

# The Facts

COVERING BRAZORIA COUNTY ★ WHERE TEXAS BEGAN

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## Troopers stand guard as Legislature opens session



RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL/Austin American-Statesman via AP

**A DPS state trooper stands guard Tuesday on the second floor of the Capitol on the first day of the 87th Legislature in Austin.**

By **JIM VERTUNO AND ACACIA CORONADO**  
Associated Press

**AUSTIN** — More than 100 Texas troopers in riot gear stood outside the state Capitol, wearing tactical vests and face shields. Dozens more patrolled the hallways, some carrying zip-tie handcuffs. Beyond the front gates, a small group of armed demonstrators paced on the sidewalk.

The start Tuesday of a new legislative session in Texas was guarded by an extraordinary show of state police and National Guard members, following the violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol last week and new



**PHELAN**

FBI warnings of armed protests nationwide ahead of President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration.

But the heavy security went unmentioned by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott and lawmakers during a largely ceremonial gaveling in of a new session, resulting in a scene of striking contrast, as warm speeches in the House and Senate carried on with troopers on alert for unrest just outside the chamber doors.

No incidents were reported and Texas Department of Public Safety

troopers greatly outnumbered what turned out to be a small number of protesters outside and visitors inside the Capitol, where officials required rapid COVID-19 tests for entry as cases surge statewide.

"It's sad that our country is in a state of turmoil where we have to fear violence like what happened in Washington," Democratic state Rep. Julie Johnson said. "I'm really grateful that DPS has really taken this seriously to protect us."

Groups outside the Capitol included several armed men in combat gear wearing "Texas Militia"

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## Freeport puts off decision on pump

By **NICK IRENE**  
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**FREEPORT** — City officials will take another week to decide whether a pump at the Trestle Bridge Pump Station should be repaired or replaced.

With Mayor Brooks Bass and Public Works Director Lance Petty absent from Monday's City Council meeting, Mayor Pro Tem Roy Yates decided it was in the best interest to table the approval.

"I think we need to look at some other options there," Yates said. "I think this is pouring good money on a bad situation. We ought to look at replacing the pump and, anyway, that's my opinion. Let's go look at it."

The proposed repair quote of \$24,800 from Coastal Machine & Mechanical would cover the labor, material and equipment to overhaul the vertical pump, City Manager Tim Kelty said.

The replacement cost for the pump without a motor would run "about \$73,000," Kelty said.

"About a month ago, it started having issues that have been happening for awhile but have worsened," Kelty said. "There are two pumps in that pump station. The pump was evaluated and found there were some severe damages."

Council also decided to

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TRENTON TIMBERLAKE/Special to The Facts

**Artist Dorothy Babbington shows off one of her many unique mosaics at the "Reflections of Life" show at the Brazosport Center for the Arts and Sciences.**

## ART is LIFE

Women's works exhibit love for different styles

By **ALEXA CRENSHAW**  
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**CLUTE**

**B**razosport Art League's first exhibit of the year, "Reflections of Life" offers a bright portrait of three women's lives with their mosaic, pastel, photography and sculpture work.

The works of Dorothy Babbington, Linda Paulk and Mary Lou Darst, now on display

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TRENTON TIMBERLAKE/Special to The Facts

**Pastel artist Linda Paulk paints her granddaughters' cat named Eboni at the Brazosport Center for the Arts and Sciences in Clute.**

## Daily average jumps

35 percent of COVID tests at UTMB coming back positive

By **ALEXA CRENSHAW**  
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**ANGLETON** — Five weeks ago, Brazoria County set a single-day record by announcing 244 new cases of COVID-19. In the past week, its daily average easily exceeds that number.

With 284 new COVID-19 cases reported Tuesday, the county's seven-day average rose to 262 cases. That is an increase of 31 cases from the previous seven days and 56 cases from the week of Dec. 23-29.

UTMB Health Angleton Danbury Campus, one of Brazoria County's largest health-care providers, has a 35 percent positivity rate in COVID-19 tests over the past week, spokeswoman Tonya Visor said.

"We look at data weekly, and we have 199 out of 558 who tested in the last seven days," Visor said.

According to state data last updated Monday, 18.39 percent of molecular tests statewide and 12.34 percent for antigen tests came back positive.

Of the 284 cases added Tuesday in Brazoria County, 44 are probable and two were administered more than two weeks ago, according to Brazoria County spokeswoman

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## Trees, volunteers are still needed for Dunes Day

By **WES WOLFE**  
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**ANGLETON** — There remains a significant need for natural Christmas trees and volunteers to help spread them along the coastline to restore the dune line, officials said.

"We still do need some volunteers to stake out Christmas trees on the beach," Brazoria County Parks Director Bryan Frazier said at commissioners' court Tuesday. "We're rounding those up as we speak. All of the precinct offices were gracious enough again this year to accept the forest of

dropped-off trees — most of which I do believe are real, so a victory there. I've not seen any lights yet, but upon closer inspection, I doubt that will be the case."

He said with the damage done to county dune fields, they need all the trees they can get.

The annual Dunes Day effort will take place from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday. Anyone interested in helping can meet at Stahlman Park off Bluewater



**FRAZIER**

Highway in Surfside Beach.

Dunes Day is so named because it is when hundreds of people turn out to stake those discarded trees to the beach, primarily in Surfside Beach, considered one of the most erosion-sensitive stretches of coastline along the Gulf. The limbs and needles of the trees collect blowing sand to renourish the dune line — or in this year's case, rebuild the dunes destroyed by an active tropical storm season.

The commissioners voted to award the professional design services contract for restoration of the mouth of the San

Bernard River to Dannenbaum Engineering of Houston.

"I want to say that this will be paid for with RESTORE Act funds," Commissioner Dude Payne said. "We're on their dollar now. We had over \$500,000 in for final design ... and this is in at (\$391,000), I think, so we're going to be good for that. ... We have an aggressive timeline — we're hoping to come back to court sometime in April and bid for the dredge, and hope to have the dredge out there sometime late May or June, and have the

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## TREEDROPOFFS

Natural Christmas trees can be taken today to these sites around Brazoria County. They should be free of all decorations.

- Brazoria County Parks Department offices, 313 W. Mulberry St. in Angleton
- Surfside Beach main entrance
- Manvel substation, 7313 Corporate Drive
- Precinct 1 office, 1432 Highland Park Drive in Clute
- Precinct 2 office, 21018 CR 171 in Angleton
- Precinct 3 office, 2508 N. Gordon St. in Alvin
- Precinct 4 office, 121 N. 10th St. in West Columbia
- Stella Roberts Recycling Center, 5800 Magnolia Parkway, Pearland
- Check with your city hall to see if they also are accepting trees

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