

BOARD MEETING NOTES

THE BTU BOARD OF DIRECTORS MET ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2016, AND DISCUSSED THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

OPERATIONS

BTU General Manager Gary Miller presented the safety statistics for the previous month stating BTU had no recordable incidents and one not-at-fault vehicle incident for the month of November. Mr. Miller discussed the circumstances of the one vehicle incident with the Board. Mr. Miller shared all employees have completed current training and eleven separate safety meetings were conducted during the month.

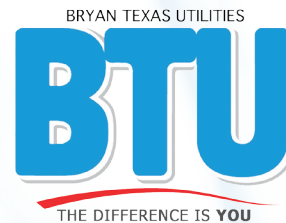
GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Miller stated that BTU Staff volunteered for the annual Food for Families Food Drive on December 7, 2016 working its normal 5:30 am to 7:00 am shift.

TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION REPORT

The SAIDI (System Average Interruption Duration Index) and SAIFI (System Average Interruption Frequency Index) report for the month of November was presented. Mr. Trimble stated the outages with the longest duration were due to animal contact in the Rural system and wire down in the City system.

SAFETY:
For Work.
For Home.
For Life.



BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

205 East 28th Street • Bryan, TX 77803

email: ContactBTU@btutilities.com

www.btutilities.com

Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Paul Turney, Chairman

Mr. David Bairrington, Vice Chairman

Mr. Bill Ballard, Secretary

Mr. Buppy Simank, Ex-Officio

Mr. Carl L. Benner

Mr. Flynn Adcock

Mr. A. Bentley Nettles

Mr. Art Hughes

GENERAL MANAGER

Gary Miller

GROUP MANAGERS

Randy Trimble

David Werley

DIVISION MANAGERS

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Shawndra Curry

Ken Lindberg

Vicki Reim

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CITY OF BRYAN

Kean Register, City Manager

Joe Hegwood, Chief Financial Officer

Bernie Acre, Chief Information Officer

Important Numbers

Billing/Collections/Connects (979) 821-5700

Electrical Outage/Lines Down (979) 822-3777

Distribution/Line Design (979) 821-5770

DOWNTOWN BRYAN IMPACT AWARD



THE OWNER OF DOWNTOWN UNCORKED WINE BAR, MELBA TUCKER-ARDEN, WAS AWARDED THE 2016 MAYOR'S DOWNTOWN IMPACT AWARD AT THE 17TH ANNUAL MAYOR'S DOWNTOWN IMPACT AWARD CEREMONY.

MAYOR ANDREW NELSON:
“WE, AT THE CITY OF BRYAN, KNOW THAT WHEN VISITORS HAVE A GREAT EXPERIENCE IN DOWNTOWN BRYAN, THEY WILL RETURN. AND THEY WILL RETURN WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY.”

Every year, there are organizations and individuals whose positive impact on revitalization efforts in Historic Downtown Bryan is simply extraordinary. The Mayor's Downtown Impact Award, created in 2000, celebrates progress in the city's oldest business district, while recognizing those who go above and beyond to contribute to this progress.

Recognized as a Cultural District in 2014, Downtown Bryan has seen overwhelming success with First Fridays and other special events while continuing to grow, offering additional amenities for residents and visitors alike. “We, at the City of Bryan, know that when visitors have a great experience in Downtown Bryan, they will return,” said Mayor Andrew Nelson. “And they will return with friends and family.” This award serves as a way to recognize those who continue to invest time, effort, and resources into making Bryan better.

The owner of Downtown Uncorked Wine Bar, Melba Tucker-Arden, was awarded the 2016 Mayor's Downtown Impact Award at the 17th Annual Mayor's Downtown Impact Award ceremony.

Downtown Uncorked Wine Bar opened its doors as a fun, vibrant space for patrons to enjoy one another's company. This unique, locally-owned venue offers visitors a place to meet for a quick pizza, dessert, or glass of wine in a warm atmosphere. Valued customers have described Downtown Uncorked as “an excellent place in Downtown Bryan with rustic charm and a friendly, knowledgeable staff” and as a venue that “offers the right combination for small and large groups in search of a laid-back evening.”

To learn more about Historic Downtown Bryan, please visit www.downtownbryan.com. ■

"IT'S A BALANCE, AND IT ISN'T ALWAYS EASY"

*Story and Photos
by Kenneth W. Smith Jr.*



FROM REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS TO VILLAGE FOODS AND PHARMACY, JIM LEWIS AND GG ENTERPRISES HAVE SHOWN HOW A COMPANY CAN DIVERSIFY "NATURALLY AND ORGANICALLY" IF YOU HAVE THE PATIENCE AND WILL TO SEE IT THROUGH.

