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The Mexia News

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Rincker sighs relief on HB62

By Timothy J. O'Malley
Managing Editor

It was a long road for Mexia resident James Rincker as he waited for the final results of House Bill 62 a proposed statewide ban on texting while driving.

Rincker, along with 20 other families, went to the state capital Feb. 2 to hear Texas Representative Tom Craddick (Midland) make his fourth attempt to create a traffic violation for smartphone use while driving, known as House Bill 62, during the 85th Texas Legislative Session.

Rincker's reason for this bill to pass is more personal and closer to heart. His sister, Amanda Rincker, died in November 2015 when the car she was driving crashed. Rincker

said, "We believe she crashed as a result of her picking up her phone to send a text message. We know of two texts she sent at the time of the wreck. One was to her friend texting, 'Going to Groesbeck. I love you' and one to her best friend 'Are you awake?'"

During the Committee Hearing in March, the HB 62 passed 13- yes/0-no. The bill was sent to Calendars Committee to be scheduled for debate on the floor.

It was at that time that hope turned to concern for Rincker. He said, "Several amendments had been made and there were only two weeks left in session. Time is of the essence in getting this bill passed."

The Senate committee delayed voting on the statewide ban on texting while driving.

See HB62, Page 4



Mexia Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Susan Cates leads a discussion at a webinar on overcoming objections to implementing changes in small towns. The webinar was held May 17 at the Mexia Business Resource Center, which is the building that houses the EDC and Chamber of Commerce.

Photo by Roxanne Thompson/The Mexia News

WEBINAR OFFERS NEW IDEAS TO IMPLEMENT CHANGES

By Roxanne Thompson
Staff Writer

Mexia Economic Development Corporation hosted a webinar earlier this month on how to make a town more open to new ideas, and attendees came away appearing to find the material helpful.

The webinar – which is like a seminar, except the speakers broadcast from an online location – was held May 12 at the Mexia Business Resource Center, the building on McKinney Street that houses the Mexia EDC and the Chamber of Commerce.

The object of the webinar was to address the mindset that people who try to make changes in small towns often confront, such as "We've already tried that before," or "That's not how we do things here." Those phrases and that mindset have stopped positive change many times and discouraged those who have ideas they would like to try in their town.

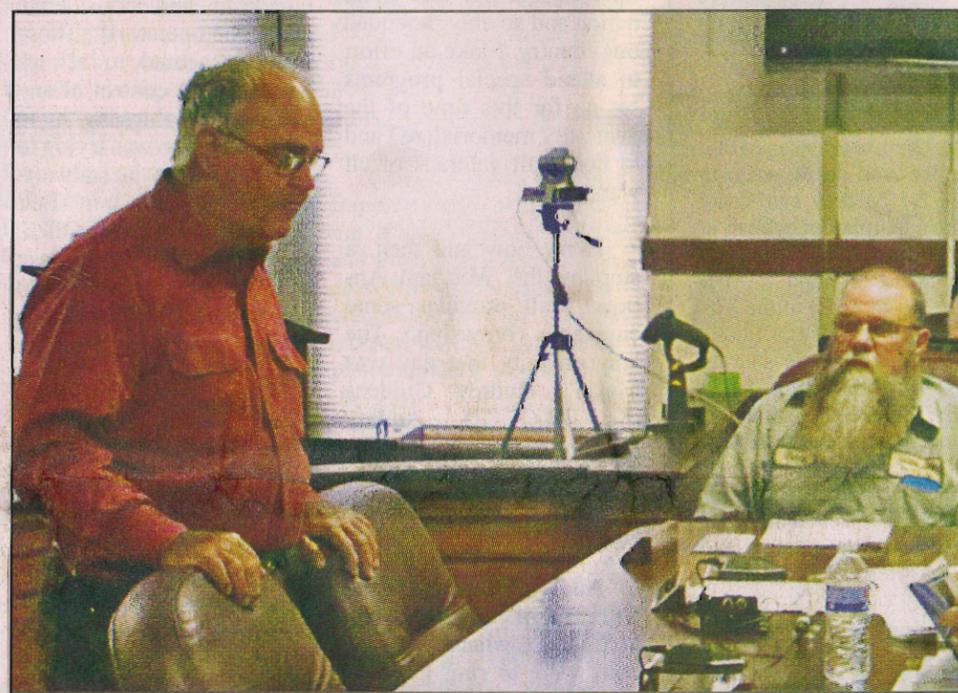
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Mexia EDC Director Susan Cates coordinated the Mexia portion of the event, and about nine people participated, including Cates, in Mexia.

