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# THE SUNDAY TRANSCRIPT

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Sunday, Sept. 2, 2018 NORMAN, OKLAHOMA \$1.50

## Bryant denies any wrongdoing



**Mack Burke**  
Transcript News Editor  
@MackBurke4

Norman City Attorney Jeff Bryant said his recent absence from city council meetings has nothing to do with the looming possibil-

Norman city attorney bemused by potential investigation into conduct of a city council backed investigation aimed at him. Bryant said he was on vacation earlier this month when he first discovered the council was considering instructing the city manager to investigate him and has been excused from other recent meetings for unrelated reasons. He said he is still the city attorney and plans to continue to serve the city in that role as he has for the past 14 years. "It certainly has not been communicated to me that I am no longer the city attorney or that I'm not expected to attend meetings or advise council," he said. "Nobody's told me that." Bryant said he does not know what a potential investigation might include and has denied any wrongdoing. "I obviously was not invited to [the executive sessions]," he said. "So, I don't really know what went on or where they're at. I haven't had any direct conversations with any of the council members about what their issues might be. They did, I think hire separate, outside

legal counsel to advise them about it and I think that outside legal counsel advised them at the last executive session." Though the investigation item was tabled by the council on Aug. 21 following discussion in executive session.

See **BRYANT** Page A3

## Sooner Nation celebrates first win of the season



**Kyle Phillips** / The Transcript  
OU's Curtis Bolton celebrates a touchdown Saturday after a punt block during the Sooners' game against Florida Atlantic University at Oklahoma Memorial Stadium. See full coverage, **Sports**.

## POLITICS

### Growing concerns

Medical marijuana entrepreneur numbers higher than anticipated



**Janelle Stecklein**  
CNHI Oklahoma  
@ReporterJanelle

OKLAHOMA CITY — The vast numbers of Oklahomans applying to become medical marijuana entrepreneurs is stunning some industry insiders, raising concerns that state officials could soon be fighting the largest black market in the country. "We're on pace right now to out-license Colo-

rado (commercially)," said Bud Scott, executive director of the medical marijuana trade group New Health Solutions Oklahoma. With few emergency rules governing business regulations — and still no legislative action — experts say the State Department of Health, which is overseeing implementation, really has little authority to control or limit the number of commercial marijuana

See **NUMBERS** Page A3

## Brookhaven Run gets Oklahomans moving



**Kyle Phillips** / The Transcript  
Frezer Legesse won the Brookhaven Run. See top 50 finishers, Page B4.



**Caleb Slinkard**  
Transcript Editor  
@CalebSlinkard

It's known as the fastest 5k in Oklahoma. It might also be the most fun. The 33rd annual Brookhaven Run had hundreds of runners from near and far competing for a cash prize and a chance at breaking the men's and women's state record, both of which have been set during the competition. No records fell Saturday morning, but the race was fierce nonetheless, even if

## COMMUNITY

the competitors were having a good time. Men's winner Frezer Legesse from Oklahoma City, a professional runner sponsored by Under Armour, grinned wide and pumped his arms as he broke the tape at the finish line with a time of 14:57. Only a few seconds behind him were Andrew Leahey (15:19) and Aaron Sherf (15:32). "This race is an awesome race. This was on the list of things I wanted to do, along with competing

See **BROOKHAVEN** Page A3



**Travis Caperton** / For the Transcript  
Ashley Carreon crosses the finish line in first place in the female division.

## POLITICS: JOHN McCAIN

### Tributes echo with criticism of Trump

**By Laurie Kellman**  
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — John McCain's daughter and two former presidents led a public rebuke of President Donald Trump's divisive politics at the late senator's memorial service Saturday in a call for a return to civility among the nation's leaders. The nearly three-hour service at the Washington National Cathedral was a remarkable show of defi-

ance against a president McCain openly defied in life as the antithesis of the American spirit of service to something greater than any individual. Standing near McCain's flag-draped casket and with Trump's daughter in the audience, Meghan McCain delivered a broadside against the uninvited president without mentioning his name. "We gather here to mourn the passing of

