Habitat finishes another metro neighborhood; looks to the future

Volunteers raise framing in June 2019 for a Central Oklahoma Habitat for Humanity house sponsored by Bank7. The house is one of 146 in the now-completed Stephen Florentz Legacy Estates addition in northwest Oklahoma City. COURTESY PHOTO/COHFH

OKLAHOMA CITY – Central Oklahoma Habitat for Humanity dedicated the final house in its third subdivision Friday and shifted focus to its next and largest development. Known as a nonprofit that provides a pathway to homeownership for hardworking Oklahomans, COHFH also is a major homebuilder that constructs 45 to 50 houses each year in metro Oklahoma City.

CEO and Chairman Ann Felton Gilliland said COHFH ranks seventh among Habitat for Humanity’s 1,100 active U.S. affiliates that build affordable housing for people to purchase with zero-interest mortgage payments.

The dedication Friday was the final one in the 146-house Stephen Florentz Legacy Estates addition near Wilshire Boulevard and Council Road. The neighborhood took seven years to complete at a cost of about $22 million.

Chief Operations Officer Sonja Potts said Habitat is able to build houses for less than traditional construction companies because of donations and volunteer labor.

The newly completed neighborhood will bring in about $300,000 in property taxes each year, Potts said. The 146th house was built in memory of Gilliland’s late husband, Bob Gilliland, the nonprofit’s attorney.

“They are perfectly capable of making the house payments and maintenance, but it’s very difficult for them to come up with the down payment,” she said. Habitat lets buyers put “sweat equity” into the home-building in lieu of the down payment.

Habitat has built 1,056 houses and counting, including 250 in two other neighborhoods – Hope

Turn to HABITAT » p12

BY KATHRYN MCNUTT
The Journal Record

Senators debate freedom and mandate bills

OKLAHOMA CITY – The debate over vaccine mandates is creating a rift among lawmakers trying to appease constituents while maintaining a pro-business environment in the state. PHOTO by TOWFIQU BARRHIJNA VIA UNSPLASH

BY JANICE FRANCIS-SMITH
The Journal Record

The discussion over how best to deal with vaccine mandates is creating a rift among Republicans, trying to appease constituents while maintaining a pro-business environment in the state.

State Sen. Lonnie Paxton, R-Tuttle, praised his fellow legislators for having their “heart in the right place” as they introduced bills to support the rights of individuals opposed to vaccination mandates. But speaking as a rural legislator and a business owner, Paxton said the bills proposed would cost the state $5.5 billion and give businesses reason to avoid setting up shop in Oklahoma.

“I’m not for vaccine mandates,” Paxton said. “I’m also not for crushing businesses in the state of Oklahoma with a series of bills. … We have to spend our time as legislators continually dealing with legislation that is, without question, anti-business, business-unfriendly, pro-trial lawyer legislation. It does not help move this state forward. It does not help make this state unfriendly, pro-trial lawyer legislation. It does not help individuals opposed to vaccination mandates is creating a rift among Republicans, trying to appease constituents while maintaining a pro-business environment in the state."

State Sen. Blake Stephens, R-Tahlequah, agreed to temporarily pause advancement of his Senate Bill 1128, dubbed the Employee Liberty and Freedom Act, after extensive questioning on the bill’s effect. The measure would make it illegal for any person, association or corporation to mandate any employee “submit to or take any vaccination, injection, shot or medication for any virus, disease or condition.”

The debate over vaccine mandates is creating a rift among lawmakers trying to appease constituents while maintaining a pro-business environment in the state.

The discussion over how best to deal with vaccine mandates is creating a rift among Republicans, trying to appease constituents while maintaining a pro-business environment in the state. PHOTO by TOWFIQU BARRHIJNA VIA UNSPLASH

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“ ‘What are we doing to stop this overreach of mandates?’” Stephens said. “ ‘Constituents want to know.'” Stephens said some employees have given decades of their life in service to their employers, only to have the
BY JOURNAL RECORD STAFF

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Kroger Co. has planned a “spoke” facility in Oklahoma City as part of an ambitious strategy to extend its e-commerce reach into markets across the country. A 50,000-square-foot Kroger site at 8801 N. I-35 Service Rd. is expected to become operational later this year and employ up to 191 people full time. The Oklahoma City facility will work in collaboration with a planned Kroger hub in Dallas to extend the grocer’s delivery services into the region.

Kroger Senior Vice President and Chief Supply Chain Officer Gabriel Arreaga described the investment in Oklahoma City as an integral part of the company’s strategy to double its digital sales and profitability rate by the end of 2023.

“We’re excited to extend the Kroger fulfillment network to Oklahoma City, a new geography for our operation,” Arreaga said. “This grocery delivery service is an innovative addition to the expanding digital shopping experience available to our customers.”

Kroger previously rolled out such fulfillment centers in Florida, Ohio and Georgia, utilizing refrigerated vans that deliver fresh groceries directly to customers’ doors.

“We’re eager to continue expanding our fulfillment network and entering into both existing and new geographies through hub and spoke facilities,” Arreaga said.

AI, robotics

The expansion in Oklahoma City represents an extension of a partnership between Kroger and Ocado, a technology company heavily involved in grocery e-commerce. In 2018, the companies announced plans to leverage artificial intelligence, advanced robotics and automation in creation of a new-generation delivery network.

“(The plan) underpins the permanent shift in grocery consumer behavior and elevates our position as one of America’s leading e-commerce companies,” Kroger President and CEO Rodney McMullen said.

At hub sites, the company said more than 1,000 bots will “whizz around giant 3D grids, orchestrated by proprietary air-traffic control systems.” As customer order delivery times near, bots will retrieve products and present them at stations to be intelligently packed.

Groceries will then be loaded into temperature-controlled vans, which can store up to 20 orders. Machine learning algorithms will optimize delivery routes, considering factors such as road conditions and fuel efficiency. Vans may then travel up to 90 miles to deliver orders within their service area, adding ZIP codes as demand grows, “a Kroger’s release said.

“(It) will provide more grocery options for our citizens and good jobs for our community,” he said. “We look forward to working with Kroger to ensure their success in Oklahoma City.”

Additional customer fulfillment centers are planned in locations from Maryland to Michigan to California, Kroger’s said.

HFAA invites community to explore criminal, social justice issues

OKLAHOMA CITY (JR) – Harding Fine Arts Academy has planned a series of free events in the coming week to explore issues related to criminal and social justice reform.

Issues will be examined through film, music and literature. HFAA is a college preparatory high school focused on integration of arts and academics. Founded in 2005 by John L. Belt and other community leaders, it is a public, non-profit school sponsored by Oklahoma City Public Schools. It offers a STEAM-based curriculum – science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics – as well as all standard core curriculum.

On Tuesday, beginning at 6 p.m., a free screening of the 1955 film Trial Classics. The Oscar-nominated film examines the American criminal justice system in the mid-20th century. Introduction and commentary will be provided by Elizabeth Anthony, a classic film historian and president of Reel Classics.

Recently in English classes, HFAA students have read Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson. Free copies of the book will be available.

On Thursday, from 10:45-11:30 a.m., Oklahoma Innocence Project Executive Director Vicki Behenna will conduct a presentation about the Innocence Project and how it works to identify and remedy cases of wrongful conviction in Oklahoma.

Also on Thursday, from 6-8 p.m., various community leaders will contribute to The Mercy & Justice Conference: A Social and Criminal Justice Reform Conference planned at the school. Oklahoma County District Judge Kenneth M. Stoner will moderate a panel discussion including Damon Britton, executive director of the Diverion Hub; Wayland Cubit, a lieutenant in the Oklahoma City Police Department; Kaushiki Chowdhury, a criminal defense practice leader in the She Still Rises organization; and Mauree Turner, who represents District 88 in the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

On Friday, from 10:45-11:30 a.m., members of the Black Student Association will speak, perform music, dance and exhibit works of art. All original works will align with the theme mercy and justice.

All events except the film showing will be available to view via livestream online.

Community members are encouraged to sign up for in-person or virtual experiences via the Harding Fine Arts Foundation website at www.hfaafoundation.org/mercyjustice.

According to a release, the Institute of Museum and Library Services provided financial support to make presentations and the free books available. HFAA was one of five grant recipients in Oklahoma.