People are drawn to Bryan, Texas, for all kinds of reasons. It's affordable. There are good jobs here. The quality of life is second to none. And there are plenty of business opportunities for people who want to invest the time and money to make things grow.

That's how Jim Lewis found his way here. A San Diego native, Lewis' company owned a retirement facility in southern California. In the process of selling that facility about 20 years ago, the company decided to invest in new real estate. They scanned the nation and liked what they saw in Bryan.



"My partner (former father-in-law, and very dear friend) was able to find some properties here with some really good value. He felt like this market would continue to do well over time, particularly, with Texas A&M being here as kind of the engine for this community," Lewis said. "He thought it would always be stable. It wouldn't have the radical ups that you might find in San Diego, but you also wouldn't have the radical drops. And we liked the tax environment of Texas, with no personal-income tax. Bryan, Texas just seemed more American, you know, more entrepreneurial."

The company, GG Enterprises, acquired several properties in the area, including the Galleria Village tower on Briarcrest Drive, and the building next door, which is home to the new Aldi grocery store, and was the longtime location of Village Foods and Pharmacy.

Speaking of Village Foods and Aldi, well, that's a whole story in itself.

**JIM LEWIS:
"BRYAN, TEXAS
SEEMED MORE
AMERICAN, YOU
KNOW, MORE
ENTREPRENEURIAL."**



www.btutilities.com

It Takes a Village... And Then Comes an Aldi

The site of the new Aldi on Briarcrest Drive in Bryan was originally the site of the local Safeway grocery store. When the Safeway chain left the Texas market, they put all their stores and assets into an entity called AppleTree.

"AppleTree was one of our tenants," Lewis said. "We got to the end of their lease, and the owner of the company asked me to cut their rent in half. That wouldn't work out very well for us, particularly since he really didn't want to change his business... he wasn't going to do anything new to make the business grow."

So, Lewis came up with a plan. He admits that it was a little scary, but he took the leap. He formed a new company outside of the GG Enterprises partnership, and negotiated the purchase of the AppleTree store including the inventory, furniture, fixtures, and equipment. He also saved more than 80 jobs.

"One thing that was really important to me was keeping jobs for all of the employees," he said. "Everybody got paid what they had been being paid, they had the same benefits with regard to insurance, with regard to vacation time, and all of those kinds of things as though they had worked for me all the years that they may have worked for AppleTree, and even Safeway before that. For instance, our meat manager had been with the company as long as I've been alive. So some of them had a lot of benefits and we kept all of that intact."

Now that the structure was in place, Lewis set the full plan into motion. Six months after he bought it, the old store was converted to Village Foods in March 2009 and Lewis said they added a lot of natural and organic foods because that segment of the population really wasn't being served very well at the time.

"We had more than 7,000 natural and organic items right out of the gate, because I felt like if we didn't commit, if people just came in and said, 'Well, they have a few items but I still have to go to multiple stores to get everything I want,' then that's not a win for them and, ultimately, that would cause it not to do well," Lewis said. "So, we really committed and took the leap."

“IT’S A LIFE CHANGER IF YOU ALL OF THE SUDDEN CAN GET EVERYTHING YOU WANT WITHOUT LEAVING YOUR TOWN.”



That was the scary part, he said, because a lot of those items are perishable. In particular, there’s a whole deli case of yogurts, milks, eggs, and cheeses, and all of those kinds of things.

“I was going to find out pretty quick if I was right or wrong,” he said. “And, thankfully, I was right enough that people came in and started buying it, and we also focused a lot on gluten-free foods as well, and that became an important part of our identity because there was a group of people in the community who really were having to travel to other cities in order to get what they wanted, and they very much appreciated what we

did for them. Because it’s a life changer if you all of the sudden can get everything you want without leaving your town.”

Bryan-College Station is a tricky market, Lewis admits. He describes travelling and seeing things in stores in larger cities, and he would think, “I want to try that.” But he says there has to be a balance in what you try, because what works in a densely-populated urban downtown may not work in a less-densely-populated area like Bryan-College Station.

“It’s a balance, and it wasn’t always easy, but that’s how the store progressed.”

In February 2016, a new chapter in the Village Foods life cycle began. Aldi (more on them in a moment) approached Lewis a year earlier about setting up shop where Village Foods was operating. That would mean relocating his store to a new location at 3030 East 29th St. in Bryan, and a move away from the full grocery store model to focus solely on two parts of the business that were unique: the pharmacy and natural foods.

"The new pharmacy is just doing phenomenally well," Lewis said. "Our staff pays a lot of attention to the personal details. They will spend the time with our customers to make sure they really get what they need. Customers like that. And also, we're quick. We don't make them wait a long time. They can come to our counter with the prescription in hand and we usually have them out in less than 15 minutes. If their doctor sends it ahead, we'll have them out even faster than that."