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**WORD of the day**

**serrated**  
(adj) serr-a-ted [ser-ey-tid]  
1. having a notched edge or sawlike teeth, especially for cutting;

**Example:** Beside it, a tall needle of rock, serrated and sharp, shot up.  
— My New Curate P.A. Sheehan

**Jim Chowins**  
Hometown Service  
364-1626

**Inside**

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# Bryant:

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session, Bryant confirmed that he has hired his own attorney in the matter. Though no city council members have confirmed or denied the status of a possible investigation, many have told The Transcript they have been advised not to speak on the issue until it has been resolved.

It is unclear whether any possible investigation, or the fact that the council tabled the topic, has any connection to City Manager Steve Lewis' pending departure next month. It's also unclear whether such a potential investigation has any connection to recently disclosed documents revealed via an open records request spearheaded by Fred Gipson. Gipson believes the documents indicate the city has been footing legal bills for services to other clients.

In an Aug. 21 letter to the city council, Gipson states the city paid more than \$320,000 to the Center for Economic Development Law between March 2017 and June 2018 for the purpose of advising other entities, such as the Norman Chamber of Commerce, OU Foundation, Norman Public Schools, and various TIF partners. A city of Norman expenditure report for FY 2018 shows total outside legal expenditures of roughly \$404,000, with

the majority of those funds going to the Center for Economic Development Law.

"While the CEDL invoices may not reveal legal wrongdoing, they do suggest that Norman's elected city officials were often being maneuvered around to achieve the outcome desired by the OU Foundation and other individuals and organizations with an economic interest in the continuation of the UNP TIF," Gipson's letter states. "The City Attorney signed off on these invoices for payments to CEDL, but it is unclear whether the city council or other city staff were informed of the discussions or consulted about direction."

Bryant said those expenditures were approved by the city manager and the council and the claim that the city has been paying for the CEDL to represent other entities is "absurd."

"Absolutely, the Center for Economic Development Law was 100 percent representing the city of Norman and the city of Norman's interests as expressed in the project plan and prior development agreements," he said. "Councils sometimes change, depending on who is in the seats and their priorities change. And that's all OK. That's all part of the political process and part of what makes this country great ... If you don't like what's going on you can bring in someone else to maybe steer it a dif-

"It's a little frustrating, but I've given a lot to the city ... I'm confident that people who know me are not bothered by some of the things that have been said recently."

## Jeff Bryant, City attorney

ferent direction."

Former council member Tom Kovach, who was first elected to the city council in 2008 and served until 2014, said this isn't the first time Bryant has drawn scrutiny.

"There was quite a bit of talk when I ran about changing the charter because certain department heads, [Bryant] in particular, weren't receptive to the council," Kovach said. "That did not pass, but there was quite a bit of energy toward that because of [Bryant]."

"There were numerous occasions when I was on council when [Bryant] was the subject of manager review ... I do know that at one point it got so bad that he was going to go ahead and quit. I think he actually turned in his resignation and then asked for it back."

Kovach said he had concerns about how much business the city legal department was outsourcing to the firm McAfee and Taft and claims there was a two-year period where expenses for the firm's services roughly doubled to about \$130,000 annually. He added staffing

matters were being taken to arbitration that were "dog losers," and that raised red flags for him.

"Why were we taking losing arbitrations to arbitration?" he said. "It's expensive. And who was doing those arbitrations for us? McAfee and Taft. My opinion, then and now, is that he was either negligent in taking those [employee firings] to arbitration or he had an ulterior motive. We had a lot of them. And if you look at the numbers, we were losing way too many."

Kovach said then City Manager Brad Gambill was responsive to council's concerns about Bryant, but then fell ill and resigned in 2006. Kovach said that while then City Clerk Mary Hatley was acting as interim city manager, prior to Lewis' hiring, Bryant had indicated that he had received an offer from McAfee and Taft.