Harding Fine Arts Academy is located at the corner of NW 33rd Street and Shartel Avenue in Oklahoma City. To find out more, online visit www.hfaafoundation.org.
Job raises questions about lawmaker’s interests, priorities

BY JENNIFER PALMER
Oklahoma Watch

She voted for and often co-authored legislation expanding school choice in 2021, earning her an “A+” in the grassroots lobbying group ChoiceMatters’ ranking of state lawmakers.

Months later, that group’s parent organization hired state Rep. Toni Hasenbeck, R-Elgin, for a paid position where she spent some of her time teaching parents how to improve educational outcomes for their children. Hasenbeck speaks to ChoiceMatters representatives.

Hasenbeck’s duties included “parent organizing and community organizing,” according to a LinkedIn profile. She was also head of quality assurance for OKEd, a nonprofit that, due to ChoiceMatters’ parent organization and Community Development Corp., she actually worked for Scissortail, a company or nonprofit organization hired state lawmakers to lobby for state legislation.

Her work exemplifies the potential conflict of interest legislators’ day jobs can have on the job voters entrust them with, according to John Pelissero, a senior scholar at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University.

“It does present a conflict of interest because, as an elected official, the legislator should be representing the public interest. And if you’re working for a company or a nonprofit organization in which you are seeking to influence the outcome of legislation, then it’ll raise questions about whether some private interest is first and foremost in the mind of the legislator, rather than the public,” Pelissero said.

Hasenbeck and ChoiceMatters defended her employment. They said she actually worked for Scissortail Community Development Corp., ChoiceMatters’ parent organization and a nonprofit that, due to federal tax laws, cannot spend a substantial portion of its activities on lobbying.

“It does present a conflict of interest because, as an elected official, the legislator should be representing the public interest. And if you’re working for a company or a nonprofit organization in which you are seeking to influence the outcome of legislation, then it’ll raise questions about whether some private interest is first and foremost in the mind of the legislator, rather than the public,” Pelissero said.

Hasenbeck said she left because she grew tired of the commute, which is about 90 minutes from Elgin.

“My feelings about working for a nonprofit that helped families is: I’m doing everything at the House, using all of my years of experience in business and education, and I felt like if I could help families on the other side, that’s like somebody actually getting to make a difference in the world,” Hasenbeck said.

ChoiceMatters and Scissortail both are led by Robert Ruiz. He was a registered lobbyist from 2019 to 2021 but did not renew for 2022, records show.

As an associate director for Scissortail, Hasenbeck served as an associate director at Scissortail from Aug. 31 to Nov. 21.

“Both are self-employed when I talked to families. I felt pretty strongly about that,” she said.

Scissortail’s purpose, according to its website, is “to improve the physical and social infrastructures in blighted neighborhoods” in low-income communities across Oklahoma. It hosts several annual Hispanic cultural festivals and mariachi programs.

ChoiceMatters is one of its programs. Its mission is to educate, inform and provide resources to Oklahoma parents about educational options, according to its website. It champions charter schools, programs that provide public funds for private school tuition, and voucher programs – like the one proposed this year by Senate President Pro Tem Greg Treat.

Scissortail’s main funder, the Walton Family Foundation, gave Scissortail grants worth more than $2 million from 2015-2020. The Waltons are staunch supporters of school choice and in 2016 pledged to spend $1 billion supporting charter schools and other choice initiatives.

To be sure, many nonprofits and social media groups on all sides use grassroots lobbying to influence legislation. Hiring a sitting lawmaker, though, makes ChoiceMatters’ situation unusual.

Pelissero, who has authored dozens of articles on politics and public administration and co-authored a book called Managing Urban America, said ethical issues arise when there’s an appearance of conflict, even if there’s not a formal conflict.

“Members of the public would wonder, ‘is this legislator looking out for the people of Oklahoma or for the nonprofit organization?’” he said.

Lawmakers are prohibited from being lobbyists, but other employment situations can also be a conflict of interest depending on circumstances, said Ashley Kemp, executive director of the Oklahoma Ethics Commission.

“Due to the varied nature of public service and personal circumstances, what may present a conflict for one position or individual may not be a conflict for another,” she said.

Under state law, a conflict of interest exists when a lawmaker or state employee engages in activities or has interests that “conflict with the proper discharge of their duties and responsibilities.”

Lawmakers, judges and statewide elected officials are required to disclose all material financial interests each year.

Hasenbeck’s 2020 report doesn’t list any financial interests. Reports for 2021, when she worked for Scissortail, aren’t due until May 15.

As an associate director for Scissortail, Hasenbeck’s duties included “parent leadership development, adult education and community organizing,” said Weintz.

He would not say how much Hasenbeck earned at Scissortail.

“As an associate director for Scissortail, Hasenbeck’s duties included “parent leadership development, adult education and community organizing,” said Weintz.

He would not say how much Hasenbeck earned at Scissortail.

All Oklahoma lawmakers earn $47,500 a year.

Hasenbeck was first elected to a two-year term in the Oklahoma House of Representatives in 2018 and is running for reelection this year. She supports better pay for educators but has criticized the tax increase passed by the Legislature in 2018 to increase teacher pay.

For the upcoming session, she’s proposed a bill to incrementally expand the Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship Program, which provides private school tuition to students with disabilities, as well as a bill to boost the bonuses to educators who earn National Board certification to $7,500.

She has been an educator for nearly two decades and taught at Elgin Middle School.

In an interview with Oklahoma Watch, she said she left Scissortail because of the long commute but continues to admire the organization’s mission of working to improve educational outcomes for students, particularly low-income or minority students.

In her time there, she never dealt with families whose children attended private schools and mostly counseled parents on how to improve their situation in public schools, Hasenbeck said.

Charles McCall, speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, was unaware of Hasenbeck’s work for Scissortail, according to his spokesperson.

Oklahoma Watch is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news organization that produces in-depth and investigative content on a wide range of issues facing state. For more Oklahoma Watch content, go to oklahomawatch.org.
**NEWS IN BRIEF**

**College football playoff expansion plans stall**

What started last summer with the enthusiastic unveiling of a plan for a 12-team College Football Playoff has come to a halt with the cold, hard reality that expansion will not happen until at least 2026— if at all.

The CFP is set to remain a four-team format through the 2025 season after administrators who manage the postseason failed to agree on a plan to expand before current contracts run out.

The CFP management committee, comprising 10 conference commissioners and Notre Dame’s athletic director, met by videoconference last week. The road to expansion appeared to be much smoother eight months ago, when the CFP publicly unveiled the 12-team plan. Even with details still be worked out, there was hope agreement could be reached by the fall and a new format could be in place by the 2024 season.

About a month later, it was revealed the SEC was in talks with Texas and Oklahoma to leave the Big 12 and join the powerhouse league that has produced 12 of the last 17 national champions. Relatively new commissioners in the Big Ten, Pac-12 and ACC, already leery of a process that started before they were involved with the CFP, apparently became even more disillusioned after the SEC’s expansion plan became public.

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**OKLAHOMA**

**Young artists part of fast sale**

Applications are being accepted for the Festival of the Arts annual Youth Art Sale set for April, an opportunity for young artists to showcase their creativity.

The Youth Art Sale is a one-day event held during the Festival of the Arts. Young people 8-18 are eligible to apply. This year’s sale will feature an impressive example of what the students in our community are learning. If you know a young artist, make sure they apply. Otherwise, we support the future of Oklahoma art.”

Selected artists must design and create their own artwork, all of which must be original. The process of entering the Youth Art Sale is comparable to the experience of the professional artists participating in this year’s festival’s Art Market. A process of selecting entrants is underway. Each entrant will be notified of the date they will be a part of the Festival of the Arts for years to come,” said Peter Dolose, executive director for Arts Council OKC.

Applications will be accepted through March 14. To apply, visit arts council okc.com and select Youth Art Sale under the Festival of the Arts tab.

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**Around the STATE**

**LAWHORN**

Lawn, senior vice president and Chief Financial officer; and Curtis Dinan, senior vice president and chief operating officer, will conduct a series of meetings with members of the investment community. Materials utilized will be accessible on the One Gas website, www.onegas.com/investors/events-and-presentations on Feb. 28.

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**DURANT**

**State man to study urban agriculture**

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has named an Oklahomaatego of the United States of America on behalf of the support committee for urban agriculture.

