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BROWNSVILLE AND THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

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AROUND THE VALLEY

Garza pushes economic solutions to border woes

➤ BROWNSVILLE — U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Tony Garza touted stronger economic ties as a solution to recent border violence as he received the University of Denver's Distinguished Diplomat Award at a ceremony Tuesday night.

According to a written statement from the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, Garza was selected for the award for strengthening the nation's bilateral relationship with Mexico.

Garza, who was appointed as ambassador by President George W. Bush in 2002, told an audience at the dinner that the administration remains concerned about border violence in Mexico but remains confident that economic, cultural and political ties would overcome the problem.

"An aggressive response to border violence is one way to help avoid talk of building walls when we are all better served by building bridges," the former Cameron County Judge said in a speech.

Garza said economic integration between the United States and Mexico as well as Central and Latin America would bring both prosperity and security to the region.

According to the University of Denver's Web site, the school's Graduate School of International Studies was founded by Joseph Korbel, the father of former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Among the past recipients of an annual award to recognize distinguished diplomats in Korbel's honor is Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Five detained in McAllen shooting

➤ McALLEN — Police have detained five men in connection with Monday's drug-related shooting at a home in North McAllen.

Around 9 a.m. Tuesday, investigators executed a search warrant at a home just outside of Alamo, near the junction of FM 495 and Valley Boulevard. Hidalgo County Sheriff's deputies and helicopter surveillance from the Texas Department of Public Safety helped in the operation.

The men staying at the residence were taken in for questioning; however, they had not yet been arrested, said Sgt. Joel Morales, spokesman for the McAllen Police Department. Investigators did not release the names of those in custody.

"The investigation is continuing and determination of charges is pending," Morales said. "Police are still on the lookout for an older model white or beige pickup truck with covered bed in connection with this shooting. The suspect vehicle was last seen at the home where the warrant (was) executed."

LOTTO

TEXAS LOTTERY RESULTS

Winning numbers, Tuesday, August 16:

Mega Millions: 9-15-20-24-55
MB 3 Megaplier: 3
Cash Five: 6-8-22-26-32
Pick Three: 3-0-5(day) 2-2-0(night)

Find past winning numbers at www.txlottery.org

GETTING IT RIGHT

CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

It is the policy of *The Brownsville Herald* to correct errors in a timely manner. Corrections and clarifications will be published in this space. To inquire about corrections, readers may call an editor.

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DA wants to re-file weapons charge against Wright

BY SERGIO CHAPA
THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

An appeal hearing to re-file a weapons charge against Cameron County Commissioners Court counsel Douglas Wright was postponed Tuesday and assigned a new judge.

In March, Wright was acquitted of DWI and an unlawful carrying of a weapon charge after he pleaded no contest to a Nov. 20 auto accident at the foot of the Queen Isabella Memorial Bridge.

He was arrested again this weekend and charged with public intoxication and disorderly conduct by exposing his genitals on a South Padre Island beach.

Court records show Wright, 55, appeared before County Court at-Law No. 2 Judge Elia Cornejo Lopez Tuesday morning.

District Attorney Armando Villalobos said prosecutors planned to argue to re-file the unlawful carrying of a weapon charge but Lopez transferred the case to County Court at-Law No. 3

at the request of Judge Daniel Robles. The appeal is set for Aug. 24.

Robles heard the original case in March after South Padre Island police charged Wright with DWI, duty upon striking a fixed object and unlawfully carrying a weapon after police found a handgun inside his vehicle.

He received six months deferred adjudication for the auto accident. Villalobos said his office filed an appeal to re-file the weapons charge shortly after

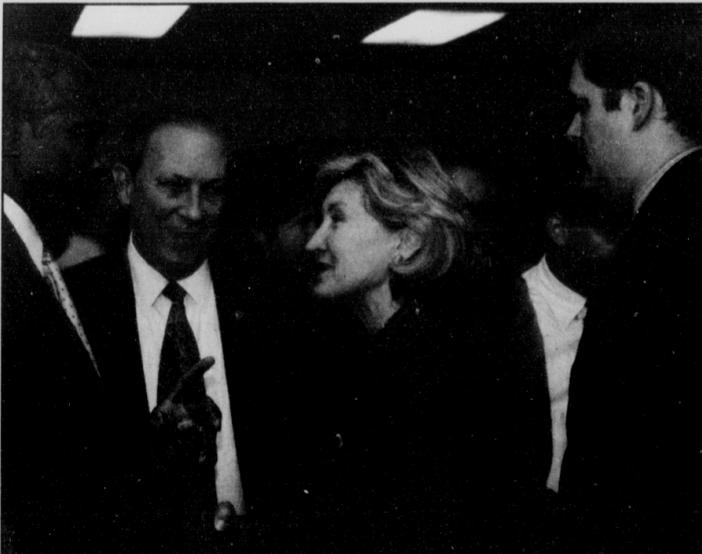
Robles' decision.

Wright's attorney Richard Zayas could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Villalobos told *The Herald* Monday that the arrest could affect Wright's probation.

County Judge Gilberto Hinojosa said Commissioner's Court would meet to discuss the incident next week. Meanwhile, Wright remains employed by the county.

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U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison speaks with George McShan, left and former Harlingen mayor Connie de la Garza after a meeting at Harlingen.

JOE HERMOSA/VALLEY MORNING STAR

City, county leaders praise Hutchison's efforts to lure money

BY ALLEN ESSEX
VALLEY MORNING STAR

HARLINGEN — Local political leaders heaped praise on U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison Tuesday for funding she has brought to Cameron County and its cities for vital projects.

