

Bullard ISD adopts budget, sets tax rate

From Staff Reports

At a special called meeting on Aug. 28, the Bullard ISD Board of Trustees adopted the 2023-24 school budgets and set the district's new tax rates.

Trustees approved a 2023-24 budget of \$30,529,400 before adopting a total tax rate of \$1.2492 per \$100 valuation. The adopted tax rate includes a maintenance and operation (M&O) rate of \$0.7492 and an interest and sinking (I&S) rate of \$0.50.

Compared to the 2022-23

adopted tax rate, the M&O rate decreased by \$0.1854 due to rising property values and state tax compression. The I&S rate remains at \$.50 due to the \$103 million bond package voters approved in May 2022.

Bullard ISD maintains an "A" rating from the Texas Education Agency.

"Throughout our budget development process, the information gained from district administrators, directors, and staff has been extremely helpful, as was feedback from discussions throughout the year with parents, students and

additional stakeholders," said Superintendent Dr. Jack Lee. "I believe the budget we are presenting to the community strongly reflects these efforts to seek and utilize meaningful input while also reflecting our district's Strategic Plan."

Lee also said although "the state legislature has a historic budget surplus and yet is providing schools no additional funding," the district remains committed to doing everything possible to attract and retain the best educators throughout the state.

"I hope this budget demon-

strates our commitment to our students, staff and community," he said.

Winona ISD board lowers tax rate

Last week, the Winona ISD Board of Trustees approved a tax rate that will be the lowest for district taxpayers in more than 20 years.

After a public hearing, the board unanimously approved a Maintenance and Operations (M&O) tax rate of \$0.66920, which combines with the Interest and Sink-

ing (I&S) tax rate of \$0.31350 for a 2023-24 total tax rate of \$0.98270, down \$0.23 cents from the previous year's rate.

"I am grateful for the continued growth in Winona ISD, this growth has allowed for a lower tax rate for many years in a row, the 23-cent decreased tax rate will give Winona ISD taxpayers a huge relief for rising property values," said Damien Miller, WISD Superintendent. "The Winona ISD Board of Trustees continues to do an amazing job of creating fiscally sound budgets and have wisely used our

taxpayer's dollars to support the children of Winona ISD."

In Texas, school district M&O tax rates are guided by the state government based on a formula. Winona ISD's fast growth has played a beneficial role in this formula, as increasing property values have compressed the M&O tax rate, according to Winona ISD Director of Finance, Sheila Bowie.

The second part of the total tax rate, the I&S portion, is levied to service debt approved by voters as part of bond elections.

UT Tyler med school welcomes Sports Medicine Fellowship class

From Staff Reports

The UT Tyler School of Medicine recently welcomed a new cohort of students, Dr. Pauline Skowron and Dr. Alex Wang, to its Sports Medicine Fellowship program.

Skowron, a graduate of Poznan University of Medical Sciences in Poland, completed her residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at East Carolina University. Wang, who attended St. George's University School of Medicine in Grenada, completed his residency in Family Medicine in Aurora, Illinois.

The Sports Medicine Fellowship is led by Dr. Rebecca Peebles, program director, and Dr. R. Michael Galbraith, associate program director. The close collaboration between UT Tyler Athletics and the UT Health East Texas Sports Medicine clinic ensures that the program provides comprehensive training and expertise in the field of primary care sports medicine, equipping physicians with the knowledge and skills to diagnose, treat and prevent sports-related injuries, among other conditions. According to Galbraith, Skowron and Wang began the program on July 1.

"Their experiences will further enrich our program and strengthen our commit-



(Left to right) Sports Medicine Fellowship's assistant program director, Dr. R. Michael Galbraith; sports medicine students, Dr. Alex Wang and Dr. Pauline Skowron, and program director Dr. Rebecca Peebles

ment to delivering exceptional care in the field of sports medicine," he said. "We are proud to collaborate with our partners at UT Tyler Athletics and UT Health East Texas to provide comprehensive training and expertise, equipping our graduates to serve the needs of the region."

In addition, the inaugural class of Sports Medicine Fellows graduated this past

June and passed boards. This milestone marks an important achievement for the program and the first class of board-certified Primary Care Sports Medicine physicians, Drs. Joe Volpi and Alex Jacobsen.

"We are thrilled to celebrate the graduation of our inaugural class of Sports Medicine Fellows," said Peebles. "These fellows have

demonstrated our values of excellence and perseverance in their pursuit of sports medicine. They will undoubtedly make significant contributions to the field of sports medicine."

Volpi plans on returning to his home in Oregon to complete another fellowship

at the University of Oregon with a focus on running medicine and Division 1 athletics. Jacobsen recently signed a contract to stay with UT Health East Texas as part of the fellowship's faculty team and to help start an outpatient rehabilitation department. He will perform EMG/

NCS, diagnostic ultrasound, ultrasound-guided injections and be a team physician for UT Tyler Athletics.