Smallwood, who lives in McAlester, was nominated by Chock-chock Chief Gary Batton. He is the co-founder and CEO of Symbiotic Aquaponics, an aquaponics provider and consultancy company. "Innovation comes naturally to Kaben,“ Batton said in a release. "He led a team in developing innovative indoor growing practices that conserve water and provide nutrient-rich food in a sustainable manner. He always looks for ways to partner with the local community and gives back, holding true to Chockaw values instilled in him by his family."

Vilsack's committee will be made up of agricultural producers as well as representatives from higher education or extension programs, nonprofits, business and economic development organizations, supply chain and financing businesses. "Urban agriculture has been growing in impact and importance, and we are taking bold actions to build a support structure," Vilsack said. "I look forward to learning how we can better serve urban agricultural producers, which will complement our efforts focusing on equity, local food systems, access to safe and nutritional food and new ways to address climate change."

The inaugural committee will hold its first meeting in late February.
WASHINGTON — The government wants to give beer lovers more choices than the usual suspects when they reach for a drink — and help them pay less for whatever they choose.

As part of a larger Biden administration effort to boost competition in all sorts of industries, the government is looking at ways to loosen the grip of a few big beer companies that control 65% of the market.

The answers could include everything from rethinking how beers are displayed on grocery store shelves to considering whether brews can be shipped straight to doorsteps.

The Treasury Department came up with its list of suggestions earlier this month in response to a July executive order by President Joe Biden to develop a plan to improve small business access to the beer, wine and spirits industry.

The department issued a 64-page report that looks at how state alcohol laws impact competition for smaller brewers, asks the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission to examine how mergers affect smaller companies and look at labeling rules that make it hard to comply with federal laws.

It offers mostly recommendations to a variety of actors, but several law enforcement agencies are directed in coming months to decide whether to create new federal rules on the trade.

Bob Pease, CEO of the Brewers Association for small and independent craft brewers, says the report is a good first step, but “there is a lot of work yet to be done” to level the playing field for smaller brewers.

“What’s happening is that the competitive landscape has shifted,” Pease said. “And antitrust enforcement is critical for the ability of smaller producers to compete.”

Pease’s trade group represents 5,300 U.S. brewery members and nearly 40,000 members of the American Homebrewers Association.

He says it’s more and more difficult to compete as a small or craft brewer, especially after massive mergers between big breweries, like the $107 billion merger between Anheuser-Busch InBev and SABMiller, which needed federal government approval to close in 2016.

In its recent report, Treasury looked at how big brewers, distributors and retailers potentially exclude smaller players from the market. Smaller brewers complain that distributors choose to work primarily with larger companies and retailers slot beer in preferred locations on shelves, despite a ban on the practice.

Jim McGreevy, president of the Beer Institute, which represents the country’s biggest beermakers, said the report is a “mischaracterization of the thriving American beer industry.”

“Consumers are benefiting from the growing number of brewers and beer importers, with more choices for beer than at any other time in our nation’s history,” he said in a statement.

Beer and small beverage prices increased by about 2% last year, significantly below the overall annual inflation rate of 7%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Census Bureau reported that there were 4,217 breweries in 2019, about 80% of which have fewer than 20 employees. There’s been a roughly tenfold increase in breweries with fewer than 20 workers since 2009, a sign of the growth of independent brewing and the desire for greater access to the market.

The issue of a few companies dominating the market extends beyond beer and wine makers to the larger economy, says Matthew Weinberg, a professor at Ohio State University who studies anti-competition issues.

Weinberg, who has researched the effects of beer company mergers, found that merger agreements between large brewers can result in price increases to consumers, even though companies say that these unions lower costs for people.

“I can imagine that the most vulnerable people in our economy are the ones who are least able to avoid price increases. It has consequences for the rise in inequality we’ve seen in the past 40 years,” Weinberg said.

Pease says his association is working on building solutions for smaller brewers where federal enforcement is lacking.

“What has been a consistent pattern over the past 12 to 24 months is wholesaler consolidation, where there are fewer and fewer beer distributors, which inhibits small brewers’ ability to go to market,” he said. “What we’re doing now is pushing for direct to consumer shipping.”

Most states restrict direct shipment of beer to customers, but at least 12 states including Florida, Hawaii, and West Virginia, have started to allow the practice. Most states allow the direct shipment of wine.

The Treasury report leaves it up to the states to decide.

“State officials need to evaluate the direct-to-consumer distribution model,” both in terms of opportunities for small producers and the risks of making alcohol available to underage drinkers, the report states.

It added that “such balancing of public policy values is best addressed by a democratically-elected legislature.”

AP writer Josh Boik contributed to this report.

Treasury brews ideas for more competitive beer market
SHANNON WARREN

Why can’t I date my boss?

You can date your boss, but your boss can’t date you. Workplace romances are older than time. While it worked out for Marie and Pierre Curie and the Obamas, they are the exceptions.

The obvious problems include distorting flirtations, accusations of favoritism and slowdowns in everyone’s productivity. What about employees and managers just becoming friends? According to Title VII, they can be.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission instructs that “Unwelcome sexual advances ... constitute(s) sexual harassment when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicit or implicit is made an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment.”

While blatant sexual harassment is easily identifiable, relationships are more challenging. How do you prove “advances” are welcomed? Once you have knowledge of an office romance, it should be promptly addressed.

The supervisor dates a person who reports to them. It’s true love – they know it’s forever. Wedding bells are imminent. However, there’s one magic rule – once they start dating, they MAY NEVER AGAIN be in a reporting chain. And even trickier is the fact that best practices dictate that the boss, not the subordinate, should be transferred to avoid any appearance of impropriety.

Here’s where prescient policies can save the day. Have a policy that encourages all employees involved in a romantic relationship, especially one that involves a superior, to meet with HR and explain their immediate work future. Draft a Memorandum of Understanding of what the new normal will be.

This so-called “Love Contract” between parties agree their relationship is consensual and that should things change, they will let the company know. Any new assignments should be handled along with a recitation of your anti-harassment policy. While this is not a bulletproof shield against lawsuits, it’s a start.

Ahmad, Romy Owens and Marium Rana, a news release noted. I enjoyed seeing the unique works during the opening reception last week. Each artist had a different vision for their spaces and explored “suspension, tension and intersection” in their works, as the note stated.

Owens’s fiber installation “Nothing Can Be Perfect” looks almost like an architectural extension of the corner, with taut strings with pale colors aligned across the space.

Ahmad’s work “Jaili: ‘Only from the heart you can touch the sky, (Rumi)” looks at the geometric forms inspired by her Pakistani heritage. The three-dimensional, orange-red art piece also reflects shadows on the walls around it, adding another dimension.


For information about all, go to okcontemp.org.

Have an item, idea or event for On the Town? Email lillie.beth@yahoo.com.

MADALENE A.B. WITTERHOLT

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What about a breakup?

Continue to keep the boss and subordinate apart. Routinely check on any employee whose workplace love has gone bad; don’t be surprised that yesterday they liked being called “honey bear,” and today they say it’s harassment.

A final note, companies need to train managers on the pitfalls of extracurricular fraternization. This is a similar danger zone.

An employee asks a manager if they can “talk” after work. The employee tells the manager their spouse is seriously ill, causing the employee to drink all the time. Don’t be surprised when the next time the employee is disciplined, they claim it’s because of their spouse’s health problems or their drinking. All managers would be well-advised to keep non-work-related conversations confined to safe topics like the weather and local high school sports.

And hence, if our mythical manager had followed these rules, they might not have met their true love, but the company might not get sued.

Madalene A.B. Witterholt is an attorney with Crowe & Dunley, crowedunley.com, and a member of the Labor & Employment Practice Group.

GUEST COLUMN

Best practices for Black History Month

February’s Black History Month provides a worthwhile opportunity to highlight a company’s ongoing commitment to DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion). Outlined are some best practices and pitfalls in recognizing this occasion:

• Learn more: Black History Month traces its origins to 1926 when historian Carter G. Woodson began paying tribute to the long-ignored contributions of Black Americans. In that vein, some organizations have been sponsoring management’s visits to Tulsa Greenwood Rising Museum and the Greenwood Cultural Center. Tours and educational materials are also available through the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce.

• Be authentic: Celebrating Black History should be part of ongoing strategies that show respect and empathy for others. Companies that “glibly” in DEI without having a conscientious, long-term commitment can’t make up the deficit by posting a couple of superficial tweets in February; in the face of consumer and shareholder activism, performative actions tend to be exposed.

