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THE BROWNFIELD NEWS

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VOLUME 108, NO 80

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2012

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City okays new property improvement program

Existing businesses and property owners will have a chance to dust off their buildings and improve their facades with help from the city after a vote Thursday morning by the City Council approved a new property improvement program.

The program is designed to encourage local businesses and property owners to make exterior improvements, which enhance the appearance of their buildings or landscapes so as to better attract customers and visitors.

The result, it is hoped, will demonstrate the economic vitality of the community and revitalize commercially zoned areas of the city.

The help from the city comes in the form of financial assistance up to 50 percent of the cost of improvements, not to exceed \$2,500.

The monies are available on a cost reimbursement basis only. No funds will be paid up front or advanced prior to the completion of the projects.

Additional funds, not to exceed \$2,500 may be available for corner buildings or lots where improvements will be made to multiple frontages.

Properties and businesses that qualify will be located in the local retail, central business, general commercial and light/

heavy industrial areas of the city as displayed on zoning maps.

Applications for the program are available in the City Secretary's office, 201 W. Broadway.

Upon initial review, the application will be submitted to the City Council for final review and approval. The council's determination of eligible or ineligible improvements and the amount of the incentives awarded shall be final.

David Partlow, director of Brownfield Industrial Development Corp., was first to suggest the program and worked with City Manager Eldon Jobe to include it in the current city budget with \$50,000 annually.

"The thing I like best about this program is that most, if not all, the money spent on these property improvements will be paid to local contractors," Partlow said. "Most of the property improvement contracts will run around \$5,000 each or less, so I believe most jobs will be done by local contractors instead of out of town contractors. So a total of \$50,000 of direct spending will be put in the pockets of local businesses."

"Then using the multiplier effect cited by a study produced by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, at least three times the direct spending (\$50,000) goes

back into our local economy when a local independent business is used; thus generating a total of \$150,000 into our economy. Then there is the additional sales tax income generated which would total around \$4,000-5,000."

The multiplier effect is how much of a dollar spent at a local independent store is re-spent in the local area in the form of payroll, goods/services purchased from area businesses, profits spent locally by owners, and donations to area charities.

The study found each \$100 spent at local independents generated \$45 of secondary local spending, compared to \$14 for a big-box chain.

"I commend the City Council for picking up this program. BIDCorp had originally planned on developing this program; but two categories of businesses we wanted to help, we couldn't due to restrictions of how the 4A sales tax funds could be used."

Those categories were retail and commercial. The intent of the laws governing the use of the 4A sales tax state that BIDCorp can only use the funds to assist companies that create primary jobs (manufacturing, industrial, distribution, and warehousing jobs).

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Caroline Hisel, left, entertained the crowd at Thursday night's Harvest Festival Talent Show with help from her dad, Dr. Gabe Hisel (not pictured) and Dr. Shane Hord, right. The annual pageant is a highlight of the Harvest Festival, this year in its 65th rendition.

Election 2012

Deadline looms for voter registration

Eligible, unregistered voters residing within Terry County have until Tuesday to sign up to take part in the Nov. 6 general elections process, if they wish to have a say in the outcome of several local, state and federal level offices.

Terry County Clerk Kim Carter, this week, issued a reminder to unregistered, eligible voters, that they have until the end of the day Tuesday to register for the upcoming November general election process.

"There is still time for those who have not registered, or who may have voter information changes that are required for voters to participate in the elections process," said Carter.

"We want everyone who can to come and register so they will have an opportunity to come out and have a say (in the next elections process)."

Local residents who are not registered and wish to take part in the November elections, or may have voter information changes -- such as a change of address -- may register/make those changes at the Terry County Clerk's office, located temporarily in the American Legion Building on Seagraves Hwy.

The Clerk's office will be closed Monday in observation of Columbus Day, but back open from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m., Tuesday.

As of Friday, the clerk's office reported 7,279 registered voters in Terry County were officially eligible for participation in the Nov. 6 general elections process, which is highlighted by the U.S. Presidential race between incumbent

Democratic President Barack Obama and Republican challenger -- and former Massachusetts governor -- Mitt Romney.

According to the Texas Secretary of State's website, Texas residents are eligible to vote if they meet the following requirements:

- You are a United States citizen;
- You are a resident of the county where you submit the application;
- You are at least 18 years old on Election Day;
- You are not a convicted felon (you may be eligible to vote if you have completed your sentence, probation, and parole); and
- You have not been declared by a court exercising probate jurisdiction to be either totally mentally incapacitated or partially mentally incapacitated without the right to vote.

Also on the Texas Secretary of State's website -- <http://votetexas.gov> -- residents can check their voter registration status through one of three search methods:

- Your Texas driver's license number, if you provided it when you applied for voter registration;
- Your Voter Unique Identifier (VUID), which appears on your voter registration certificate, and;
- Your first and last name.

Presidential Debate Obama vs. Romney

(AP) — In a showdown at close quarters, President Barack Obama and Republican Mitt Romney sparred aggressively in their first campaign debate Wednesday night over taxes, deficits and strong steps needed to create jobs in a sputtering national economy. "The status quo is not going to cut it," declared the challenger.

Obama in turn accused his rival of seeking to "double down" on economic policies that actually led to the devastating national downturn four years ago — and of evasiveness when it came to prescriptions for tax changes, health care, Wall Street regulation and more.

The economy dominated the evening, as it has the race for the White House all year. Pre-debate opinion polls showed Obama with a slight advantage in key battleground states and nationally.

With early voting already under way in dozens of states, Romney was particularly aggressive in the 90-minute event that drew a television audience likely to be counted in the tens of millions — like a man looking to shake up the campaign with a little less than five weeks to run.

The former Massachusetts

governor virtually lectured Obama at one point after the president accused him of seeking to cut education funds. "Mr. President, you're entitled to your own airplane and your own house, but not your own facts," he said.

Romney said he had plans to fix the economy, overhaul the tax code, repeal Obama's health care plan and replace with a better alternative, remake Medicare, pass a substitute for the legislation designed to prevent another financial crash and reduce deficits — but he provided no new specifics despite Obama's prodding.

Said Obama: "At some point the American people have to ask themselves: Is the reason Governor Romney is keeping all these plans secret, is it because they're going to be too good? Because middle class families benefit too much? No."

The two men debate twice more this month, but they were first going their separate ways on Thursday. Obama had campaign stops in Colorado and then Madison, Wis., while Romney was booked into Virginia. All three states are among the nine battlegrounds likely to settle the race.

At times the debate turned into

rapid-fire charges and retorts that drew on dense facts and figures that were difficult to follow. The men argued over oil industry subsidies, federal spending as a percentage of the GDP, Medicare cuts, taxes and small businesses and the size of the federal deficit and how it grew.

Obama sometimes seemed somewhat professorial. Romney was more assertive and didn't hesitate to interrupt the president or moderator Jim Lehrer.

Despite the wonky tone of the debate, Romney managed to make some points by personalizing his comments with recollections of people he said he had met on the campaign trail. In another folksy reference, Romney told Lehrer, a veteran of the Public Broadcasting Service, that he would stop the federal subsidy to PBS even though "I love Big Bird."

Generally polite but pointed, the two men agreed about little if anything.

Obama said his opponent's plan to reduce all tax rates by 20 percent would cost \$5 trillion and benefit the wealthy at the expense of middle income taxpayers.

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