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River Oaks News

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Texas History Minute by Dr. Ken Bridges

Apollo 13 Commander Jim Lovell, Whose Calm Leadership Turned Near Disaster Into Spaceflight Triumph, Dies at 97



“Houston, we’ve had a problem,” were the words of Apollo 13 astronaut Jim Lovell when an explosion crippled the spacecraft and threatened the lives of the crew. What started as a terror that threatened their lives

and for days gripped the attention of the world became one of the great adventures of manned spaceflight, an event remembered as the nation mourns the passing of Lovell, who died at his home in Illinois at age 97 on Thursday, Aug. 7.

Apollo 13 was to be the third attempt by NASA astronauts to land on the Moon. Apollo missions were manned by three astronauts taking off from Cape Canaveral, Florida. Once they reached the Moon, a lunar module would detach from a command module. The lunar module would reach the surface where two astronauts would then explore the surface, collect rock samples, and conduct experiments. The command module would orbit above, with the lunar module reattaching to the command module after taking off from the lunar surface. Once they returned to Earth, a re-entry capsule would detach from

the command module for the descent through the atmosphere to a splashdown in the Pacific Ocean.

The three astronauts for the Apollo 13 mission were: Jim Lovell, Fred Haise, and Jack Swigert. Lovell and Haise would be in the lunar module.

Lovell was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1928 and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1954. He had previously flown in space twice before, including the Gemini 7 mission in 1965, which set a record of fourteen days in orbit. He would also fly on the Apollo 8 moonshot in 1968, where on Christmas Eve, he joined his crewmates in reading the Biblical story of creation from Genesis to a global audience.

Haise was born in Mississippi in 1933 and completed a degree at the University of Oklahoma in (story continued on page 6)

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From the City River Oaks

River Oaks City Council Candidate Deadline Monday

The City of River Oaks will hold an election on Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2025 for Place 1 and Place 3 on the River Oaks City Council.

Applications for a place on the City of River Oaks Regular Election ballot may be filed through Monday, Aug. 18.

Applications may be filed in person or by mail at River Oaks City Hall, located at 4900 River Oaks Blvd, River Oaks, TX, 76114.

Office hours are Monday through Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30

p.m.; Fridays from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 18.

If an applicant wishes to email an application, they may send it to pluck@riveroakstx.com; applications may also be faxed to 817-625-2790.

Contact City Secretary Paula Luck at 817-626-5421 x326 or by email at pluck@riveroakstx.com with questions or for more information.

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Manager of business: Kamak Sadeghi

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- All Letters to the Editor must not be over 250 words, and include the author’s name, address and phone number. Only the name will be included.
- Yeas and Nays are limited to 50 words or less.
- Engagement Announcements must be published four weeks prior to the wedding.
- Wedding Announcements have a 350 word limit. Anniversaries are limited to 150 words.
- Obituaries are limited to 250 words and are \$100.

Mistakes in stories or ads must be reported by Friday at 4 p.m. following Thursday’s edition for corrections. Payment for advertising is due by 10 a.m. Monday.

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**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ON THE
FRIENDS OF THE RIVER OAKS
ANIMAL SHELTER
(501 C3-NON-PROFIT)**

PROPOSED 2024-2025 FY BUDGET

Friends of the River Oaks Animal Shelter will hold a Public Hearing on the Oct. 1, 2024 - Sept. 30, 2025 Proposed Budget on Wednesday, Aug. 27, 2025 at 2 p.m. in the Jury Room at 4900 River Oaks Blvd, River Oaks, Texas 76114

Legal Notice

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ON THE
PARKS FOUNDATION OF RIVER OAKS
(501 C3-NON-PROFIT)**

PROPOSED 2025-2026 FY BUDGET

The Parks Foundation of River Oaks will hold a Public Hearing on Oct. 1, 2025 - Sept. 30, 2026 Proposed Budget on Wednesday, Aug. 27, 2025 at 1 p.m. in the Jury Room at 4900 River Oaks Blvd, River Oaks, Texas 76114