The new location also has a drive-thru pharmacy window that has been very successful, Lewis added. But he wasn't sure how the natural foods side would do.

"That part of the business had grown a lot and was important to us," he said. "But I wasn't sure how much would transfer over when you go from a full-scale grocery store to a store that's just focused on natural foods and the pharmacy. But it actually has exceeded expectations as well, and people seem to appreciate that we kept the team together and continue to give that personal touch."

After an extensive remodel, the Aldi Food Market opened at the Briarcrest location on Dec. 1, 2016. Aldi is a discount grocery chain described on their website as a "no-frills grocery shopping experience" focusing on customer service and "bringing our shoppers the highest quality products at the lowest possible prices."

"Their broker contacted me and it was a smooth process," Lewis says of signing Aldi as new tenants. "They are good people and were very easy to work with."

Aldi is taking up 18,000 square feet of space in the building, and another 33,000 square feet is currently slated for an Urban Air trampoline and adventure park which is still in development.

Energy Efficiency and the Future

When you're running a business, you want to save money as much as possible, so energy efficiency is a no-brainer. As new advances in technology have become available and affordable, Lewis said, GG Enterprises has made investments in energy efficiency, such as LED lighting and high efficiency HVAC systems.



A PARTICIPANT IN BTU SmartBUSINESS

As a part of their energy-efficiency initiatives, Jim Lewis and GG Enterprises have participated in BTU's SmartBUSINESS program. The program offers incentives to BTU non-residential customers who engage in energy-efficient equipment upgrades. For more about the SmartBUSINESS program, visit: btutilities.com.

"We've worked on common area lobbies, and parking lot lighting, and things like that in order to get the most bang for the buck," he said. "The ROI is relatively quick. I mean, it should pay itself back within just a few years. And so, when you consider that against other investments that you can make, that's a pretty good return on investment."

Those kinds of good investments can often lead to more opportunities for growth. Lewis said he's not quite sure what the future holds, but there is always the possibility of opening multiple stores in the new Village Foods & Pharmacy format.

"In my experience, it seems like, most new businesses take about twice as much energy and capital as the entrepreneur expects to get up and running," he said. "But if you set yourself up right by giving yourself that buffer, then you might do very, very well...Over time, you can get a lot done." ■

FOOD FOR FAMILIES FOOD DRIVE

GARY MILLER:
“CARING FOR OUR
COMMUNITY IS A CORE
VALUE FOR BTU. IT IS
IMPORTANT TO US TO DO
WHAT WE CAN TO HELP
FEED FAMILIES IN NEED
IN THE BRAZOS VALLEY.”

For 21 years, the employees of Bryan Texas Utilities have gathered at the Brazos Center in early December to help unload boxes of donations, and sort cans of food at the KBTX Food for Families Food Drive, benefitting the Brazos Valley Food Bank. It's just one small way we can give back to the community, and help to make a difference in the lives of those facing food insecurity.

In addition to our staff volunteering, they work together to collect donations within their respective departments to contribute to the food drive. This year, we surpassed our previous record with 1,130 items collected, and the presentation of a check to the Brazos Valley Food Bank for \$1,000.

Thanks to the tremendous response from the Brazos Valley community, this year's food drive was another success with approximately 156,410 pounds of food and over \$131,127 donated.

These donations will go a long way in helping to fill up the shelves at the Brazos Valley Food Bank's newly acquired building, located at 1501 Independence Avenue in Bryan. This new location will allow increased storage space for non-perishable items as well as the opportunity to provide more fresh and frozen foods to families in the Brazos Valley. ■



FOUR EASY PAYMENT OPTIONS

AUTOMATIC BANK DRAFT

Visit btutilities.com and fill out the bank draft form; send it to us with a copy of a voided check and we will do the rest.

1

ONLINE CREDIT CARD

Pay securely online at btutilities.com 24 hours a day. We accept VISA, Mastercard and Discover.

2

RECURRING CREDIT CARD

Create an online account and set up a recurring credit card. It is simple and you can manage your own account.

3

INTERACTIVE VOICE RESPONSE

You can check your account balance and pay by credit card or e-check by calling our interactive voice response system at (979) 821-5700.

4

We know how busy life gets and how hard it is to find time to get everything accomplished. BTU offers four easy options for convenient and quick payment without leaving home.

You can also make a bill payment at one of the kiosks at any of the following locations in Bryan:

- BTU Lobby at 205 E. 28th Street
- HEB at Texas Avenue & Hwy 21
- HEB at 725 E. Villa Maria
- Texan Market at Harvey Mitchell Parkway & Villa Maria (open 24 hours)

You can pay at any of these locations with cash or check. You will need your account number, BTU bill, keycard or reminder letter to make your payment.