

OUR VIEW: Bond's success signals an important change at COM » A5

GALVESTON  COUNTY

The Daily News.

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COM | CONSTRUCTION



KELSEY WALLING/The Daily News
College of the Mainland President Warren Nichols speaks to employees and supporters before election results begin to roll in for the \$162.5 million bond on Tuesday. The bond passed, which is the college's first bond referendum to pass since 1970.

Board expected to approve order of new bond projects

By **KATHRYN EASTBURN**
The Daily News

After voters Tuesday approved a \$162.5 million bond for new construction at College of the Mainland, President Warren Nichols will appear before the board of trustees Monday to begin moving three major construction projects forward.

"On the agenda is getting the board's approval to move forward to hire a project manager," Nichols said. "We'll also create a recommendation for our architecture and engineering firm, PBK, to begin work on the new Student Success building, plus authority to continue work on the science and technology building."

The Student Success building will replace the college's existing administration building, a one-story structure that flooded in September and sustained major damage to floors and walls throughout.

"If you walked through the building, you'd see that all the carpeting has been ripped off," Nichols said. "We're literally walking on cardboard throughout this whole building. Part of the building is condemned. We're in less than ideal working conditions."

In the interim, while waiting for the new building to be completed, the college's administrative offices will move to the newly remodeled Student Center on campus, but not until late February or March.

"We'll be registering students in January and February and we want to get through that before we attempt moving," said Ruth Rendon, communications officer

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COMING SUNDAY

League City officials say they've done their research on the developers behind a proposed \$450 million project that will include four hotels and a convention center.

SPECIAL MEETING | PERSONNEL

Commissioners to consider firing facilities manager

By **JOHN WAYNE FERGUSON**
The Daily News

» **GALVESTON**

The county will hold a rare single-issue special meeting Monday to consider firing the man in charge of managing its facilities.

In an agenda posted on Thursday, the county announced a special meeting to consider

terminating Michael Bell, the county's director of facilities management.

Bell, whose salary is \$91,352, has been the facilities director since 2012, according to the county.

County Judge Mark Henry had the item placed on the agenda, which included no additional information about the proposed firing.

Henry and other county commissioners The Daily News was able to reach on Thursday said they couldn't comment on the agenda item before the meeting because it's a personnel issue.

Bell oversees all county facilities on Galveston Island and the mainland. Among those facilities are the Galveston County Justice Center, the county courthouse, the San Luis Toll Bridge,

county annex buildings, the medical examiners facility and a fire station on Bolivar Peninsula.

Bell on Thursday declined to comment about the agenda item.

The maintenance department's mission statement is "to provide a safe and comfortable

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PRESERVATION | GALVESTON

Historic fire station to undergo major renovation



KELSEY WALLING/The Daily News

Michael Guillot, director of preservation and conservation services, and Laura Camayd, architectural projects and historic properties manager for Galveston Historical Foundation, talk in front of Star State No. 3 fire station on Market Street in Galveston on Thursday. The foundation plans to renovate the station, which has fallen into deep disrepair.

Star State No. 3 founded in 1859

By **KERI HEATH**
The Daily News

» **GALVESTON**

Galveston Historical Foundation plans to demolish and reconstruct three walls of a 115-year-old fire station at 29th and Market streets, which some groups have wanted restored for years.

The foundation originally hoped to rehabilitate the Star State Company No. 3 Firehouse, 2828 Market St., but tearing down three walls, held up now with braces, is the best option, foundation Executive Director Dwayne Johnson said.

The city's landmark commission gave the project the green light Monday, unanimously approving what staff called an "unusual" request because of the building's advanced state of disrepair, commissioners said.

First, crews must stabilize the south-facing facade, which the foundation plans to keep standing, Johnson said.

"It's an important part of the community's history and it's rarely been really talked about," Johnson said.

The foundation is looking at several months and several hundred thousand dollars of work to bring the building to a safe and usable state, Johnson said.

He hopes to have the building ready by the end of next summer and the foundation is working with its own money, he said.

"It's an important part of the community's history and it's rarely been really talked about."

Galveston Historical Foundation Executive Director Dwayne Johnson

The foundation gained ownership of the firehouse in early 2017, several years after the firehouse had fallen into disrepair, said island architect David Watson.

Watson has been working on the project for years and has worked on other historic buildings around Galveston, he said.

Once the front facade is stabilized, crews will construct a steel frame for the three new walls, Watson said.

"We want to get the backup building up as quickly as possible and we can put up a steel building in a couple days compared to a wood frame building," Watson said.

The new walls need to go up fast to stabilize the front facade, he said. He hopes to finish the exterior walls within six months of starting the project, he said.

"It's one of those projects that we're more

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MEDICINE | EMPLOYMENT

Medical branch to hire about a third of 900 laid off

By **MATT DEGROOD**
The Daily News

» **WEBSTER**

In the months since Bay Area Regional Medical Center suddenly shuttered, Shannan Sillen managed to find other work, she said.

But, while life has moved on since she was laid off as an MRI technician in May, she misses her time at the Webster hospital, she said.

"I love this hospital," Sillen said. "It was like a family. I really enjoyed working here."

Which is what led Sillen and about 140 others, including former hospital employees, to a job fair Thursday in Webster held by the University of Texas Medical Branch, which will open a new operation in the building.

Thursday's job fair was exclusively for people who lost their jobs when the medical center closed.

"It's been a roller coaster," Sillen said. "My husband and I both worked here."

Kathleen Ingram, who also was among the 900 laid off when the hospital closed, is working in Baytown now, she said. But she's hopeful of getting a job as a house supervisor with the medical branch, in part, because of good benefits, she said.

But others, like Josephine Chan, haven't found new work.

Chan is a registered nurse who thought she would retire at the hospital, she said. She hasn't found a job since the medical center closed in May.

The medical branch plans to hire about 300 employees for the hospital's first day of operation sometime in spring 2019, said Katrina Lambrecht, vice president of health system operations and regional hospitals for the medical branch. But officials hope to grow from there, she said.

The University of Texas System Board of Regents in late October finalized a lease agreement with HC-200 Blossom Street LLC to

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