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(L) Justin Ryan Rodriguez (R) Izaiah Kane Piedra

Brownfield High School students charged with illegal weapon possession

Two Brownfield High School students were arrested Wednesday after they were caught with guns on campus.

Justin Ryan Rodriguez, 17, and Izaiah Kane Piedra, aka Izaiah Marroquin, also 17, are each charged with unlawful carrying in a weapon-free zone, a state jail felony.

The pair were arrested at 12:42 p.m. in the 1000 block of East Grace Street following an investigation by Brownfield police, school district administrators and the school resource officer. According to preliminary determinations, the case that led to their arrests began when other students posted threatening comments on Facebook and panic escalated both on- and off-campus.

Superintendent Jerry Jones told the News investigators confiscated one handgun from a student return-

ing to BHS from lunch and then located a second gun in a vehicle parked on campus, but declined to say which student was under suspicion of which specific offense.

"Our security procedures helped in this case," he said. "All agencies working together helped to quickly resolve the situation, insuring the safety of our students, faculty and staff. The investigation is ongoing."

Both students were booked into the Terry County Jail Wednesday afternoon. Rodriguez was released at 1:50 p.m. Thursday on a \$5,000 bond. Piedra was released at 2:03 p.m. Thursday on a bond of the same amount.

If convicted, Rodriguez and Piedra could be sentenced to confinement in a state jail between six months and two years and fined up to \$10,000.



Major Bob Simpson shakes Ramon Gallegos' hand during a reception honoring Gallegos and Gary Cook for over 40 years combined service to Terry County.

County taxing entities authorize property sales

Local taxing entities have agreed in recent meetings to authorize Terry County Appraiser Ronnie Burran to hold a fire sale on their behalf.

Up for grabs in the coming months will be various properties within the city and county at, as Burran told

the *Brownfield News*, rock-bottom prices.

As many as 130 properties, mostly inside the Brownfield city limits, have accumulated over the years as they are foreclosed on because of delinquent ad valorem taxes.

State sales tax revenue up 13.1 percent from '11

Texas Comptroller Susan Combs said today that state sales tax revenue in November was \$2.34 billion, up 13.1 percent compared to November 2011.

"Gains across major sectors boosted state sales tax revenue," Combs said. "Collections were strong in sectors such as retail trade, manufacturing, oil and natural gas, construction and telecommunications."

Combs will send December local sales tax allocations totaling \$552 million to cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts, up 15.5 percent compared to December 2011.

Brownfield's rebate for the month was \$98,089, almost flat when com-

pared to the same month last year, \$97,700.

Year to date, the city still shows an increase of more than seven percent, receiving a total of \$1,347,894.34 in 2012, compared to \$1,257,350 in 2011.

Terry County's monthly rebate was up almost 13 percent to \$48,123.

For the year, the county received \$611,475, a 12 percent increase over the 2011 total of \$544,423.

The sales tax figures represent October sales reported by monthly tax filers.

A chart detailing rebate amounts to area cities is included on Page 4 of this issue.

"Typically on a property in tax foreclosure, we take it to the courthouse steps for public auction," Burran said. "But if it doesn't sell, then it goes into a trust belonging to all of the taxing entities and we manage that at our office."

The entities then must maintain those properties for appearance and safety, an expense that is prorated to each by the city, who handles the labor.

"If we can get these properties out from under us, even if they sell very cheap, it will be a benefit to all of us," Burran said. "They'll also be back on the tax rolls and generating a little income instead of costing us time and money to keep them up."

Other counties in the area have initiated similar programs in recent years and officials have reported strong interest in the sales, according to the appraiser.

"You'd be surprised how many people will buy these up if the price is right," he said. "Usually it's a neighbor that wants the adjoining property for whatever reason."

No specific date has been set for the sales, which will include 10-20 properties each, but the first likely will occur next spring.

