

# Chambers County Weekly

Thursday, June 3, 2021

Baytown Sun Extra

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## BH football coach leaving to be closer to home

BY ALAN DALE

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The last year was nothing Tom Westerberg would like to remember and hopefully going forward, the now-former Barbers Hill football coach and athletic director can find comfort in a return closer to home.

Westerberg made it official this week that he will leave his posts at Barbers Hill effective late June to become the athletic director at Hays Consolidated ISD where he will oversee the programs of three high schools – Hays, Lehman and Johnson – while stepping aside from the coaching sidelines for now.

The district is located in the Austin Metropolitan area, located within approximately half-hour from the state capitol.

“I had an opportunity that I

couldn't pass up,” Westerberg said. “Hays Consolidated opened up a position – they hadn't had a straight athletic director – and I know someone down that direction and was contacted if I would be interested and I said yes. It went pretty fast. It happened over the past three weeks.

“That area is where we are headed back to. I have a townhome in Salado (his hometown) about an hour north of there. It puts us closer to my wife's mom and 35 minutes from my dad. I have a sister that lives in Georgetown and one in Austin. Family has a lot to do with it. It helps being able to help out my dad as he gets older. 2020 was an awful year.”

Westerberg said that not leading a football program will be a chance and with his son Kyle



WESTERBERG

Hays facilities.

“It's going to be a fun adventure,” Westerberg said. “You never say never, but at this point, no I won't coach football. But I can't say I will never do it because you never know what's happening the next day.

“At this point, I don't have any plans to.”

Westerberg lost his mother and father-in-law and his sister last year and so this move was in the cards.

Westerberg went 38-17 in five

seasons as Barbers Hill's football coach and that run included the undefeated 2019 District 12-5A II title that included a 11-2 record and a trip to the Region 3 semifinals of the playoffs. His teams made it to three consecutive post-seasons from 2018-2020 and won at least one playoff game in back-to-back seasons (2019-2020).

His first team in 2016 also qualified for the postseason.

“The whole athletic department, we created a good family atmosphere and that may have been a little different than prior to me getting here,” Westerberg said. “The coaches get along and it's a fun office to be in.

“From the football standpoint, we did some things that hadn't been done in a long time. The third-round playoff game was a first in 19 years. We won con-

secutive playoff games in back-to-back years for the first time in 17 years and won the first district championship in 12 years. We got a lot of things accomplished. Did we win a state championship? No. But we were working that direction I think.”

Westerberg's attitude carried over into his overall athletic program's performance.

“Tom's tenure saw uniform success in all of our competitive activities,” BHISD superintendent Dr. Greg Poole said. “He oversaw the addition of soccer and the fact that our girls have already made the playoffs is a remarkable feat. He also exhibited professionalism in all that he did, and I'm very proud that our athletes showed class in their actions win or lose, and we wish Tom nothing but the best.”



The Barbers Hill High School Class of 2021 was ready to go for this year's ceremony as 387 announced graduates prepared for their commencement Friday night in the school's Fieldhouse prior to the big event. (Baytown Sun photo by Alan Dale)

## BH staffers to get \$100 gift cards

BY MARK FLEMING

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The Barbers Hill Education Foundation had a starring role in the Barbers Hill school trustees meeting Monday as Superintendent Greg Poole announced the foundation would present a \$100 gift card to each of the district employees the following day.

He said the district has 1,008 employees.

Another gift from the foundation came up in the meeting as trustees approved accepting \$69,467 to sponsor the new Auxiliary Field scoreboard. The new scoreboard, 36x25.5 feet in size, will be visible from Eagle Drive, Poole said.

The meeting room was packed with spectators for recognitions, a change from most of the year when COVID-19 restrictions kept attendance to a bare minimum.

Poole said the pandemic's effects are still being felt, but waning.

As of Monday, he said, the district was tracking three people in the district who had tested positive, down from a high of 77 at one point.

In spite of the growth the district has shown this year, he said, there are still students missing, particularly among very young students, who are presumably being kept at home by parents concerned about potential infection.

“It's been a tough year but it's been a defining moment for us,” Poole said.

## Permitless carry gun bill awaits governor signature

BY MARK FLEMING

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A bill to remove the requirements that Texans obtain a license in order to carry a firearm is headed to the governor's desk.

Abbott is set to sign legislation that will allow anyone legally permitted to carry a handgun under state and federal laws to do so, either concealed or openly, without a license. Once signed by the governor, the law would go into effect on Sept. 1, and law enforcement officials are trying to work out exactly what it will mean.

Chambers County Sheriff Brian Hawthorne chairs the Legislative Committee of the Sheriff's Association of Texas and has been in Austin on behalf of that group.

While the bill has made national and international news, Hawthorne said he doesn't expect much will change.

“I do not think the average citizen will be affected by this law,” he said.

Most people who can legally possess a firearm and want one already have a permit, he said.

As for law enforcement, Hawthorne said peace officers are already taught to assume that everyone they approach is probably armed. “We have the expectation every officer will take every precaution,” he said.

“In 1995 when we passed license to carry everybody thought it was just going to be a wild, wild west. Then when we passed open carry, everybody, including law enforcement, thought it was going to be even wilder wild west,” he said.

“But in reality ... most law-abiding citizens understand the responsibility of those weapons, so we have had very few problems with people who were licensed to carry, either open or concealed.”

Some law enforcement associations opposed the legislation, but Hawthorne said the sheriff's group is very pro-Second Amendment.

Even that group stayed neutral on the bill until the Senate passed some amendments desired by law enforcement.

The House removed some of them, he said, but the group was still able to sup-

port the bill, even with some reservations.

The bill, popularly referred to as “Constitutional Carry” and formally called the “Firearm Carry Act of 2021,” maintains current prohibitions against certain persons carrying firearms that are imposed by state and federal law.

In fact, Hawthorne said, one of the amendments supported by law enforcement and approved by the legislature enhances the penalty for a felon convicted of possessing a firearm, increasing it from a third-degree felony to a second-degree felony with a minimum five-year sentence.

While felons were already prohibited from carrying handgun, the new law extends that prohibition to a few misdemeanors as well for five years after conviction for those misdemeanors.

Those crimes include assault with bodily injury, deadly conduct, terroristic threat, discharging a firearm in a public place, and displaying a firearm in a way calculated to cause alarm.

Since the removal of a licensing re-

quirement also removes the requirement for training, the new law requires the Department of Public Safety to create a free online training program available to the public.

Baytown Assistant Police Chief Eric Freed said the department sees very few instances on non-compliance with current licensing laws.

He said the only reservation about the new law expressed by Interim Police Chief Mike Holden is that “It will take away law enforcement's ability to verify or even ask if the person is a felon or otherwise prohibited from carrying that weapon.”

Any Texan who is at least 21 years old and has a clean criminal record could carry a holstered sidearm in public under the new law. Private property owners and businesses could still prohibit carry and the bill enhances penalties for convicted felons and domestic violence offenders who aren't legally permitted to carry a handgun.

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