Bryant confirmed that he did receive an offer from the firm, but never accepted. He said he opted instead, at the request of legal staff, to continue working for the city.

Bryant said he has no

memory of Gambill expressing such concerns to him, and said the assertion that he was unduly granting city business to McAfee and Firm is false and unfounded.

"That's total [nonsense]," Bryant said. "That's not who I am and that's not something I would be involved in. That's the craziest thing I've ever heard of."

Kovach said there were other issues related to open records dating back to his time on the council, as well.

"The law would require something and [Bryant] would come up with a work-around," Kovach said. "We actually came up with an ordinance just to make him follow the law. He was trying to come up with some way to twist the law into a pretzel ... A specific example was there was a FOIA request on someone's emails ... So, then they went to this policy where they started deleting emails after 24 hours ... That's blatantly illegal. But [Bryant] had come up with this excuse that there was a

server issue and we didn't have enough room on the server. Yeah right."

Bryant said he does recall an issue many years ago concerning whether the city had enough server space to keep emails without buying additional storage space but denied any wrongdoing.

Regarding the possibility of an investigation in the present, Bryant said he believes the truth will come out and he will be vindicated by an investigation.

"It is a little frustrating that they would hold an executive session when I was on vacation and then not one of them reached out to me individually to talk about an issue they might have," Bryant said. "But I've given a lot to the city. I've had a career that's lasted over 32 years here, 14 years as city attorney. It's been a wonderful career. I'm confident that people who know me are not bothered by some of the things that have been said recently."

# Brookhaven:

From Page A1

at the Olympics: I really wanted to win Brookhaven," Legesse, who spent time in Indiana with an elite club team and recently returned to Oklahoma said. "It feels great to be back home and competing here."

Legesse said he's working to enhance the competitive running scene in OKC and also coaches at Mt. St. Mary High School.

Ashley Carreon won the

women's category with a time of 16:59, while her husband, Jazz, finished fourth for the men. Amanda Goetschius (17:33) and Kristen Radcliff (18:34) rounded out the top three for the women.

"I've run this race for four years, and I'd always finished top 10, but this is my first time to cross the finish line first," Carreon said.

"That's really a great honor, because I know some of the elite athletes who come to this race, it's the fastest 5k in Oklahoma. It's a good way to start the day."

The event, which also featured a 1-mile fun run and a variety of kids' sprints sponsored by Andy Alligator's, serves as a fundraiser for the Norman High and Norman North Cross Country teams. Both were well-represented by current and former athletes, as well as the seemingly inseparable High/North principal duo of Scott Beck and Peter Liesenfeld.

For Gus Thompson, co-founder of title sponsor OK Runner and race director, supporting youth who are willing to get out and get

active is what the event is all about.

"I know it's gratifying for all of the parents and coaches of all the cross country kids to have this community come together in a health and fitness event as a fundraiser for their programs," Thompson said. "They're the future of our sport."

Reno Blum (15:41) finished fifth in the men's category, while Sophia Maag (18:48) and Hayden James (19:20) took fourth and fifth in the women's.

# Numbers:

From Page A1

businesses. Unlike other states, Oklahoma officials are allowing outdoor commercial grows. They're not limiting the number of commercial licenses, the number of plants or the square footage of a grow facility.

About a week after it started accepting medical marijuana licensing applications, the state is already deluged with more than 1,100 commercial applications from Oklahomans wanting to open dispensaries, grow marijuana or process it, according to the state Department of Health statistics.

"It was definitely more than we anticipated," Scott said. "Just the sheer level of interest and the fact that you can apply for unlimited numbers of licenses, I think there are a lot of people who are submitting five to 25 licensing applications."

In comparison, only about 2,200 patients and caregivers have applied for licenses to legally use cannabis, according to the health department.

Tony Sellars, a health department spokesman, said officials haven't yet been able to tabulate where most businesses plan to open. While they've already approved 844 patient licenses, officials had only processed about 45 of the 1,100 business applications as of Friday morning.

