

Early Bird 19 – 25 January 2013

LEADERS/POLITICS

Outgoing County Commissioner received high civilian award (Jan. 25)

For Garrison Commander Lt. Col. Michael D. Runey, the county of Schweinfurt is the most beautiful in Europe. In a special ceremony he emphasized that the American Soldiers enjoy living here, and of course also in the city, and feel welcomed and at home. He presented a high civilian award – the Commander’s Award for Public Service, to the outgoing County Commissioner, Harald Leitherer for his contributions to German-American friendship and the decades-long support. Harald Leitherer was noticeably stirred and pointed out that he had refused all other recognitions. However, he is very happy about the recognition by the U.S. Army. He stated, “It’s a great honor.” Community, friendship, partnership and trust: For Harald Leitherer and Michael D. Runey, these are cornerstones of German-American relations. As a memory of good times Harald Leitherer received a picture.

January 27 a day of remembrance for victims of the Holocaust (Jan. 24)

On Sunday, Jan. 27, the flags on all government and public buildings will fly at half mast in remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust, according to an announcement of the government of Lower Franconia. In 1996 the federal president at that time, Roman Herzog, declared Jan. 27 as day of remembrance of the victims of National Socialism. On Jan. 27, 1945 the concentration camp Auschwitz had been freed by Russian troops.

In Lower 127,684 weapons are registered (Jan. 23)

According to statistics which were publically announced by Joachim Herrmann, Bavarian minister of the interior, there are 288,000 owners of weapons and 1.15 million legally registered weapons in Bavaria. Approximately 10% of those weapons, exactly 127,684, are currently registered in Lower Franconia by 28,614 weapons’ owners. In Upper Franconia 110,084 guns, revolvers and pistols have been registered by 28,614 owners. Since the storage requirements for weapons have become stricter, the number of weapons and owners has slightly decreased. Since 2009 many owners of inherited or historical weapons gave them up because they did not want to buy a weapons’ safe. Still, the number of weapons in Bavaria is high compared to other federal states, according to Harald Schneider, spokesman for security policy of the SPD fraction. He stated: “Only in Rheinland-Palatinate and Saarland are there more weapons are registered per citizen.” Schneider demands more and sharper controls.

A year ago Americans announced drawdown in Schweinfurt (Jan. 23)

“We are not Hanau, not Wildflecken,” said Schweinfurt Lord Mayor, Sebastian Remele. There are no concrete projects but there are discussions everywhere. The contacts between the city and the technical college are intensive since the college, now located at Ignaz-Schön-Strasse, would like to expand and is only a few minutes walking distance from Ledward Barracks. On Tuesday morning, Hans Schnabel informed the main and finance committee of the city council about the actual state of the conversion process. As of Feb. 2, 2012 Schweinfurt was no longer an enduring U.S. Army garrison. The first units (500 of 5,000 Soldiers) left the city in 2012. Another 2,200 Soldiers will be leaving this spring and after that there will be approximately 1,000 active U.S.

Soldiers left in Schweinfurt. The drawdown is supposed to end on Sept. 30, 2014. Hans Schnabel is responsible for economic promotion and he is also the city's conversion representative. His office is executive department for conversion where all information and inquiries converge. Schnabel sees the 30 months until the drawdown of the U.S. Army in Schweinfurt from a positive as well as from a negative aspect. He states: "We have time and we have to take our American partners into consideration." He attests that the cooperation with the American partners was outstanding. The problem was the security aspect. There are no plans of the buildings inside the casernes. Explorations of contaminated sites have to wait. In October 2014, the Federal Real Estate Agency (BImA) will take over the installations. So far only the Abram's Club at Richard-Wagner-Strasse was turned over and there has been no decision made in regard to future use of the building. The city of Schweinfurt has preemption if it wants to use the building. There will be no other exceptions. Currently, there are discussions in regard to the Bundeswehr taking over the training area "Brönnhof." An information meeting has been scheduled for Feb. 1 in Hammelburg. Schnabel counts on the experts' assessment for conversion which the city and the county of Schweinfurt had prepared by the company BulwienGesa from Munich. The final version of the conversion assessment, which includes perceptions from the "Civil Arena"—a procedure where citizens could participate and make recommendations via the internet—will be announced March 20. Discussions between the city and BImA in regard to the use of the areas that will become vacant continue. In the matter of contaminated areas, the city is reviewing documents. The city is planning urban development measures for all properties used by the U.S. Army. After the drawdown of the U.S. Army in the fall of 2014, probing projects for contaminated areas and environmental remediation are planned as well as utilization of properties which are ready for use without requiring further measures. Schnabel estimates that in 2016, demolition of buildings and new construction will get started. He estimates that the conversion process will last five to ten years. Lord Mayor Remele sees the conversion also as a chance for urban development but does not think that it will be completed as fast as in Hanau where it was completed in four years due to the fact that the economic area of Frankfurt was close. He stated: "Schweinfurt is not Hanau, but also not Wildflecken." He explained that the college for applied sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt is interested to expand and is looking for areas but so far there is no complete concept.

