the program."

Crayton went through an extensive interview process to be accepted into the program. He said he did a few interviews by video over the computer and spoke to former interns who were in the program to ask questions and get more information. His final interview was a face-to-face meeting in Kansas City.

Some Bel Aire residents may have already spoken to Bina in the first phase of the project. The first step is to gather leads in the community for folks who might be interested in having a paint job done on their property. Crayton's teams will be able to do interior and exterior painting in addition to staining decks or other woodwork.

"First is door-to-door marketing," he said. "That means going door-to-door here in Bel Aire and asking people if they're interested in a free painting estimate. After that, I call through that list of leads and try to set up estimates. That's the stage I'm in now, setting up estimates and making sales."

The next step in this involved process for Bina will be to hire and oversee his own painting team for the jobs. He said he is recruiting friends who are reliable and hard-working to form his painting crews.

"There are two painters per team and you can have as many teams as you want," he said. "Most people have one or two teams, depending on the amount of work. I'm not sure which one I'll go with yet. I'm going through a lot of my high school friends, just people I know who work hard and enjoy working. What they will actually have to do is go through the Sherwin Williams painting course before they ever get to work on a project. That's kind of how we manage quality and make sure it's all up to standards."

The organization will pay the team members for their work and Bina will get paid on commission. He said his team will be able to fulfill customers' specific needs for a variety of projects.

"We can customize every paint job exactly how the customer wants," he said. "We ask a bunch of questions when we do the estimates in order to ensure that they get the paint job they want. The overall quality and type of paint job is based on what the customer wants and what they're willing to pay."

Bina said the reception in Bel Aire has been good so far. He understands that some folks aren't fond of door-to-door salesmen but he appreciates those who take the time to hear about his unique opportunity.

"I haven't had too many angry people yet," he said. "So it has been really good. I appreciate when people will just come out and talk to me. Even if they're not interested in a painting estimate, I really appreciate when people will have a conversation."

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American Family Mutual insurance Company, American Standard Insurance Company of Wisconsin, American Family Life Insurance Company 6000 American Parkway, Madison, WI 53783. ©2013 06141301 06/13

City of Bel Aire

City of Bel Aire

All senior activities, rec center programs and community events have been CANCELED because of the coronavirus.

SAVE THE TRIP TO CITY HALL

In an effort to maintain social distancing and do what we can do to reduce the spread of the novel COVID-19, **City buildings have been temporarily closed effective March 18th. City services will remain operational by phone or e-mail.** Please see below for more details specific to what you may need.

During this time, the City has suspended utility disconnects and waived online utility convenience fees. The Police Department will be reducing a few non-essential services. However, they will continue to provide all essential law enforcement services to the public. If you are in need of police service, call 911.

We will continue to monitor the situation in order to best serve you as well as keep our employees safe.

Service You May Need	How To Accomplish Without Visiting City Hall
Paying Your Utility Bills	• Visit www.belaireks.gov to pay online • Call 744-2451 to pay over the phone. • Drop your payment in our drop box located in the north parking lot of City Hall.
Code Enforcement Issues	• Call 744-5231 to speak with our code enforcement officer. • Report a concern by visiting www.belaireks.gov.
Building Department: • Apply and pay for permit • Schedule Inspection • Contractor Licensing	Visit http://belaireks.gov/191/Permit-Applications and email completed permit to bldginsp@belaireks.gov. Call 744-2451 ext. 120 to schedule inspections. Class A, B, C & D License Application can be done online at http://belaireks.gov/FormCenter. Payment can be made by calling 744-2451.
City Clerk • General & Home Business License • Dog Licenses • Records Request	Visit http://belaireks.gov/FormCenter to submit any one of these.
Utility/Water/Sewer Concerns	Non-emergency concerns can be shared at http://belaireks.gov/FormCenter or by calling 316-744-2888. If there is a utility emergency, please call 316-761-6972 or 316-761-6973.
Vacation Watch Request	Visit http://belaireks.gov/FormCenter to fill out vacation watch request by our Bel Aire Police Department.
New Service for Utilities	Visit http://belaireks.gov/234/Water-Department. E-mail completed application & additional documents to abunton@belaireks.gov.
Public Safety	In need of police service, call 911.
Municipal Court Questions	Call 744-2451 ext. 134 or email municourt@belaireks.gov.
Recreation & Senior Services	Call 744-2700 or e-mail reccenter@belaireks.gov.
General Questions	Leave a message at 744-2451 and your call will be returned or visit www.belaierks.gov.

