



NEW SOUTHWEST SEATING PLAN NOT EASY AS A-B-C

The airline that made its mark by keeping everything very simple is complicating matters with its new Business Select, says columnist Steve Huettel. **Business, 1D**

Prison transfers were big business

A Corrections Department investigation finds that \$1.2-million was spent to arrange improper inmate transfers. **Local & State, 1B**

Hope for alliance dashed in Pakistan

While under house arrest, opposition leader Benazir Bhutto calls for the resignation of President Pervez Musharraf. **Times 2, 4A**

Dow comes out of doldrums for a day

Good news from Goldman Sachs and Wal-Mart allay immediate concerns about the credit crunch and send the stock market up almost 320 points. **Business, 1D**

Vinny Lecavalier, all grown up

On and off the playing field, the Lightning star is the best professional athlete the bay area has to root for these days, says columnist Gary Shelton. **Sports, 1C**

In search of some PolitiFacts

Our latest installment in the search for the truth in political claims challenges statements by presidential candidates John Edwards and Rudy Giuliani. **Times 2, 4A**

Wide world of sports has deep pockets

When winnings and salary are combined with endorsement earnings, Tiger Woods made more last year than the Nos. 2 and 3 athletes on the list combined. Check out the top 50. **Sports, 2C**

Brian Kelly likes the present for Bucs

The cornerback has missed 19 of the team's past 25 games, and he might not be back next year. But for right now, he likes where the team is at. **Sports, 1C**

Avast! Other crews scouring the seas

Tampa-based Odyssey Marine Exploration isn't the only company searching seabeds for sunken treasure. **Business, 1D**

Three turkey strategies

Our cooks put their birds through the paces before the big day. **Taste**



Make your lists

Make cooking checklists now and you'll have one more thing to give thanks for. **The Dish**

St. Petersburg Times

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FLORIDA'S BEST NEWSPAPER

Wednesday, November 14, 2007

Appraiser won't run again

Jim Smith won't seek re-election after his term ends in 2008, a deputy says.

BY WILL VAN SANT AND JONATHAN ABEL
Times Staff Writers

Politically damaged Pinellas County Property Appraiser Jim Smith will not seek a fifth term, according to his longtime top deputy, Pam Dubov.

Dubov said late Tuesday that she spoke with Smith around 4 p.m. and he told her he would not campaign

again for his seat and planned to announce the news to local television stations.

"Jim's been thinking about this for a while," Dubov said. "He needed to make a decision in his own time for his own reasons."

Smith, 67, did not return several messages from the *St. Petersburg*

Times on Tuesday night.

With local Republican leadership saying it felt no loyalty to Smith and contenders coming forward to challenge him for the first time in 15 years, the buzz in local political circles for weeks was that he would not run.

"What else could he do?" said Ben Friedlander, a Democrat who

announced a week ago that he would run for property appraiser. "Mr. Smith has been in denial about the events of the summer."

In June, the County Commission voted unanimously to buy Smith's private land on Brooker Creek for \$225,000, nearly four times the



Jim Smith was at the center of a land scandal.

Go to tampabay.com for the latest information

Ammonia pipe an easy target

A section was not protected. Why? No one saw a need for it to be protected.

BY THOMAS LAKE AND ABBIE VANSICKLE
Times Staff Writers

RIVERVIEW — Beneath the soil, encased in steel, ammonia flows like a subterranean stream. Nearly 300 gallons a minute run from a port at the edge of Tampa Bay to a chemical plant in Mulberry. Most of us never notice.

Hillsborough County's 1.16-million residents might still be ignoring this hidden passage if not for the improbable meeting on Monday afternoon of two anomalies:

An eight-foot section of unprotected pipe.

And a 16-year-old boy who believed it was full of money.

The results were spectacular, the damage still uncounted. With a noise like an uncorking champagne bottle, toxic gas spurted through a tiny hole in the pipe, burning the boy and forcing authorities to order the evacuation of hundreds of people living within a half-mile radius.

