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County Judges Henry and Emmett speak to BAHEP members about State of the Counties moving forward

When the county judges from Galveston and Harris counties addressed the membership of the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership about the State of the Counties moving forward, they each spoke of resilience and growth. The meeting took place in late September at Lakewood Yacht Club in Seabrook, Texas.

Judge Henry speaks of growth

Galveston County Judge Mark Henry welcomed the arrival of the Carnival Vista saying, “The Vista is the largest ship ever to call Galveston its home port. It will hold 4,000 passengers and 1,400 crew. The Port of Galveston plans on a third cruise terminal which should be developed within the next couple of years.”

Henry reported that the City of Hitchcock has a new Foreign Trade Zone that encompasses 300 acres. He said, “It’s the only real Foreign Trade Zone in the county.” He also noted, “Hitchcock has been accepted into the Texas A&M Target Communities Program. This is a ‘by invitation’ program where the Texas A&M School of Public Development helps with things such as architecture, landscaping, and urban planning. A city like Hitchcock probably couldn’t afford to do something like that on its own.”

The judge also said that LaMarque is the second fastest growing city in the county. Its population is growing at a record pace due to a planned community of 400 homes that’s just west of I-45.

Leading the county in growth is League City whose population is projected to be 200,000 by 2025. Henry said, “When I left active duty and moved to League City in 1995, the population was 35,000.”

The judge continued, “Texas City was proud to announce that it made its final installment on Tanger Outlet Mall - \$8.5 million in sales tax rebates – four

years earlier than planned. October will see some work on the Texas City levy system, but, the dike will remain opened for the Flounder Run!”

Northern Galveston County is home to Friendswood, which is looking at 400,000 SF of new development currently under construction – new residential development. Henry said that Friendswood has new road projects that were on the bond issue last November that will be part of that process.

He reported that the Gulf Coast Community Protection and Recovery District will release its final report in November. The



Harris County Judge Ed Emmett

next step will be to get federal financing for the coastal spine. He said, “It’s a project that is way too big for the local area to handle. We’ll have to be local partners, of course, but it’s estimated to cost \$12-\$16 billion.”

Speaking of Hurricane Harvey, the judge said that about 20,000 homes were damaged in the county. “We work on this every day, but recovery seems to be very slow.”

Henry gives roadway construction update

Traveling around the northern sections of Galveston is going to be challenging for quite a while, according to Henry. He related, “For those of you who commute on I-45, this is just in from my engineering office. I-45 and 646 will have to be rebuilt. Starting Jan. 4th next year, the overpass at 646 will be destroyed to make way for a new one. The

anticipated completion is 180 days. I-45 at 518 is an expansion project. They aren’t going to have to shut it down, but there will be a lot of delays. Work on the northbound lanes will start in November and should take 4-6 months to com-

plete. It’ll take another 14 months to finish the southbound lanes. The 146 expansion will start in January 2019. It will go from six lanes to 12 lanes and will take about two years to complete. It’s a much needed update that will also be another evacuation route.”

Judge Emmett speaks of resilience and urban governance

Harris County Judge Ed Emmett opened his remarks saying, “What’s going on in Harris County? First and foremost, it’s resilience.” He spoke of the \$2.5 billion in bonds to finance flood damage reduction projects in Harris County that voters approved in August. He said, “The \$2.5 billion -- \$700-900 million of that goes as local matching funds for the federal funds that are available. We’re going to complete the Clear Creek, Brays Bayou, White Oak Bayou, and Hunting Bayou projects.” He added that a lot of work has to be done to the tributaries leading into Addicks and Barker reservoirs. Emmett stressed the importance of having flood plain maps that are correct. He said, “In Harris County, 160,000 homes flooded. Of those, 105,000 were not in flood plains.”

Emmett then changed the topic to discuss indigent health care. He stressed that indigent health care “will cost us the most going forward.” He said that he went to Austin repeatedly to ask for Medicaid expan-



Galveston County Judge Mark Henry

sion. The property tax payers of Harris County bear the costs of indigent health care. “We need some help. There’s no way of getting around that.”

He segued from talking about indigent health care into mental health saying, “For those who have mental health issues, we need to make sure that they don’t get into the criminal justice system. It’s not good for them, and it’s not good for the taxpayers. He spoke of the newly-opened mental health Jail Diversion Center. This center only has 40 beds now, but the judge said, “At least it’s a start. We have got to start getting away from the fact that the Harris County Jail is the largest mental health facility in the State of Texas.”

The judge stressed that overriding all of these issues is the fundamental problem of urban governance saying, “Everything I’ve just talked about becomes moot if we don’t come up with a new

way of urban governance. Of the 4.7 million people in Harris County, 1.8 million live in unincorporated areas. County government exists entirely by the property tax. How are we supposed to maintain these areas with just the property tax?”