City of Bel Aire
LIFE'S better ON THE EDGE!

Prevent expensive home plumbing issues, like sewage backup:

Only flush toilet paper

DID YOU KNOW?

By June 1 every year, all lawn sprinkler systems in Bel Aire must be inspected for backflow prevention by a Bel Aire licensed contractor. Every 5 years, the backflow preventer must be rebuilt by a Bel Aire licensed contractor. Unused sprinkler systems require capping and inspection (call City Hall at 316-744-2451 for more info).

Backflow prevention is required by the State of Kansas and our major water supplier, the City of Wichita, to protect the drinking water supply. When backflow preventers fail, naturally occurring pressure changes in pipes may cause water to reverse direction, going *back* into the public water supply. This "backflow" water carries contaminants, including fertilizers, pesticides & pet waste.

To find a contractor, visit **belaireks.gov** and search "licensed contractors". For more information call City Code Enforcement at 316-744-2451.

Brought to you by the Utility Advisory Committee

Need help?
Want to help?
Call United Way at 2-1-1

If you're looking for help, want to volunteer, or have general questions, dial 211 to talk with a call specialist or text your ZIP code to 898-211. United Way is working with local and state agencies to have accurate, current information.

Materials Donations

United Way is accepting donations of hygiene products, bottled water and cleaning supplies. Donations will be distributed to people who have self-quarantines and those who are vulnerable, such as senior citizens. Please call 2-1-1 for details.

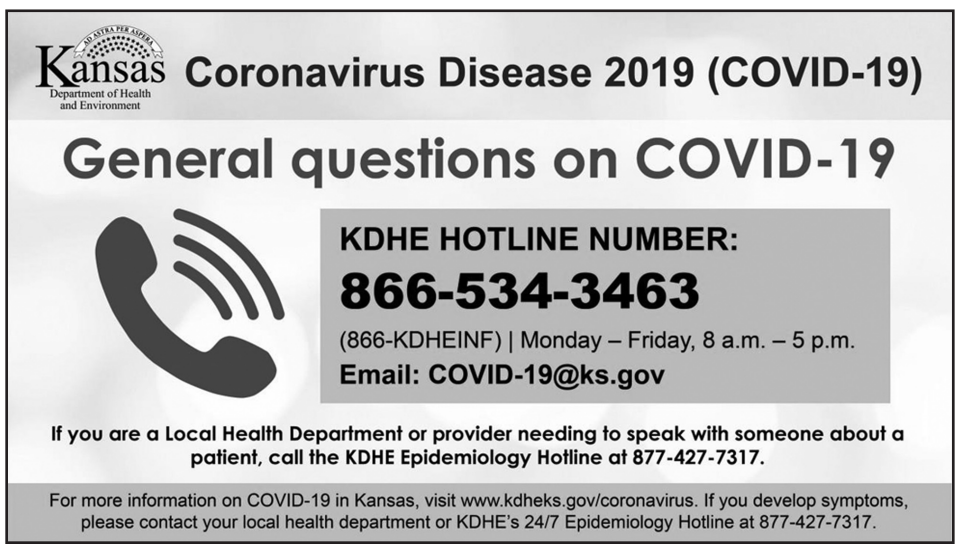
Monetary Donations

The United Way has set up a fund to help, as well.

There are three ways to donate:

1. Online: http://unitedwayplains.org/pandemicfund
2. Text: ICTResponse to 41444
3. Mail checks to: United Way of the Plains 245 N. Water St. Wichita, KS 67202

Please include "Pandemic Fund" in the memo.



Bel Aire Recreation

HELP WANTED

Now accepting applications for pool manager and lifeguards. Pool opens May 23. Please apply at ksgovjobs.com.

Now accepting applications for dance instructor. Classes held Thursday evenings and/or Saturdays. Please contact Ashley Sherwood (asherwood@belaireks.gov) if interested.

RECREATIONAL BASEBALL, SOFTBALL, T-BALL

For girls ages 5 through 12 and boys 5 through 11. Practices begin in May, games start after May 25. Registration deadline is May 2.

BEL AIRE POLICE REPORTS

Feb. 13— A man reported his new license plate was never delivered to his residence. The man checked on delivery and the license plate was apparently delivered to some address in Hutchinson.