• Host an inclusive book club: Books can help individuals understand the link between historical events and ongoing systemic racism. My favorite resource, The Sum of Us by Heather McGee, is heavily researched and directly applicable to business. Also, Robin DiAngelo’s book on White fragility is an eye-opener as is How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi.

• Avoid assumptions: Don’t assume that Black employees will participate simply because of their ethnicity. Avoid pressuring employees of color into valuing affirmative action situations involving discussions among co-workers. Be aware that sharing painful, emotional experiences should not be exploited to educate others. Instead, hire an external consulting team specializing in DEI.

• Lead by example: Join national forums like the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion organization (ceoaction.com). Leaders represent all industries and openly share their best DEI practices.

• Support Black-owned businesses and philanthropic endeavors: Filling that prize customer’s gift basket? Consider coffee from Tulsa’s Cliffon Wills of Java Roots or Good Girl Chocolates in OKC’s Penn Square Mall. Need a caterer for an upcoming department luncheon? Check out visitokc.com for a list of options. Want to support the arts? Contact the OKC-based B.L.A.C., an organization run by noted historian Anita Arnold.

There are too many ideas to fully list here, but The Diversity Movement’s free guide to the best ways to honor Black Americans, not just during this month, but throughout the year.

Shannon Warren is a former HR executive, business ethics professor and nonprofit CEO. She is president of the Women’s Diversity Initiative of Oklahoma (https://womensdiversityinitiative.com).

LILLIE-BETH BRINKMAN

The Oklahoma Visual Arts Coalition said hello to a new director and new Momentum artists while saying goodbye to its executive director during a Spotlight Preview reception Wednesday at the 21c Museum Hotel in Oklahoma City. Khystle Kaye, with Momentum OVAC’s director for the last five years, has stepped down. At the artists’ reception last week, OVAC announced that Danielle Ezezi will be interim director and lead the search committee for the next one.

Ezezi has owned several businesses, served on the executive team of a multinational corporation and led multiple nonprofits, OVAC noted on social media. She is a certified senior professional in human resources with an accreditation in public relations.

During the pandemic Kaye pivoted programs to meet new needs of the community. Programs include the new OK Art Crawl 2020, a statewide self-guided arts festival tour that won a Best Project Award from the Arts Oklahoma. The organization also distributed $80,000 in pandemic relief funds to artists as part of a partnership with the Andy Warhol Foundation.

“Khystle has been a meaningful leader who has brought insightful, sustainable growth to OVAC while expanding our statewide support of Oklahoma’s rapidly growing arts community,” said Douglas Sorocco, OVAC board president. “Khystle leaves OVAC poised to engage Oklahoma’s arts community in transformative ways.”

The work of OVAC’s three current Momentum artists was also on display, including sculpture from Carrie Kouts, which included a concrete cast of organic materials; paintings by Shaneen Dickey, who explores her family’s legacy as Black farmers; and intricate mixed-media work by Kayla Ohmer, whose primary focus is glass art.

To learn more about OVAC, go to ovac-ok.org.

Off the Wall artwork

The work of three artists in a new immersive art exhibit that explores its Mary LeFlore Clemmons Oklahoma Gallery space. The exhibit, “Off the Wall,” features site-responsive works from Oklahoma-based artists Sarah Carter and Inclusion organization (ceoaction.com).

GUEST COLUMN

ON THE TOWN

Kaye departs Visual Arts Coalition

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For information about all, go to okcontemp.org.

Have an item, idea or event for On the Town? Email lillie.beth@yahoo.com.

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Williams plans departure from Greater OKC Chamber  
Roy Williams on Feb. 11 announced plans to retire later this year as president of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber. He joined the chamber as executive vice president of economic development in 2002 before becoming president in 2004.

Search for fire’s cause may take weeks  
It could take weeks for investigators to discover the cause of the massive fire that destroyed a five-story complex under construction at 6161 N. Western Ave. in Oklahoma City, if they find the answer at all, authorities said Feb. 11. Capt. Scott Douglas said the five-alarm fire that brought down the luxury apartment complex Feb. 8 started on the roof. Investigators seeking the cause had to wait on demolition work to access parts of the building.

Is nuclear an energy option for state?  
Feb. 16 marked the 40th anniversary of the day the last effort to build a nuclear power plant in Oklahoma came to an end. This month, a lawmaker requested a study to examine if a nuclear power plant in Oklahoma was now a feasible option in Oklahoma, after the site is now a feasible option in Oklahoma, after the site's closure in 1985. The effort came after a lawmaker requested a study to examine if a nuclear power plant in Oklahoma was now a feasible option in Oklahoma, after the site is now a feasible option in Oklahoma, after the site's closure in 1985.

Economists: Interest rate hikes coming  
The pandemic-era economy — marked by federal relief dollars flowing into personal bank accounts and ultra-low interest rates — is coming to an end. Oklahoma economists say consumers will notice changes soon and throughout 2022. Over the past two years, household budgets grew from federal government direct support and a strong stock market.

Crowe & Dunlevy moving to new offices in Tulsa  
Crowe & Dunlevy, a law firm that traces its roots in Oklahoma to before statehood, is about to open a new chapter in its storied history. The firm has opted to move its offices in Tulsa from Fourth and Boston, where they’ve been for some 30 years, to 222 N. Delaware Ave. They’ll occupy 34,000 square feet on the sixth floor of the building, offered for lease by WPX Energy, a subsidiary of Devon Energy.

Simple Modern to open manufacturing facility in OKC  
Simple Modern, a provider of premium drinkware and consumer products to retail partners like Amazon, Target and Sam’s Club, has announced plans to open a multimillion-dollar manufacturing facility in Oklahoma City. In a release, the company said it will make an initial investment of 4 million to $5 million to cover costs of setting up a plant and purchasing state-of-the-art equipment. It already has entered into a five-year lease for a 175,000-square-foot facility at 4600 SE 59th St.

Federal dollars to pay for economic development programs  
More help is coming for small businesses and nonprofits dealing with negative economic effects caused by COVID-19. The Oklahoma City Council approved a contract for new economic development programs to be paid for with $12.7 million in American Rescue Plan Act dollars. The contract authorizes the Alliance for Economic Development of Oklahoma City to operate on behalf of the city programs in the areas of job training and placement, small business technical assistance and retrofits, minority business assistance and nonprofit assistance.

Increasing demand seen for retirement plans, other benefits  
As more small businesses resort to poaching employees from competitors just to survive, an arms race is brewing in an Oklahoma business community struggling to fill an increasing number of jobs with a dwindling number of workers. There is no doubt that wages are going up, but industry watchers are saying this war is no longer just about money. In addition to competitive pay, more small businesses are throwing in fringe benefits for the first time, such as retirement packages, profit sharing plans and health savings accounts.

Treat’s ‘not a voucher’ plan unlikely this session  
Oklahoma Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat on Feb. 10 stressed that his Senate Bill 1647 is not a “voucher” program — it’s called the Oklahoma Empowerment Act. Regardless of what it’s called, it’s a concept that has not gained any traction among rural legislators, said House Speaker Charles McCall, indicating that the measure is unlikely to pass this year. The details of how the measure would be funded could be worked out as the measure makes its way through the legislative process, Treat said. But he insisted the funding would not come at the expense of public schools.

Proposal to reduce penalties for cockfighting sparks outcry  
State Rep. Justin Humphrey said he knew he was going to “catch some problems” for authoring House Bill 3283, which reduces penalties for cockfighting. The practice of cockfighting and breeding fighting birds, considered by many to be an embarrassment to the state, has continued in Oklahoma despite being outlawed with State Question 687 two decades ago. What’s changed recently, prompting Humphrey to present HB 3283, is that now some sheriffs may begin actually enforcing the law.

Investments in multifamily properties booming  
The newly released 2021 Apartment Report shows the pandemic turned out to be a great time to invest in multifamily properties in Oklahoma. In the Oklahoma City metro, there were 78 sales of properties that exceed 25 units for a total sales volume of 961.8 million. Devon defines 2021 as ‘breakout year’

In what was described as a “breakout year” for Devon, the Oklahoma City-based energy corporation tripled its operating cash flow in 2021. Driven by production growth and margin expansion witnessed especially in assets in the Delaware Basin, free cash flow rose to the highest level reported in the company’s 50-year history, according to financial reports.

