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Substance Abuse the Focus of Commissioners' Proclamations

Ellis County Commissioners approved both a resolution and a proclamation today that related to the problem of substance abuse.

"The Ellis County Commissioners' Court has been made aware of a threat to the health and welfare of the citizens of Ellis County posed by the smoking or other consumption of the 'incense' or 'potpourri' known as 'K2' and other like products, apparently intended as a substitute for marijuana," said Commissioner Bill Dodson, pct. 2, reading from his resolution.

"The promotion and increasing popularity of the drug as a 'benign alternative' to marijuana lures many new, young users that might otherwise not use drugs," said Larry Wilson from IMPACT Waxahachie in a short presentation on the topic. "The only way to stop this is to ban it and give law enforcement the power to deal with it."

Resident Brandie Owens spoke in opposition to the resolution.

"It's ridiculous to think that anything you buy that's labeled as an herbal incense is going to impair you to the point that you can't carry on a conversation is ridiculous," Owens said. "Outside the city limits add a sin tax to it, add a permit to sell it, and the county gets a new bank account. One store has sold \$50,000 on this – that's great sales tax as our own county judge says we have a bandaid on a gaping wound."

Ellis County does not levy sales taxes and does not have the authority to prohibit K2 and like products or the authority to issue permits for the sale of the products.

The Court's resolution asks that the Texas Legislature address the issue in the upcoming session, because it is of concern to the citizens and municipalities of Ellis County.

Dodson also presented a proclamation declaring the week of October 25 through 29 as Red Ribbon Week in Ellis County, encouraging citizens to participate in drug prevention education activities.



Richard Norman of the REACH Council addressed the Court.

“Red Ribbon Week was started as a result of a murder of a DEA agent in Mexico in the 1980’s, and it has now gone nationwide,” Norman said. “The REACH Council was started as a result of a drug related murder in Midlothian in 1987.”

At that time, some high school students involved in the drug culture realized the presence of an undercover agent in the high school, took him out to a field, and shot him in the head.

“It was a brutal murder and shocked our community,” Norman added. “At the time, my son was a sophomore in high school, and he sat right behind the young man that pulled the trigger. It was a wake-up call to our community.”

Red Ribbon Week serves as one of the many vehicles the REACH Council utilizes to promote substance abuse awareness and prevention in the community.

On the lighter side, Commissioners also proclaimed the month of October to be Czech Heritage Month in Ellis County, with members of the local chapter of the Czech Heritage Society providing a box of Czech Kolaches in honor of the occasion.



“Our next meeting is in Ennis at the KJT Hall on November 14,” said Victor Havel. “We will show Czech films with English subtitles if you want to learn about the Czech Heritage in the Czech Republic or polish up on your own Czech language.”

Some time was spent in discussing upcoming regulatory changes and necessary improvements on the county’s VHF Radio System and Infrastructure, with Constable Terry Nay, pct. 2, gaining the Court’s approval for an agreement with Aerowave and Pat Gardenhire to provide licensing of five remote sub-repeater sites and the modification of existing repeater license with the Federal Communications Commission.

“We are going to be forced by the FCC to narrow-band our frequencies effective January 1, 2013,” Nay said. “Engineers in the industry are telling us we can expect a 20 percent reduction in our transmission footprint to the tower and back out.”

Nay has been working closely with Dodson and Emergency Management Coordinator John Patterson to meet the challenge.

In a related item, Commissioners voted to reject all bids on design and engineering services related to the system.

In other business, Commissioners:

- Approved the renewal of the lease agreement between Ellis County and Edwin Spaniel for the term of October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011 for agricultural purposes for 307 acres of the property referred to as the Ellis County Farm;
- Approved the replacement of two Alternate Election Judges for the November 2, 2010 General Election;
- Approved the re-plat of Stonewood Ranch, Phase Two, lots 1 & 2, block E, in precinct 4;
- Awarded the bid for the District Attorney’s Office Mechanical Shelving System to Southwest Solutions in the amount of \$36257.74, with funds being provided from the DA-Drug Forfeiture Equipment line item;

- Declared as surplus outdated law books from the DA's office;
- Approved a resolution in support of the Meals-on-Wheels of Johnson & Ellis County applying for a grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture Home-delivered Meal Grant Program;
- Approved the 2011 Ellis County Resolution to apply for the Indigent Defense Grant Program through the Texas Task Force on Indigent Defense;
- Adjourned into executive session to consult with legal counsel regarding potential litigation; sale or lease of real property; and employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline or dismissal of staff;
- Directed that all money that otherwise would be deposited in a salary fund, created under Chapter §154.007 of the Local Government Code, to be deposited into the general fund of Ellis County.