

Bastrop city manager, council trade barbs, B2

Runner struck by car during Austin Marathon, B3

COMMENTARY



Ken Herman

This pope has got nothing on PJP2

It's a big deal when a pope drops by your part of the world, especially if your part of the world is one where popes don't often drop by. Pope Francis is in Juárez, Chihuahua, on Wednesday, and many Texans (and some future Texans) will get a glimpse of him in that border city across from El Paso. I hope you're following the great on-the-scene coverage by my American-Statesman colleagues Nicole Chavez, Marlon Sorto and Rodolfo Gonzalez.

I was among Texans fortunate enough to get a glimpse of the only pope to visit Texas. Back in 1987 I was working for The Associated Press when Pope John Paul II was in San Antonio for a gig. (Don't challenge me on this. Inside the Vatican, a papal visit is indeed known as a gig.)

PJP2 liked to travel, making more than 100 foreign trips, though I'm not sure if leaving Vatican City and crossing into Rome for pizza counts as a foreign trip. Somebody has determined that the later-sainted PJP2 made more foreign trips than all preceding popes combined. To be fair, for many earlier popes a foreign trip involved many hours in an uncomfortable sedan chair. (And I hope you're aware of PJP2's long and interesting friendship with a Vermont woman, as reported for the first time this week by the BBC.)

During his papacy, PJP2 traveled about a quarter of a million miles, racking up the valuable Holy Father Frequent Travel miles that can be used toward popemobile upgrades. I'm happy to say our paths crossed during one of those frequent miles, one near the Alamo.

A papal trip is an all-hands-on-deck operation for a news organization like the AP. My hands (and related parts) were assigned to a San Antonio corner where it was my job to watch the pope roll by. All went well, and I was able to duly report that the roll-by rolled by without incident. Though I saw His Holiness for maybe a second or so — and I'm pretty sure he didn't see me — it was very inspiring to see the massively inspired folks in the massive crowd.

I didn't get to chat with the pope or yell a question at him, as I sometimes did to George

Herman continued on B6

NEW DETAILS MANOR SCHOOLS

District, Brackmeyer to part ways

Once-ousted superintendent, later rehired, is on way out again; board says it wants a fresh start.

By Melissa B. Taboada
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The Manor school board is negotiating the departure of Superintendent Kevin Brackmeyer, less than two years after trustees took the rare step of rehiring him to lead the district. On Monday night, the school board voted 6-1 to execute a retirement agreement with Brackmeyer, who had resigned under pressure in 2014, but then took the job back after a

slate of trustees who supported him was elected. Trustee Sam Samaripa, Brackmeyer's main critic on the board, was the lone dissenter who instead made a motion to terminate Brackmeyer. His motion died because no other trustee supported it. But even Brackmeyer's once-staunch supporters are saying now that the district — where test scores continue to lag and where auditors recently found a long list of financial discrep-



Superintendent Kevin Brackmeyer has been on medical leave since the start of the year.

ancies — needs a fresh start. "At some point, we need to start moving in the right direction," said board President Marlin Thomas. "He understands our need to be progressive and move forward." The agreement should be finalized within a week, Thomas said. While calling it a

retirement, Brackmeyer is 50, years away from being eligible for full benefits through the Texas Retirement System. Brackmeyer's contract doesn't expire until June 2018, and it's unclear whether he will be paid for the remaining time. The board had three closed-door discussions regarding his contract since Dec. 7. Brackmeyer began taking time off using sick days in December, and he has been on medical leave for an undisclosed illness since the start of this year under the Family and Medical

Manor continued on B3

TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Dogs help kids with reading tricks



Therapy dog Tucker came with his owner, Geri White (right), to help deaf students with their reading skills at the Carrie Abbott Educational Complex library on Tuesday morning. Texas School for the Deaf fourth-graders Maddie McGann (left) and Kaylee Sweet took part in the program that brings dogs like Tucker — calm, attentive, obedient — from the Austin Dog Alliance's Bow Wow Reading Dog program to the school to help boost reading skills and raise money for the school. RALPH BARRERA / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

See more photos from the program at statesman.com.

AUSTIN STATE OF THE CITY

Adler calls for taking risks as Austin grapples with growth

By Andra Lim
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Borrowing the language of chemistry, citing an example from computer science and referring to the culture of the startup scene, Mayor Steve Adler said city government shouldn't be afraid to experiment when it comes to tackling the affordability and mobility challenges that have accompanied Austin's rapid population growth.

myStatesman

Read the full prepared text of the speech with the story on mystatesman.com.

