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## Brownfield P.D. detective suspended under accusation

by JOSIE MUSICO  
Staff Writer

Detective Darrel Williams has been suspended from the Brownfield Police Department amid investigation that he lied under oath in a jury trial and had agreed to permanently leave the law-enforcement field 17 years earlier after he was accused of sexual assault.

Chief of Police Tony Serbantez confirmed that Williams was suspended with pay as of Tuesday, but declined to comment further.

Williams is accused of giving false testimony about his employment history in the trial of 60-year-old Edward Dugan Barnett, who in July was convicted of aggravated sexual assault of a 12-year-old girl and sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Barnett's attorney, Stephen Hamilton of Lubbock, presented on Oct. 4 a motion for a new trial for his new client based on the claim that Williams - BPD's lead investigator for the case - lied under oath in the original trial. Before Judge Cecil Puryear ultimately denied the motion, Hamilton introduced multiple witnesses who testified that Williams worked as a patrol officer for the Kermit Police Department from 1994-95, but resigned after he was accused of engaging in a sexual relationship with a 14-year-old girl. Williams made an agreement with the Kermit police chief, the Winkler County district attorney and the child's father to surrender his peace officer's license in exchange for them not presenting the matter to a grand jury, they said.

"That was the agreement - that he surrender his peace officer's license and never enter into law enforcement again in lieu of being indicted," said Lubbock-based criminal investigator Kevin Overstreet.



Darrel Williams

Responses Oct. 5 and Wednesday by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education to open-records requests submitted by the *Brownfield News* indicated Williams' peace officer's license had never been suspended.

"TCLEOSE records show that no disciplinary actions of suspension or revocation have been taken on this license," said agency spokeswoman Laura Le Blanc. "...I could find no records of a permanent voluntary surrender. I know he is under investigation right now, but we haven't seen anything yet."

TCLEOSE records indicate Williams has worked in Brownfield since May 1, 2006 and worked as a reserve officer for Kermit from Oct. 31, 1994 through Aug. 16, 1995, although some witness testimony suggests those records were only recently updated. They claimed that the paperwork - then known as an F5 form - had not been processed correctly and never arrived at TCLEOSE's Austin headquarters.

"It was pretty obvious the ball was completely dropped on this case, whether it was TCLEOSE or Kermit," Hamilton said after those witnesses spoke.

Terry County Attorney Ramon Gallegos later told the *News* he will request an investigation from the Texas Rangers to determine whether Williams broke the law. He continued that his own office's investigation about a year ago when they first learned about Williams' past had revealed no admissible evidence because his license was valid, and a theft charge they discovered from a criminal-background check had been dismissed.

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## City sales tax rebate check up 25% from '11

Texas Comptroller Susan Combs announced this week that state sales tax revenue in September was \$1.96 billion, up 11.6 percent compared to September 2011.

Brownfield's check for the month was up almost 25 percent over the same time last year, a sign of strong economic growth in the area due in large part to activity in the oil patch.

The city received just over \$120,000 this month, a 24-percent increase from a year ago.

Year to date, Brownfield has received \$1.2 million, almost exactly \$100,000 more than last year.

Terry County's rebate is up more than 13 percent over last year, to more than half a million dollars in 2012.

"Continued strength in the manufacturing and oil and natural gas sectors led to the sales tax revenue increase," Combs said. "Collections were also boosted by improvement in consumer spending at restaurants and retail stores. State sales tax revenue has now increased for 30 straight months."

Combs will send October local sales tax allocations totaling \$551 million to cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts.

October local sales tax allocations are up 9.1 percent compared to October 2011.

The sales tax figures represent monthly sales made in August.

See SALES TAX CHART...Page 5



Workers dumped a truckload of peanuts into a hopper Friday afternoon at Tejas Peanuts on the city's southwest side. Farmers in Terry County and the South Plains are hustling to dig, turn and thrash this year's crop after the first freeze Monday morning prompted quick action.

## Harvest begins amidst ever changing weather conditions

Mother Nature is being her usual finicky self this week and farmers across the South Plains are scurrying to keep up as the 2012 harvest begins for the area's biggest crops -- peanuts, and of course, cotton.

Terry County recorded its first official freeze Monday, prompting growers to kick into overdrive, according to Agri-Life Extension Agent Chris Bishop.

"We're digging peanuts 24 hours a day right now," he told the *Brownfield News* on Friday. "That freeze had the potential to start killing off the vines on our peanuts so a lot of our farmers are digging and turning them as fast as they can to start the drying process."

Peanuts grow beneath the soil and must be dug up and turned over where they are left to dry before they are picked up by a thrasher after several days of hot, dry weather.

Unfortunately for South Plains farmers this week, those arid conditions have been rare.

"It's been cold and moist right when we need hot and dry," he said. "We need those pods to dry out as soon as possible, but we're not getting the help from Mother Nature that we need."

Bishop said the elevated price of peanuts earlier in the year resulted in increased acreage of the legumes in the area.

Many farmers contracted at good

prices at or before planting time and are protected from recent drops in the price, caused by a glut of peanuts on the market because of large crops across the southeast, according to Grady Herron, manager of Tejas Peanuts in Brownfield.

"We're seeing big numbers come out of a lot of areas in the southeast and we're having decent numbers here in our area, so there won't be a shortage of peanuts, which causes the price

to fall."

Herron said no one is offering contracts for peanuts right now, forcing growers who didn't contract earlier in the year to put their harvest yields into the government loan program, which currently is paying \$335 per ton.

"That's quite a bit lower than the contracts a lot of guys got when they planted," he said. "It's always a gamble. Farming always is."

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## Property improvement program huge success

Less than a week after the city council approved a Property Improvement Program offering to split the cost of upgrading local storefronts, city administrators have stopped taking applications because of the immediate response of local businesses.

The city allocated \$25,000 for the program in the current budget and grants are awarded up to \$2,500.

David Partlow, director of the Brownfield Industrial Development Corp. who helped design the program, told the *Brownfield News* Thursday that more applications had already been received than there was money available.

"The response to the program was overwhelming," Partlow said. "When we were putting the program together, I speculated that we would run out of money in six months. Instead, we ran out in six days. That's amazing."

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 dem-

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