

CLAY COUNTY LEADER

In the Spirit of the Pioneers, est. 1932

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2015 | \$1.00

ALMANAC

	THURSDAY 11/12 Mainly Sunny High: 67 Low: 38
	FRIDAY 11/13 Mainly Sunny High: 66 Low: 39
	SATURDAY 11/14 Partly Cloudy High: 64 Low: 45
	SUNDAY 11/15 Showers High: 62 Low: 50
	MONDAY 11/16 AM Showers High: 69 Low: 51
	TUESDAY 11/17 Partly Cloudy High: 67 Low: 42
	WEDNESDAY 11/18 Mostly Sunny High: 62 Low: 42

Weather RECORDS

DATE	HIGH	LOW
Tuesday, Nov. 3	79	56
Nov. 4	71	60
Nov. 5	83	64
Nov. 6	70	49
Nov. 7	68	49
Nov. 8	66	42
Nov. 9	69	50
Rainfall this week	0.40	
Rainfall to date	36.34	
Rainfall 2013	21.00	
Rainfall 2012	21.62	
Rainfall 2011	23.16	

Clay County 50 YEARS AGO

The Lake Arrowhead basin area in southwest Clay County gained two additional oil ventures this week - one of them a wildcat.

The wildcat was staked by A.L. Payne of Bridgeport and termed the No. 1 T. J. Pace. It is located about one and one-quarter miles south of the new Halsell, West (Vogtsberger) Field which was opened by M.O. Rife Jr., Fort Worth and Clay County independent oil operator.

The other venture staked this week, and drilling Wednesday Nob. 10, is the M.O. Rife Jr. No. 19. The venture is the fourteenth Vogtsberger sand test Rife has staked in the lake basin.

The No. 19 Halsell spots 3720 feet from west and 3286 feet from north lines of J Rogers survey A-390.

The venture is 1320 feet southwest of Rife's No. 8 Hal-

See **HISTORY** Page 3

PETROLIA SPORTS page 5

Leader INDEX

Obituaries	2
Classifieds	12
Real Estate	13

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The case against wind farms

CCAWF states case in public meeting at Rock Barn

Martin Aldridge
Clay County Leader

The Rock Barn in Henrietta was standing room only for the first public meeting of Clay County Against Wind Farms (CCAWF) held Tuesday night, November 3.

The only wind farm currently located in Clay County is the 119-turbine Shannon project, which is scheduled to begin operation in January of 2016. However, inquiries by wind energy agents in the Bluegrove and Petrolia areas has led opponents - many of which were against the original Shannon project - to begin campaigning early to make sure no more wind farms are built in the county. The Tuesday night meeting was one of the first steps, along with a website - www.CCAWF.org - stating their reasons for opposing wind energy.

Officially, the county hasn't been approached by any wind energy company with any requests regarding future wind farms.

"Before we change the county, we need to think about it very hard," said Dr. Paul Burns, one of the featured speakers at the event.

Burns, a retired physician, has been working hard to spread the word about the drawbacks of industrial-sized wind energy projects in Texas. Burns became concerned with wind farms when companies were considering installing them in Brown County, which his family has deep ties with. Though Brown County has so far remained free of wind farms, neighboring counties have allowed them, and one now abuts the Brown County line.

According to Burns, counties benefit very little from wind energy projects, which he feels destroys the natural beauty of the countryside, causes health problems, devalues property of small and mid-size land holders nearby, and the money promised by wind energy companies for counties and school dis-



A view of the Shannon wind farm in south Clay County from the Scaling ranch, approximately three miles away.

Commissioner seeks public input

Two Clay County Commissioners were in attendance at the meeting last Tuesday sponsored by Clay County Against Wind Farms.

Precinct 4 Commissioner Richard Keen said he was not there in any official capacity, but only to listen and get information regarding wind farms.

He said the commissioners have not been officially approached by anyone concerning future wind farms, but he said he is aware that some residents have been getting calls regarding leases. He said the commissioners' court was unlikely to have any involvement concerning wind farms until and unless the wind energy company requests a tax abatement.

