

GALVESTON COUNTY

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EDUCATION | BEYOND GRADUATION

"We're really doing all these different life skills so that when they graduate high school and leave, they can have a good footing."

Hillary Gramm, Higher Up Texas executive director

Learning for life

Dickinson High School students thrive with help of nonprofit



JENNIFER REYNOLDS/The Daily News

Higher Up Texas Executive Director Hillary Gramm, left, leads a Zoom meeting with Denise Kwong, right, a board member with the organization, and Kaylee Shannon, center, a Dickinson High School student and president of Higher Up Texas Phase 2 Huddle of Directors, in the nonprofit's new office space, subleased from the Dickinson Economic Development Corp., 1621 FM 517 E., on Monday.

By EMMA COLLINS
The Daily News

» DICKINSON

When Norjelly Herrera was applying for college, she often was in the computer lab at Dickinson High School filling out forms. Not having a computer at home limited her to submitting applications from her phone or when she could make it to the lab.

But that changed when staff

in the program she joined as a senior, Higher Up Texas, took notice. They called her into a classroom one rainy day and presented her with her own laptop.

"That was the moment when I was like, 'This is it, this is going to be great,'" Herrera said.

Founded in 2019, Higher Up Texas partners with Dickinson High School to teach seniors life skills to carry them beyond graduation.

Students enrolled in college

and career readiness classes at the high school can participate in the program, Executive Director Hillary Gramm said. Representatives from Higher Up spend a few hours each week meeting with students during class, she said.

"We're really doing all these different life skills so that when they graduate high school and leave, they can have a good footing," Gramm said.

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GOVERNMENT | CLIMATE CHANGE

Oil giants deny spreading disinformation on climate change

By MATTHEW DALY
Associated Press

» WASHINGTON

Top executives of ExxonMobil and other oil giants denied spreading disinformation about climate change as they sparred Thursday with congressional Democrats over allegations that the industry concealed evidence about the dangers of global warming.

Testifying at a landmark House hearing, ExxonMobil CEO Darren Woods said the company

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GOVERNMENT | FEDERAL BUDGET

Biden announces 'historic' deal — but still must win votes

By LISA MASCARO, AAMER MADHANI and FARNOUSH AMIRI
Associated Press

» WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden announced Thursday he and Democrats in Congress have reached a "historic" framework for his sweeping domestic policy package. But he still needs to lock down votes from key colleagues for what's now a dramatically scaled-back bill.

Eager to have a deal in hand before his departure late in the day for global summits, Biden made his case privately on Capitol Hill to House Democrats and publicly in a



JOE BIDEN

speech at the White House. He's now pressing for a still-robust package — \$1.75 trillion of social services and climate change programs —

that the White House believes can pass the 50-50 Senate.

The day's fast-moving developments put Democrats closer to a hard-fought deal, but battles remain as they press to finish the final draft in the days and weeks ahead.

"Let's get this done," Biden said.

See BIDEN » A7

POLICE | SHOOTING DEATH

La Marque man charged in Texas City shooting death

By EMMA COLLINS
The Daily News

» TEXAS CITY

Authorities charged a La Marque man with murder Thursday in connection to the Monday shooting death of Karli Hope Hurley, police said.

Mark Anthony Jackson Jr., 43, was being held in Galveston County Jail on \$250,000 bond, police said.

Hurley, 27, was killed by a gunshot wound to the back, the



MARK ANTHONY JACKSON JR.

Galveston County Medical Examiner's office said Thursday.

She was found early Monday after a passing motorist spotted her body in a ditch beside North Willow Street near Fifth Avenue, police said. Willow Street,

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THIS WEEKEND



In November's Coast Monthly, locals give thanks for all the pleasures of small-town living by the sea.

THIS WEEKEND



Halloween is becoming a holiday for big spenders, and it's not just full-sized candy bars they're buying.

GOVERNMENT | SHORT-TERM RENTAL REZONING

Hundreds of homes rezoned to ban short-term rentals

By JOHN WAYNE FERGUSON
The Daily News

» GALVESTON

The city council Thursday rezoned two Galveston neighborhoods to ban new short-term rentals from operating in hundreds of houses.

The zoning change came amid increased tension over a boom of rental units on the island, espe-

cially their expansion into traditional neighborhoods.

The city council voted 6-0 to put more than 320 homes in the Denver Court neighborhood and on Lafittes Point into R-0 zoning districts. Councilman Bill Quiroga was absent from the meeting.

In R-0 districts, property

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INSIDE



SPORTS PLUS: A World Series short on drama so far shifts scene to Atlanta » B5



TECHNOLOGY | COMPANY NAME CHANGE

In the middle of a crisis, Facebook Inc. renames itself Meta

By BARBARA ORTUTAY
Associated Press

» OAKLAND, Calif.

Like many companies in trouble before it, Facebook is changing its name and logo.

Facebook Inc. is now called Meta Platforms Inc., or Meta for short, to reflect what CEO Mark Zuckerberg said Thursday is its commitment to developing the new surround-yourself technology known as the "metaverse." But the social network itself will still be called Facebook.