Feb. 15 — A man in the 5900 block of East 45th North reported that he noticed his small dog was not in his backyard. He looked into the backyard of his neighbor and saw his small dog, deceased. There were two large dogs in the neighbor's yard. Officer Steele responded to the scene and retrieved the deceased dog and returned the small dog to its owner. Investigation is ongoing.

Feb. 16 — Officer Manuel was driving on Oliver when a vehicle going the opposite direction crossed the centerline and nearly struck his patrol vehicle in the 4500 block of North Oliver. Manuel turned around to pursue the vehicle and checked its speed at 53 mph in a posted 40 mph zone. He activated his emergency lights and sirens and the vehicle failed to stop. The driver eventually pulled over. Blaise Buhendwa Bigabwa of Wichita was arrested on a charge of DUI.

Feb. 16 — Officer Steele and a sheriff's deputy responded to a call of an auto theft in the 4700 block of North Krueger. The victim had been at church at 1800 N. Woodlawn when her vehicle was entered and a garage door opener was stolen. The victim of the auto larceny was then the victim of a burglary when the suspect went to the person's residence in Bel Aire and stole a vehicle from the garage. The vehicle was later recovered.

Feb. 16 — A woman in the 5700 block of North Lycee reported finding burn marks on her apartment balcony floor. She reported a white ashy residue on a black table, which is located on the balcony, with a heart shape drawn in the residue.

Feb. 17 — A two-vehicle wreck was reported at 53rd and Woodlawn. A 2007 Cadillac Escalade was traveling west on 53rd to south on Woodlawn when it collided with the 2017 Ford Transit, which was traveling north on Woodlawn. The driver of the Escalade was issued a citation for running stop sign.

Feb. 17 — A woman in the 6100 block of East Quail Ridge Court reported that she and her stepfather were involved in a verbal altercation over household chores. The woman said the situation had diffused and her stepfather left the residence for a while.

Feb. 17 — A man in the 5900 block of East 45th North reported his neighbor drove a Jeep into his driveway, exited the vehicle, and put his hands up, saying "Let's go." The man invited the victim to go to his residence to fight him. When the victim did not respond, the suspect drove away.

Feb. 17 — Officer Smithwick retrieved a gray stocking cap from a woman in the 4700 block of North Krueger in regards to a Wichita Police Department case.

Feb. 18 — A two-vehicle wreck was reported at 53rd and Rock Road. A 2018 Ford Escape was traveling west on 53rd when it ran the stop sign and collided with a 1996 Jeep Grand Cherokee traveling north on Rock Road. The driver of the Ford Escape was issued a citation for running a stop sign.

Feb. 18 — Officers were sent to check the welfare of a 17-year-old female who reportedly wanted to do self-harm in the 4200 block of North Rushwood Court. There appeared to be no emergency with the subject.

Feb. 19 — A female student in the 5500 block of North Lycee alleged sexual battery after being found in a restroom with a male student.

Feb. 19 — Officer Steele responded to the report of an animal at-large in the 4100 block of North Harding. There were two large dogs in the area. The dogs were harassing workers. Steele contacted the owner of the dogs and later issued her a notice to appear in court for allowing her dogs to run at-large.

Feb. 19 — Officers Gibson and Stearns were dispatched to a vicious animal call in the 4900 block of North Hedgerow. A man said he let out his two dogs and when he called the dogs back in, only one returned. The man went outside to look for his dog. The man realized that his dog was over in his neighbor's yard and his neighbor's dog had his dog in his mouth. The man and his wife went to the neighbor's residence and retrieved their dog. It was dead. Investigation is ongoing.

Feb. 19 — A woman in the 4400 block of North Auburn reported being stopped by a Kansas Highway Patrol trooper because the license plate on her vehicle did not come back to her car. The woman said the trooper seized the license plate. The woman said the tag must have been switched in the last week.

Feb. 20 — A man in the 6600 block of East Summerside Place called to report that his mother and father were arguing and throwing things. The husband and wife said they were arguing because the house was not ready for company that was arriving within the hour. Both parties said the conflict was verbal only.

Feb. 20 — A student found a car parked in his reserved parking place in the 5500 block of North Lycee. Instead of getting the assistance from school administration or the School Resource Officer, he hooked a tow rope to the vehicle and remove it from the parking place.

Feb. 20 — A two-vehicle wreck was reported at 45th and Woodlawn. A woman reported that while sitting at the stop sign at 45th and Woodlawn in her 2009 Toyota Highlander, her vehicle was rear-ended by another vehicle.

