

Water

Continued from Page 1

more information to study the feasibility of the project. Dillingham said Whitehouse needs to know by June 1.

"That's just not enough time for a project of this magnitude to be decided upon so quickly," said Mayor A.W. Hines.

Council members were invited to a workshop held after presstime on Tuesday, but no action would happen until a later council meeting.

Bullard City Manager Larry Morgan said that while he's not convinced aquifers are drying up it's long-term solutions the council is looking at.

"A total dependency on wells isn't good," Morgan said. "Just like on everything else the council is looking at infrastructure wise, we are all looking for a broader base and long-term goals."

He did, however, say it's certainly something both he and the council feel is worth looking into.

"Water is going to become more expensive," he said. "You have to have alternatives."

The agreement would consist of three cities - Bullard, Whitehouse and Troup - working cooperatively to get 4 million/gallon with 2 million going to Whitehouse and the other split 50-50 with Bullard and Troup.

If they get the water, they will likely spend millions of dollars to build a pipeline to a treatment plant near Troup, and distribute it to the three cities from there.

State officials say such moves, especially by smaller cities, are another indication that water is the "new oil."

"You're seeing utilities and communities - even as small as 500 people - that now have an understanding of what their water supply situation is going to be over the next 50 years, whereas before, that never would have happened," said Bill Mullican, a planning administrator for the Texas Water Development Board.

Mullican, who has testified before Congress about growing concerns over limited water supplies nationwide, said the 2007 state water plan projects that 45 percent of Texans won't have enough water under drought conditions in 2010 if the state doesn't implement the projects outlined in the plan.

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Texas Water Development Board

And while large cities are coveting the supplies in Texas lakes, small towns are realizing that they must compete in the same market.

In the case of Whitehouse, Troup and Bullard, last year's drought brought more to the forefront of city leaders the precarious nature of the aquifers that serve as the chief water supply.

After Whitehouse officials, leery of having little control over rates, backed away from a 30-year contract to buy treated water from Tyler, they pursued groundwater studies and decided they have to have another water source to meet long-term needs.

Dan Jackson, a consultant for Whitehouse, said the three cities realize they can cut costs by working together.

The Angelina-Nacogdoches Water Control and Improvement District, which governs Lake Striker, now sells about 25 percent of its available water to TXU.

A second power plant has optioned about 33 percent, and the city of Henderson about 22 percent. That leaves about 20 percent, or 4 million gallons per day.

The district's board of directors agreed early this year to start discussions that could lead to Whitehouse, Bullard and Troup purchasing an option on the remaining water.

Either way, Whitehouse officials seem intent on following the steps being taken in communities across the state that are competing for the same limited supplies.

"Every city from Dallas and Houston on down to even unincorporated communities, is looking when possible to nearby surface water," Mullican said.

"The lines are crossing such that we no longer have more water than we need," he said. "We are going to have to develop new water supplies, because we are in the red."

Cooperation would be through a contract to protect all parties - the city of Bullard as well as the other cities, Morgan said.

"It's just good business," he said.

The Whitehouse council also discussed a rate study or

combination rate/ impact fee study to be conducted by Dan Jackson of Economist.com.

Whitehouse and Troup have entered into a 10-year water option contract, reserving the rights to almost 4 million gallons of water per day. With a \$150,000 annual contract in place, the negotiation for cost of water and details of pipeline/plant construction and timeline are the next steps. But Dillingham said Troup only needs 1 million gallons per day, and he wants Bullard to have the opportunity to use the rest.

Whitehouse Mayor Jake Jacobson asked what needed to be done to be ready for the next step, and Stoke and Associates spokesperson Neal Holland said there were three keys: determine how much water you want, determine the size of water plant and start negotiations with Lake Striker for a water purchasing price.

In considering rate and impact fee studies, Jackson said the information gathered would help the city achieve what's best for the rate payers in terms of plan alternatives, pricing and implementation.

Although a rate study alone would normally cost about \$25,000, Jackson said it could be done for Whitehouse for \$15,000 because his work with the city had already provided a lot of information that would normally be part of the study.

An impact fee study would also be about \$25,000, but he said the two together could be done for roughly \$23,000.

Jackson said a question to consider in the need for higher development fees is who should pay.

"Is it the people coming in or the people already here?" he asked. An impact study would help the city determine a maximum impact fee and then allow the council to set a price no higher than that for developments to pay with connection. Jackson said the average for Texas was \$2,300 per connection.

Jackson also said the fees for the studies could be deferred until the beginning of the next fiscal year, as they are not currently budgeted items, and that the cost of the studies could be factored into any development fees that are assessed.

BROOK HILL HONORS ACHIEVERS



Approximately 3000 students from across Texas qualified for the 2007 Private School Interscholastic Association (PSIA) Academic State Meets that were held on April 28 and May 5 at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. The purpose of the PSIA academic program is to use competition to further develop students' higher order of thinking skills. "Inspiring student achievement through academic competition remains our primary goal," said Dr. Patricia Walters, PSIA executive director. "In addition, PSIA serves to honor and reward academic achievements, while ensuring that the overall purposes of the program are to use competition as a tool in the preparation of students for citizenship and successful adulthood and to provide incentive to excel in academics." The following Brook Hill students competed at the state meet: back row, from left, Daniel Sharpless: first in reading writing; Graham English: fifth in vocabulary; Kelly Kendrick: sixth in spelling; Edwin Link, vocabulary; front row, from left, Alex Dean, science; and Owen Key, sixth in vocabulary. Not pictured are: Ross Lee, maps, graphics, charts and Aaron Stevens, vocabulary.

Grads

Continued from Page 1

without successful TAKS completion.

The seniors have another chance to take the test but not before graduation on Friday.

"We're going to take another look at district policy in June," said BISSD trustee John Alexander.

And while that doesn't help the class of 2007, if the TAKS remains as is, it may change graduation in future years.

"It's just the rules," said assistant principal Scott Franks. "And we can't alter or change the rules without the board doing so."

One problem, Alexander said, is that some of the parents said they were aware of the problem since October. But they didn't give us - as a board - enough time to make a well-thought out decision," he said. "I wish they had come to us sooner with their concerns."

A record high 40,182 students from the Class of 2007 failed all or part of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills graduation exams, which cover math, science, social studies and English.

The students first take the exams during their junior year and have five opportunities to pass.

Texas Education Commissioner Shirley Neeley encouraged the students to keep studying and try again this summer.

"We know that it is heart-breaking for students to miss graduating with their class," Neeley said. "I know the immediate concern deals with commencement activities, but students also need to keep their eye on the ultimate goal - earning a high school diploma."

Overall, 84 percent of seniors passed all four of the graduation exams.

Passing rates on the exit-level exams dropped in math, science and social studies. English scores were the same as last year.

The 16 percent of seniors who failed is up from 13 percent last year. Next year could

be better, however, as juniors taking the graduation exam this spring passed at a 69 percent rate, an increase from last year's juniors.

About 3 million Texas students in grades three through 11 took TAKS exams this spring. Statewide, 70 percent of students passed all tests taken, up from 64 percent last year.

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