



H.S. hoops

Temple knocks off Waco, 71-51

– 1B



More coverage online

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Asia

Magnitude 7.5 quake in northern Japan injures 23 people and triggers a tsunami

– 5A

Today's Outlook

High: **69**
Low: **44**
Sunny



TEMPLE

How \$78 million botanic garden vision wilted away

BY IAN CAMACHO
TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

The recent settlement regarding the Bend of the River property has officially closed the book on one of Temple's most ambitious and expensive unrealized dreams.

While the city finalizes a \$100,000 payment to the Talasek family and commissions a \$93,500 statue of Reuben D. Talasek, staff have confirmed that the city quietly has scrapped the long-planned \$78 million botanic garden project.

Seed of an idea

The vision began in 2011, when the Reuben and Bernice Talasek family donated 30 acres along the Leon River, a site known locally as Bend of the River Park, on South General Bruce Drive on the south side of Temple.

The city immediately began exploring a botanic garden concept, drumming up public enthusiasm with an "Imagine If" concert the following year, which drew performers from around the country.

Momentum built quickly with the owner of an adjacent property donating an additional 58 acres in 2015.

Now holding a considerable 88-acre canvas, the city envisioned a destination that would rival the 66-acre Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, hoping to draw tourism dollars from across the state.

Master Plan

To turn the dream into reality, the city engaged St. Louis-based EMD Consulting for a feasibility study.

With good results in the 2016 report, the city later hired Houston-based SWA Group to develop a master plan.

The group held public meetings for feedback while the city formed a three-member Bend of the River Foundation Board to lead fundraising.

The SWA 2017 reveal outlined a world-class facility featuring:

- Kitchen and family adventure gardens.
- A pollinator garden.
- A preserved forest with an elevat-

ed canopy walk.

- Labs, classrooms, a gift shop, and food trucks.
- A river-view deck and kayak launch connecting to Belton's trails.

But the estimated construction cost came to \$78 million — more than \$100 million in today's dollars.

It also projected annual operating costs of roughly \$1.5 million — more than \$2 million today. For context, the Dallas Arboretum reportedly spent about \$1.44 million on

Please see GARDEN, 3A

WASHINGTON

Farm aid

Trump giving \$12 billion to farmers hit hard by his trade war with China

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump announced a \$12 billion farm aid package Monday — a boost to farmers who have struggled to sell their crops while getting hit by rising costs after the president raised tariffs on China as part of a broader trade war.

He unveiled the plan Monday afternoon at a White House roundtable with Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, lawmakers from farm states, and farmers who thanked him for the help.

"With this bridge payment, we'll be able to farm another year," Iowa farmer Cordt Holub told Trump during the event.

Rollins put the immediate value of the program at \$11 billion — money that the White House said will

offer one-time payments to row-crop farmers. Another \$1 billion will be put aside for specialty crops as the administration works to better understand the circumstances for those farmers, Rollins said. The aid will move by the end of February, she said.

"We looked at how they were hurt, to what extent they were hurt," Trump said, explaining how the administration came up with the size of the package. Trump said the money for the program will come from tariff revenue.

Later this month, the USDA will use a formula that estimates production costs to come up with a per-acre payment for each type of crop.

Please see AID, 3A

Frozen stares



Nan Dickson/Special to the Telegram

Steven Duran, left, and Charley Hedgepeth are all bundled up in blankets as they raply observe fellow class members Dec. 2 make a glass piece during glassblowing class at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor's Baugh Center for the Visual Arts in Belton. Temperatures are forecast to be cold with a gradual warming trend through the week. For more weather information, see Page 8B.

CENTRAL TEXAS

Reward offered for information about vandalism at Bartlett Red School building

BY CAROLINE REED
TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

BARTLETT — Supporters of a local historical site are seeking help regarding a break-in and vandalism at the historic Bartlett Red School building, a 1909 landmark that houses the Bartlett Area Museum and the Bartlett Area Historical Society.

Bartlett Activities Center, Inc., which manages the property, said the incident occurred sometime between Nov. 22 and Dec. 3. A reward is being offered for information leading to the arrest of those responsible.

Kathy Jones, president of Bartlett Activities Center, said there is \$100 reward for information that could lead to those responsible.

The 1909 building functioned as a school until 1988, and has since been leased to Bartlett Activities Center Inc., a non-profit corporation meant



Courtesy

Vandalism occurred sometime between Nov. 22 and Dec. 3, resulting in damages to trophies, windows and other items in the building.

to preserve the old school as a landmark and to keep the building in service to benefit the citizens of Bartlett and surrounding area.

"It's a beautiful building, and it's heartbreaking to see

what they did," Jones said.

Jones said the back door was forced open and will likely need to be replaced. Inside, the damage included broken trophies, mannequins destroyed, historical items

scattered outside, drawers pulled out and scattered debris — including beer cans. The museum's front door had been egged, and window screens

Please see BARTLETT, 3A

INDO-PACIFIC SECURITY

Rubio, Hegseth discuss security with Australian counterparts

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth met their Australian counterparts Monday in Washington for annual talks focused on Indo-Pacific security and countering China's increasing assertiveness in the region, including in the South China Sea and directed at Taiwan.

Rubio, Hegseth, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Defense Minister Richard Marles gathered at the State Department, with many eyes also on the Russia-Ukraine war, a fragile ceasefire in Gaza and U.S. military strikes against al-

leged drug traffickers in the Western Hemisphere that have raised questions about the use of force there.

"This is a very strong partnership, it's a strong alliance, and what we want to do is continue to build on it. We think we have a lot of momentum behind this alliance," Rubio said, hailing cooperation between Washington and Canberra on critical minerals, defense production and troop deployments.

None of the four mentioned China by name in their brief comments to reporters before the formal meeting began.

Please see SECURITY, 3A

TEMPLE

Multiple warming shelters available as temps drop near or below freezing

BY IAN CAMACHO
TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

The city of Temple has partnered with The Salvation Army to operate an overnight warming shelter during periods of severe winter weather.

The shelter, at 419 W. Ave. G, will open whenever temperatures are at or below 32

degrees in dry conditions, and at or below 36 degrees in wet conditions.

If conditions qualify for opening, the warming shelter will open from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m.

Additionally, if temperatures remain at or below 32 degrees at 7:30 a.m., guests may stay inside until weather condi-

tions improve.

The Salvation Army shelter includes a warm indoor space, secure overnight accommodations, cots, food and drinks.

While the warming shelter allows only registered service animals indoors for overnight guests, it will help to make special arrangements for pets.

In addition to the shelter at

The Salvation Army, two other local shelters have agreed to provide daytime-only indoor warming stations.

The Temple Public Library, at 100 W. Adams Ave., remains open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday to Thursday, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 1-6 p.m. Sundays.

Feed My Sheep, at 116 W. Ave. G, also offers an indoor warming location from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday to Friday.

These three facilities will display a blue flag outside when the warming shelter is activated.

Other Temple city facilities will remain open to the public

during their standard operating hours.

City staff have asked residents to take precautions and check on their neighbors who may need help when conditions drop to freezing temperatures.

For information, visit stay-safetemple.com.

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TODAY'S BIBLE VERSE

"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." — John 6:35



MARKET
REPORT
Complete coverage Page 4B

Dow Jones industrials	-215.67
47,739.32	
Nasdaq composite	-32.22
23,545.90	

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