Feb. 23 — A white Ford Fusion was observed failing to properly maintain a single lane of travel and making an improper turn northbound in the 4600 block of North Rock Road. The vehicle was stopped and the operator displayed several indicators of impairment. After testing and evaluations, Miriah Nikala Lazos of Wichita was arrested on charges of DUI, driving with no insurance, failure to maintain a single lane and improper turn.

Feb. 23 — A woman in the 4400 block of North Mission reported that she found two white males wearing all black in her unsecured vehicle. She said when she confronted the suspects, they ran, entered a vehicle and fled the area.

Feb. 23 — A man in the 4300 block of North Stratford Court reported an unknown person entered his unsecured vehicle and rummaged through the glove compartment and center console. The man said nothing was taken to his knowledge.

Feb. 24 — A man from the 4700 block of North Krueger called the Bel Aire Police Department to report that someone was using his identity to get phone service.

Feb. 24 — A woman from the 5900 block of Forbes Court reported she forgot to lock her vehicle. It was rummaged through by an unknown person. She lost her credit cards, IDs, various clothing and sunglasses.

Feb. 24 — A man reported that a female friend threw candy at him and punched him multiple times in the 3800 block of North Oliver. The man invited his friend over to drink alcohol and settle an argument they have been having. The man said his friend drank too much about a month ago. She does not remember an embarrassing situation that occurred when she was inebriated.

Feb. 25 — A landlord reported evicting some men from duplexes she owns in the 3400 block of North Rock Road. The woman reported she received a call from one of the evicted men who began demanding his belongings. The man then threatened the landlord. The landlord got a protection-from-abuse order on the ex-tenant.

Feb. 25 — A 15-year-old student in the 5500 block of North Lycee reported a sexual battery by a 17-year-old student last year in Park City.

Feb. 25 — Officer Smithwick served the ex-tenant from an eviction with a protection-from-abuse order in the 4000 block of North Woodlawn. Smithwick explained the order to the man, and he was ordered to have no contact with the landlord or her business.

Feb. 27 — Lt. Foxx responded to a call of a subject threatening to do self-harm with a firearm in the 6800 block of East Odessa Court. Officers contacted the man who has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and was suffering from severe depression. He had been involved in a near-fatal car crash in November. The man was transported to St. Joseph for evaluation and the firearm was seized for safekeeping.

Feb. 26 — A woman in the 3900 block of Cozy Drive reported that a man posing as an officer from El Paso Texas named Johnathan Lee told her they found an abandoned truck on the side of the road. He said the truck was registered in her name. The fake officer was able to get the last four digits of the woman's Social Security number. The woman was given an identity theft packet. Officer Gibson called the number provided by the woman and spoke with a man who claimed he worked at the Social Security Administration. The man hung up on Gibson.

Feb. 26 — Sgt. Davis observed a red Chevrolet Silverado with the rear half of the truck sitting in a ditch in the 3800 block o North Harding. After making contact with the driver, it was discovered the man was carelessly backing out of a driveway when he went into the ditch. The driver did not have a driver's license. He was cited for driving with no driver's license and careless driving.

Feb. 29 — A man in the 5200 block of North Cypress Circle reported to the police that he had not heard from his wife and was worried. The man was worried because his wife is a recovering addict and sent a text message say "good bye." After calling a few AA group members, the man found out his wife was hanging out with a male friend. The woman said she did not wish to harm herself, but she was too drunk to drive home.

March 1 — Officer Steele and a Kechi officer responded to check a residence in the 4100 block of North Clarendon. The caller reported someone was in the backyard. When the officers got on scene, no one was located.

March 2 — Officer Steele responded to assist Chief Atteberry with two dogs at-large at 45th and Dundee. Steele transported a German Shepherd-collie mix and a pit bull to the Wichita Animal Shelter. Neither dog was microchipped and neither had tags.

March 2 — An unknown gray vehicle driven by a subject with the first name Kim struck a white Honda on the private property of Northeast Magnet High School in the 5500 block of North Lycee. The subject gave her first name and a phone number to the owner of the Honda before leaving.

March 2 — A student in the 5500 block of North Lycee purchased what she believed to be two marijuana food items from another student for $8 each. The item did not test positive for tetrahydrocannabinol.