Day of German-French friendship: French citizens comfortable in Schweinfurt (Jan. 22)

Fifty years ago, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and French President Charles de Gaulle signed the friendship contract in the Elyse's palace in Paris. The contract committed both governments to consult each other in important questions concerning foreign policy, security policy, youth policies and cultural and educational policy. The friendship between Germany and France is important not only for political reasons but also from a cultural point of view. It is always rewarding, said Michel Hugué who has been living near Schweinfurt for 26 years. During the years he became fond of many German customs. He especially enjoys the atmospheric Christmas markets and the cozy beer gardens. "This is something you can hardly find in France," he said. The 52 year-old man has learned the German language so well that he even speaks the regional dialect. He said laughing, "When you go to a foreign country you have to adjust." The first time he came to Schweinfurt from Schweinfurt's partner city Chateau dun was at age 12 during an exchange program of swimming clubs. He liked it here then and years later he came back because he had fallen in love. Hugué works at SKF ball bearing plant in logistics and lives in Gerolzhofen. Lord Mayor Sebastian Remele also appreciates German-French friendship. "It was

a great historical achievement to bring the rivals of the 20th century together again after two World Wars,” Remele said. Remele, whose family has French roots, sees it as a commitment of cities and communities to foster this friendship. Since the Mayor of Chateau dun visited Schweinfurt last year, Lord Mayor Remele will visit France this year.

County of Schweinfurt became support point for wind power in Lower Franconia (Jan. 19)

Since Friday the county of Schweinfurt has officially become the support point for wind power in Lower Franconia. According to Melanie Huml, State Secretary for Environment, the Bavarian government wants to canvas acceptance from the citizens with this act. A position will be established in the office of the county commissioner where resentments of the citizens will be cleared up by explaining the facts. The experiences made in those support points will be extended to all of Bavaria. Huml stated: “The energy turn-around can only work if the citizens understand what has to be done.” Therefore wind parks for citizens are especially important. County Commissioner Harald Leitherer combines the choice of making the county of Schweinfurt the support point for wind power with the fact that the county of Schweinfurt has the most wind turbines. Presently 20 have been installed but Leitherer expects that 60 more will be erected. The Bavarian government plans a support point for wind power, which will be subsidized with €150,000 for each government district.

SAFETY/SECURITY

Detonation at University of Würzburg (Jan. 24)

On Wednesday afternoon, a small detonation occurred in a laboratory of the university of Würzburg with damages estimated at a six-digit figure. At the time of the detonation, 45 students were in the laboratory where the fire started. The students were conducting experiments also involving sulfuric acid, among other substances when a small detonation occurred for unknown reason, causing an exhaust hood to catch on fire. The fire spread so quickly that trying to extinguish it was impossible. The students were able to exit the laboratory and no one was injured. The rest of the building was evacuated for safety reasons. According to a police report, the fire fighters had the fire under control quickly. However, the damage caused by smoke and soot is estimated to reach a six-digit figure.

Black ice in Southern Germany – Franconia also affected (Jan. 21)

On Sunday afternoon black ice endangered traffic in parts of southern Germany. In a first overview the police counted 800 accidents and 30 persons sustaining injuries. Damages have cost an estimated €1 million. Weather warnings were given for the district Main-Spessart, for the city and county of Würzburg as well as the Schweinfurt region. In Lower Franconia black ice, caused by snow fall (wet snow) that was followed by rain made the roads extremely slippery and dangerous. At 4:30 p.m. the Frankfurt airport was blocked for take-offs and landings and in Baden-Württemberg highways were closed.

SPORTS

Hockey: Mighty Dogs want to continue their series of victories (Jan. 25)

When playing against the team of Klostersee on Friday and the Blue Devils from Weiden on Sunday in the Schweinfurt Ice Dome the Might Dogs want to continue their series of victories despite of several players not being able to play due to sickness.