"I get calls every day" about possible future wind farms, he said. "Not all are against

them, but I'd say most are." Keen, who lives in Bellevue, said "I'm a little concerned about property values myself. To me, there's nothing pretty about them."

He suggests, however, residents visit the Shannon project and spend some time there to judge for themselves how a wind farm might affect them if one is built nearby, or even whether such a project is something residents feel they want or need in the county.

Keen said he recently checked with the treasurer in Archer County, which has had wind farms for years, and said they are receiving at most about \$184,000 a year for one wind farm, and somewhat less for the others. Meanwhile Clay County is supposed to get around \$8 million over the next 10 years, he said.

"I hope that's true," he said.

"I've seen the contract and that's what it says."

On the other hand, he said anyone considering signing a lease "should think about what it's going to do to your neighbors and community."

Meanwhile Keen said he'd like to hear more from residents about how they feel about wind farms, both those who support and those who oppose them.

The other commissioner in attendance, John McGregor of Precinct 3, released the following statement regarding the responsibilities of commissioners concerning wind farm projects.

"The Clay County Commissioners do not have anything to do with the land leases for any windfarm project. If the land owners do not want a

See **INPUT** Page 10

who are looking for a rural setting to "get away from it all."

He was also critical of Facebook's purchase of the energy from the Shannon project, owned by Alterra Energy of Canada, for their new data center currently being built north of Fort Worth.

"It's a joke that Facebook cares about Clay County," he said. "No one cares about Clay County but you."

He also warned about the leases offered by wind energy companies, saying they give only about 5%-10% of profits to landowners while most private property rights are signed away. Meanwhile, the value of neighboring properties often fall up to 50% because few are willing to buy rural property next to an industrial installation like a wind farm.

"(Wind energy agents) sell the deal several times," he warned. "You have no idea who is coming and going on your land."

He said one of the worst consequences of wind farms is how it "pits neighbor against neighbor" by setting landowners who believe they will benefit with a lease from wind energy companies against landowners who don't want wind turbines on their property or are located nearby and will have to look at the 400-foot tall towers during the day and blinking lights at night. He said the contracts often require a "non-disclosure" agreement from those signing them, creating an atmosphere of suspicion.

"Be sure you're willing to hurt your neighbor," he said, before agreeing to a wind farm.

The other featured speaker of the night was Vann Stanford, a former owner of a multi-million dollar manufacturing facility in Brownwood and current realtor in Brown County. He said he has experienced first-hand how wind farms have decreased property values.

"We don't have any dog in this hunt," he said regarding possible future wind farms in

See **WIND** Page 10

Voters in Clay County approve all amendments

Only about 12% of registered voters in Clay County came out to vote for the special constitutional amendment election last week, but all seven amendments gained the approval of those that did vote, which mirrored the results from around the state.

Gaining the most lopsided approval from Clay voters was Proposition 2 which addressed a quirk in state law extending a 100% property tax exemption to surviving spouses of disabled veterans who died before January 1, 2010, as long as the surviving spouse has not remarried. The unofficial total from early

and election day voting was 797 for and 72 against, or less than one percent not in favor.

The next most popular amendment with local voters was Proposition 1, raising the homestead exemption for school districts from \$15,000 to \$25,000. The amendment is expected to save homeowners an average of \$126 per year, but the state is expected to have to pay out around \$600 million annually to cover the loss of revenue to school districts. The unofficial vote count for this proposition was 786 in favor with 83 against, or just over one percent against.

Proposition 6, "recognizing

the right of the people to hunt, fish and harvest wildlife..." was the next most popular amendment for voters, garnering an unofficial count of 778 for and 87 against.

Proposition 7, dedicating some taxes on motor vehicle sales to the State Highway Fund, passed with 728 votes in favor and 139 against.

An amendment raising the population limit from 5,000 to 7,500 - Proposition 5 - for counties to perform road construction, was passed with 687 for and 179 against.