March 3 — Officer Manuel stopped a white Ford E250 van for failing to stop at the stop sign at 11100 E. 53rd. The driver said the van was stolen and he was a juvenile runaway. The van was stolen from a business in the Sunflower Industrial Park about two hours before the car thief was stopped. The teenager was booked into the Juvenile Intake and Assessment Center.

March 3 — Lt. Foxx and Officer Steele responded to a call of a disturbance in the 4500 block of North Eagle Lake. A woman and her son had an argument. The son left the residence to cool off and was returning as the officers arrived. No criminal event took place.

March 3 — Officers were dispatched to a psychiatric call in the 3900 block of North Oliver. A woman reported her son swallowed clothes whitener and attempted to swallow aftershave. The youngster was alert, breathing and speaking normally. He said he had a bad day at school and claimed he had not actually swallowed anything, and did not wish to harm himself. EMS assessed the youth and stated his vital signs were within normal range. The mother declined EMS transport, and transported her son to ComCare on her own.

March 3 — The Bel Aire Police Department received a complaint regarding dogs that were barking in the 5600 block of North Lycee Court. While researching the call, it was discovered the owner of the dogs had not registered his dogs in Bel Aire. The man was cited for failing to register his dogs. The man was also talked to about his dogs barking and disturbing his neighbors.

March 3 — Officer Gibson assisted a Kechi officer on a traffic stop in the 5700 block of North Oliver. The search resulted in paraphernalia and marijuana being found. The suspect was cited and released.

March 4 — Chief Atteberry reported citing a driver for speeding and driving in violation of restrictions on her driver's license (corrective lenses) and a warning for failing to yield to an emergency vehicle, stop and remain. After committing a traffic violation in the 7500 block of east 45th Street North, the driver continued driving and would not pull over for 10 blocks. The driver had her fashion shades on, but was not wearing her glasses or contacts. She had to squint hard to read her citation. The woman said she was late for work and was in a hurry.

March 5 — A woman in the 5700 block of North Lycee reported a second woman removed their daughter from the residence without permission. The two do not have a legal custody agreement regarding the child. The reporting party reported no current or previous abuse or neglect issues regarding the other woman's ability to care for his child.

March 5 — Chief Atteberry reported citing a teenager for speeding, driving with no driver's license in possession and failing to yield to an emergency vehicle, stop and remain in the 4200 block of North Edgemoor. The student was running late for school and when he saw the red lights and heard the siren. He decided it was OK to drive two and one-half blocks at 43 mph within one foot of the curb so police officer could just pass him.

March 6 — A light blue Chevy Colorado was observed speeding in the 3900 block of North Oliver. The driver admitted to consumption of alcohol, and there were various indicators of impairment observed. Adam Michael Eilert of Wichita was arrested on a charge of DUI.

March 6 — A woman in the 4100 block of North Clarendon reported she arrived home and found her daughter's license plate had been stolen off of her car.

March 7 — A silver Honda Accord was observed with no taillights in the 3900 block of North Woodlawn. Officer Crouse stopped the vehicle and when he approached, he smelled the odor of burnt marijuana coming from the vehicle. The passengers and driver were removed from the vehicle and marijuana was located underneath the front driver's seat. The rear driver's side passenger said he placed the marijuana under the seat and took ownership of the contraband. The truthful passenger received a notice to appear in court.

March 7 — A woman reported a customer "touching himself" while at the register buying items in the 4500 block of North Woodlawn. The man went out the door and then came back in the front door without pants. The store had surveillance footage that is being used to help identify the subject.

March 7 — Officer Smithwick witnessed a maroon Ford Taurus with defective equipment in the 7700 block of East 53rd North. After stopping the vehicle, it was discovered the driver had a suspended driver's license. The man was cited for the violations.

March 7 — A man reported a cigarette left on his back porch caught his siding on fire in the 4800 block of East 44th. Sedgwick County Fire and Wichita Fire used a handheld fire extinguishers to put out the fire. The fire caused minor damage to the home.

March 9 — A woman in the 5100 block of North Colonial Avenue reported her grandson had been suspended from Wichita Heights High School. She reported an altercation took place after returning to their residence in Bel Aire. The woman said she had attempted to take a PlayStation from her grandson's room, and he became angry.