“Another thing that keeps coming up is our toll road system. If you take away our toll road system, you’re not going to get any more roads. It spins off \$120 million per year for mobility funds. Where are we going to get that money if all we have is property tax and we’re being told that we are going to be made to lower it?”

Emmett concluded by saying, “Harris County is perfectly positioned to get into the future, but we have to be sure that we have a governance structure that will work. We are the test tube for what an urban environment will look like in the future.”

BAHEP’s newest members offer widely differing services

NanoRacks LLC

The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership has welcomed new member NanoRacks LLC, the world’s first commercial space station company with an existing customer base.

BAHEP President Bob Mitchell said, “NanoRacks fills a very crucial niche in the world of commercial space enterprises. We’re excited about the future of this dynamic company as it works to extend its reach beyond low-Earth orbit.”

Marcia Hodge serves as a Vice President of Sales for NanoRacks, LLC and will represent the company within BAHEP. “Everyone in this region who has any connection to aerospace knows about BAHEP and its incredible advocacy efforts on behalf of NASA that span decades. We at

national research, and more – both at home and in 30 nations worldwide. Hodge noted, “Since 2009, Texas-based NanoRacks has truly created new markets and ushered in a new era of in-space services, dedicated to making space just another place to do business.”

She also explained that NanoRacks has developed four guiding principles for its business. These are: standardization of research hardware, miniaturization of hardware where possible, keeping the facilities open sourced so NanoRacks can tap the world’s creativity, and finally, obsession with customer satisfaction. In any other market these principals would be normal, she said, but for space operations, NanoRacks believes they are revolutionary.

She concluded saying, “NanoRacks’ vision for the future states, ‘We believe that the dreams for continued affordable access to space will remain challenging to achieve unless the energized customer base continues to grow. We are determined on being part of this next exciting step in the exploration of space.’”

NanoRacks’ headquarters is located at 555 Forge River Road, Suite 120, in Webster, Texas. To learn more, visit www.nanoracks.com or call 281-984-4040.

Duke’s Premium Meats Home Delivery, LLC

For those with a discriminating palate, a truly premium cut of meat offers an experience that is so much more than a meal. Duke’s Premium Meats Home Delivery, LLC simplifies the culinary experience by bringing premium meats and seafood right to your front door or place of work. The company is one of the newest members of the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership.

BAHEP President Bob Mitchell said, “We Texans can be very selective about the meat we purchase whether we’re going to put it in a smoker for several hours or grill it for just a few minutes. Duke’s Premium Meats offers the quality we demand with home or office delivery as



an added bonus. We are certainly happy to welcome the company to our membership.”

Bernadette Bujanowski and Duke Dirksmeyer are the co-owners/co-founders of Duke’s Premium Meats Home Delivery, LLC. They bring over 70 years of experience in the foodservice industry with over 55 years of corporate and operating company leadership roles at the world’s largest foodservice distributor.

Bujanowski will represent the company within BAHEP. She commented, “We’ve heard so many good things about BAHEP and felt that becoming a member would be mutually beneficial. Duke and I look forward to learning more about the important work that BAHEP does and getting to know other members of the organization.”

Bujanowski offered details about their service saying, “At Duke’s Premium Meats, we specialize in Aged Choice or better

USDA inspected Premium Angus beef, Wagyu briskets, Texas local beef, premium veal, domestic lamb, premium cold water lobster tails and sustainable salmon that supports healthy and abundant oceans. We also have an excellent source for Prime Aged Beef.

“With our combined knowledge and expertise of the food industry, we provide the same fine dining, restaurant quality premium proteins from the nation’s top suppliers to everyday consumers, delivered right to their doorstep or office.”

Duke’s Premium Meats’ primary clients are business owners, home gourmets, private chefs, family managers, ranch managers, company executives, financial investors, etc.

Learn more about the company and view mouth-watering photos of its products by visiting the company’s website, www.dukespremiummeats.com, or call 713.493.4394.



NanoRacks look forward to participating in this important work,” she said.

Private company access to the International Space Station has brought about market demand from across the world. NanoRacks LLC offers low-cost, high-quality solutions to the most pressing needs for satellite deployment, basic and educa-

BUSINESS to BUSINESS is a monthly Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership publication in partnership with THE DAILY NEWS. BAHEP is a member-driven organization that provides the leadership to stimulate regional economic development and employment in southeastern Texas. Its members include more than 265 business partners encompassing 13 cities, Galveston and Harris counties, the Houston Airport System, and Port Houston. For membership information, contact Membership Director Harriet Pilgrim at 832.536.3250.

Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership
18045 Saturn Lane
Houston, TX 77058
832.536.3255

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