



ONLINE

FROM OUR ARCHIVES: APRIL 1992

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HOUSTON

Woman trapped inside a box for clothing donations

Houston firefighters rescued a woman Wednesday who became trapped inside of a donation box while seeking clothes for her family, according to authorities.

Firefighters rescued the woman around 3:40 a.m. from the metal box in the 7800 block of West Tidwell Road, just east of the Northwest Freeway.

The woman told authorities she had gotten stuck while trying to retrieve clothes for herself and her child, according to HPD Sgt. Victor Olivares. Firefighters cut a portion of the box off from the back to free her.

Officers gave the woman pamphlets to direct her to city resources for clothing.

EL PASO

O'Rourke tests positive for COVID after campaigning

Beto O'Rourke, the Democratic candidate for Texas governor, tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday.

The former congressman from El Paso is experiencing mild symptoms and "will be following public health guidelines," he said in a statement. O'Rourke has been traveling across the state to appear at more than a dozen town halls in recent weeks, as his campaign targets the young voters who propelled his 2018 campaign for U.S. Senate.

Since Friday, he has held events in Livingston, Fort Bend, Canyon Lake and San Antonio, according to his campaign website.

O'Rourke said he "regularly" tests for COVID while traveling, and in fact tested negative on Sunday. He is fully vaccinated and received a booster shot.

TEXAS

Early voting begins on measures to cut property taxes

Early voting has begun for the May 7 constitutional amendment election.

There are local propositions on the ballot, too, which vary by region. But at the statewide level, Texans will decide on two measures aiming at cutting property taxes.

Proposition 1 would approve the tax cuts for elderly and disabled homeowners beginning in 2023, while a second measure seeks to raise the state's homestead exemption from \$25,000 to \$40,000, lowering school property taxes by about \$176 a year, on average. Early voting ends May 3.

Texas has one of the highest property tax rates nationwide — only Wisconsin, Vermont, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Illinois and New Jersey have higher property tax rates.

AROUND THE REGION

Sludge is still leaking at Union Pacific site



Emily Foxhall / Staff

U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee talks to community members on April 19 about the contamination at the Union Pacific rail yard in Fifth Ward. It's unclear if the substance is moving through storm sewers.

Fifth Ward residents have long pushed to get contamination cleaned up, but the process continues to drag out

By Emily Foxhall
STAFF WRITER

Hazardous tar-like sludge still seeps up through cracks in the pavement that covers a portion of the contamination at the Union Pacific rail yard in Fifth Ward, especially on hot days. The system to remove the dangerous material from the site where trains still pass through appears not to be very effective. And whether that same contamination is in the soil beneath nearby homes or moving through storm sewers is not fully known.

These details were highlighted for community members by Melissa Smith, a branch chief for the Environmental Protection Agency Region 6, at a meeting in a school cafeteria April 19. Residents long have pushed to get the site cleaned up, and the process continues to drag out. It has been so long that some community members have died without seeing a resolution.

The meeting with Smith was one in a string of regular community gatherings about the issue. On the horizon is a significant meeting state regulators plan to host May 3. That will be the last chance for people formally to tell the state how they want the cleanup to look. Politicians and advocates last week tried to prepare the group of

about 50 people for how to organize ahead of that meeting and what to expect.

State Sen. Carol Alvarado reminded those present that she was on their side. Harris County Attorney Christian Menefee said his office also had their backs. State Sen. Borris Miles said he was fighting for justice, too. "We have not forgotten you," said U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, who promised to push for compensation for residents as well.

Advocates said the contamination is a glaring example of environmental injustice, in which the same communities of color repeatedly suffer an unfair portion of harm from pollution. Workers treated rail ties at the urban site for years with toxic creosote, which seeped into the ground. There are homes across the street.

Environmental Protection Agency officials sent the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality a detailed letter last month explaining how they believe the proposed plan for cleanup needs to be revised. The federal agency suggested that Union Pacific look at other op-

tions for getting contamination out of the ground, collect more data and share that data in a clear way with residents.