Other locations across the United States hosted their own venues for the webinar while McCray and Brown spoke from their respective locations.

The webinar was titled "Idea Friendly: How to Make Your Town Open to New Ideas," and the thrust of the message was:

1. Gather a crowd – Find people who are interested in the new idea or change.
2. Build connections – People from different groups, who may not otherwise interact, if brought together, may work together toward common goals.



Independent insurance contractor Sam LeNoir, at left, addresses the Limestone County commissioners court at its May 23 meeting, requesting the county allow payroll deductions for insurance premiums to his company, National Farm Life Insurance.

Photo by Roxanne Thompson/The Mexia News

Court takes no action on deduction request for now

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Staff Writer

A representative of an insurance company made a presentation at Limestone County commissioners court's May 23 meeting, requesting the county make automatic payroll deductions to pay the insurance company's premiums for county employees who request it, but commissioners took no action to fulfill his request.

Groesbeck's Sam LeNoir, an independent insurance contractor for National Farm Life Insurance, made the pre-

miss it," LeNoir told the commissioners, "so it makes it a whole lot easier for that employee, a lot of times, to take \$20 out of his paycheck, where it might be hard for him to pay a \$40 bank draft to cover his family."

At one point, Commissioner Pat. 3 Jerry Allen asked Pickett, who was in the audience, what she thought of the idea, and she expressed willingness to set up the deductions.

"If the employees want it, I don't mind doing it," she said.

County Judge Daniel Bur-

LeNoir said the company would then contact the customer and either send a bill or have a draft taken from the customer's bank account.

"In today's world, you can draft on a person's bank account pretty easy," Forrest said. "The main reason to have it is so people will have life insurance after they are no longer employed."

"I think if we open the door for one company to do it, who's to say (another agent) is not down here next week, asking if we can do one for his company also," Forrest continued. "I just think we

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Groesbeck's Sam LeNoir, an independent insurance contractor for National Farm Life Insurance, made the presentation, saying that he had a payroll deduction program in Freestone County. He said he had done business with some county employees for as long as 20 years, and he wanted to make paying the premiums easier for county employees.

LeNoir pointed out that his insurance program would not cost the county anything beyond the efforts of County Treasurer Carol Pickett, who handles the payroll, to set up the line item deduction. He mentioned other benefits of the policy, such as its portability and its liberal underwriting requirements — and he noted that the insurance was voluntary.

"It works on the concept of, 'If I don't see it, I don't

miss it,'" LeNoir told the commissioners, "so it makes it a whole lot easier for that employee, a lot of times, to take \$20 out of his paycheck, where it might be hard for him to pay a \$40 bank draft to cover his family."

At one point, Commissioner Pct. 3 Jerry Allen asked Pickett, who was in the audience, what she thought of the idea, and she expressed willingness to set up the deductions.

"If the employees want it, I don't mind doing it," she said.

County Judge Daniel Burkeen, however, expressed reservations about the county's receiving too many requests similar to LeNoir's.

"We haven't done this before, frankly because if we get everybody and their cousins coming in wanting to do a legal service plan, a payroll deduction, we'd be collecting money for everybody," Burkeen said, but he opened up the subject for discussion by the court.

LeNoir's associate, Randy Ingrant, began pointing out the benefits of the plan, but Commissioner Pct. 4 Bobby Forrest said the quality of the policy was not the issue. He asked LeNoir how the company would get its premium if the employee retired or quit.