Securing money for rail relocation and highways was a big victory, the senator said.

The importance of railroad relocation projects that Hutchison has backed was illustrated last week with the explosion and fire resulting from a truck-train accident in Lucio Blanco, Mexico, said Cameron County Judge Gilberto Hinojosa.

Moving hazardous cargoes outside cities and ensuring that fire trucks, ambulances and police cars can move quickly through cities is vital, he said.

Hutchison "put her boots on" to kick down barriers to getting a permit for an international bridge as part of the

West Rail Relocation Project for Brownsville, Hinojosa said.

Brownsville Mayor Eddie Treviño thanked Hutchison for helping to secure \$4 million more in federal funds for railroad relocation.

"For 100 years, in Brownsville, they wanted the railroad coming to the city and now, all of the sudden, they can't get it out soon enough," Treviño said, drawing laughter from the crowd.

Also, his city has received more than \$6 million for the Brownsville Urban System, the mayor said. "It's funding for a city-wide transit improvement project."

The mayor also thanked Hutchison for pushing for \$1.6 million for road projects in the north and west sides of Brownsville to alleviate traffic congestion.

Hutchison also noted that Texas carries 80 percent of the traffic from the North American Free Trade Agreement trade on its high-

ways.

"I do so support free trade and, I think, particularly (Central American Free Trade Act)," she said. "We have a huge export market into those Central American countries and, now with more tariffs being lifted, I think our exports will increase."

Trade barriers in Europe and China will continue for many years, so the United States must develop markets in this hemisphere, Hutchison said.

She has pressed for federal funding for health care and other costs of illegal immigration, Hutchison said.

"I hope to free the hands of our local law enforcement officers to help the Border Patrol," she said.

She has pressed the Mexican government to deliver the water it owes to Texas farmers under a treaty, Hutchison said. One of her priorities is more funding for irrigation districts to improve outdated water systems, she said.

Villarreal appointed to PUB board

BY JEFF RAYMOND
THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

With no discussion at Tuesday's City Commission meeting, commissioners appointed a local banker to replace outgoing Brownsville Public Utilities Board director Billy Bradford Jr.

The commission voted unanimously to appoint Al Villarreal to a four-year term. Bradford's term ended July 1. He served eight years on the board.

Villarreal is an executive vice president with IBC Bank and board chair for the United Way of Southern Cameron County.

He has served on various

city committees, including the Brownsville Community Improvement Corp. board and the Charter Review Committee.

In other business, the commission approved creation of the city's second tax increment reinvestment zone, an area in which developers receive property tax abatements for a period of time in the interest of economic development.

The zone is near International Technology, Education and Commerce campus. When completed, residential and commercial developments will add some \$161 million to the city's tax rolls, city officials estimate.

The commission also scheduled two public hearings on the proposed fiscal year 2006 tax rate. Although the proposed rate of \$.68 per \$100 of property value is unchanged from the current rate, some homeowners' tax bills will increase or decrease because of changing appraisal values.

The commission also moved ahead on offering down payment and closing cost assistance to homeowners. One million dollars will be available under the newly created Brownsville Down Payment Assistance Program.

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Growth prompts school boundary changes

BY KEVIN GARCIA
THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

Brownsville Independent School District zoning lines were altered slightly to match residential changes near Perez and Egly elementaries thanks to a decision Tuesday by the school board.

The item was put before the board due to population growth in the area; the board addressed that and other issues.

During the meeting, board members raised concerns about budget items that are approved without their knowledge. Board president Pat Lehmann noted that the district purchased 28 busses and at least one brush pick-up truck this year, of which board members were initially unaware.

Trustee Eliceo Muñoz pointed out that changes in current construction projects, such as the parking lot at Vermillion Elementary, should mean thousands of dollars returned to the district.

"As the keeper of the taxpayers' money and as a trustee ... we have to understand exactly what we are doing," Lehmann said.

In both cases, Superintendent Michael Zolkoski said the board had approved budget items and such changes were within the administration's legal right to make.

"It's our job to run the district," Zolkoski said, adding that these concerns could have been raised during the two-month budgetary process.

The issue was resolved, and the budget changes approved, when Zolkoski agreed to have administrators bring itemized purchase and change lists to the district for every budgetary change.

The district also tabled a decision to refund \$43,272.48 in property tax refunds to organizations and individuals because some areas did not qualify for refunds. Administrators agreed to review and itemize the list after agreeing with the board's findings.

The district also honored the Braves, a 14-and-under Brownsville-based team with the United States Specialty Sports Association baseball league.

The district also honored the Braves, a 14-and-under Brownsville-based team with the United States Specialty Sports Association baseball league. The Braves are made up of players from five BISD middle schools and two high schools, and won two major tournaments and earned a AA World Series Championship title this year.

The Braves next season will begin in March, until which time they are recruiting new middle school-age players since the current 13-member team will be over 14 by that time.

The board next meets for a special-called meeting at 12 noon Aug. 25. The next regular board meeting is at 5:30 p.m. Sept. 6. Both meetings will be held in the board room of the BISD Administration Building, 1900 Price Road.

The Herald

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DON PEDRO SAYS

"Eddie Lucio Three might run for the state House," Don Pedro said as he entered the newsroom.

"Some people might do a double-take if they see two Eddie Lucio's on the ballot on Election Day," the city editor speculated.

"Yeah," The Don agreed. "And with the Valley's reputation, some might not even realize that they're voting for two different Eddie Lucios."

And out he went.