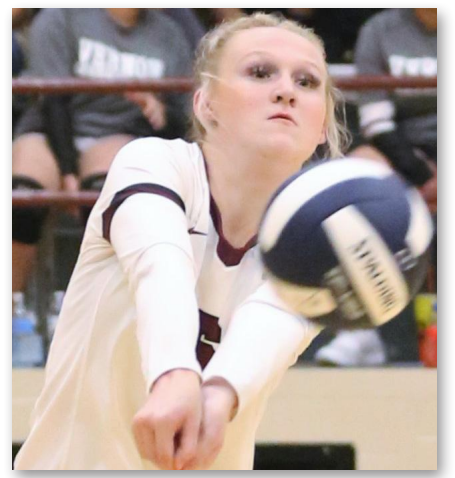


# THE VERNON DAILY RECORD

WEDNESDAY | SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

Lady Lions battle Abilene Cooper to the wire.

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## City demands transparency from BDC

DANIEL WALKER  
VERNON RECORD

Concerns by the Vernon City Commission regarding the Vernon Business Development Corporation continue to boil over. Commissioners have questioned the BDC's transparency, attention to the website and amount of work being done by staff.

The issue first came to light in the July 27 Vernon City Commission meeting. The BDC had submitted its annual budget, along with budget revisions, for the city commission to approve. A usually rubberstamp vote was tabled, with Mayor Pam Gosline saying there were too many unanswered questions for the financial matters to be approved. BDC staff were asked to meet with the commission.

In the August 24 city commission meeting, BDC Administrative Assistant Jan Bonner and Managing Consultant Rick Hardcastle brought the budget back before the commission – and they faced a barrage of questions.

Commissioner Don Aydelott questioned Bonner on several lines of budgeted items, and why there wasn't more detail. For instance, he said Professional Fees was budgeted at \$82,000. He asked what that entailed, and was told the item included the pay for Hardcastle as managing consultant, some computer fees, the audit, and other items.

"Is the (BDC) board privy to the breakdown?" Aydelott asked, and was told yes.

The city commission also questioned what projects the BDC was involved in, and how proactive they were in identifying and working with potential clients. Gosline said it appeared that the BDC operated under a veil of secrecy and she felt they needed to answer to the city commission and provide regular updates.

"I really want our board informed; we want the BDC, but we want transparency," Gosline told the BDC staff.

"We do expect transparency with the board," commissioner Don Aydelott added. "There needs to be a lot more openness with the board."

Bonner replied that the BDC was required to work in secrecy regarding what businesses may have reached out for potential support. Aydelott said he understood that, but some measure of transparency was needed, even without giving specific details.

Gosline also took issue with the BDC website being unusable, and it had been for years.

She asked how anyone interested in relocating a business to Vernon would want to come if the website was the impression they had of the community's support for business. Bonner said the website was a disaster and that it was her fault that it was not maintained.

"Get the website fixed," Aydelott said.

During the course of the meeting it was mentioned in passing that there was a separate fund the BDC maintained, and that it was not part of the annual budget the BDC submitted to the

SEE BDC, PAGE 6



### VHS Homecoming royalty

Vernon High School will hold its 2021 Homecoming at halftime Friday of the the football game against Burkburnett. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. VHS royalty includes (front row) Blakely Schur, Jasmine Jackson, Lillian Jones, and Audrey Hodges, (back row) Jazlynn Leija, Carli White, Tana Conner, and Reina Quilodran.

## Vernon ISD bond explained

Dear Vernon ISD Resident:

On Thursday, August 12, 2021, the Vernon ISD School Board called a bond election for \$40 million. The board and administration worked with a number of bond committee members to develop this bond pack-

FROM VISD



Sup. Jeff Byrd

age. Together, they reviewed the district's facilities, demographics, equipment, and educational spaces. The bond committee proposed this bond package to the Vernon ISD Board of Trustees and it will go to the voters on November 2, 2021.

The district's financial advisor has determined that there would be a \$0.22 school tax rate impact to finance this bond. For the average household of \$100K, that would be a monthly increase of \$13.75.

WHAT WILL THE BOND INCLUDE?

- A new elementary School:
  - Serve grades 2-5 for a total of 650 students
  - Science labs, Music room, & Art room
  - Gymnasium that will also serve as a storm shelter
  - Cafeteria will house a performance platform
  - Age appropriate play areas
  - Parking for the building will also serve event parking at the adjacent stadium

SEE BOND, PAGE 2

## VISD trustees get update on Covid impact

DANIEL WALKER  
VERNON RECORD

The Vernon Independent School District board of trustees held their September meeting on Monday at the VISD Administration building. The board barely had a quorum, with just four in attendance including Emory Byars, Carrie

Hawkins, Patrick Parmer and Tom Scott.

Superintendent Jeff Byrd updated on the latest Covid-19 impacts for the district. He said the numbers for the previous two weeks had been low, but were now "picking back up."

He said he had discussed the school's re-

sponse at length with Dr. Travis Lehman, Wilbarger County's health authority.

He said the district had not been allowing overnight field trips, but that Dr. Lehman was okay with allowing those again.

"He does not foresee any of those (restrictions) helping control Covid," Byrd said, adding he

would keep the restriction in place if the board wanted it. They indicated they were okay easing the restriction.

Byrd said that Dr. Lehman stated he would contact the district if he saw a "massive spike," and they would then reevaluate policy.

SEE VISD, PAGE 2

### DEATHS:

Amelia Hall, Dallas  
Mary Lynn Abernathy, Vernon  
Ruth Sanders, Vernon

Page 2

For He Himself is our peace.

Ephesians 2:14

### NEWS POINTS

#### See You At The Pole, Rally

See You at the Pole prayer will begin at 7 a.m. Wednesday at Vernon Middle School and Vernon High School campuses.

All area youth groups are invited to the Saw You at the Pole Rally beginning at 6:45 p.m. Wednesday evening at the Second Baptist Church. There will be live Praise and Worship, and Spoken Word Ministries will bring a powerful message for the youth.

#### Hidden Treasure hours

Hidden Treasures, the thrift store operated by the North Texas State Hospital's Volunteer Serves Council, has changed its hours.

The store is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. All proceeds of the store go to benefit hospital patients and support hospital activities.

#### Rep. Jackson's Pro-Veterans initiative passes the House

On Monday night, language authored by Congressman Ronny Jackson (TX-13) that will reauthorize and extend the CHIP IN (Communities Helping Invest through Property and Improvements Needed for Veterans) Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives as part of a larger package, the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2021. The legislative package passed by a vote of 423-0 on the House Floor.

The CHIP IN Act was originally passed by Congress in 2016, creating a pilot program that encouraged public-private partnerships for VA construction projects. The program authorized five projects, but only two have been approved.

Congressman Jackson's original legislation was introduced in July to extend the program for an additional five years and require the VA to submit a report to Congress to ensure oversight and transparency of the program.

"Nearly a quarter of all veterans return from military careers to live in rural areas, including many communities in TX-13. Yet, too often, VA facilities in rural areas are not prioritized for modernization projects," Jackson said. "My language helps address this issue by allowing the VA to accept donations from non-federal entities for major construction projects. I am grateful to my colleagues, and the House Veterans Affairs Committee staff, for working with me to pass this important legislation."

Busy Saturday planned in Downtown Vernon. Page 12A

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