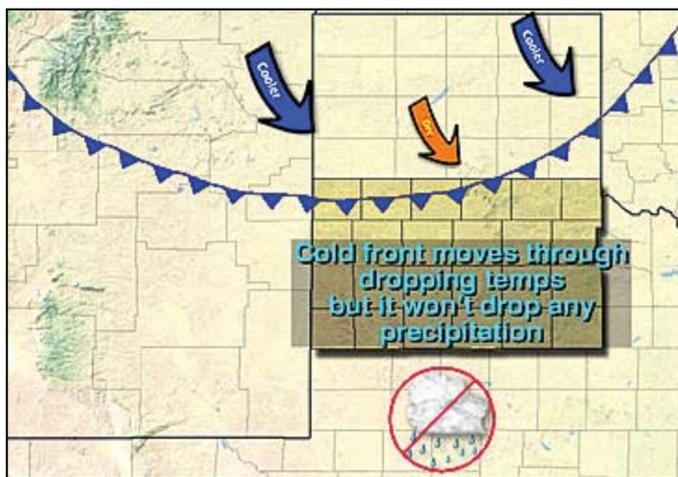
"If we can reduce our inventory, then it's worth a shot," Burran said. "Some of these properties have been in our trust since the 70s."

Certain rules would apply, including forbidding the sale of properties to anyone who already is delinquent on their taxes to any of the entities.

The majority of the properties are vacant or abandoned lots. Any structures on the properties are substandard and the city has worked in recent years to raze many of them as nuisances.

Average appraised value on the lots in the program is roughly \$200, Burran said.

"We'll consider any offer," he said. "If they sell for \$50, at least the program worked and they're back on the rolls."



Strong december storm brings, wind, dust, rain

A powerful storm system slammed into the region Friday afternoon, bringing with it winds gusting over 50 miles per hour and dust-filled skies, as well as brief rainfall, which fell for a few minutes as mud.

Weather stations in Dimmitt recorded gusts of 74 mph Friday afternoon and one station in Lubbock topped out at 77 mph.

The system's leading edge was a strong pacific front moving to the east through the evening.

The Lubbock office of the National Weather Service issued weather warnings to much of the area after lunch Friday.

The NWS said low level moisture in place across the region combined with strong lift and cool temperatures aloft to result in strong to severe thunderstorms.

The main threat, according to the weather experts, was from damaging downburst winds.

Offices in Brownfield reported a burst shortly after 3 p.m. Friday that pushed southern-facing doors open, forcing dirt, rain and debris into the buildings.

Terry County Sheriff's office representatives said their were no reports of weather-related damage in Terry County by press time Friday.

A Brownfield Police spokesman said some traffic signs were reportedly blown down on the Seagraves Hwy.

A Brownfield Fire Dept. spokesman said the emergency responders had not been called to any instances of damage, but was ready to help if needed.

Forecasts called for calmer conditions

through the weekend, but still expected breezy winds to redevelop Saturday afternoon, from 25-35 mph with gusts up to 45 mph.

Areas of blowing dust are possible Saturday afternoon and evening.

The probability of hazardous weather next week is low, according to NWS.

Weather models released last week also suggest the likelihood of a white Christmas is slim for most of Texas.

Gins finish for 2012 cotton season

Terry County cotton gins have completed the 2012 ginning season just shy of 140,000 bales produced locally, according to the most recent polling of the 2012 cotton harvest conducted by the *Brownfield News*.

2012 Bale Count	
Lone Star.....	18,141
Meadow Co-op.....	33,952
Southwest.....	34,252
Terry County.....	31,026
West.....	5,677
Needmore.....	14,094
Total.....	137,142

BISD board approves staff, superintendent search

Brownfield's school board is still in the search process for a new superintendent, but now has a new second-grade teacher.

The board of trustees voted 6-0 in a specially-called meeting Tuesday night to hire Brittini Jakstas for that educational position at Oak Grove Elementary School. Jakstas, a Brownfield native and a recent college graduate, was contracted for the remainder of the current school year.

She will replace Melissa Miller, whose resignation will be effective Jan. 1 and which the board approved with another 6-0 vote. Miller is leaving at semester for personal reasons related to family health.

The school board spent the remainder of the meeting in a closed-session discussion with Texas Association of School Boards representative Kathee Lupton regarding their search for a new superintendent. As the *News* reported Nov. 27, they recently entered into a \$7,000 contract with TASB for assistance with the process.

Current Superintendent Jerry Jones' retirement is effective June 30.

Trustees present were Yvonne Rocha, Fred Cawthon, Geoff Cooper, Shane Hord, Randy Anthony and Wayne Taylor. Tony Serbantez was absent.

Sat 12/15	Sun 12/16	Mon 12/17	Tue 12/18	Wed 12/19



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