Understanding what’s driving ‘The Big Quit’

Competitive salaries and benefits are very important to employees, but a lot of the Great Resignation is about work-life issues and how workers see their future, said Keith McFall, chief operations officer of Express Employment. McFall and Michael Shaw, human resources manager for Embark, joined Journal Record Editor Joe Dowd recently for a JR/Now webinar about “The Big Quit.”

House Democrats define priorities for legislative session

Elimination of Oklahoma’s sales tax on groceries was identified as a priority among Democrats in the state House of Representatives. Leaders in the minority party in the House also said they would place high value on legislation to improve the health care of Oklahomans, to strengthen the state’s education system, to promote economic development, and to increase transparency and accountability at the state Capitol.
GUEST COLUMN

Oklahoma lags in energy industry recovery

The most recent Oklahoma Energy Index, compiled by Oklahoma City University’s Russell Research Center, offers a peculiar look at the state’s defining industry.

Oil and natural gas prices are up, with growing global demand and limited supply to meet it. In years past, $90 oil and $4.50 natural gas would have created a mad rush for drilling rigs and every roughneck from Shattuck to Sallisaw would be walking in tall cotton.

But today, things are different, and the Sooner State is lagging its energy-producing peers as oil-dominant states slowly recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that increased demand for petroleum and sent prices to the cellar.

Making matters worse, Oklahoma was the first state to see an exodus in drilling capital before the onset of the pandemic. Oklahoma saw a precipitous decline in drilling activity, dropping from 140-plus drilling rigs at the end of 2018 to just 49 active drilling rigs in the state one year later. Other similar energy-producing states did not see such a decline, with New Mexico and North Dakota losing just five drilling rigs combined in the same time frame.

Our rapid loss of drilling rigs compared to peer states still holds true today. Compared against 2018 activity levels, Oklahoma rig counts were down 70% through the close of 2021. In contrast, New Mexico was off its 2018 peak by only 22%, Texas by 50%, and North Dakota by 56%. Oklahoma’s oil fields are similarly lagging in production. New Mexico has recovered its pre-pandemic production level, and production was growing to end the year in North Dakota. Oklahoma is not yet experiencing a similar turn in production.

In short, current rig counts that once signaled a downturn in Oklahoma’s defining industry may be the new normal unless our state finds a new way to encourage increased investment in Oklahoma’s historic oil fields. Several factors — among them public policy — will play into the pace of the industry’s recovery, driving an increase in employment, capital investment and tax revenue for the state.

It’s time to encourage capital investment in Oklahoma oil and natural gas again.

Brook A. Simmons is president of The Petroleum Alliance.

Ford, battery maker face stout job requirements in Tennessee

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Ford Motor Co. and a South Korean company would have to create more than 3,000 full-time jobs at a planned electric pickup truck factory and battery manufacturing plant in Tennessee or pay back at least part of a $500 million state grant for the project, according to a lease approved by a regional board.

The Megasite Authority of West Tennessee’s board of directors voted to approve the lease during a meeting to discuss the $5.6 billion project to build electric F-Series pickups and batteries at a 3,600-acre parcel of land in rural Stanton, northeast of Memphis.

Ford, battery maker SK Innovation and Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee announced the project in September. A joint venture called BlueOvalSK also will construct twin battery plants in Glendale, Kentucky, in an estimated $5.8 billion investment. The projects are expected to create an estimated 10,800 jobs and shift the automaker’s future manufacturing footprint toward the South while putting an emphasis on green energy.

Construction on the Tennessee site, named BlueOval City, is expected to begin later this year. Ford has said it plans to start production by 2025.

“The approval of the site lease for BlueOval City is another important step in keeping the project moving forward,” Ford said in a statement.

In October, Tennessee lawmakers committed to spending nearly $900 million on state incentives, infrastructure upgrades and more as part of a sweeping plan with Ford. The agreement included $500 million in capital grant funds.

The lease approved by the board essentially grants the land to Ford through December 2051. The rent is $1 for the entire lease term.

Under conditions in the lease, an accountability agreement requires the creation of 90% of the committed 5,760 jobs in connection with the $500 million grant, according to details presented during the meeting by attorney Chris Bowles.

If less than 5,184 jobs are created within 10 years, Ford and SK will have to repay a portion of the grant plus $175 million, which represents the value of the land, according to the lease presentation.

"We thought to ourselves, ‘What protections does the state have if ... either the joint venture or Ford default on the obligation?’” Bowles said, adding: "That's not what we expect to happen.”

The deal includes only full-time workers at the plant, not the estimated 30,000 jobs tied to the construction of the facility.

"Bob Rolfe, Tennessee’s economic development commissioner, noted Swedish appliance maker Electrolux’s decision in 2019 to shut down its Memphis factory after receiving a large incentive package.

The state’s 2010 agreement with Electrolux didn’t include clawback provisions to recover $100 million in state incentives if job thresholds weren’t met. Electrolux later agreed to pay local taxes on the factory.

“Basically, Electrolux took $100 million from the state and lot of money from the city and the county, and then just woke up in year six and said ... we’re going to shut the plant down and we own everything, and there were no repercussions,” Rolfe said.

Rolfe added that the Ford payback provisions are “almost the opposite” of the Electrolux deal.

"There’s an enormous amount of capital at risk here,” Rolfe said.

Before landing the Ford project, Tennessee had invested more than $174 million in the Memphis megasite but struggled to lure the big tenant it wanted.

With an economy based largely on farming, Haywood County saw its population shrink by 4.9% to 17,864 people from 2010 to 2020, one of 14 counties to lose population, according to census data.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee speaks during a presentation on the planned factory to build electric F-Series trucks and batteries to power future electric Ford and Lincoln vehicles recently in Memphis, Tenn. AP FILE PHOTO/MARK HUMPHREY
Energy secretary promotes net-zero carbon research at HBCUs

ORANGEBURG, S.C. (AP) – U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm on Thursday announced that $3 million in federal funding would be directed toward historically Black colleges and universities, and other minority-serving institutions, for research that would help advance the Biden administration’s goals of carbon neutrality by 2050. Granholm visited with engineering students, hearing their research presentations and also making a pitch that they choose to employ their talents with jobs in the public sector.

The visit, Granholm’s first to South Carolina, came as gasoline prices rise and tension mounts over the war in Yemen and global energy supplies.

Saudi Arabia to keep lid on oil output as gas prices rise

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates – Saudi Arabia is signaling it isn’t willing to pump more oil and won’t push for changes to an agreement with Russia and other producers that has kept a lid on oil production levels.

Biden administration has its hands full as gasoline prices rise

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Solar project delays create hurdles for New Mexico utility

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) – A utility in sun-drenched New Mexico is struggling to get enough solar-generated electricity as it prepares to shut down a coal-fired power plant amid supply chain disruptions, one of the problems threatening to delay or cancel projects around the world as pressure mounts to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change.

New Mexico law requires publicly owned utilities and cooperatives to roll into their portfolios more renewable sources and eliminate carbon emissions over the next two decades.

As part of that push, the San Juan Generating Station – a coal-fired power plant that has produced electricity for millions of customers in the Southwest for decades – was slated to close in June.

Public Service Co. of New Mexico initially proposed replacing the lost capacity with a mix of natural gas, solar and battery storage. The Public Regulation Commission instead opted for solar and storage to make up some of the difference after environmentalists pushed back on gas.

But minority executives have acknowledged bumps in the renewable energy road, citing a perfect storm of regulatory challenges, lengthier periods of unsustainably hot weather that affect demand and the supply chain issues.

Soaring material and shipping costs are being felt across a wide range of industries. When it comes to worldwide utility-scale solar projects planned for 2022, analysts with the independent research company Rystad Energy predicted in the fall that 56% of projects risked delay or cancelation due to the factors.

In New Mexico, utility executives on Thursday submitted a plan to state regulators aimed at ensuring adequate supplies to avoid rolling blackouts during peak demands this summer. One unit of the coal-fired plant would keep running through September.

The utility says state regulators would need to sign off within weeks to have the coal-fired plant would keep running back on gas.

Even if inflation eases, the Washington, D.C.-based Solar Energy Industries Association has said longer-term solutions are needed. That would include diversifying the supply chain by expanding domestic manufacturing.

