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Veterans' Services Officer recognized

Ellis County Veterans' Services Officer James Wilhoite was recognized Monday during a regularly scheduled meeting of the Ellis County Commissioners' Court as the recipient of the 2007-2008 Outstanding Officer of the Year Award. The award was made by Charles Kelker, Director of the Dallas Region of the Veterans County Services Officers Association of Texas.



L-R Bill Dodson, Commissioner, Pct.2; Chad Adams, County Judge; James Wilhoite, Ellis County Veterans' Services Officer; Heath Sims, Commissioner, Pct.3; Ron Brown, Commissioner, Pct.4; Dennis Robinson, Commissioner, Pct.1; Seated, Charles Kelker, Director of the Dallas Region of the Veterans County Services Officers Association of Texas

"I am the assistant (veterans' services officer) here in Ellis County – however, there are other activities I participate in," Kelker said. "This year the Dallas Region has the privilege of honoring James Wilhoite as the Outstanding Officer in the region."

County Judge Chad Adams read a proclamation of the Commissioners' Court congratulating Wilhoite, not only for his achievement as the recipient of this award, but also for his many years of service to veterans and their families in Ellis County.

"I accept this award – but you know the people who really deserve it are you guys sitting up there," Wilhoite said. "Judge, and Commissioners, I remember a time when the Commissioners

didn't approve a Veterans' Service Officer in the County – we didn't have one. And I congratulate you for the support you give – thank you so much.”

Wilhoite has worked tirelessly for several years to open satellite offices throughout the County to allow better access to assistance for veterans and their families. Currently, Veterans' Services office locations are the Historic Courthouse in downtown Waxahachie, with office hours from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday; 116 W. Ennis Avenue in Ennis, with office hours from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursday and Friday; room 205 of the old Red Oak Elementary school building at 100 N. Methodist, with office hours from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month; Ferris City Hall at 100 Town Plaza, with office hours from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month; 101 W. Main in Italy with office hours from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month; and 1150 N. Highway 67 in Midlothian, with office hours from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month.

The service officers can be reached by telephone at 972-825-5099 or 972-875-4531.

Following a months-long process that included a number of public hearings, Commissioners voted unanimously to approve an overall tax rate that is very slightly lower than last year's tax rate. The overall rate is made up of separate assessments for Maintenance and Operations, Interest and Sinking, and Farm to Market.

“It has been my desire to always try and lower the tax rate,” said Adams. “It is a principle -- I know we on the Court have had disagreements regarding that, but I always believe we need to make it our best effort to reduce the tax rate.”

The new total tax rate of \$0.393599 per \$100 of taxable value will have the effect of raising more property taxes than last year's budget by \$2,818,729.89, and of that amount \$1,496,426.90 is tax revenue that will be raised from new property added to the tax roll this year.

In other business, Commissioners:

- Approved the second year of the three-year agreement with CASA of Ellis County to provide financial support of \$5,000 for FY 2008-2009 for services to children;
- Approved a resolution for the 2009 Indigent Defense Grant Program that assists the County in implementation of the provisions of the Fair Defense Act and the improvement of the indigent criminal defense services in the County, enabling Ellis County to obtain \$69,049 for indigent defense;
- Approved a memorandum of understanding with the North Central Texas Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging for services to Ellis County residents over age 60;
- Approved interlocal agreements with the City of Italy, the City of Maypearl, the City of Milford, the City of Waxahachie, Italy ISD, Maypearl ISD, Midlothian ISD, Milford ISD, and Waxahachie ISD;
- Approved the list of Presiding and Alternate Judges for the November 4, 2008 General Election;
- Approved the number of clerks needed for each polling place for the same election, a total of over 400;
- Took no action on renewal of the lease agreement between Ellis County and Edwin Spaniel for the site referred to as the County Farm;
- Took no action on the lease of temporary warehouse space for storage of the Sheriff's seized vehicles and other property;

- Took no action on a memorandum of understanding with the First Administrative Judicial Region regarding an interim plan to ensure judicial readiness in times of emergency;
- Approved several variances to the County of Ellis Rules, Regulations and Specifications for Subdivisions and Manufactured Home Parks for the Crater Ridge Development, Phase I, which is inside the extraterritorial jurisdiction of Grand Prairie and has received the approval of the Grand Prairie Planning and Zoning Commission and the Grand Prairie City Council;
- Declared as surplus the bed from a 2007 Dodge Dooley pick up and authorized its sale at auction;
- Convened briefly in executive session to discuss the possible sale or lease of real property and to consult with counsel concerning a lawsuit filed by Tony and Barbara Davis against Ellis County and Herman and Sandra Garcia.