"I want us to creatively and innovatively deal with the problems that fast-growing cities are facing even if other cities have never figured out the answers," Adler said in prepared remarks for his second

State of the City address, held Tuesday night at the 440-seat Zach Theatre. "This is how we learn and get better. This is how we do big things." Adler said that risk is part and parcel of pursuing meaningful solutions. In some cases, he said, such risk has produced great dividends, such as his work securing enough housing for all the city's homeless veterans. In other cases,

Adler continued on B5

NEW DETAILS OFFICER SHOOTING



Austin police officer Geoffrey Freeman (left) shot and killed David Joseph, 17, who was naked and unarmed, on Feb. 8.

Police union boss rips Acevedo

Chief's actions in death of David Joseph unacceptable, he says.

By Philip Jankowski
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The Austin police union president on Tuesday condemned Police Chief Art Acevedo's decision to stand shoulder to shoulder with Black Lives Matter activists days after an officer shot and killed a naked, unarmed teenager, calling the chief's act "absolutely unacceptable" and urging police leaders to back off from a rush to judgment of the officer who pulled the trigger. The shooting of 17-year-old David Joseph on Feb. 8 by veteran officer Geoffrey Freeman has led to public protests and widespread criticism of Austin police. Acevedo allowed leaders from Black Lives Matter Austin and the Austin Justice Coalition on Thursday to make public statements inside the Police Department headquarters that were at times highly critical of the department. "The public perception is the chief agrees with everything they said," union Pres-

Union continued on B6

WALLER CREEK

Large art project to grace Waller Creek

Conservancy, museum team up to commission series of works.

By Jeanne Claire van Ryzin
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Austin's public art landscape is about to bloom. The Waller Creek Conservancy and the Contemporary Austin announced Tuesday that the two organizations

'HURLYBURLY' UNVEILING
When: Noon to 3 p.m. March 5
Where: Waller Creek Boathouse, 74 Trinity St.
More information: waller creek.org

have commissioned the first of what will be many large-scale public art projects for the 1.5-mile stretch of creekside downtown. A major site-specific installation by artist Orly Genger,

to be unveiled March 5, is the first realization of a new partnership between Waller Creek Conservancy, the private nonprofit spearheading the transformation of the creekside, and the Contemporary, the museum that operates both the downtown Jones Center gallery and the 12-acre Laguna Gloria site, now the Edward and Betty Marcus Sculpture Park.

Art continued on B6



Orly Genger's "Red, Yellow and Blue" was displayed in New York's Madison Square Park in 2013. Genger's "Hurlyburly" will be unveiled at Waller Creek on March 5. JAMES EWING / MADISON SQUARE PARK CONSERVANCY 2013

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Herman

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W. Bush in the White House Briefing Room. I had hoped to ask John Paul II the question long on everybody’s mind: When he replaced John Paul in 1978, did he give any thought to taking the name George Ringo?

I had no way of knowing it at the time, but that brief moment near the Alamo was the closest I’ve ever been to somebody who became a saint. (Though ex-Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison once told my wife she must be one, and I’ve lived in the same city as Drew Brees.)

For me, a highlight of the PJP2 visit was the kitsch hawked by vendors. Somewhere, I still have my cardboard mask of his likeness. I also might have purchased a Popescope, a low-tech periscope allowing one to see over the crowd in front of you to get a view of the passing pope, giving you the Holy See.

I also remember Pope on a Rope, modeled on the then-popular soap on a rope. In this customized version, the soap – what with cleanliness being next to popeliness – was shaped like PJP2. There also were T-shirts, caps, medallions, “Popesicles” and assorted other popepourri.

To this day, I suffer from nonbuyer’s remorse for nonbuying something I should have bought. It might have been the best souvenir I’ve ever seen. And I hope it’s been re-created for the current papal visit. It you see it, buy it.

It was a 30-inch-high likeness of PJP2 with sprinklers rigged to each of his divinely outstretched hands.

It was the “Let Us Spray.”

Amen. And may God continue to bless American souvenir creativity.

The device was marketed by a couple of Detroit guys who also had sprinklers with likenesses of Ronald Reagan, Liber-

ace, Elvis Presley, and Jim and Tammy Faye Baker. “They’re selling real well,” creator Robert Lebow told The Miami News back in 1987. “We’ve only had a few complaints.”

People magazine noted that Catholic officialdom was not overly thrilled with the product.

“But we just have to live with it,” Jay Berman, then a spokesman for the Archdiocese of Detroit, told the magazine. “The pope is in the same category as any well-known public figure. There’s nothing we can do.”

At least in this life. The linkage is unclear, but the aforementioned Miami News died a year after reporting on the papal sprinkler.

If any of you are in Juárez for this papal visit, I’d appreciate a report on the best souvenirs you see. And let me know if you see any portable toilets with the brand name VatiCan.

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Pope John Paul II greets the crowd during his visit to San Antonio in 1987. During his papacy, John Paul traveled about a quarter of a million miles, racking up valuable Holy Father Frequent Travel miles. DAVID WOO / DALLAS MORNING NEWS 1987

Art

continued from B1

Genger’s “Hurlyburly” will be a mass of intricately woven blue rope that will stretch over undulating mounds across an area directly adjacent to the mouth of Waller Creek near the Waller Creek Boathouse on the north shore of Lady Bird Lake.

