

## Election officially canceled, game room denied by council

Written by By Betsy Blevins, Managing Editor  
Thursday, 28 April 2011 15:15 -

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April 21, 2011 - Leonard residents will officially have no municipal election on May 14, following the decision by the Leonard City Council to cancel it at last week's regular monthly council meeting. City Secretary Nancy Robinson certified that Stephen Bolin and Larry Thompson were uncontested in their seats. Darrell Grintz opted to fill the unexpired term vacated previously by Richard Johnson, and Tammy Barnes was the sole filer for the position held by Glenn Murphy, who did not file for re-election. The Leonard ISD School Board had already canceled their part of the election and with the City Council following suit last Tuesday, the election is officially called off.

The first item of interest on the agenda was a proposal by Jennifer Cheney to set up an adult game room - outfitted with slot machines - in Leonard, which requires the approval of the city council per city ordinance. Cheney, who owns similar businesses in McKinney, Dallas and Whitesboro, stated that she had looked at several different locations in Leonard and there are three or four that are very favorable, and a game room can be profitable for the city through permit fees charged annually. But, her proposal met many questions from the council.

"What kind of games are we talking?" asked councilwoman Jane Blackerby.  
"Like what you see at the mall - video games and such?"

"No ma'am," Cheney said. "It's the same kind of games as Choctaw, but we pay out different. We do debit cards."

"How does that work?" furthered Blackerby.

"They are cards that are just like debit cards you get from a bank, but can't be spent on alcohol, cigarettes and lottery," said Cheney.

"Paying out cash is illegal in Texas. What's to keep the person who wins a debit card from selling the card for cash?" asked Blackerby.

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"That's out of our hands," Cheney said. "I've ran game rooms for 12 years and have never had a problem."

Mayor Bill Yoss raised another concern.

"We are a dry area. What if someone comes in with alcohol?" he asked.

"It's not allowed. I do not serve alcohol and will not allow it inside. I will serve soft drinks and possibly short-order food, but no alcohol."

"What about smoking?" one of them asked.

"I do allow smoking in the store. I have a sectioned area in some of my stores that is non-smoking, and it's a completely glassed-in area," said Cheney.

"You said they can be profitable for the city. How much are we talking?" asked one member of the council.

"In McKinney, I have 65 machines and they charge \$25 per machine, plus permit fee and I have to pay for officing [sic]," Cheney said.

"Oh. Well, I thought we were talking about money," said councilman Murphy.

"There are restrictions for it being so far from a church or school, and she's aware of those ordinances and has dealt with that with her other businesses," said Assistant City Administrator Butch Henderson. "They are legal."

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"But basically it's gambling," said Murphy.

Council members were shocked to find out that there were several businesses that operate the same type of machines - mostly convenience stores - in the Bonham area. But when it came down to it, the majority of the vote wasn't swayed by the proposal.

"You couldn't give us enough money for me to vote yes, that's my personal belief," Murphy said. "I am open-minded on a lot of things, but not when it comes to gambling."

With that statement, Murphy motioned to deny the proposal, and everyone except for Councilman Bolin supported his motion.

In other business, the council approved the closing of Collin Street on May 7 for the Madeline Burke benefit concert, as requested by Ava Barlow and voted to only repair two of the RV hookups at City Park that have been vandalized so the carnival workers for the Leonard Picnic will have a place to connect.

The final agenda item was action on a proposal for future sidewalk work, with the city doing the work.

"So many residents are pleased with the new sidewalks going in that they want one in front of their house," said Henderson. "The people that have asked me - I've told them the grant money is doing this. But Darwin's crew knows how, and since they do, I propose that anyone who wants a sidewalk will get one with the city doing the labor, and the homeowner paying for the materials. We can't do it for them free of charge, but we can do it this way."

An entire block costs an estimated \$2700, so homeowners would only have to pay the percentage of that amount for the distance covering the front of their property. The motion passed unanimously.