Of the commercial applicants, nearly 560 Oklahomans want to grow marijuana. That number tops both Washington and Oregon,

which have full-blown recreational markets, Scott said.

"It's a really interesting scenario that we're opening up like a recreational market," he said.

Scott said production estimates indicate that even if the state had half as many growers, it would still be producing more cannabis than the Oklahoma can handle.

"We are structuring ourselves to become the largest black market producer of cannabis in the country," he said. "Because what's going to happen to all this product?"

Even though Oklahoma voters legalized medical cannabis in June, the drug remains illegal under federal law. A controlled substance, it cannot be transported across state lines.

Chip Paul, who co-authored the legalization ballot initiative and plans to apply for two business licenses of his own, said he believes Oklahoma's market can support 1,000 operating cannabis businesses — when patient licensing numbers top 100,000.

"I'm shocked that it's that high right now," he said. "I'm shocked at the amount of grow licenses. That's crazy."

Paul said oversaturation will likely kill many small businesses, but he said crafters of the ballot initiative wanted to let the "free market" determine the business climate. The state doesn't regulate the number of donut shops in a town, so it shouldn't regulate cannabis shop numbers either, he said.

"Again there's good and bad about it. It does let in

everybody, but you better understand the risks because people will be building really good 'donut shops,'" Paul said. "People are going to need to be educated and sophisticated about it to understand that if they are planning to take the plunge that it's not easy. It's not a get-rich-quick thing."

And with the sheer number of applicants, Paul said he expects there will be "a little bit of a glut."

That could be good for patients and drive prices down, he said.

But for businesses expecting marijuana to sell wholesale for \$2,000 a pound, the saturation won't be a good thing. He expects said the actual wholesale price to be closer to \$800 a pound.

Sarah Lee Gossett Parrish, an Oklahoma City attorney and member of the Oklahoma Cannabis Trade Association, said she's not surprised about the high commercial interest.

The state's current system allows "the little guy" without massive amounts of money to enter the market. Oklahoma's \$2,500 licensing fee is significantly lower than other states, she said.

Parrish said she's had people call her seeking legal advice. Some people want to open larger operations, while others plan on small, limited grows. Some growers are also looking to breed plants that are targeted toward certain medical conditions like autism and epilepsy, which would limit that marketplace.

Some also plan to grow, process and operate a dispensary while others just



## Better Together

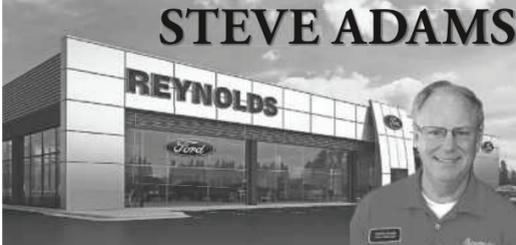
### ABLE

ABLE's vocational programs serve clients through three distinct services: Sheltered Workshop, Community-Integrated Employment (CIE) and Work Adjustment Training (WAT)/ OK Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS).

*The Transcript and United Way of Norman are working together over the next year to share information about the United Way's partner agencies.*

### Death Notices

**Russell Lee Long**, 94, Norman, passed 8/30/2018. Visitation, 5-7 pm, 9/5/2018, St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church, 3939 W. Tecumseh. Mass of Christian Burial, 10:30 am, 9/6/2018, St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church. Burial following, St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery. [www.tribute.com](http://www.tribute.com).



## STEVE ADAMS

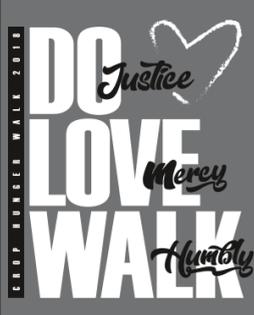
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As a matter of policy, The Norman Transcript will publish corrections of errors in fact that have been printed in the newspaper. The corrections will be made as soon as possible after the error has been brought to the attention of the editor.