Having a little tougher time was Proposition 3, an amend-

ment overturning the requirement that state officials reside in the state capitol of Austin. Voters in Clay, however, were still in favor by a 599 to 258 margin.

Having the toughest time of all, but still passing fairly easily, was Proposition 4, an amendment that would allow charitable foundations of professional sports teams to conduct charity raffles known as "50/50" games at stadiums. Usually, fans would buy raffle tickets and the winner gets half the pot, with the other half going to charity. The proposition was backed by the Dallas Cowboys and other sports franchises and voters also

approved, 521 to 339.

In all 881 Clay County voters participated in the election, either by voting early, by mail or on election day. There are currently 7,359 registered voters in Clay County. For this election there were only six polling places open on November 3 instead of the usual 16 due to an expected low voter turnout.

All results are technically unofficial until canvassed by the Commissioner's Court, which must be conducted between November 11 and November 16, and results might change slightly before then.

Texas Constitutional Amendments Election Results for Clay County

	Prop. 1		Prop. 2		Prop. 3		Prop. 4		Prop. 5		Prop. 6		Prop. 7	
	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against
Precincts 1, 8, 9, 15, 20 -	274	34	281	24	192	112	175	127	236	70	270	35	249	58
Precincts 11, 12 -	135	8	133	9	102	39	95	45	123	19	135	8	124	17
Precincts 13, 14 -	49	9	46	10	40	14	33	24	46	11	50	6	47	10
Precincts 17, 32 -	142	8	143	7	116	31	87	60	118	31	134	13	131	18
Precincts 10, 24, 26 -	120	15	128	12	98	37	80	59	107	32	125	15	113	24
Precincts 6, 27 -	66	9	66	10	51	25	51	24	57	16	64	10	64	12
TOTALS:	786	83	797	72	599	258	521	339	687	179	778	87	728	139

NOTE: All results are unofficial. Totals include 214 ballots cast in early voting in person and by mail.

Commissioners hear opposition to wind farms

The Commissioners' Court of Clay County got a possible preview of the coming battle regarding future wind farms.

Local rancher Diaz Murray was in attendance and spoke out against the county granting tax abatements or any other potential benefits that might persuade wind farm investors from building any more projects in the county. He said the county is just rated "average" for wind energy potential and believes the drawbacks far outweigh the benefits, including the loss of personal property rights to one's land. Murray himself said he had a power transmission line constructed through his property that he didn't want.

"I'm representing every little landowner," said Murray.

Commissioner Johnny Gee of Precinct 2 said he was not pushing for or against wind farms, and all the commissioners said they had not had any official discussions with wind energy concerns. They also reiterated that the county would not become involved until and unless they were approached by a wind energy company looking to secure tax abatements or some other issue needing the approval of the commissioners.

Diaz also questioned Judge Kenneth Liggett about what he felt was a conflict of interest regarding the judge negotiating with landowners on behalf of a wind energy concern. Judge Liggett said that while he had

been in negotiations with landowners, the issue wouldn't be a conflict of interest since he plans to recuse himself from any vote concerning wind farm projects. He also said he was reluctant to say anything regarding wind farms while the commissioners were meeting because it might appear he was trying to influence their opinions about the matter.

In other action the court:

- Approved payment for all bills relating to Clay County Memorial Hospital, and heard a report about two upcoming surgeries for indigents that the county may be responsible for at up to \$30,000 per surgery.

- Approved payment of all bills relating to Clay County.

- Approved Treasurer's Monthly Affidavit for the month of October.

- Approved to continue to pay cell phone reimbursements for DPS at a maximum of \$50 per phone per month.

- Approved an order granting a permit and right-of-way to construct pipeline, road crossing and/or road cut, requested by Rife Energy Operating, INC.

- Approved Precinct 4 to dispose of junk iron.

- Approved entering into a contract with Texas Public Policy Foundation regarding the Bureau of Land Management.

Flu clinic is today

The Department of State Health Services will be conducting an immunization and flu clinic in Henrietta at the First Baptist Church, 208 S. Graham, on Thursday, November 12, from 9:30-11:30 and 1:00-4:00.

