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Board bars doctor from treating female patients, B3

DPS chief upholds firing of trooper over Bland case, B3

NEW DETAILS TEXAS 130

Chapter 11 sought by tollway operator

SH 130 Concession Co.'s payments lag on about \$1.7 billion of debt.

By Ben Wear
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The company operating the southern 41 miles of Texas 130, a tollway that has struggled with light traffic and heavy debt since opening in late 2012, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection Wednesday afternoon in federal court.

That will put before a federal court negotiations over SH 130 Concession Co.'s lagging payments on about \$1.7 billion of debt owed on the four-lane road, a figure that includes \$1.27 billion in principal and more than \$400 million in unpaid interest, expenses and fees. About \$500 million is owed to the federal government under a low-interest loan program for transportation projects, and payments on that portion of the debt begin in 2017.

In its filing for bankruptcy protection, the company (which depleted a \$65 mil-

Tollway continued on B5



ROBERT CALZADA / STAFF

PUBLIC ART

\$1.1 million donated for Waller Creek art

Marcus Foundation gives money to the Contemporary Austin.

By Jeanne Claire van Ryzin
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The future of public art along Austin's Waller Creek received major support thanks to a \$1.1 million donation from the Edward and Betty Marcus Foundation that was announced Wednesday.

Melba Whatley, chair of the Dallas-based foundation, made the announcement at the preview opening of "Hurlyburly," a massive, site-specific installation made of repurposed lobster rope by artist Orly Genger that is on view on a stretch of public park adjacent to the Waller Creek Boathouse.

On hand for the announcement were Mayor Steve Adler; City Council Members Kathie Tovo, Leslie Pool and Sabino "Pio" Renteria; and state Rep. Eddie Rodríguez, D-Austin.

The \$1.1 million is being

Donation continued on B6

"HURLYBURLY" PUBLIC OPENING

When: Noon to 3 p.m. Saturday
Where: Waller Creek Boathouse, 72 Trinity St.
Tickets: Free
Information: 512-453-5312, thecontemporaryaustin.org

ELECTION 2016 CENTRAL TEXAS

Primary result: New faces abound

Both Travis County and Williamson County will have new sheriffs and district attorneys.

By Philip Jankowski and Claire Osborn
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Travis and Williamson counties will see sweeping changes in their top criminal justice officials after Tuesday's primaries assured that both counties will have a new sheriff and district attorney.

Margaret Moore cruised to victory, earning the Democrat-

ic nomination for Travis County district attorney in what experts saw as the primary's most shocking voting result, with Moore handily defeating the man who was once considered the clear successor to the post being vacated by Rosemary Lehmborg.

Precinct 3 Constable Sally Hernandez also pulled off a surprise by narrowly winning a majority of the Democratic primary vote in a four-per-

son Travis County sheriff's race that seemed destined for a runoff. Sheriff Greg Hamilton isn't seeking another term.

On Wednesday, local political experts were still assessing the district attorney's race, but the consensus was that both Hernandez and Moore were aided by women voters.

"The sheriff's race, especially," political consultant David Butts said. "That is probably where the power of the women's vote is most evident, no question."

Indeed, women notched several wins in Travis County

in a primary election that had the highest turnout – 37 percent – since the 2008 primary, according to the Travis County clerk's office. Gina Hinojosa won a majority in the race for District 49's state representative (second place also went to a woman), and Tamara Needles defeated Judge Jim Coronado in the primary for 427th District Court seat.

Only one woman lost to a male challenger in a Travis County race. Brad Urrutia defeated Chantal Melissa

Primary continued on B6

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY

Texas' independence celebrated



Men in period costumes fire a volley on Wednesday in honor of those who fought and died in the Texas Revolution. Wednesday marked the 180th anniversary of Texas Independence Day, when settlers in Mexican Texas declared independence from Mexico. Celebrate Texas organized activities that featured a musket volley on the grounds of the Texas State Cemetery. See more photos at statesman.com. RALPH BARRERA / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

ENVIRONMENT

Plan to protect lizard upheld

Appeals court says state's conservation approach is adequate.