Also unchanged, at least for now, are its chief executive and senior leadership, its corporate structure and the crisis that has enveloped the company.

Skeptics immediately accused the company of trying to change the subject from the Facebook Papers, the trove of leaked docu-



ERIC RISBERG/AP

Seen on the screen of a device in Sausalito, California, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg announces the company's new name, Meta, in a virtual event Thursday.

ments that have plunged it into the biggest crisis since it was founded in Zuckerberg's Harvard dorm room 17 years ago. The documents portray Facebook as putting profits ahead of ridding its platform of hate, political strife and misinformation around the world.

The move reminded marketing consultant Laura Ries of when energy company BP rebranded itself to "Beyond Petroleum" to escape criticism that the oil giant harmed the environment.

"Facebook is the world's social media platform, and they are being accused of

creating something that is harmful to people and society," she said. "They can't walk away from the social network with a new corporate name and talk of a future metaverse."

Facebook the app is not changing its name. Nor are Instagram, WhatsApp and Messenger. The company's corporate structure also won't change. But on Dec. 1, its stock will start trading under a new ticker symbol, MVR.

The metaverse is sort of the internet brought to life, or at least rendered in 3D. Zuckerberg has described it as a "virtual environment" you can go inside of, instead of just looking at on a screen. People can meet, work and play, using virtual reality headsets, augmented reality glasses, smartphone apps or other devices.

It also will incorporate other aspects of online life

such as shopping and social media, according to Victoria Petrock, an analyst who follows emerging technologies.

Zuckerberg's foray into virtual reality has drawn some comparisons to fellow tech billionaires' outer space adventures and jokes that perhaps it's understandable he would want to escape his current reality amid calls for his resignation and increasing scrutiny of the company.

On Monday, Zuckerberg announced a new segment for Facebook that will begin reporting its financial results separately from the company's Family of Apps segment starting in the final quarter of this year. The entity, Reality Labs, will reduce Facebook's overall operating profit by about \$10 billion this year, the company said.

Other tech companies such as Microsoft, chip-

maker Nvidia and Fortnite maker Epic Games have all been outlining their own visions of how the metaverse will work.

Zuckerberg said he expects the metaverse to reach a billion people within the next decade and that he hopes the new technology will create millions of jobs for creators.

The announcement comes amid heightened legislative and regulatory scrutiny of Facebook in many parts of the world because of the Facebook Papers. A corporate rebranding isn't likely to solve the myriad problems revealed by the internal documents or quiet the alarms that critics have been raising for years about the harm the company's products are causing to society.

Zuckerberg, for his part, has largely dismissed the furor triggered by the Facebook Papers as unfair.

FROM THE FRONT

STUDENTS

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The skills Allison Hines learned as a member of the pilot program in 2019 have changed her life, she said.

"I feel like every single aspect of the organization helps me in at least one way," Hines said. "For example, there were field trips we would go on where we would kind of learn about specific tasks or just parts of life that we would need to know in our future."

The success of the program hasn't come without challenges. Launched pre-pandemic, the first year was full of field trips and guest speakers, Gramm said. But that stopped in March 2020 with the pandemic.

The students suddenly found themselves in



JENNIFER REYNOLDS/The Daily News

Hillary Gramm, center, executive director of Higher Up Texas, leads a Zoom meeting with Denise Kwong, left, a board member with the organization, and Kaylee Shannon, a Dickinson High School student and president of Higher Up Texas Phase 2 Huddle of Directors, on Monday. Founded in 2019, Higher Up Texas partners with Dickinson High School to teach seniors important life skills.

class at home, and many missed the program's support, Hines said. Rather than suffer in silence, the students organized what

would become Phase 2 or the post-graduation part of the program, she said.

"It was kind of us just advocating for ourselves,

which was one of the things that the organization taught us," she said.

People in Phase 2 participate in monthly Zoom

meetings and have mentors to help them with whatever plans they have after high school, Hines said.

They also receive support from the organization's staff, Herrera said. That support helped her as she transitioned to college, she said.

"If I have a question and I'm scared to talk to someone, I know I can talk to them," she said.

Despite the program being reimaged because of COVID, Herrera still feels supported as she moves beyond high school.

"It's a really good feeling I have knowing I have all these people that support me and want the best for me," she said.

The nonprofit moved to its first office, a space subleased from the Dickinson Economic Development

Corp. at 1621 FM 517 E. and sponsored by The University of Texas Medical Branch, in July.

"Having a home for the organization I feel is pretty important because it allows us to have that safe space," Hines said. "Specifically, if we have an in-person meeting, it kind of brings us all together in our own place."

And students continue to guide the program. They recently created a board called Huddle of Directors to teach students how boards operate. And participants continue to meet, even if that looks like online meetings.

"We're still kind of in the guinea pig stage," Herrera said. "We're still trying new things, but it's exciting."