Legal Notice

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ON THE FOUNDATION SUPPORTING
THE RIVER OAKS COMMUNITY
CENTER (501 C3-NON-PROFIT)
PROPOSED 2024-2025 FY BUDGET**

Foundation Supporting the River Oaks Community Center will hold a Public Hearing on the Oct. 1, 2024 - Sept. 30, 2025 Proposed Budget on Wednesday, Aug. 27, 2025 at 2:30 p.m. in the Jury Room at 4900 River Oaks Blvd, River Oaks, Texas 76114

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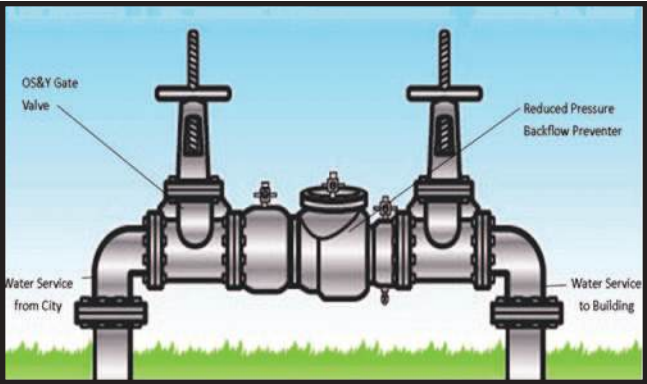
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From the City of River Oaks
TCEQ Offers

**Consumer Guide on
Backflow Prevention
in Texas**



The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has released a consumer guide to help residents understand backflow prevention and how it protects drinking water.

Backflow occurs when water flows in the reverse direction from its normal path, creating a risk of contaminants entering the public water supply. Common sources include lawn irrigation systems, garden hoses and commercial equipment.

TCEQ officials said properly installed and maintained backflow prevention assemblies, such as vacuum breakers and double-check valves, are key to safeguarding water quality. The guide outlines where backflow risks are most likely to occur and what steps homeowners and businesses can take to reduce them.

“Backflow prevention is an essential part of protecting public health,” TCEQ stated in the guide. “Even something as simple as a garden hose submerged in a pool can cause contamination without the right device in place.”

Texas public water systems are required to maintain cross-connection control programs, and in some cases, customers may be required to install approved backflow prevention devices. The guide also explains inspection and testing requirements, which must be performed by licensed professionals.

The full consumer guide is available on the TCEQ website.

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**Suburban Newspapers Staff Writers
River Oaks**

**Community Rallies to
Support Students at
First Back-to-School
Block Party**



Local students headed into the new school year with fresh haircuts, new backpacks and school supplies thanks to a community-led back-to-school block party Sunday at Franks Realty Plaza.

The event, held Aug. 10, was the first of its kind in River Oaks. It began with an idea from Adrian Robin, owner of Faded Art Barbershop, who wanted to give free haircuts to neighborhood students. Once she shared her plan with building management, other tenants quickly joined in to create a larger celebration. By the end of the day, Robin and fellow barber, Brittney, had provided 50 free haircuts and distributed 30 backpacks filled with supplies.

Riverside Events, a new tenant still renovating its space, offered a bouncy house, sweet treats, and free student portraits, along with another 30 bags of school supplies. Cherry on Top Catering served an assortment of small bites, keeping families fed as they browsed activities and collected supplies. Owners Kathy and Michael prepared items such as bacon-wrapped smoked sausage bites, Italian meatballs, watermelon with feta and balsamic glaze, and mini cheeseburgers.

Franks Realty International LLC, which manages the plaza, coordinated the event and provided a banner and additional school supplies. Broker Kris Franks said the goal was simple, to bring the community together to support its youngest members.



everyone who sticks by, and it's clear they've planted not just flowers, but roots in our community.