LeNoir said the company would then contact the customer and either send a bill or have a draft taken from the customer's bank account.

"In today's world, you can draft on a person's bank account pretty easy," Forrest said. "The main reason to have it is so people will have life insurance after they are no longer employed."

"I think if we open the door for one company to do it, who's to say (another agent) is not down here next week, asking if we can do one for his company also," Forrest continued. "I just think we would open a bag of worms we can't control."

"We don't have any problems in some other counties, I'll put it that way," LeNoir replied.

After the discussion, when Burkeen asked whether any of the commissioners wanted to make a motion on the subject, none moved to propose the action, so the proposal died for lack of a motion.

After the meeting, Allen commented in agreement with Forrest's idea.

"Just like Bobby says, if we open the door for one, we're opening the door for ... everybody, and then you couldn't say no to the others," Allen said. "If you do it for one, you have to do it for all."



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 2. Build connections — People from different groups, who may not otherwise interact, if brought together, may work together toward common goals.
 3. Take small steps — Moderate changes are easier to achieve and move in the right direction.
- McCray and Brown contrasted their way of implementing changes versus more traditional ways that often don't work as well:
- Being informal rather than formal.
 - Allowing chaos rather than trying to be in control.
 - Involving the crowd, rather than only a few.
 - Testing ideas rather than making a decision and moving forward with it.
 - Staying connected with the larger group, rather than staying isolated.
 - Being open to change and new ideas, rather than being closed.
 - Taking small steps, rather than aiming for big changes.
 - Viewing failure as valuable information rather than viewing it as bad.

After the two speakers completed their presentation, people attending the webinar in the different locations submitted questions, generally asking how to apply the principles the women had explained to the questioners' individual

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demands for amendments from the Republican senators she needs to reach a goal of 25 votes.

That's 25 votes in a 31-member Senate, or six more than is normally needed under Senate rules to bring a bill up for consideration.

"We're still working on amendments," Zaffirini said after the committee failed to

police departments, medical groups representing doctors and hospitals, automobile manufacturers and Realtors.

On May 19, HB 62 passed the Senate by a vote of 23-8. The bill, authored by Rep. Tom Craddick and Sen. Judith Zaffirini, will head to the Governor's desk for consideration after the Texas House approves a procedural

Rincker said, "I'm just full of an array of emotions. It's definitely a bitter sweet victory. I am relieved that this is actually coming to a circles, but unfortunately it leaves me a sadness that this many people have had to die for this to finally take place. All I can say is 'This one is for you Sissy.'

WEBINAR

Continued from Page 1

situations, which McCray and Brown answered immediately.

The webinar lasted about an hour, which was the right length, since it was scheduled during the lunch hour so people could attend without interfering with their employment.

Brown and McCray's ideas were not only valuable but could be implemented in Mexia, Cates said.

"The team at saveyour.town, Deb Brown and Becky McCray, always have great information to share from their years of experience in small rural communities that Mexia can apply in our community," Cates said. "Deb and Becky encouraged small communities to 'Take Small Steps,' and that is something we can do. For example, Mexia Rocks is something small that one person, Debbie Nelson, thought she could do

in her spare time; and it has become a local phenomenon."

Cates was referring to a fun initiative Nelson came up with to paint small rocks and leave them around town for people to see, enjoy and even take home – as long as they paint their own rock and leave it where they took the rock they liked. Since Mexia Rocks began, many people have responded, and painted and exchanged rocks.

Although turnout to the webinar was not high, Cates expressed satisfaction with it.

"I think the webinar encouraged participants to think outside the box," she said. "No idea is too big, too small or too weird to be considered. Mexia has some great local talent and creative thinkers. We need to encourage these individuals to share their ideas, gather a crowd to get it done and watch Mexia blossom!"

The webinar is one in a series of events planned by Mexia EDC to involve the Mexia community in the process of economic development in the city.

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