Emma Collins: 409-683-5230; emma.collins@galvnews.com.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Continued » A1

"has long acknowledged the reality and risks of climate change, and it has devoted significant resources to addressing those risks."

The oil giant's public statements on climate "are and have always been truthful, fact-based ... and consistent" with mainstream climate science, Woods said.

Democrats immediately challenged the statements by Woods and other oil executives, accusing them of engaging in a decades-long, industry-wide campaign to spread disinformation about the contribution of fossil fuels to global warming.

"They are obviously lying like the tobacco executives were," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., chairwoman of the House Oversight Committee.

She was referring to a 1994 hearing with tobacco executives who famously testified that they didn't believe nicotine was addictive. The reference was one of several to the tobacco hearing as Democrats sought to pin down oil executives on whether they believe in climate change and that burning fossil fuels such as oil contributes to global warming.

Maloney said at the end of the nearly seven-hour hearing that she will issue subpoenas for documents requested by the committee but not furnished by the oil companies.



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Darren Woods, CEO of ExxonMobil, testifies via video conference during a House Committee on Oversight and Reform hearing on the role of fossil fuel companies in climate change Thursday on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Republicans accused Democrats of grandstanding over an issue popular with their base as President Joe Biden's climate agenda teeters in Congress.

Kentucky Rep. James Comer, the top Republican on the oversight panel, called the hearing a "distraction from the crises that the Biden administration's policies have caused," including gasoline prices that have risen by \$1 per gallon since January.

"The purpose of this hearing is clear: to deliver partisan theater for prime-time news," Comer said.

The hearing comes after months of public efforts by Democrats to obtain documents and other information on the oil industry's role in stopping climate action over multiple decades. The fossil fuel industry has had scientific evidence about the dangers of cli-

mate change since at least 1977 yet spread denial and doubt about the harm its products cause — undermining science and preventing meaningful action on climate change, Maloney and other Democrats said.

"Do you agree that (climate change) is an existential threat? Yes or no?" Maloney asked Shell Oil President Gretchen Watkins.

"I agree that this is a defining challenge for our generation, absolutely," Watkins replied.

Watkins, Woods and other oil executives said they agreed with Maloney on the existence and threat posed by climate change, but they refused her request to pledge that their companies would not spend money — either directly or indirectly — to oppose efforts to reduce planet-warming green-

house gas emissions.

"We're pledging to advocate for low-carbon policies that do in fact take the company and the world to net-zero" carbon emissions, said BP America CEO David Lawler.

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., who leads a subcommittee on the environment, said he hopes "Big Oil will not follow the same playbook as Big Tobacco" in misrepresenting the facts to Congress.

"As I'm sure you realize, that didn't turn out too well for them," Khanna said. "These companies must be held accountable."

The committee released a memo Thursday charging that the oil industry's public support for climate reforms has not been matched by meaningful actions, and that the industry has spent billions of dollars to block reforms.

Oil companies frequently boast about their efforts to produce clean energy in advertisements and social media posts accompanied by sleek videos or pictures of wind turbines.

Maloney and other Democrats have focused particular ire on Exxon, after a senior lobbyist for the company was caught in a secret video bragging that Exxon had fought climate science through "shadow groups" and had targeted influential senators in an effort to weaken Biden's climate agenda, including a bipartisan infrastructure bill and a sweeping climate and social policy bill currently moving through Congress.

In the video, Keith McCoy, a former Washington-based lobbyist for Exxon, dismissed the company's public expressions of support for a proposed carbon tax on fossil fuel emissions as a "talking point."

McCoy's comments were made public in June by the environmental group Greenpeace UK, which secretly recorded him and another lobbyist in Zoom interviews. McCoy no longer works for the company, Exxon said last month.

Woods, Exxon's chairman and chief executive, has condemned McCoy's statements and said the company stands by its commitment to work on finding solutions to climate change.

Chevron CEO Michael Wirth also denied misleading the public on climate change. "Any suggestion that Chevron has engaged in an effort to spread disinformation and mislead the public

on these complex issues is simply wrong," he said.

Maloney and Khanna sharply disputed that. They compared tactics used by the oil industry to those long deployed by the tobacco industry to resist regulation "while selling products that kill hundreds of thousands of Americans."

Rep. Katie Porter, D-Calif., accused the oil industry of "greenwashing" its climate pollution through misleading ads that focus on renewable energy rather than on its core business, fossil fuels. She spends nearly 10 times as much money on oil, gas and chemical production than it does on renewables such as wind and solar power, Porter said, citing the company's annual report.

"Shell is trying to fool people into thinking that it's addressing the climate crisis when it's actually doing is continuing to put money into fossil fuels," she told Watkins.

While U.S. leaders and the oil industry rightly focus on lowering carbon emissions, the world consumes 100 million barrels of oil per day — an amount not likely to decrease any time soon, said Mike Sommers, president of the American Petroleum Institute, the oil industry's top lobbying group.

The industry group supports climate action, Sommers added, "yet legislative proposals that punitively target American industry will reverse our nation's energy leadership, harm our economy and American workers, and weaken our national security."