March 9 — A woman reported a blue vehicle with a California license plate pulled into her driveway in the 6100 block of East 41st Circle. She saw an unknown male exit the vehicle and place a paper onto her front door. When the vehicle drove away, she retrieved the paper, and found it to be an eviction notice for someone she does not know for a Wichita address. The woman was concerned. Officer Smithwick determined the person who lives in Wichita was served with the eviction and went to his landlord's old address and placed the eviction notice on the door.

March 10 — Officer Manuel assisted the Park City Police Department during a felony stop of a stolen vehicle in the 900 block of East 53rd. All three of the occupants of the stolen vehicle were detained.

March 10 — A man in the 4300 block of Bellmore called to report the license plate that should be on his 2005 Crown Victoria was missing. The man said his son, who typically drives the car, did not know where the tag was but told his dad that an officer told him about the missing tag the night before.

March 10 — A woman called the Bel Aire Police Department regarding a welfare check on her estranged mother. She said that her mother had not been heard from for 24 hours. Her mother had also missed an appointment. Officers went to home in the 5600 block of North Lycee and could not get an answer at the door. The apartment manager assisted the officers and opened the door to the apartment. The woman was found lying on the bathroom. She was transported in serious condition to Wesley Medical Center for treatment.

March 12 — A man in the 5300 block of North Cypress reported his son was emotionally agitated and possibly wanted to harm himself. Officers contacted the son who was in the garage smoking a cigarette. The son said he did not wish to harm himself or anyone else. The son said he was just upset that he was going through a custody battle for his daughter in Colorado.

March 12 — Officer Crouse stopped a vehicle with a temporary Colorado license plate for speeding in the 7000 block of East 53rd. The driver was cited for driving with a suspended license and expired registration. Delia Renee Rosenstiel of Wichita was arrested on a warrant. A juvenile passenger admitted to possessing packaged marijuana and a digital scale. The juvenile was booked into the Juvenile Intake and Assessment Center.

March 13 — A woman in the 6900 block of East Perryton reported her husband grabbed her hand and possibly broke her finger. After speaking with the husband, it was discovered that his wife grabbed his shirt (ripping it) which is when he grabbed her hand to stop her and received a scratch on the left side of his neck. Hanan M. Mustafa as arrested on a charge of domestic battery.

March 14 — Officer Steele responded to a call of an embezzlement in the 4800 block of North Battin. A man reported that a female friend paid his Sprint telephone in late February. In return, the man gave the woman permission to use his mo-ped. She apparently took the mo-ped to Oklahoma. When Steele spoke to the woman, he was told that she and the man had dated for about one month. She also said her ex-boyfriend owed her $200. There was also a flurry of threatening test messages sent by the man. The woman was advised to look into getting a protective order.

March 15 — A man in the 4800 block of Farmstead Court reported his wife as missing. She had not been seen since 11:30 p.m. the previous night. While Officers attempted to locate the woman, she showed up back home. The woman told the officers that she took a wrong turn to Emporia and ran out of gas.

Virus

Continued from Page 1

non-payment. New account applications are being accepted online.

The finance department is keeping track of additional expenses related to the pandemic in case federal relief funds become available. Additional cleaning and disinfecting protocols were implemented for city hall visitors, especially in high traffic areas.

Lasher asked the city council to move to level two of his plan on March 17. That step closed City Hall and the recreation center to the public. Staff will continue reporting and providing services. Payments will be accepted in the mail, dropbox or online. Convenience fees online will be waived for now to encourage customers to make online payments. Water connections or disconnections can also be handled through the website, emails or phone calls. Building permits will be handled by appointment and inspections will be handled through planning and zoning as usual.

Class A, B, C and D Licensing can be handled online and the city attorney will work with a judge for municipal court modifications. All tickets that don't require an appearance can be paid online, by phone or through the dropbox. If an appearance is required, the city is planning to postpone those hearings to later court dates.

"Level three is going to be something we are going to have to look at," said Lasher. "Particularly, some of these items now that schools are closing. We have these parents, just like all businesses, that are now impacted with their kids being home … so we'll have to kind of work through that. Or, if someone would get the virus here, at that point we would limit staff to coming in. We'd encourage them to work from home when we can and telecommunicate. Or we can isolate them if someone is a concern."

Lasher said essential employees would be expected to work at the building, from home or both, depending on each situation. Non-essential personnel would be provided access to the building to complete required tasks in the building.

Council member Joel Schroeder asked for Lasher's opinion on exactly what would constitute the city moving to level three. Lasher said the plan has changed a little with kids being released from schools.