"Starting fellowship during the first year of the program provided a unique opportunity to foster relationships with the community, build out the Sports Medicine Department, and get plugged in from day one with teaching and research," said Jacobsen. "Growth within Tyler, East Texas, and the Health Science Center made staying on as faculty an exciting prospect, and I hope to contribute to the community and the fellowship for years to come."

The graduating fellows have successfully completed an intensive training curriculum, which encompassed a wide range of sports medicine disciplines, including musculoskeletal medicine, exercise physiology, orthopedics, sports nutrition and concussion management. Throughout their fellowship, they gained hands-on experience working with athletes of all levels, from recreational to professional.

For more information about the UT Tyler School of Medicine Sports Medicine Fellowship, visit uthtct.edu/sportsmedfellowship/.

Judge blocks Texas law that would erode cities' power

BY JOSHUA FECHTER
The Texas Tribune

A sweeping new Texas law aimed at undermining the ability of the state's bluer urban areas to enact progressive policies is unconstitutional, a Travis County judge ruled Wednesday.

State District Judge Maya Guerra Gamble halted the law — House Bill 2127, which opponents nicknamed the "Death Star" bill — just days before it was slated to take effect on Friday.

The state is expected to appeal the ruling.

The Republican-backed law aims to stop local governments from enacting a wide range of progressive-leaning policies by barring cities and counties from passing local ordinances that go further than what's allowed under broad areas of state law.

Local officials balked at the law's passage earlier this year, blasting it as a massive, vague and possibly unconstitutional power grab by the state that would prevent them from meeting local needs and needlessly disrupted how the state has operated for nearly a century. Houston, later joined by San Antonio and El Paso, sued the state last month alleging that the law conflicts with a portion of the state constitution that allows cities to enact their own laws.

During a court hearing Wednesday morning, lawyers for the state argued that such a law is within the state's purview. But the judge sided with cities.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner celebrated the ruling.

"The Governor's and Legislature's ongoing war on such home-rule cities hurts the State and its economy, discourages new transplants from other states, and thwarts the will of Texas voters who endowed these cities in the

Texas Constitution with full rights to self-government and local innovation," Turner said in a statement. "This self-defeating war on cities needs to end."

The law — carried during this year's regular legislative session by state Rep. Dustin Burrows of Lubbock and state Sen. Brandon Creighton of Conroe, both Republicans — marked Texas Republicans' most expansive attempt yet to weaken local governments in their yearslong campaign against the state's major metropolitan areas, which account for most of the state's economic growth and often are governed by Democrats.

"The judgment today by a Democrat Travis County District Judge is not worth the paper it's printed on," Burrows said after the ruling. "The Texas Supreme Court will ultimately rule this law to be completely valid. The ruling today has no legal effect or precedent, and should deter no Texan from availing themselves of their rights when HB2127 becomes law on September 1, 2023."

Gov. Greg Abbott and business lobbying groups, chiefly the National Federation of Independent Business, had long sought such a law — complaining of a growing patchwork of local regulations they argue overwhelmingly burdens businesses.

"Texas small businesses are the backbone of our economy," Abbott wrote on X, the social media platform previously known as Twitter, during Wednesday's court hearing. "Burdensome regulations are an obstacle to their success."

Just how many local ordinances would become illegal under the new state law remains unclear owing to how broad it is, city officials and progressive groups have said.

But there are some concrete examples.

The law, for example, prevents cities from passing local ordinances that require employers to provide paid sick leave to their workers — as Austin, Dallas and San Antonio have attempted, though courts blocked those laws before they could take effect. It would also bar cities from enacting protections for tenants facing evictions — at a time when the number of eviction filings in Texas' major cities exceeds pre-pandemic levels. And as Texas increasingly endures brutal summer heat waves, the law wipes out mandatory water breaks for construction workers passed by Austin and Dallas.

Wednesday's ruling "allows critical, life-saving local policies to remain in place ... reflecting the importance of local leaders being able to respond to their communities' urgent needs," a coalition of progressive and labor groups including the Texas AFL-CIO and Local Progress Texas said in a joint statement.

The law seems to be having the chilling effect that lawmakers intended. After it passed, San Antonio officials scaled back a proposed water break ordinance of their own.

"When you get right down to it, this law is anti-democratic," San Antonio City Council Member Teri Castillo said. "It takes the power and freedom away from everyday Texans who deserve to have their voices heard. And it directly contradicts the values that I know Texans hold true."

Even as local officials have increasingly pinpointed some of the ordinances that would become illegal, the true scope of the new law remains unknown. City leaders believe it will take several lawsuits to figure out which local ordinances can stay on the books.

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