The gas injured firefighters, forced the shutdown of U.S. 301 and the closing of schools. The cloud spread over the Alafia River, threatening snook and trout.

A day later, gas still seeped from the line. The evacuation order remained in effect, as a specialized welder who was flown in from Houston began repairs.

And some people wondered: If a teenager and a drill could cause such chaos, what might someone do with expertise and a plan?

"We're a very open society," said Greg Laughlin, a former U.S. representative from Texas who worked to improve pipeline safety. "And it allows for terrorists and stupid people to do terrible things."

The pipeline was installed in 1981, when much of eastern Hillsborough County was still farmland and swamp. The ammonia is used to make fertilizer, which goes everywhere from cornfields in the Midwest to soybean operations in India.

According to Glenn Howell, who manages the pipeline for



As water cannons spray close by, Mike Clark of Houston lines up a gate Tuesday to help stop an ammonia leak near the Alafia River. The breach created transportation nightmares. **Story, 3B**

SKIP O'ROURKE | Times

School plan inches closer

Board members okay student assignment proposal. The final vote comes Dec. 11.

BY DONNA WINCHESTER
Times Staff Writer

LARGO — The Pinellas School Board on Tuesday voted 6-1 to approve a controversial student assignment plan, overriding eleventh-hour efforts to delay a decision on an initiative two years in the making.

The vote was the first of two that will determine whether the district will return to a system of neighborhood schools beginning with the 2008-09 academic year. A final vote is scheduled for Dec. 11.

About two dozen parents and community activists, including representatives from the St. Petersburg and Clearwater-Upper Pinellas branches of the NAACP, pleaded with board members to postpone their decision until more provisions for improving black student achievement can be built into the plan.

But board members, with the exception of chairwoman Mary Brown, said it was time to move on.

"We do need to look at student achievement, but that's not part of the student assignment plan," said board member Peggy O'Shea. "The specifics of how to raise achievement need to be a separate issue."

Acknowledging the concern about the educational gap between black and white students, board member Carol Cook said further delay on the plan could prevent the board from working on the very issue the group has raised.

See **VOTE, 11A**

Land under the Trop is a developer's dream

The 70 acres and interstate access make it a rare gem.

BY AARON SHAROCKMAN
Times Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — While the Tampa Bay Rays dream of baseball on the waterfront, developers are salivating over the land the team wants to leave behind.

The 70-plus-acre Tropicana Field site represents potentially the largest urban redevelopment project in Pinellas County history.

Though the prospect of a new baseball stadium likely will dominate the talk at water coolers, what becomes of the Rays' current home is in most ways just as

City rivalry

There's plenty of debate over whether the Rays should consider moving to Tampa instead. **1B**

important.

The team wants to help build a major mixed-use development there. Developers and elected officials already are imagining the possibilities.

Transforming the Tropicana site is "the kind of thing you dream about," said Craig Sher, the chief executive of the

Out of the gate, fickle Iowans can make or break the hopeful

The caucuses in January are crucial for Clinton's campaign.



Hillary Rodham Clinton's lead is slimmer in Iowa than elsewhere.

BY ADAM C. SMITH AND MICHAEL VAN SICKLER
Times Staff Writers

DES MOINES, Iowa — Can any Democrat beat Hillary Rodham Clinton? Absolutely.

And if it happens, the beginning of the end will surely occur amid the snow-covered cornfields and silo-dotted town centers of Iowa. Forget Sen. Clinton's more than 20-point lead in Florida and nationally. Iowa is what matters most in the Democratic race at this point, and Iowa is

looking like a dogfight.

"Clinton doesn't answer questions," said Mary Blackman, an 85-year-old retired schoolteacher in rural, southern Iowa. "I think she thinks we're stupid."

In Des Moines on Saturday night among 9,000 Democrats gathered for a massive candidate cattle call, Tim Lapointe gushed about Clinton winning him over. But being a typically fickle Iowan, he remained happily uncommitted.

See **IOWA, 6A**

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