By Eric Dexheimer
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Texas' voluntary and privately administered plan to protect the dunes sagebrush lizard is legal and adequate to protect the species, a federal appeals court ruled Tuesday. The decision appears to end challenges to the state's conservation plan by environmental groups that argued Texas' efforts are unenforceable and so leave the species vulnerable to development by oil and gas companies.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had proposed listing the species as endangered in 2010. Because the lizard is found primarily in West Texas lands that are rich with oil and gas, petroleum companies were concerned it would have had a dramatic impact on exploration and drilling. So, led by then-Comptroller Susan Combs, the state in 2012 proposed instead an alternative plan to protect the species.

Yesterday's court decision said: "The focus of the Tex-

Lizard continued on B5



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had proposed listing the dunes sagebrush lizard, found mainly in oil-rich areas of West Texas, as endangered in 2010. MIKE HILL / U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

HEALTH

State board scraps proposed rule restricting 'distance' counseling

Proposal's foes said rule would cause fewer people to seek help.

By Mary Ann Roser
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After receiving overwhelming opposition from counselors, a Texas regulatory board scrapped a proposed rule Wednesday that would have required an in-person session before a therapist could provide "distance" services, such

as a video call. In addition, the Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors said it didn't see problems indicating the rule was needed, said Steven Christopherson, chairman of the board's rules committee.

"We haven't really seen a pattern of complaints," he told the board. "Show us a pattern of complaints, we'll show you a rule."

The rules committee took up the rule earlier in the day and agreed it wasn't needed.

"There's very little support for this rule," Christopherson said at that meeting. He added that those making comments pointed out that not allowing the use of technology for counseling clients in rural areas where mental health professionals are sparse could cause fewer people to seek help.

The rule was proposed for safety reasons, so counselors could get a better handle on who they were treating,

Counseling continued on B6

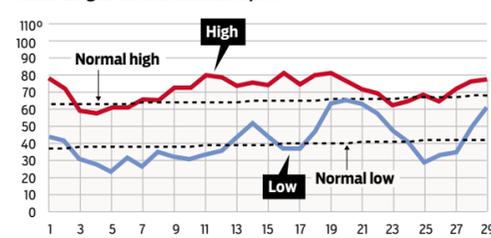
CENTRAL TEXAS WEATHER

February weather summary

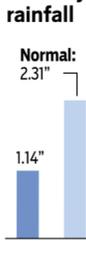
With all but 10 days of high temperatures at or above 70 degrees, this February at Camp Mabry was the 8th warmest on record. The only significant rainfall of the month occurred on the 23rd.

Daily temperature

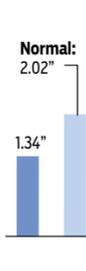
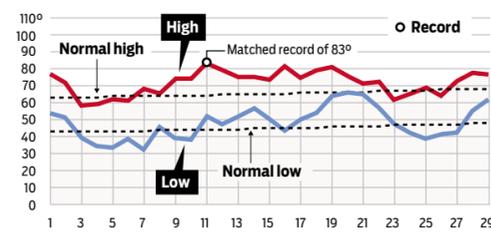
Austin-Bergstrom International Airport



Monthly rainfall



Camp Mabry



Sources: National Weather Service, Lower Colorado River Authority, KVUE

LINDA SCOTT/STAFF

El Niño continued as 'El Nada' in February

Colder, wetter weather anticipated for month never materialized.

By Marty Toohey
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El Niño "sputtered." El Niño "has been a weird one." El Niño's anticipated rainfall was "El Nada."

However you want to put it – those assessments came from Central Texas meteorologist Bob Rose, Houston meteorologist Matt Lanza and Austin weather spotter Michael Lyttle, respectively – February wasn't the kind of month that El Niño was expected to usher in. El Niño is typically associated with colder and wetter conditions than usual in Central Texas. It tends to make winter feel more like winter.

Nope. With highs some-

times reaching into the lower 80s, winter was effectively over by the end of February, a month that also brought little rainfall to the Austin area. The winter of our discontent, it was not.

All but 10 days of February saw temperatures climb to 70 degrees or above, according to the National Weather Service. The only significant rainfall for the month fell during a few pre-dawn hours the morning of Feb. 23, when the Austin metro area saw up to 2 inches of rain.

"Winter hardly showed up in Austin," said Rose, the Lower Colorado River Authority's meteorologist. According to Rose:

■ Since Dec. 1, only 4.68 inches of rain fell at the Camp Mabry weather station in Central Aus-

Weather continued on B6