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House Bill 1481 (HB 1481), signed into law by Governor Greg Abbott on June 22, 2025, after its passage by the 89th Texas Legislature, prohibits students from using personal communication devices during the school day—including during passing periods and lunch.

**NOT PERMITTED
DURING SCHOOL**



POWER OFF and PUT AWAY
THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE SCHOOL DAY

Artificial Intelligence on the Rise in Texas Classrooms:

A Look at Possible Rewards and Risks



As artificial intelligence (AI) tools make their way into some school districts across the Lone Star State, educators, parents and administrators weigh the potential benefits against the possible pitfalls. The use of AI in Texas public schools could offer powerful instructional support, but it also raises questions of equity, privacy and developmental appropriateness, particularly as its application varies significantly between elementary, middle and high school levels.

Elementary School: Foundations and Gentle Introductions

At the primary grades, kindergarten through fifth, AI typically appears in gentle formats: adaptive learning apps for math, reading comprehension programs, and voice-assisted tools that help with phonics. When deployed thoughtfully, these tools can offer early learners personalized pacing and immediate feedback.

Yet concerns abound. Child development experts caution that overreliance on AI could reduce essential human interactions vital for early social and emotional growth. Educators note potential disparities: schools with fewer resources may lack high-quality, vetted AI tools, widening achievement gaps. Additionally, data privacy protections for young students must remain paramount as personal learning data accumulates.

Middle School: Exploring AI as a Learning Partner

In grades six through eight, students begin to explore AI for more sophisticated purposes, such as research assistance, science simulation environments and interactive tutoring for math and language arts. AI systems can help break down complex subjects into manageable chunks, empowering students to explore independently while teachers monitor progress through dashboards.

Still, middle schoolers are at a formative stage. Critics argue that AI could inadvertently encourage shortcuts in critical thinking, especially if students lean too heavily on AI-generated explanations rather than grappling with problems themselves. There's also the issue of possible misinformation: unless carefully supervised, AI tools may supply answers that appear authoritative but contain inaccuracies. Teacher training becomes crucial to vet and mediate AI

outputs.

High School: Preparing for the Future - and the Risks

At the high school level, AI takes on new dimensions. Students could use AI for college essay drafting help, data analysis in science labs, language learning, even for simulated real-world applications like predictive modeling in economics. These tools can simulate professional workflows, equipping students with valuable digital skills for higher education and the job market.

Still, the stakes are higher with academic integrity. The potential for AI-generated plagiarism is a major concern, prompting schools to revisit honor codes and adopt new detection tools. Additionally, students' reliance on AI for writing or problem-solving may hamper the development of original thinking and writing skills, unless educators integrate AI use with reflective, human-centered learning. At this stage, discussions around algorithmic bias, data ethics and AI's societal impacts become not just relevant, they're essential.

Across All Levels: Shared Opportunities and Challenges

Across all grades, AI offers the possibility of personalized learning, ensuring that instruction adapts to individual student needs and learning styles. Moreover, with reported teacher shortages affecting several Texas districts, AI can provide supplemental support, freeing educators to focus more on social-emotional learning or differentiated instruction.

But the benefits come with trade-offs. Significant equity concerns persist: more affluent districts may procure advanced AI systems, while some rural or lower-income schools may lack access, further exacerbating gaps. Privacy and data security loom large, especially under the protection of the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), schools must ensure student data is not misused or exposed.

Teacher training emerges as another universal challenge. From the youngest learners to seniors preparing for college, educators need robust professional development not just to operate AI systems, but to understand their limitations and integrate them judiciously. Without that, the risks, for overdependence, algorithmic bias or student disengagement, may outweigh benefits.

As school districts across Texas navigate integrating AI into classrooms, the tool's value depends on age-appropriate design, equity in access and careful oversight. Across all levels, success hinges on balancing innovation with responsibility, ensuring that AI enhances, rather than replaces, the human relationships at the heart of education.



Texas History Minute (continued from page 1)

1959 before being selected as an astronaut in 1966.

