

GPI seeks more tax-free bonds

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Graphic Packaging International expects to issue a third round of tax-exempt bonds soon, this one for about \$120 million, to refinance another portion of the construction costs for its Waco mill, which represents a \$1.67 billion investment.

The Waco City Council on Tuesday endorsed Graphic Packaging's effort with Mission Economic Development Corp. to secure the tax-exempt notes. The council's approval is required to seek the bonds, but no city money or financial liability is involved.

Graphic Packaging expects the bond sale to close early next month. The council authorized up to \$145.5 million, but Graphic Packaging plans to seek \$120 million in this round, a company official said Thursday.

The mill at 301 Sheehy Parkway in Waco's Texas Central Industrial Park

produced its first commercial-grade recycled coated paperboard in October, with officials at the time saying they expected to reach full production in a year to 18 months. The facility employs 230 people across four production shifts.

It qualifies to seek the tax-free bonds because of the recycling component of its operation. Graphic Packaging has said the mill will annually divert about 550,000 tons of fiber from landfills to produce an array of recycled coated paperboard.

The city of Waco's mixed-material recycling last year totaled a little more than 7,000 tons.

The company has previously received a total of about \$246 million in tax-free bond financing in two rounds.

The tax-exempt bonds, which offer lower borrowing costs than taxable corporate bonds, are considered private activity bonds by the Texas Bond Review Board, and more particularly, industrial

development bonds. Private activity bonds must be sold through an entity with a federal tax-exempt status, such as Mission Economic Development Corp.

Under the federal Tax Reform Act of 1986, each state has an allocated amount of tax-exempt bonds that may be sold for specific private activities, according to the bond review board website. In Texas this year the cap is about \$4.74 billion.

Qualifying uses include mortgage revenue bonds, small-issue industrial development bonds, certain state-voted bond issues, student loan bonds, and those for a variety of "exempt facilities," including qualified affordable multi-family rental housing, sewage facilities, solid waste disposal facilities and hazardous waste disposal facilities, the bond review board website says.

Because of the cap on available bonds, Graphic Packaging may not receive the full \$120 million it is seeking.

Teen gets 30 years in murder plea deal

Father of eight fatally shot last spring

BY CHRISTOPHER DE LOS SANTOS
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A Mart teen was sentenced Thursday to 30 years in prison after pleading guilty to murder in the May 2025 shooting death of Rondal Smith, 36, a Waco father of eight.

Judge Susan Kelly of Waco's 54th State District Court sentenced Lee Treviun Holloway, 17, to 30 years in prison, in accordance with a plea deal Holloway reached with McLennan County prosecutors. Holloway, who was 16 at the time of the shooting but certified to stand trial as an adult, will be eligible to seek parole after serving 15 years. Kelly warned him, however, that he likely will serve most if not all of his sentence behind bars.

Waco Police responded the night of May 21, 2025, to a shots-fired report at an apartment complex in the 5100 block of Hawthorne Drive, where they found both Smith and Holloway with gunshot wounds. Smith was pronounced dead at the scene, and Holloway was taken to a local hospital in stable condition, police said at the time, identifying Holloway only as a 16-year-old. He was arrested on a murder charge about two months later.

Holloway initially told officers he shot Smith in self-defense after a struggle for the gun as Smith attempted to rob him at gunpoint, McLennan County First Assistant District Attorney Ryan Calvert said.

"However, subsequent DNA testing on the gun found at the scene showed Holloway's DNA on the inside of the firearm, refuting his claim that the gun belonged to Mr. Smith," Calvert said.

After Holloway's sentencing, Smith's wife, two of his children and his mother gave victim impact statements.

Smith's wife walked to the front of the courtroom with an associate who read her statement.

"I have one question for Mr. Holloway: As an African-American who grew up without a father, why would you take away another African-American family's father? ... My husband was not just my husband, he was my person," she read. "He was the person I came home to, the person I shared my life with, the person who carried the weight of our family with me. I found my person and then he was taken from me."

She said she now has to meet the needs of her eight children without Smith's help, and grief over his death mutes each life milestone they pass, from first dates and school dances to graduations and other family celebrations.

Smith's mother also walked to the front of the courtroom and had an



Holloway

LEGEND ON HAND FOR KICKOFF LUNCH



JERRY LARSON, TRIBUNE-HERALD

Patty Donaldson, of Hillsboro, gets her jersey signed by former Dallas Cowboys defensive tackle Randy White after his talk at Thursday's Kick Off Sports Luncheon hosted by the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce. White, a first-ballot Pro Football Hall of Fame inductee, was named co-MVP for the Cowboys' 1978 Super Bowl win. For coverage of Thursday's event, **see Page A3.**

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Panel votes to hold Fauci in contempt

Dems call Paul's move to bypass full Senate vote unprecedented

AHMED ABOULENEIN
Reuters

WASHINGTON — Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., said Thursday he will ask the Justice Department to prosecute Dr. Anthony Fauci for refusing to answer questions about the COVID-19 pandemic after a Senate committee voted to hold the former top infectious disease official in contempt of Congress.

The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which Paul chairs, approved a contempt resolution on a party-line vote with Republicans in favor and Democrats opposed.



Paul

2022 as the head of the national infectious-disease agency and a presidential adviser, invoked his Fifth Amendment constitutional right against self-incrimination more than 100 times.

Paul sent the referral, a formal request to consider criminal charges, after the contempt finding. But the Kentucky senator, a longtime Fauci antagonist, bypassed a referral vote by the full Senate.

He described that step as

The resolution accuses Fauci of failing to obey a congressional subpoena.

The move followed a hearing last week where Fauci, who retired in

unnecessary and said his request would be hand delivered to the attorney general Thursday. Democrats said Paul was violating Senate rules by skipping the vote, which would likely fail to achieve the necessary 60-vote majority, and called the move dangerous and unprecedented.

A Justice Department spokesperson confirmed copies of the referral had been sent to the DOJ leadership and the U.S. Attorney's Office in Washington, D.C.

"We have received the document, we are reviewing it and will work with the Senate accordingly," the spokesperson said.

The development was the sharpest escalation yet in a broad Republican and Trump administration campaign to relitigate the



KEVIN DIETSCH, GETTY IMAGES

Former NIH Director Anthony Fauci testifies before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing July 29 in Washington.

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