The New Mexico utility also is on the hook for finding enough renewable power to replace what will be lost starting in 2023 and again in 2024 when its leases for electricity from the Palo Verde nuclear plant in Arizona expire. Regulators have approved more solar and storage in that case as well.

PNM President and CEO Pat Vincent-Collawn said in a statement to The Associated Press that the utility has a responsibility to balance reliability, cost and the environment.

“This solution may impact the timing of our plans to close the San Juan plant, but it does not change our direction and goals for delivering clean energy to New Mexicans, and it keeps our commitments to provide a financially backed just transition,” she said.

Bringing more renewable energy projects online fast is the immediate challenge in New Mexico and other states, including California, where officials who run the state’s main power grid have urged regulators to order utilities to significantly boost capacity over the next few years to ensure there’s enough electricity to meet demands.

Blackouts in August 2020 were the first in nearly 20 years because of an energy shortage, putting California’s quest to have 100% of its energy come from renewable sources under more scrutiny. The electrical grid has seen some storage and transmission upgrades since then, but officials were still forced to call for voluntary energy conservation last summer.

In New Mexico, concerns first were raised in 2021 when it became clear that developers working on the solar and battery projects meant to replace the San Juan plant were defaulting. PNM said it analyzed numerous options and spent months securing firm electricity supplies from other utilities to help meet summer demands.

The other key is the continued operation of one unit at San Juan. Utility executives say the one-time temporary extension will keep the system reliable and help control customer costs.

Without that option, PNM would have a negative 3.4% reserve margin. The historical reserve margin is 13%.

Having a healthy reserve is more important now with demands fluctuating amid extreme weather from climate change, the utility said.

Environmentalists also are acknowledging that keeping San Juan running two more years would be necessary, but they stressed that the long-term solution needs to be ending the state’s reliance on coal and gas plants and passing more legislation to address climate change.

Tom Fallgren, PNM vice president of generation, said New Mexico’s energy transition law adopted in 2019 made for good policy and provided a clear direction for the state. However, he said reliability and cost issues arise when people try to push too fast.

“That has the opportunity to derail the whole path to carbon-free,” he said. “Our caution when that bill was passed was ‘Yes, we’re all moving in the same direction, but let’s do it responsibly so we all stay moving in the same direction.’ And again, that voice has not been heard.”
Leases debated near historic park

FARMINGTON, N.M. – Federal officials have scheduled a series of public meetings to gather comments on the U.S. Interior Department’s proposal to limit oil and gas development on federal land surrounding Chaco Culture National Historic Park.

The meetings are part of a process that aims to withdraw about 550 square miles of federal land holdings within 10 miles of the park boundary, making the area off-limits to oil and gas leasing for 20 years.

New leases on federal land in the area will be halted for the next two years while the withdrawal proposal is considered.

U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland traveled to northwest New Mexico in November to announce the plan. She cited the significance of the area to many tribes from the Southwest that trace their roots to the high desert outpost.

A World Heritage site, Chaco is thought to be the center of what was once a hub of Indigenous civilization.

The Navajo Nation is among the Native American tribes that support increased protections, but top tribal officials have called for a smaller area around Chaco to be set aside as a way to limit the economic impact on families who rely on revenues from oil and gas leasing.

—Associated Press

US firm’s tanker linked to Iran oil trade

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates – A tanker owned by a Los Angeles-based private equity firm likely took part in the illicit trade of Iranian crude oil at sea despite American sanctions targeting the Islamic Republic amid the collapse of its nuclear deal with world powers, an advocacy group alleges. The firm said it is cooperating with U.S. government investigators.

The group United Against Nuclear Iran raised its allegations in a letter dated Tuesday to Oaktree Capital Management, which holds assets worth over $160 billion. Satellite images and maritime tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press correspond to the group’s identification of the vessels allegedly engaged and showed them side-by-side off the coast of Singapore on Feb. 12.

The alleged oil transfer comes as world powers and Iran negotiate in Vienna to restore the nuclear deal. That accord saw Tehran drastically limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions – including those targeting its crucial oil sales.

But Iran even under American sanctions claims to be selling billions of dollars more of crude than before, likely buoyed by energy prices rising to their highest point in years amid the ongoing Ukraine crisis. That makes the sales even more lucrative and increases the challenge of enforcing sanctions if the Vienna talks collapse.

In a statement to the AP, Oaktree subsidiary Fleetscape – which owns the oil tanker Suez Rajan – said it is “committed to using best practices in its operations and complying with U.S. sanctions laws.”

—Associated Press

Japan’s deficits, energy imports soar

TOKYO – Japan racked up a 2.2 trillion yen ($19 billion) trade deficit last month, an eight-year high, as the cost of energy imports soared, the government said.

The Finance Ministry said exports edged up 9.6% in January from the same month the previous year. Imports jumped 39.6%, resulting in the sixth straight month of trade deficits, it said.

The amount is the biggest since January 2014, when the trade deficit was nearly 2.8 trillion yen.

Koya Miyamae, a senior economist at SMBC Nikko Securities, said the trade deficit tends to rise in January because of the New Year’s holidays, which pushes exports down.

“Even taking that into consideration, the deficit is huge,” he said.

Japan imports almost all its oil and gas. Prices have soared to multi-year highs recently, adding to global concerns about inflation. Tensions in Ukraine amid worries about a Russian invasion have pushed prices still higher.

Meanwhile, Japan’s currency, the yen, has weakened against the U.S. dollar as the Federal Reserve prepares to raise interest rates to counter inflation. Higher rates tend to push the dollar higher against other currencies because they create more demand for dollar-denominated investments.

Exports have not risen as quickly as imports as manufacturing of electronics and autos has been slowed by shortages of computer chips resulting from pandemic-related disruptions in some countries.

—Associated Press

Fuel shortages frustrate Nigerians

ABUJA, Nigeria – A prolonged fuel shortage in Nigeria, Africa’s top crude oil producer, has provoked growing frustration and many citizens are demanding government action.

Authorities blamed the scarcity of fuel on the withdrawal of adulterated gasoline that the West African nation’s national oil company said was found to have been imported by four oil marketers.

In the aftermath, the oil regulator has been unable to sustain distribution to retail outlets nationwide. Across Nigerian cities on Friday, lines spilled from gas stations into major roads as motorists spent hours and nights waiting to fuel their cars.

“I slept with mosquitoes (at the station) ... because there was no other option," said Chijioke Ngene, a taxi driver and father of six who said he spent 14 hours through the night until he could buy fuel from a gas station in Abuja, Nigeria’s capital.

Gasoline shortages are common in Nigeria even though it is one of Africa’s top crude oil producers, pumping an average of 1.27 million barrels per day in November, according to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Nigeria’s oil exports contributed more than 7% to its economic growth rate of 3.4% in 2021, the statistics agency reported.

—Associated Press

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Cars queue outside a petrol station in Lagos, Nigeria, on Friday. Nigerians on Thursday demanded action from the government as a prolonged fuel shortage in Africa’s top crude oil producer continued prompting growing frustration and anger from citizens. AP PHOTO/SUNDAY ALAMBA
HABITAT ➔ from p1
Crossing, NE 78th Street and Kelley Avenue, and Faith Landing, SW 59th Street and County Line Road.

Gilliland is already looking ahead to the 450-house development planned for 160 acres they have purchased at NW 150th and Morgan Road.

“The is a crisis situation in our community. There just isn’t any affordable housing,” she said.

From 2000 to 2019, home prices and rental rates in Oklahoma City rose faster than income, increasing the affordability gap, according to the 2021 Housing Affordability Study prepared by Economic & Planning Systems Inc.

The National Association of Realtors one-third of home sales in Oklahoma go to first-time buyers. Polling shows close to 70% said affordability was their biggest obstacle, including ability to save for a down payment.

Habitat for Humanity leaders nationally have been struggling with all home-builders with pandemic issues.

Local affiliates had to limit volunteers over virus concerns, forcing them to spend more money to hire contractors. Revenue declined by temporary closures of ReStores, the reuse stores operated by local Habitat organizations. Supply chain problems caused construction delays. In addition to that has been the spike in construction costs. Lumber prices, according to the National Association of Home Builders, increased by more than 300% since April 2020.

Gilliland said COHFH built fewer houses in each of the past two years, about 35 instead of 50.

“With the costs of lumber and concrete, it’s been tough,” she said. “But thanks to good partners, we’ve managed to keep up.”

