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County to apply for funding

During its regular meeting on Monday, April 13, the Ellis County Commissioners' Court authorized the Sheriff's Department to apply for grant funding under the Public Safety Partnership and Community Policing Grant offered by the U.S. Department of Justice. The grant is designed to pay the first three years of a deputy's salary and benefits, with no limit on the number of positions an entity may apply to fund. It requires the county to commit to retain those deputies at least one year beyond the grant funding.

"This is going to be very competitive, across 50 states and all the local jurisdictions," said Captain Charles Laubach, noting that the cost of one deputy's salary and benefits is approximately \$62,000 per year at this time.

"We should take into consideration that in the past the Sheriff's Office has always added personnel, every budget year," said Commissioner Dennis Robinson, pct. 1. "While this year, with a decrease in revenue (expected), we will not be adding additional personnel, is it realistic that we wouldn't add any over a four year period? If there is a possibility that we are going to add any at all, I can see it being beneficial."

Laubach received authorization to submit the application, which is due by midnight on April 14. If funding is approved by the U.S. Department of Justice, the Court will revisit the item and vote to accept or reject the funding.

No action was taken regarding an application for \$76,950 in Recovery Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) funding authorized by the Court at a prior meeting. A public hearing was held, but no members of the public came forward to speak. The item is expected to be on a future agenda prior to the filing of the application in May.

Two resolutions for the Texas Legislature were approved by the Commissioners, one opposing House Bill 490 and House Bill 515 concerning indigent health care, and a second in support of House Joint Resolution 84 which would prevent the imposition of unfunded mandates on counties. House Bill 490 would increase the county's financial liability for indigent health care, while House Bill 515 would allow the Dallas County Hospital District, Parkland Hospital, to annex contiguous counties as a region.

"Those who are truly indigent do not have transportation to Parkland Hospital, and this would be a huge tax burden for our citizens, as much as \$22 million a year," said Diana Buckley, director of human services for the county. "We are doing a good job here, with our contract with Hope Clinic, and I believe we should keep local tax dollars local."

In an item related to the facilities bond program approved by voters in May 2007, the Court approved the purchase of kitchen and laundry equipment from the Supreme Fixture Company at a cost not to exceed \$513,000.

“These people have all worked with the architects and contractors, so it’s people they know and have done other business with,” said County Engineer Joe White. “In fact, this company has done work in Ennis and Waxahachie.”

White also received approval to contract with Flowers Construction for placement of electrical conduit necessary for street lighting, at a cost not to exceed \$5,000, and to renew two lease agreements – one with Tejas Warehouse for storage of county property that was previously stored at the Superconducting Super Collider site, and one with Haight-Taylor-McClain for storage of the Sheriff’s impounded vehicles and property.

“We have plans for a building to store those automobiles and impounded items at the County Farm,” White said.

Department of Development Director Delton Ake asked the Court to accept updated requirements from the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) for the 9-1-1 addressing program’s geographic information systems under an existing interlocal agreement.

“In the contract, they propose the question, ‘Is the county going to be able to fulfill all of the requirements?’” Ake said. “My answer to you is yes, we will be able to fulfill all the requirements. There are only two we are not doing right now.”

In other business, Commissioners:

- Accepted the resignation of Dave Bundrick from Avalon ESD #8, effective immediately;
- Approved interlocal cooperation contracts with the City of Oak Leaf, the City of Red Oak, the City of Ovilla, the City of Pecan Hill, and the Red Oak Independent School District;
- Approved a cooperative agreement for additional Law Enforcement Services at Lake Bardwell, with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;
- Agreed to the Location Agreement from im360studios for photographs taken at the Ellis County Courthouse on March 30, 2009, striking out language in the third paragraph of the agreement that was considered too broad;
- Took no action on a proposal to amend the “Rules of Procedure, Conduct and Decorum at Meetings of the Ellis County Commissioners’ Court;”
- Renewed the blanket order to Trinity Materials for Washed Pea Gravel with no change in pricing, setting the contract term for April 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010; and
- Approved the final plat for the Oaks at Cedar Glenn, 9 lots.