Adult and children's flu vaccines will be offered. Vaccines will also be available for kindergarten, seventh grade, and college entry. All infant immunizations will also be offered.

The Texas Department of State Health Services provides vaccines for those on Medicaid, no insurance, American Indian, Native Alaskan, and the underinsured. *CHIP and private insurance cannot receive State Vaccine*

at this clinic, and will be referred to another provider. A parent or guardian must accompany a minor. VFC vaccines are provided for \$10.00 per visit, with a maximum of \$20.00 per household. Adult vaccines are \$20.00 per visit for the adult with no insurance.

United Pharmacy will be providing flu shots for ages 7 and up; for those individuals who do not qualify for State vaccine.

Cost will be \$25.00 for children and adults

For more information regarding the clinic, please call 940-574-2159

Deer Creek

Continued from Page 4

the radar indicated that there wasn't a shower in the area. As always we are thankful for every drop that falls and keeps our lands from drying out.

This Friday & Saturday (13th/14th) I encourage all of you to attend the Beast Feast that takes place here in Deer Creek. The event was formed out of a passion of cooking and spending time with family and friends

by the Crossroads Gang. The Gang wanted to assist veterans and others by raising funds and thus the Beast Feast was created. There were will be concessions, raffles, and live music.

I will report more on this next week! Until then I hope all of you will take a moment to enjoy the beautiful autumn season!

AgriLife offers healthy cooking school

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension service will present "Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking School" on Thursday, November 19, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Saint Mary's Parish Hall, 105 S. Barrett, in Henrietta.

During the school attendees will see demonstrations of quick and easy-to-make

recipes to create at home, learn healthy and economical meal preparation ideas, sample taste three dishes, discover new culinary tips and food preparation techniques, receive a special Dinner Tonight Cookbook, and have the opportunity to win door prizes.

Cost for the school is \$15 per person or \$20 at the door, and

spaces are limited.

Besides AgriLife, other sponsors for the school include Louisiana State University College of Humanities & Social Sciences, Texas Beef Council, Waurika Livestock Commission Company, Law Office of Seth Slagle, Diamond Food Markets, 4P Dozer-Jack Pickett, Burns Ranch, Clay County Memorial

Hospital, Luke Halsell Ranch, Scaling & Company - Ann & Wilson Scaling, Pullen Angus - Rayford & Carla Pullen and Birdwell & Clark Ranch.

To reserve a space for the school or for more information contact Sherri Halsell, Clay County Extension Agent, at shalsell@ag.tamu.org or call 940-538-5042.

Wind

Clay County, "so we're just giving you what we think."

He said most realtors have lost deals because of wind farms, since potential buyers who might be interested in land in the area want it because of the rural setting, which he said wind farms "ruin." He said even recreational users such as hunters who just want to use the land for weekend getaways or vacations are not interested because the nearby wind turbines are just too intrusive.

Stanford said he now requires buyers to sign a release saying they will not sue if a wind farm is built nearby because he is afraid of potential lawsuits.

He said there are usually only a few winners - the landowners who have wind turbines located on their property - while meanwhile the rest of the people suffer. He said wind farms will eventually cause property values and the tax base to go down in the long term.

During the question session audience members brought up a wide range of concerns, everything from how wind farms affect eminent domain to debris flying off turbine blades to possible strategies to stop wind farms because of endangered species.

One of the biggest concerns expressed by members of the audience regarded tax abatements. The Shannon wind farm project was touted in part because it will provide to the county and school districts approximately \$8 million over the next 10 years through a tax abatement agreement made between the county and the wind energy company. Many with CCAWF, including John Greer, whose family owns land and has long ties in Clay County, believe the county has no business encouraging wind energy companies by agreeing to tax abatements for a business that already is subsidized "from top to bottom," be it federal Production Tax Credits (PTC), state subsidies



Continued from Page 1

Martin Aldridge/Clay County Leader

Dr. Paul Burns speaks to the crowd at the Rock Barn last Tuesday during a meeting hosted by Clay County Against Wind Farms.

for transmission lines or local government entities offering tax breaks.