Astronaut Ken Mattingly was originally supposed to fly the command module, but NASA flight surgeons grounded him after he was exposed to German measles, replacing him with Swigert.

Swigert was born in Denver, Colorado, in 1931. As a teenager, he saved money from a paper route to pay for flying lessons, gaining a pilots license at age 16. After he graduated from the University of Colorado, he joined the air force in 1953.

They launched on April 11, 1970. The astronauts had each spent more than 1,000 hours training for the mission, which had been delayed a month. Two days into the mission, NASA ground controllers noticed a malfunction and asked the crew to activate the stirring fans in the oxygen tanks of the service module within the command module. These tanks were the source of air and electricity for the command module. Investigators later determined that damaged wiring had short-circuited, igniting insulation, and causing an explosion.

NASA ground controllers quickly realized the danger of the situation and scrambled to save the lives of the astronauts. The astronauts had to shut down the command module and move into the lunar module to have enough air to survive. Instead of turning the craft around, NASA decided to let the momentum of the craft carry it to the Moon and slingshot back to Earth, which would take four days.

A team of ground controllers, scientists, and engineers from across the globe worked around the clock to work around the problems of the crippled capsule. Every second and every piece of equipment counted. For what everyone knew, no help could come rescue Apollo 13, they had to rely on the information supplied from Earth. The smallest miscalculation could be fatal.

Temperatures plunged to 38 degrees inside the module, and the crew had to quickly improvise a device to filter out the building levels of carbon dioxide they were exhaling.

The final challenge was a 21-second engine thrust to put it back on course for a safe re-entry. Though ground controllers supplied all the numbers the crew needed, astronauts had to time the engine burn perfectly and angle themselves properly, using only the growing image of the Earth in a window. The maneuver was successful, and the crew splashed down safely on April 17.

In the process, what initially was a near disaster instead became one of the greatest feats of navigation in history. Apollo 13 astronauts

conducted a successful moonshot, only the fifth time ever that had ever been completed with a manned crew, and completed a journey of more than 500,000 miles on an unpowered Apollo capsule using only a couple of small thrusters and line-of-sight navigation.

Lovell credited ground controllers with saving their lives. There would only be four more manned lunar missions, with the last conducted by the Apollo 17 astronauts in December 1972.

Haise piloted the experimental Space Shuttle Enterprise on its Approach and Landing Tests in 1977 before retiring from NASA in 1979 and is still a Texas resident. He would write *Never Panic Early*, a memoir of his time as an astronaut.

Swigert left NASA in 1977 and won election to the United States House of Representatives from Colorado shortly before his death from cancer in 1982.

Lovell left NASA in 1973 and became a telecommunications executive in the Houston area as well as a popular speaker and author. A small crater on the far side of the Moon is named for him. His 1994 book on the mission, *Lost Moon*, was the basis of the popular 1995 film *Apollo 13*. Lovell can briefly be seen in a closing scene of the movie shaking the hand of actor Tom Hanks, who portrayed him. He would later move to Illinois to serve as a corporate executive for Centel Corporation until his retirement in 1991. At the time of Lovell's death, he was the oldest surviving former astronaut.

To date, no astronaut has flown further from Earth than the Apollo 13 crew.



Fred Haise (left) Jim Lovell and Jack Swigert at breakfast on launch day, April 11, 1970.

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Weekend Forecast



Friday, Aug. 15:

AM - Sunny, with a high near 96. South wind 5 to 10 mph.
PM - Mostly clear, with a low around 77. South southeast wind around 10 mph.



Saturday, Aug. 16:

AM - Sunny, with a high near 94. South wind 5 to 10 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.
PM - Mostly clear, with a low around 76. South southeast wind 5 to 10 mph.



Sunday, Aug. 17:

AM - A 20% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Sunny, with a high near 95. S/SW wind around 5 mph.
PM - Mostly clear, with a low around 76.

[Extended Forecast Click Here](#)