Union Pacific, in a statement at the time, said it appreciated the EPA's input on the plans and was reviewing the agency's recommendations. The company agreed it was important to keep the public informed, the statement said.

Attendance by so many politicians Tuesday night showed the extent of community pressure, though cleanup remains a long way off, even in a best-case scenario, federal regulators said. The feedback to the state from EPA followed a visit from EPA Administrator Michael Regan, who met with community members last year. Regional Administrator Earthea Nance joined the April 19 meeting by Zoom.

"There are many communities like this that live with these problems... Their voices and their problems are not raised up," Nance said. She lauded the elected officials for participating and sharing the neighborhood concerns to a larger audience. "In order for the problem to get solved it has to be raised up, the voices have to be raised up."

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GULF COAST

As season nears, Ida is retired as hurricane name

Ida will no longer be a hurricane name, the World Meteorological Organization announced Wednesday.

Hurricane Ida battered southeastern Louisiana last year when its 150 mph winds made landfall near Port Fourchon. It caused 55 direct deaths, 32 indirect deaths and \$75 billion in damage.

This prompted the World Meteorological Organization, which maintains the rotating list of hurricane names, to retire Ida. It will be replaced by Imani.

Hurricane names are repeated every six years unless a storm is so deadly that its name warrants retirement. Ninety-four names have been retired from the Atlantic basin since 1953.

WEBSTER

Boyfriend charged with murder in woman's shooting

A Houston man has been charged with murder in the recent fatal shooting of a woman he was dating.

Delvin Clemons, 44, is accused of shooting Kieshan Betts on April 17 at an apartment at 270 El Dorado near Webster, according to court records.

Clemons walked out of the apartment that night and told officers that Betts was dead in the bathroom, according to police. Paramedics took the wounded 46-year-old woman to a Clear Lake hospital, where she died Monday.

LAREDO

Woman accused of trying to smuggle boy across border

A woman tried smuggling a teenage boy through a Laredo international bridge, claiming he was a "friend of the family," according to an arrest affidavit.

Diana Ester Garcia-Rostro, 24, and the 14-year-old arrived at the Gateway to the Americas International Bridge on Sunday.

She presented a U.S. passport for her and a Maryland birth certificate for the boy.

Both were referred to secondary inspection, where the boy confirmed that the birth certificate was not his.

He said he was born in Michoacan, Mexico. Garcia-Rostro then acknowledged she knew the minor was not a U.S. citizen and that her brother-in-law had told her that the boy was using someone else's documents to enter the country. She was to ask her brother-in-law for \$1,200 to cover her expenses if she was successful in smuggling the boy, according to court documents.

From staff and wire reports

LOTTERY RESULTS

POWERBALL

Powerball: 4/27 11-36-61-62-68
Powerball: 4 Powerplay: 2
Estimated jackpot: \$421 million
Winning tickets: None

MEGA MILLIONS

MEGA: 4/26 5-7-19-46-69
Mega Ball: 2 Megaplier: 4
Estimated jackpot: \$22 million
Winning tickets: None

TEXAS GAMES

Lotto: 4/27 1-8-14-32-46-37
Estimated jackpot: \$10 million
Winning tickets: None
Cash 5: 4/27 3-11-18-20-25
Two Step: 4/25 9-14-22-34, 33

Pick 3 morn.: 5-1-5, Fireball: 5
Pick 3 day: 9-3-6, Fireball: 8
Pick 3 even.: 1-5-3, Fireball: 5
Pick 3 night: 4-0-6, Fireball: 2
Daily 4 morn.: 9-6-4-5, Fireball: 5
Daily 4 day: 7-8-3-9, Fireball: 5
Daily 4 even.: 5-1-1-6, Fireball: 1
Daily 4 night: 4-1-9-3, Fireball: 2

ALL OR NOTHING

Morn.: 1-6-12-13-14-15-16-17-20-21-22-23
Day: 2-3-9-10-11-12-13-16-19-22-23-24
Even: 4-5-7-9-12-14-16-18-19-20-21-23
Day: 1-2-3-7-8-9-12-13-17-18-21-24

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