On the other hand, Greer and other opponents believe making sure the county doesn't agree to tax abatements is a good way to dissuade wind energy companies from building projects in the county.

"If you can stop the tax abatement they will probably go away," Stanford replied.

"Elected officials will do what they feel like the majority wants to do," said Burns, who encouraged residents to show up at commissioners meetings and let the commissioners know where they stand. He stressed that most commissioners were good people and urged people to always be courteous when stating their case.

Yet there are no guarantees denying tax abatements will stop a wind farm project. The only sure way, admitted Burns and Stanford, is to persuade landowners considering signing a lease that it would be bad in the long term for both their neighbors and the county.

On the other hand, many opponents felt they did not get a fair hearing on the Shannon

project, and one audience member pointed out how a petition signed by 50% of nearby landowners was seemingly ignored by the commissioners back in 2010 when elected officials voted unanimously to approve the tax abatement.

Another audience member related how he had enjoyed hunting turkeys around Sweetwater, but after a wind farm was erected the noise caused by the turbines prevented him from calling turkeys, as well as ruining the beautiful setting he had once enjoyed.

One audience member, Vance Dugger, related how he had been approached regarding a lease to erect turbines on his place and was surprised to find it was County Judge Kenneth Liggett who was negotiating on behalf of the wind energy company. He wondered how that couldn't be construed as a conflict of interest.

A check with the State Attorney General's Office and the Texas Association of Counties indicates that a conflict of interest would only arise if an elected official uses his or her office to unduly influence an issue which was officially presented before

the governing body. An elected official must also declare his or her involvement in any matter coming before the governing body and then not participate in any vote coming before the governing body he or she serves on.

Judge Liggett has stated that he will not vote on any matter coming before the Commissioners' Court regarding wind energy concerns which he is involved with (see related story about the Commissioners' Court on this page).

Again, no issues regarding a future wind farm has been officially presented to the Commissioners' Court.

CCAWF's Greer said wind farm projects typically need between 8-10 thousand acres of land. He said he has always been a big supporter of private property rights, but urges any landowner considering signing a lease to have turbines erected to give serious thought about how those towering structures - visible from many miles away - will affect their neighbors and their community.

"I would hope it would give you pause," he said.

Input

windfarm near their property, then they should convince their neighbors not to sign a lease. At that point it is a private property rights issue. If the windfarm project proceeds far enough, then the commissioners court will probably be asked by the windfarm owners to grant the

windfarm project a tax abatement.

"At that time the commissioners will become involved, and have to vote for or against an abatement. Until that time it is up to the land owners to decide what they want to do with their land."

Meanwhile Keen said he'd

like to hear more from residents about how they feel about wind farms, both those who support and those who oppose them.

"I welcome any input from the public on how they feel about it," he said. "I think that would go a long way in helping the commissioners make up

their minds."

He said the best way to contact him is either by email at claycountypct4@att.net or by regular mail at 214 N. Main Street, Henrietta, TX, which is also the official mailing address for all the other county commissioners.

Continued from Page 1

AARP

Safe Drivers Course

Save \$\$\$ on your auto insurance

Where: Clay County Senior Citizens Center
216 N. Hancock St.
Henrietta, TX 76365

When: Thursday, Nov. 19, 2015
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

RSVP or for More Information:
Call Linda Johnston 940-716-0799 or
Clay County Seniors Citizens 940-538-5615
(Lunch will be provided for a donation of \$6.00)

CLAY COUNTY LEADER

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Waurika Livestock Commission Company

Regular Cattle Sale:
Tuesdays - 9:00 AM

To consign cattle or for information call:
Office: 580-228-2353
George Williams: cell 940-631-6001
Mike Pettit: cell 940-631-6003

Watch our sales live at
www.lmauctions.com
For more information, call our office

Call toll-free for a weekly market report:
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