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My electricity reform plan has sparked debate

The Watchdog asked if there is a single state legislator who wants to make a difference in the lives of Texans. Is someone willing to brave the pounding she or he will get for following through on my suggestions to fix the No. 1 consumer problem in Texas: the difficulties in shopping for electricity?

Two weeks later, I have my answer.

Not so far. That's not to say there hasn't been debate. Two

THE WATCHDOG



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well-regarded Texas electric industry newsletters dued over my ideas. One promoted them with specific detail; the other took the electric industry's side and pooh-pooed my ideas. At least debate begins.

With only 33 days before the bill filing deadline, there's no shortage of possible bill sponsors. Texas is blessed with 150 representatives and 31 senators, any one of whom could sponsor a bill.

The Watchdog's Retail Electricity Reform Act of 2015 would eliminate minimum-usage penalties, which especially hurt the elderly, and force all companies to advertise their full kilowatt-hour price and delivery

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EDUCATION

Prime Prep's troubles linger

Record-keeping issues, inquiries among many problems after closure

By **JEFF MOSIER**
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Prime Prep Academy is gone but not forgotten. Record-keeping problems

and general confusion have caused trouble for some parents and students as they moved to new schools last week.

An investigation into allegations of stolen computers continues. And a quarter-of-a-million-dollar debt and several lawsuits, including one scheduled for trial next month, are weighing on the nonprofit that

started the failed charter school co-founded by ex-NFL star Deion Sanders.

These issues, plus a Texas Education Agency investigation, are likely to drag out the Prime Prep story for months or longer. One initial set of problems involved efforts to find new

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Photos by Jim Tuttle/Staff Photographer

Retiree Bob Bartson, who recently moved to Sachse from Las Vegas, fished from an East Fork Park boat ramp at Lavon Lake on Friday. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which oversees federal lands around the lake, will hold a public hearing this month on revising the lake's master plan.

What's next for Lavon?



When Lavon Lake was created, the population of Collin County stood at about 41,000. In 2013, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the county's population at more than 850,000. "We've had a lot of changes," said Michael Kinard of the Corps of Engineers.

Lake's master plan getting its first update since 1970s

By **MICHAEL E. YOUNG**
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With its current Lavon Lake Master Plan now more than 40 years old, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans an update — one that would probably keep the lake and the land surrounding it as unspoiled as possible.

When Lavon Lake was created in the early 1950s, a master plan came with it. And when the corps and the North Texas Municipal Water District decided to en-

large the water supply in the 1970s, raising the lake level by 20 feet, the master plan was amended, said Michael Kinard, lake manager for the Army engineers.

"But since '74, we've had a lot of changes in the urban development around the lake," he said. "Now we're deciding, 'Do we need to make changes and adjustments to the plan for future development we know is coming? How do we best

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He's a different kind of food critic

Dinner invitations may be a little scarce for Charles Duncan.

Don't get me wrong. The former WFAA-TV (Channel 8) investigative reporter is a charming guy with great stories — including one about new romance.

But he's probably a little too conversant in cockroaches and E. coli.

"You know," he said over breakfast the other day, "the FDA allows a certain amount of rat droppings in our food."

Charles was a pioneer in local TV investigative reporting. His hard-charging stories were a staple at Channel 8 from the late 1970s through the 1980s.

And no stories were bigger ratings hits than his forays into dirty restaurant kitchens all over town. "Eat, Drink & Be Wary," those stories were called.

Now, at age 79 and long retired, he's out with a new book by the same name. And it just might ruin your appetite.

I confess to not worrying much about food safety. When people complain about getting food poisoning, I tend to think they just had a stomach bug.

But Charles got my attention with a startling statistic: Each year, 3,000 people in this country die of food-borne illness, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 48 million are sickened.

Those figures come from the

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86TH LINZ AWARD

Couple to be honored for park efforts

Grants devoted 8 years to funding green space over Woodall Rodgers

By **DEBORAH FLECK**
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Jody and Sheila Grant brought much-needed green space to Dallas. Their dedicat-

ed efforts led to Klyde Warren Park opening in 2012. The \$100 million park, built on a 5.2-acre deck over Woodall Rodgers Freeway, has been a popular addition to the Dallas landscape.

The Grants will receive the 86th Linz Award in April in recognition of their leadership in the development of the

park.

The Linz Award is sponsored by Zale Corp. and *The Dallas Morning News*. It is given annually to a Dallas County resident in honor of civic service or humanitarian efforts. The award is considered Dallas' oldest and most prestigious civic honor.

"We are thrilled to death

and very humbled," said Sheila Grant. "It really should go to our donors and those who supported us."

The couple agreed in 2004 to help with planning the park, and they were hands-on from day one. They raised millions and enlisted the help of

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File 2012/Staff Photographer

Jody and Sheila Grant "are the heart and soul of Klyde Warren Park," said Tara Green, park director. In recognition of their work, they will receive the Linz Award in April.

'Tell us what's important,' corps says

Continued from Page 1B

serve the public while preserving the natural resources?"

The corps' Fort Worth District will hold a public hearing on revisions to the master plan on Feb. 24 at the Wylie Recreation Center. After a 6 p.m. presentation, the public will have an opportunity to review maps, ask questions and provide comments about the project, officials said.