"Originally, level three was only if someone (at the city) reported that they had the virus and then we would try to limit people working here at City Hall," said Lasher. "But now that we have the issue with kids being out and affecting parents — like I said, some of this we're actually going to be looking at (sooner). … But that was primarily if we needed people to work remotely, which we are up against now with schools closing, or if someone got the disease."

Lasher pointed out that the city has about 10 full-time employees and he feels like that is a manageable situation for them. He said it would likely be more difficult with a larger staff. Lasher also said that everything the city is doing with its services in level two would carry over to level three. He said the timeline is uncertain right now but believes the city will need a period to reintegrate its normal operations after the danger has passed.

"After this passes we've got to then turn around and spend, I think, some time and some leeway bringing everybody back around to the way our system and our requirements were," said Lasher. "I think at some point when we determine the pandemic is over and we can go back to our normal operations that we'll really have to start communicating with people. … We may have to work with people on late payments because they may have been laid off. There are several things we may have to talk through when we get to that point."

Lasher said the city would have to discuss how it would handle the first council meeting in April. He said they would look at options for having council members available remotely. Schroeder said he was glad the city was taking the issue seriously.

"The person I think of is a friend of mine who is 80, but he acts like he's 50," said Schroeder. "For the first time in his life he is having serious health problems. I think of myself being in the hospital with the virus — I'm probably going to live; I'm 36. … But if I'm taking up hospital beds so that one of my good friends doesn't get the care he needs as an elderly person, I just about would never be able to forgive myself if I took some years away from him. I think we need to be very serious about this. Not because we're all going to die, but because if we all get it at the same time, hospitals normally run about 90 percent full. … They can't handle us all getting sick all at the same time."

The council voted unanimously in favor of implementing level two and gave Lasher the authority to move to level three at his discretion.

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Lions support Isely's book fair

LEFT: The Bel Aire Club, represented by Lion James Schmidt, presents a check of $100 for Isely Elementary School to Andrea Brainard, Isely's library media specialist. The Bel Aire Lions Club provided volunteers and the backdrop for the Isely Elementary School Book Fair March 9 through 12. The club, with the direction of the Lions Jackie and Gary O'Neal, constructed the backdrop for the book fair and the Grandparents' Tea.

ABOVE: Pictured are Lions Jackie and Gary O'Neal, Lion Grace Kneil with faculty members and Brainard. During the last day, a Scholastic Books administrator was present and noted it was the "Best book fair she has seen for quite a while." She went on to praise the Bel Aire Lions who were involved in this school event.

Courtesy photos

Council

Continued from Page 1

he sent out emails to try and get more public input on the matter — and the public responded.

Carolyn Gunzelman and Bill Cook spoke to the council about the issue.

"I hope to remind you of the will of the people," said Gunzelman. "It should be a really simple procedure for you to see who might be that person — that the city would like to have in place. I supported Mr. Welch for his run for council because I had an opportunity to hear what his thoughts were on different decisions that affect the city. With the rest of the candidates who are up for consideration, I haven't had that opportunity. I feel like if you cannot appoint someone that the citizens have had the opportunity to hear… then maybe we need to have a special election so that opportunity is available for us."

"It just seems so obvious to me," said Cook. "It was said well — the will of the people. The first nominee is the person who was next in the vote count… nominated by a mayor who was clearly the selection of the people. It just seems so clear so I don't understand how this can be difficult. I think you owe it to the people to explain if you don't select the person the people voted as their choice for the empty seat."

Benage stated when he originally nominated Welch Feb. 4 that he did not agree with all of Welch's positions. He said his decision was in support of the voters' choice and said he welcomed contrasting ideas on the council. He asked the council members for more clarity on their positions on March 3.

"I was not wanting to open the discussion of each applicant as I believe that is bad form, but to a limited degree it looks like that is what we need to do," said Benage. "I'm opening up discussion but not making a nomination yet. I hope the discussion will give us enough sense about who we will support, and if there's a consensus on that applicant I will make that nomination. The feedback from citizens makes it clear they do not support former mayors or former city council members."

Council member Justin Smith was the first to speak up when the mayor asked the council to state who they would support for the vacant position. Smith said it was an easy decision for him.