The two ReStore locations brought in $500,000 last year, which went into construction.

“Sometimes a business will provide full-house sponsorship, but every donation counts and is appreciated, Gilliland said.

They run the gamut from the third-grade class that raised $300 to buy all the door knobs for one house to the gift from Stephen Florentz, the late U.S. Army war veteran and Veterans Administration surgical technician for whom the Legacy Estates addition is named.

Garvin noted that the bill would prohibit all vaccination mandates — even many that have been in place for decades. Health care workers would no longer need to be tested for tuberculos.

Garvin also asked during the meeting who would be held responsible if a business owner is injured at their workplace.

The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services require vaccination for COVID-19 and other diseases, Paxton said. As a former member of the board for a rural hospital, Paxton saw what happens when rural hospitals don’t comply with CMS rules — they close or raise local taxes.

When they (CMS) put a mandate down, whether we like it or not, they’re the ones with the checkbook,” Paxton said.

“You have to follow the rules or not take their funding.”

SB 1128 would put hospitals in a situation where they could not follow state law and federal law at the same time, Paxton said. Local governments could lose the state’s $5.5 billion, Paxton said.

The committee voted 8-4 to advance state Sen. Nathan Dahm’s SB 1157, which would protect unemployment benefits for employees fired for failure to comply with a vaccination mandate.

“The United States Constitution nowhere guarantees anybody employment, it does not guarantee you a job,” Paxton said.

rules suddenly changed and their livelihoods threatened.

Paxton said he opposes vaccination mandates and has stopped patronizing businesses that impose them — even giving up his tickets to the basketball games. The free market can make those decisions, Paxton said, but the state government should not meddle with how private companies handle their business.

“Oftentimes we keep employees that we really need to get rid of because employers are scared to death that some money-hungry trial lawyer’s going to follow up the next day with a lawsuit,” Paxton said. “When a business closes, 100% of those employees lose their job, every single time.”

State Sen. Jessica Garvin, R-Duncan, spoke of a constituent who runs her business out of her home. The business owner has multiple sclerosis, and has twins who are immunocompromised.

“Why on my property, with my own business, am I not able to require vaccines, because my employees are coming in and out of my personal property and my home,” Garvin said of her constituent’s question. Garvin wondered “how we got to this point” of arguing over which constituent’s personal freedoms trump another’s.

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“When they (CMS) put a mandate...
The Journal Record covers legal news, court opinions, foreclosures, and public notices. Our Public Notice Department is seeking a detailed oriented, punctual, multitask, computer savvy, excellent customer service and time management skilled candidate. This individual will act as a liaison for our clients seeking newspaper placement for notices. The individual will assist our clients with all their legal ad placement needs including but not limited to deadlines, ad submission, proofreading, confirming publication, cancellations, affidavits and invoices. Job requirements demand incredible proficiency at proofreading through remarkable attention to detail and ability to hit daily deadlines. The right candidate for this position is also extremely articulate and professional in communication with many clients. Strong typing skills (50 WPM minimum) are a must as is basic computer knowledge. 1–3 years general office and data entry experience.

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**February 21, 2022**

**Corporation Commission**

(CD2088727) NOTICE OF HEARING

(CD2088727) NOTICE OF HEARING CAUSE NO. 2022040

BEFORE THE CORPORATION COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

APPLICANT: ENERQUEST DRILLING & PRODUCTION COMPANY LLC

SUIT INTENDED TO CONDUCT MINERALS EXPLORATION: "JAMES M D'AMICO, NELLIE FRANCINE DAVIS CUPP, #18183 STERLING TRUST CO, IDA CLOUGH (DEC), DORENE CLEAR, SHANNON K DUBLIN, COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA, ALBERT R CIOFFI MD PA PROF CALDWELL PENSION PLN, BILL CROCKETT TTEE, RICHARD D BEAL FOUNDATION #404/11C/O PERSONAL REP, BAYLOR BATES, MERIDITH BATES, STEPHANI ARMSTRONG, LAUREN ALLEN, JEANETTE SERVICES INC, GARRETT ALLEN, JENNIFER K JONES, JUDY K HUTCHINS, JAMISON, JIMMIE RAY JAMISON, D JAMISON, JAMES HARVEY SCHLEY, JENNIFER K JONES, JUDY K HUTCHINS, JAMISON, IRA OSBURN MONEY FUND, GAIL YOUNG, JOHN K WOODY JR, CARL F L WILLIAMSON, BILL D WOOD, BEVERLY CHUMLEY WEST, TIM TRUSTEE, ELIZABETH NICOLE ERINE NICHOLSON, DALE DAVID DUANE TANNER, NORA SHERRY ENIS SWACKHAMER, STRASSER, BETTY FAYE STUBBS, ROBERT B STEPHENS, LORRAINE STEER, SQUIRES FAMILY TRUST WALTER, KELLDORF; KING OIL & GAS OF CORPORATION; MARK S COMPANY; NANCY L WINN; 31 SIEBEL/SCHREIBER INC, VENTURES LLC; MIKE KOPECK; MLG PARTNERS LTD, MARIJO C BULLOCK, "PENELOPE D BENGOCHEA, MARIAN P HILL 2005 TRUST, DONALD J & FRANCIS GAC ENERGY CORP, DONALD J & FRANCIS GAC ENERGY CORP, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FASH FAMILY PARTNERSHIP, LEA ENIS & JENNIFER ANN ENIS, JAMES: FRED JAMES JR, SAMUEL MIMS; XTO ENERGY INC PKA MUSTANG FUEL CORP OF, CLAY FENLEY, NATALIE "FAS...
In the Matter of the Estate of Bonnie Croom,

Pursuant to an Order of said Court of June 1, 2022, the hearing will be held on the 14th day of March, 2022 at 10:30 a.m. in the courtroom of said District Court, in the City of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, when and where all persons interested may appear and show cause, if any they have, why the account should not be approved and discharged, or a money judgment in the sum of $16,363.32 plus interest, with a Petition praying that the said estate be closed and the Commissioner be discharged.

Pursuant to an Order of said Court of June 1, 2022, the hearing will be held on the 14th day of March, 2022 at 10:30 a.m. in the courtroom of said District Court, in the City of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, when and where all persons interested may appear and show cause, if any they have, why the account should not be approved and discharged, or a money judgment in the sum of $16,363.32 plus interest.

Pursuant to an Order of said Court of June 1, 2022, the hearing will be held on the 14th day of March, 2022 at 10:30 a.m. in the courtroom of said District Court, in the City of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, when and where all persons interested may appear and show cause, if any they have, why the account should not be approved and discharged, or a money judgment in the sum of $16,363.32 plus interest.
for Oklahoma County, State of Oklahoma. You and/or your unknown successors, heirs and assigns, if any, are notified that you have been sued in this action and must answer the Petition on or before the 4th day of May, 2022, or the judgment by default will be entered against you as prayed in said Petition with interest from the date thereof, or the facts alleged in said Petition will be taken as true and judgment rendered in favor of the Plaintiff, and the judgment or order of the Court, in accordance with the provisions of said Petition, will be entered against you as prayed therein.

LOT ONE (1), BLOCK FIVE (5), IN TROY ADDITION TO THE CITY OF OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA.

You and/or your unknown successors, heirs and assigns are notified that you have been sued in this action and must answer the Petition on or before the 4th day of May, 2022, or the judgment by default will be entered against you as prayed in said Petition with interest from the date thereof, or the facts alleged in said Petition will be taken as true and judgment rendered in favor of the Plaintiff, and the judgment or order of the Court, in accordance with the provisions of said Petition, will be entered against you as prayed therein.

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ORDER AND NOTICE BY PUBLICATION OF HEARING TO TERMINATE PATERNITY FA-2022-13

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF OKLAHOMA COUNTY STATE OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE MATTER OF THE ADOPTION OF Belle Sue Ann

Dawis a minor child

The State of Oklahoma to: Jeremiah Lowry

You are notified that Ilda Bararita Hale and Gregory Allan Hale filed a Petition before the above named Court, praying that they be allowed to adopt the above named child, without your consent, and for your adoption

Take notice that the Application to determine whether your consent to the ultimate termination of your parental rights to the above named child will be heard at the hearing; to present a notice to the above named Court, pursuant to 10A O.S. § 1-4-906; THAT YOUR PETITIONER, FINANCING, LLC, having a street address of 5005 S 3-5 Service Road, Oklahoma City, OK 73129 (the “Mortgagor”), hereby gives notice to the above named Court, the Mortgagor will execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. THE MORTGAGOR WILL execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. THE MORTGAGOR WILL execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser.