The project on city parkland is funded privately by art patrons Michael and Jeanne Klein and Suzanne Deal Booth.

It will open with a public reception March 5 and remain up for a year, through February 2017.

“Great cities do big things, and Orly Genger’s sculpture at the mouth of Waller Creek is big in all senses of the word,” Mayor Steve Adler said. “I am proud to be mayor of a city where we can have a



Two years ago, Orly Genger created “Current” for the amphitheater at the Contemporary Austin’s Laguna Gloria site. That installation featured undulating blue-gray waves of rope. Genger has used recycled lobster rope for more than a decade. BRIAN FITZSIMMONS 2014

public-art installation like ‘Hurlyburly.’ This feeds our soul as a community, and I hope it will spur

further work along Waller Creek.”

Future installations organized by the partner-

ship will feature works by significant local and national artists, including Austin-based artists Tere-

sa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler.

Two years ago, Genger created “Current” for the amphitheater at the Contemporary’s Laguna Gloria site. That installation featured undulating blue-gray waves of rope that spilled down the amphitheater, with one rope wave continuing its flowing journey, jutting out like a stream of lava onto a wooden barge-like platform right to the edge of the lagoon.

Genger has used recycled lobster rope for more than a decade, creating interactive installations in New York, Houston and Chicago, among other cities.

Leaders at the Waller Creek Conservancy and the Contemporary say that Austin’s appetite for public art is growing.

Twice, the conservancy has presented a temporary exhibit of light

art installations along a three-block stretch of Waller Creek near East Sixth Street, events that attracted thousands to the nighttime viewings.

And public response to the Contemporary’s burgeoning outside sculpture collection at Laguna Gloria has garnered the museum considerable popularity, officials said.

“We are so thrilled to watch as our ‘museum without walls’ philosophy begins to take shape,” said Louis Grachos, the Contemporary’s executive director. “Living among original works of art of great caliber has a positive effect on individuals and on a citizenry as a whole. I expect this and future collaborative installations will become beloved parts of the city’s fabric.”

Contact Jeanne Claire van Ryzin at 512-445-3699.



Ken Casaday, president of the Austin Police Association, speaks about the shooting of David Joseph by officer Geoffrey Freeman at a news conference at the police union hall on Tuesday. Casaday suggested a shortage of officers played a role in the shooting, and he called for an external audit of patrol staffing. JAY JANNER / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Union

continued from B1

ident Ken Casaday said Tuesday. “They got up in front of a badge much like this one behind me and degraded police officers in the worst ways, and that was absolutely unacceptable. Do that behind closed doors.”

The activist groups demanded that Austin police adhere to a 30-day deadline for an internal investigation. Mayor Steve Adler also called for a speedy investigation, and Acevedo vowed to have it complete by then.

Casaday said the 30-day timetable was “irresponsible at best.” Internal investigations typically take between 45 and 65 days to complete, he said.

Acevedo said in a statement that he respects the union’s views, but that he wouldn’t comment on them.

“As stated last week, our focus is on a complete and impartial investigation, which we owe to both the Joseph and Freeman families, as well as the Austin community,” he said.

Casaday and sever-

myStatesman

Watch Police Chief Art Acevedo join activists from Black Lives Matter and Austin Justice Coalition to comment on the David Joseph shooting last week on mystatesman.com.

Chief Acevedo said he respects the union’s views but wouldn’t comment on them.

al officers spoke Tuesday in support of Freeman, who has been on administrative leave since fatally shooting Joseph during a seconds-long encounter in the 12000 block of Natures Bend in Northeast Austin.

An attorney from the group representing Freeman has said the 10-year veteran feared for his life and acted in accordance with his training.

Freeman’s attorney, Grant Goodwin from the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas, said Freeman acted

appropriately in a rapidly changing situation. Critics of the police have pointed to the department’s troubled history with African-Americans, but Goodwin said race wasn’t a factor in Joseph’s killing.

“The facts are very clear; race is not an element,” Goodwin said. Freeman and Joseph are both African-American.

Casaday suggested a shortage of officers played a role in the shooting, and he called for an external audit of patrol staffing. He said the department has 145 vacancies, and, on the day of the shooting, Freeman’s patrol shift in Northeast Austin had seven officers on the streets instead of the 10 required for full staffing.

Freeman called for backup about two minutes before he encountered Joseph, police said. Three minutes after shots were fired, the first backup officer arrived, Casaday said. A recording of Emergency Medical Services scanner radio obtained by the American-Statesman suggests Joseph was shot twice in the torso.

Contact Philip Jankowski at 512-445-3702.

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Adrianne Curry

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