"I think this is the issue I've received the most emails and comments on from citizens," said Smith. "As I read those emails and reflected on the comments in them, I thought back to when I ran for council. I made a commitment to listen to the people and listen to what citizens have to say. As this process has evolved and I've heard from so many citizens on this issue — combined with the results of the last election — I feel like I've heard the same thing overwhelmingly, twice. And that's that the people want John Welch to fill this open seat. Given that, and that it's my duty to represent the will of the citizens and what the people want, I don't think that I can vote for anyone except John Welch to fill this vacant council seat."

Council member Joel Schroeder said he also received a great deal of feedback on the matter. He said much of that feedback was specifically against having a former mayor appointed to the council.

"I had people emailing me and not even suggesting anyone — just saying it doesn't make any sense to have a former mayor on the seat," said Schroeder. "I'm imagining being a new pastor and having the old pastor that got voted out working his way onto the church board. I mean, I wouldn't even take the job."

Schroeder also said his stance has progressed on the matter. He seemed to agree with a lot of what Smith said.

"As time goes on, everyone keeps saying there was only one vote difference," said Schroeder. "I think if it were flipped between Diane and John, and Diane had lost by one vote, we once again would have the responsibility to put Diane on because that is what the people wanted. They not only spoke at the election, but with all the responses I've got — it's just been overwhelming. It's kind of hard to say no."

Wynn was one of the original votes against Welch and said that nothing had really changed her mind. She said many of the emails she received didn't tell her who to pick specifically — they just told her to do her job and get it done. She said that hurt her feelings because she is "usually that kind of a person." She also said it was time for the city to move on.

"Now, it's kind of like get somebody on here," said Wynn. "I'm tired of listening to it. Sorry, I'm tired of listening to it. You know, we've got other things that are way more important than whoever's rear-end is in that chair."

However, later in the meeting, Wynn delayed the vote a little longer. She stated that she needed more discussion after each of the other council members had already expressed their feelings on the matter.

Elshoff said he wanted it known that people didn't just start emailing council members randomly. He said they were responses to the email Benage sent and speculated that Benage emailed people who said were "presumably supporters" of his in the past. Elshoff said he appreciated the comments from Gunzelman that she felt the public didn't know enough about the candidates.

Elshoff also defended his original vote against Welch by saying that he misunderstood the process. He said it was his understanding that each of the candidates who applied for the position would be brought up for a vote. Elshoff assumed he would be able to vote for his preferred candidates at some point. He has also stated numerous times that he believes the discussions about the candidates should take place in open meetings so those discussions are accessible and transparent to the public.

Elshoff asked for a legal interpretation of the city's policy in an attempt to determine if Benage needed to present all the candidates who applied for the seat to the council for a vote. Benage said that was not his interpretation of the city's policy and city attorney Jacqueline Kelly said she agreed. She said she would not feel comfortable defining the term "nominate" as someone reading a list. She stated that the term implies support and credibility and that the mayor is staking his reputation when making a nomination.

"I came in Feb. 4 prepared to vote on all six candidates," said Elshoff. "I thought the mayor will nominate the first one and if they vote him in — fine. If it fails, then the next one. As I read the policy, you go down the list until you either fill the seat or exhaust the candidates. That's how I understood the policy to be implemented and I was surprised when that didn't happen."

Elshoff said he would defer to the city attorney's expertise on the matter and accepted her interpretation. Smith and Schroeder stated again that they would only vote for John Welch and that all other candidates would fail before the council. Smith motioned to reconsider Welch as a candidate for the seat and Elshoff seconded. That vote and the subsequent vote to confirm Welch to the open council seat both passed with 4-0 votes. Welch did not attend the meeting after being denied last time. He was sworn in March 17.

All members of the council were present. There was no executive session taken.

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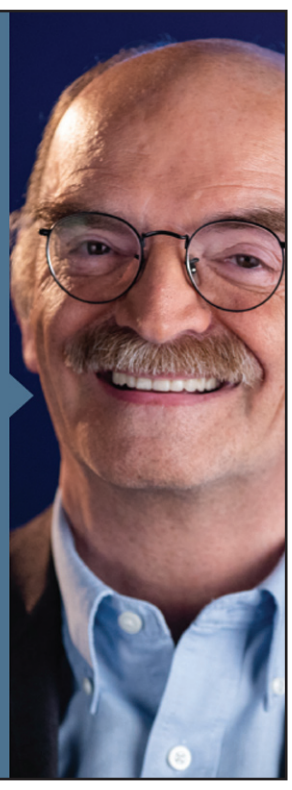
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