Your rights to your contact the above named Court, pursuant to 10A O.S. § 1-4-906; THAT YOUR PETITIONER, FINANCING, LLC, having a street address of 5005 S 3-5 Service Road, Oklahoma City, OK 73129 (the “Mortgagor”), hereby gives notice to the above named Court, the Mortgagor will execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. THE MORTGAGOR WILL execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. THE MORTGAGOR WILL execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. THE MORTGAGOR WILL execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. THE MORTGAGOR WILL execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. THE MORTGAGOR WILL execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. THE MORTGAGOR WILL execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. THE MORTGAGOR WILL execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser.

NOTICE OF HEARING

To: Presented to the above named Court, pursuant to 10A O.S. § 1-4-906; THAT YOUR PETITIONER, FINANCING, LLC, having a street address of 5005 S 3-5 Service Road, Oklahoma City, OK 73129 (the “Mortgagor”), hereby gives notice to the above named Court, the Mortgagor will not execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. The sale will be completed.

Date of 2nd Day of this 16th day of February, 2022.

Signature of applicant (s): if partnership, all partners must sign. If corporation, principal officer of the corporation must sign. If limited liability company, a manager must sign. If tribe, a tribal member must sign.

Keither Miller

County of Oklahoma, State of Oklahoma.

Before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared: Neal Keither Miller, and acknowledged that he executed the foregoing application and acknowledged that he executed the same as his free and act deed.

July Lennons

Notary Public

my commission expires June 10, 2023
(214-221-2221)

Alcoholic Beverage License

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF OKLAHOMA COUNTY STATE OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE MATTER OF Z. B. D. L. P. JUVENILE DIVISION

THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA TO:

Father: Zachary Bolt, father of child Z. B. D. Last Known Address: 3809 S. 57th Street, Bowie, TX 76230

Mother: Cynthia Kienka unit 202 last known Address: 1420 SW 31st, Oklahoma City, OK 73119 (the “Mortgagor”), hereby gives notice to the above named Court, the Mortgagor will not execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. The sale will be completed.

Your rights to your contact the above named Court, pursuant to 10A O.S. § 1-4-906; THAT YOUR PETITIONER, FINANCING, LLC, having a street address of 5005 S 3-5 Service Road, Oklahoma City, OK 73129 (the “Mortgagor”), hereby gives notice to the above named Court, the Mortgagor will not execute and deliver a deed, without warranty, to the purchaser. The sale will be completed.

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Signature of applicant (s): if partnership, all partners must sign. If corporation, principal officer of the corporation must sign. If limited liability company, a manager must sign. If tribe, a tribal member must sign.

Neal Keither Miller

County of Oklahoma, State of Oklahoma.

Before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared: Neal Keither Miller, and acknowledged that he executed the foregoing application and acknowledged that he executed the same as his free and act deed.

July Lennons

Notary Public

my commission expires June 10, 2023
(214-221-2221)

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Signature of applicant (s): if partnership, all partners must sign. If corporation, principal officer of the corporation must sign. If limited liability company, a manager must sign. If tribe, a tribal member must sign.

Neal Keither Miller

County of Oklahoma, State of Oklahoma.

Before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared: Neal Keither Miller, and acknowledged that he executed the foregoing application and acknowledged that he executed the same as his free and act deed.

July Lennons

Notary Public

my commission expires June 10, 2023
(214-221-2221)

Alcoholic Beverage License

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF OKLAHOMA COUNTY STATE OF OKLAHOMA

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Signature of applicant (s): if partnership, all partners must sign. If corporation, principal officer of the corporation must sign. If limited liability company, a manager must sign. If tribe, a tribal member must sign.

Neal Keither Miller

County of Oklahoma, State of Oklahoma.

Before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared: Neal Keither Miller, and acknowledged that he executed the foregoing application and acknowledged that he executed the same as his free and act deed.

July Lennons

Notary Public

my commission expires June 10, 2023
(214-221-2221)
**Notice of Hearing Confirm. Sale**

In the District Court of Oklahoma County, State of Oklahoma, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared: Farid Daley, to me known to be the person(s) described in and who executed the same as her free act and deed.

Sarah S. Clutz

My commission expires November 16, 2025, 921014990

(2-14, 2-21-22)

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**Notice of Public Hearing**

A Public Hearing will be held by the City of Harrah City Council to amend the 2022 Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Code and to consider the adoption of a new Zoning Ordinance. The meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on February 25, 2022, at Harrah City Hall, 201 S. Jones St., Harrah, Oklahoma 73045.

The City Council of Harrah, City of Oklahoma, will hold a public hearing on the above matters at the place and time stated above. The public is invited to attend the hearing to express their views and to make comments on the proposed amendments. Written comments may also be submitted to the City Clerk before the hearing.

**Public Notices**

To all interested parties: A Public Hearing will be held in the City of Midwest City to consider the proposed amendment of Section 16.11.02 of the Zoning Ordinance to allow for the construction of a new commercial facility on the property located at 1201 NW 136th Street, Midwest City, Oklahoma, as described in the plat recorded in the City of Midwest City, Oklahoma, as Case No. 91-0920.

The City Council of Midwest City, City of Oklahoma, will hold a public hearing on the above matters at the place and time stated above. The public is invited to attend the hearing to express their views and to make comments on the proposed amendments. Written comments may also be submitted to the City Clerk before the hearing.

**Notice of Public Hearing**

To all interested parties: A Public Hearing will be held in the City of Harrah City Council to consider the proposed amendment of Section 16.11.02 of the Zoning Ordinance to allow for the construction of a new commercial facility on the property located at 1201 NW 136th Street, Midwest City, Oklahoma, as described in the plat recorded in the City of Midwest City, Oklahoma, as Case No. 91-0920.

The City Council of Midwest City, City of Oklahoma, will hold a public hearing on the above matters at the place and time stated above. The public is invited to attend the hearing to express their views and to make comments on the proposed amendments. Written comments may also be submitted to the City Clerk before the hearing.

**Notice of Public Hearing**

The undersigned notary public, personally appeared: Rebecca Daley, Manager of the City of Midwest City, to me known to be the person(s) described in and who executed the same as her free act and deed.

Rebecca Daley, Manager

My commission expires November 16, 2025, 921014990

(2-14, 2-21-22)

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**Notice of Auction**

The City of Midwest City, City of Oklahoma, will offer for sale at public auction, to the highest and best bidder meeting specific requirements, the property located at 1201 NW 136th Street, Midwest City, Oklahoma, as described in the plat recorded in the City of Midwest City, Oklahoma, as Case No. 91-0920.

The City Council of Midwest City, City of Oklahoma, will hold a public hearing on the above matters at the place and time stated above. The public is invited to attend the hearing to express their views and to make comments on the proposed amendments. Written comments may also be submitted to the City Clerk before the hearing.

**Notice of Public Hearing**

The undersigned notary public, personally appeared: Rebecca Daley, Manager of the City of Midwest City, to me known to be the person(s) described in and who executed the same as her free act and deed.

Rebecca Daley, Manager

My commission expires November 16, 2025, 921014990

(2-14, 2-21-22)

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**Notice of Public Hearing**

The undersigned notary public, personally appeared: Rebecca Daley, Manager of the City of Midwest City, to me known to be the person(s) described in and who executed the same as her free act and deed.

Rebecca Daley, Manager

My commission expires November 16, 2025, 921014990

(2-14, 2-21-22)
STAND UP FOR
Oklahoma's Public Lands

Oklahoma’s public lands are a critical part of our state’s economy, heritage and quality of life.

We have some of the most beautiful landscapes on earth that are incredibly rich in wildlife, generate over $13 billion in revenue and support more than 115,000 jobs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the essential role of nature, recreation and outdoor spaces in the physical and mental health of every Oklahoman. These state and federally owned public lands are essential to the quality of life in Oklahoma for each economic class.

All of these benefits come from just over 6% of Oklahoma’s total land.

We need your help to protect these precious public lands.

Ask your legislators to co-author the Oklahoma Public Lands Resolution at nature.org/okpubliclands.