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Austin Bridge and Road to locate facility in Waxahachie
Commissioners' Court approves tax abatement

In a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, December 22, 2008, Ellis County Commissioners voted unanimously in favor of a tax abatement for Austin Bridge and Road. The abatement of 35 percent for a period of three years applies only to the company's real property. A further tax abatement for personal property may be sought in the future.

According to Special Projects Director Holly Davis, the County currently receives approximately \$1200 a year in taxes for the property. After the tax abatement and planned improvements, tax revenue is expected to rise to just under \$7000 a year.

"We will be employing 42 people at this location," said John Lessner, vice president and comptroller for the firm, noting three of the employees already live in Ellis County. "We expect most will move to the area. Our current location is near Richland Hills, and we expect that to be a difficult commute. Also, given the quality of life and cost of living difference, we expect most will take advantage of it."

Lessner indicated all the affected administrative personnel have already indicated they will relocate.

Construction equipment for road and bridge work will be stored temporarily at the facility and equipment maintenance will be performed there. Planned improvements include an eight-bay repair garage and a large administrative office.

Additionally, the company will construct an access road and will extend city sewer lines to the location of their new facility.

"It's important to know that when they do bring that sewer line under I-35, it will open up the whole western side there for future development," said County Judge Chad Adams.

Lessner said the firm has tripled in size in the last few years and expects to continue to grow. It owns 102 acres at the Waxahachie site but plans to retain only the back 47 acres. The remaining property would be made available for other enterprises.

"One reason (we are relocating) is the economics of the location," Lessner added. "Additional land in the (Richland Hills) area is rather expensive. We also like the location that Waxahachie offers, with its proximity to I-35. We do quite a bit of work in central Texas."

Commissioners also accepted resignations from eight individuals who have been serving on various Ellis County Emergency Service District Boards – Danny Green of Red Oak ESD #4; Frank Norris and Ben Rychlik of Bristol ESD #7; Randy Stinson of Palmer ESD #9; Karen Markgraf and Mark Hope of Ferris ISD #5; and H.L. Southard and Gregg Rodriguez of Avalon ESD #8.

A second action of the Court appointed two new members to the Bristol Emergency Service District #7 Board of Directors, Fred Bledsue and Larry Mentzer, and one new member to the Avalon ESD #8 Board, Everett Russell.

“We are still growing in this process of interviewing (board members),” said Adams. “As our population increases, the responsibility of these districts is growing, so we are very, very concerned about who we put in that spot.”

The County has adopted a questionnaire for volunteers to complete, which verifies that they own property in the affected district, are registered to vote, and are citizens of the United States.

“I have talked to all three of these gentlemen personally,” said Commissioner Bill Dodson, pct. 2. “I reviewed their questionnaires, and I went out into the community and talked to other people about these individuals.”

Each prospective board member was asked to give a short personal biography and then to answer a few of the questions from the questionnaire. After the Court voted to appoint them, the three were sworn in by Adams.

Additionally, the following individuals were reappointed for new two-year terms effective January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2010: James Morrison and Andy Mulvaney of Maypearl ESD #1; Danny F. Green and Bart Hundt of Midlothian ESD #2; James Steele, Vicente Guerrero, and Murrie Wainscott of Italy ESD #3; Stuart Schafer and Dan Keller of Red Oak ESD #4; Bill Gilliland, Jack Dineen, and Gary Beaty of Waxahachie ESD #6; Nancy Carson of Bristol ESD #7; and Mike Greenlee, John Hancock, and Marvin Rhoades of Palmer ESD #9.

Davis said letters are being sent to the various Boards to inform them of their responsibilities regarding annual reports, oaths of office, training requirements, and bonding requirements.

In other business, Commissioners:

- Heard a presentation of general information about the 2010 U.S. Census;
- Approved interlocal cooperation contracts with Palmer ISD, the City of Palmer, and the City of Ferris;
- Approved an interlocal agreement with Hill County, Johnson County, and Somervell County to designate the method that Ellis County will be reimbursed for legal costs by the other counties involved in the creation of the Groundwater Conservation District;
- Approved an amendment to a tax abatement agreement with ABPC, LLC, making minor corrections to the original agreement;
- Heard a presentation from Gabriel Roeder Smith on Ellis County post-employment benefits (OPEB);
- Decided not to change post-employment health benefits but approved a clarification to the Personnel Policy Manual, Section 8.01;
- Heard a presentation from the Waxahachie Daily Light concerning that publication’s “Profiles” special edition;
- Authorized the County Judge to sign an agreement regarding the Spring Creek Bridge, approved at a prior meeting of the Court;
- Authorized the County Judge to sign an easement and right of way agreement with Oncor Electric Delivery Company for relocation of power lines associated with the bond program;
- Contracted with Oncor Electric Delivery to provide street lights for the bond program at a revised cost not to exceed \$20,000;
- Rejected the bid for asphalt emulsions from Cleveland Asphalt Company and agreed to send the bid out again since only one bid was received;
- Awarded the 2009 contract for bulk gasoline and diesel to Avenue Fuel Company;

- Awarded the 2009 contract for lightweight road surfacing aggregate to TXI Operations, LP;
- Took no action on the 2009 contract for Proprietary asphalt treatment from P2 Emulsions Company;
- Awarded the 2009 contract for recycled crushed concrete to Big City Crushed Concrete;
- Awarded the 2009 contract for letterhead and business cards to Marfield Corp. Stationary and envelopes to Gingerbread Press;
- Awarded the contract for a drainage project on Pierce Road in precinct 1 to Concrete Structural Services for the amount of \$32,347 with set prices for extra work.