Ryan Shackelford, master planner for the Fort Worth District, said updating the Lavon master plan will probably take 12 to 14 months.

The corps has responsibility for about 460 lakes in the U.S., and roughly half have master plans that date to the '70s and '80s, said Don Wiese, natural resource manager for the Fort Worth District. Only 10 percent to 15 percent of the lakes have updated plans.

"Nationally, updating the master plans has become a priority in the last year, year and a half," he said. "And Lavon is one of our most important lakes in the Fort Worth District."

Wylie, along the lake's southern edge, has grown rapidly over the last decade or so, leading a population boom around Lavon's perimeter. New developments have popped up along the west side of the lake and others along State Highway 78 on Lavon's east side.

"One of the new developments on the west side has 1,200 units. Another has 400. Some of that farm acreage has been converted," Kinard said. "Part of the residential that has developed is on 2 to 5 acres. But we're seeing development in almost all directions."

When Lavon Lake was created, the population of Collin County stood at about 41,000. In 2013, the U.S. census estimated the county's population at more than 850,000, a more than twentyfold increase.

The challenge for the corps is to decide how to reclassify its property ringing the lake.

In the current master plan, "you have high-density usage, low-density usage and wildlife management areas," Kinard said. "Some of the parks [on corps land] were originally intended to be huge. We may only have developed 50 percent of some of them. And we have some parks that were part of the original design that have never been built out at all.

"When you look at funding levels, what is the likelihood they ever will be?" he said. "If not, should they be classified as high-usage or changed to wildlife management?"

The 1974 master plan "was rather optimistic — I guess



Photos by Jim Tuttle/Staff Photographer

Recreational pursuits such as fishing are only part of the issues to be dealt with in the Lavon Lake Master Plan. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also must determine the placement of utility corridors as needs for more power lines, water lines and communication lines increase with the population.



Staff Graphic

AT A GLANCE If you go

What: Public hearing on Lavon Lake Master Plan
When: The Feb. 24 meeting begins with an open house at 5:30 p.m., followed by a formal presentation at 6 p.m.
Where: Wylie Recreation Center, 300 Country Club Road, Building 200, Wylie

that's the way to say it," particularly with facilities like marinas, Kinard said. But only two were built.

Corps officials said they're particularly interested in discussing plans that adjacent cities have, and the county.

"We want to get a full view of their plans as we go through the process, and this gives us a chance to hear from the public and key stakeholders so they can tell us what's important to them," Kinard said.

One possibility that some cities have already mentioned is expanding a trail network around the lake.

"If the trails are done right, it's low-impact recre-



Lavon Lake was created in the early 1950s, with a master plan. The Corps of Engineers and the North Texas Municipal Water District decided to enlarge the water supply in the 1970s, raising the lake level by 20 feet, so the master plan was amended. It hasn't been updated since.

ation," Kinard said. "That's what we look at, and it's where some of the communities come in. Some have trail networks in their development plans, and we could link community trails into the federal land, which links various communities in a natural trail network."

But recreation is only part of the question. The corps also is determining the placement of utility corridors as needs for more power lines, water lines and communication lines increase with the

population.

The companies developing those often suggest routes based on the shortest distance, Kinard said, but "they aren't always real worried about the environment."

"One of the lessons we've learned from other lakes is utility lines need to go where we have pre-planned areas for them," he said. "That makes it easier and faster for the applicants, and it makes them go where we want them to go. And it gives us a little more authority to say no" if

the companies push for another route.

"Then they have the option to agree or to stay off of corps property."

Craig Kelly, spokesman for the city of Wylie, said officials there certainly want to be involved in the process.

"The city definitely has an interest in the lake's usage and will be involved," he said. "We'll take a look, take a part and hopefully help shape that land."

Wylie also understands the value of lakefront prop-

erty, Kelly added, and for facilities and businesses that draw visitors to the town.

And when the corps talks about recreation around the lake, Kelly already has an idea to offer: a mountain bike trail.

The lakeshore has its up-and-down terrain, open grasslands and beautiful water views, he said. And there's always the chance for tired riders to stop in Wylie afterward for a hot meal, a cold drink and maybe a little shopping downtown.

EAGLE SCOUTS

Eagle Scout is the highest rank in the Boy Scouts of America. To earn the honor, Scouts must complete a community service project and other requirements. These youths have earned the honor.



Justin James Regan II

Justin, 16, built four benches for the Creek Valley Middle School Athletic Department. He is a member of Troop 787, a junior at Hebron High School and the son of Justin and Glori Regan of Carrollton.



Noah Layne Parsons

Noah, 18, designed and built three medical equipment storage units and a storage bin for Seniors' Net of Network of Community Ministries. He is a member of Troop 751, a freshman at Louisiana Tech University and the son of Layne and Vicki Parsons of Richardson.



Bryton W. Praslicka

Bryton, 18, created a butterfly nursery and a flower garden for the science department at Coram Deo Academy in Flower Mound. He is a member of Troop 714, a senior at Coram Deo Academy and the son of Bron and Teri Praslicka of Double Oak.



Parker L. Wilson

Parker, 18, built and painted three picnic tables for Holy Cross Catholic Church in Dallas. He is a member of Troop 709, a freshman at Southwestern University and the son of Mike and Nancy Wilson of Dallas.



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