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Lower interest rates generate savings for County

Refinancing of General Obligation Bonds for Ellis County will generate a savings of \$272,663.66 over the course of the next four years, without extending the period of debt on the bonds.

“To put it briefly, we have some callable portions of notes outstanding from 2002,” said County Auditor Mike Navarro. “We are currently paying between four and five percent, and this gives us the opportunity to refinance it at 1.39 percent. We will still have it paid off at the same time.”

Commissioners had heard a presentation by Jim Sabonis of First Southwest about the possibility during their regularly scheduled meeting on August 8, 2011.

Tax dollars were also augmented by a grant from Oncor that was accepted by the Court during Monday’s regularly scheduled meeting.

“This is not the first time Oncor has helped us out to a great extent,” said County Engineer Joe White. “When we built our power lines, they went above and beyond, and again at the county farm, they worked with us to find the very best way to get power lines in, to make sure it was efficient for not just the utility company, but also for us.”

Oncor Representative Paul Hernandez was on hand to deliver a check for \$24,442 to offset the cost of new, energy-efficient chillers that were recently installed at the Wayne McCollum Detention Center.

“I am proud to be here,” Hernandez said. “Our Take A Load Off Texas umbrella program helps customers reduce electricity usage and carbon footprints, and one of our programs is the matching grant program for municipalities, counties, and school districts.”

County Judge Carol Bush also thanked Hernandez for Oncor’s support of the county employees’ health fair last month.

Commissioners approved two proclamations during the meeting, the first declaring October 21, 2011 as “Pink-Out Day” in Ellis County and the second designating October, 2011 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in Ellis County.

Dinah Weable and Nicole Mansell were on hand to accept the Pink-Out Day proclamation.

“A week ago this past Saturday, we had our seventh annual Breast Cancer Survivors’ luncheon, where we hosted 185 people at First United Methodist Church in the Family Life Center,” Weable said. “It was a wonderful event.”

Weable, who will celebrate her tenth year as a breast cancer survivor in January, 2012, told the Court she will be speaking to Ellis County employees on Friday, October 14, as part of the employee health and safety initiative.

Mansell represented the Waxahachie ISD in accepting the proclamation. WISD has declared Pink Out Day on October 21 as well, and will honor breast cancer survivors at that evening’s football game.

Ellis County Human Services Director Diana Buckley announced that the employee health and safety initiative will sponsor a “Pink Shoe Decorating” contest to highlight breast cancer awareness this month. Buckley, Bush, and Ellis County Sheriff Johnny Brown were all wearing pink shoes for the announcement, and Buckley presented pink flip-flops to each of the Commissioners as well.

Alecia Peters, founder of Healing Hearts Center in Ennis, was on hand to accept the proclamation for Domestic Violence Awareness.

“This is a great passion of mine,” Peters said. “I’ve been volunteering for about ten years, and the reason we began Healing Hearts Center is that there’s no services in the area. We wanted to be able to provide crisis intervention.”

Peters said domestic violence is a silent crime that most victims are unwilling to expose.

“We will be partnered with Chili’s in Waxahachie and Ennis on Sunday, October 16,” she added. “It is an all day affair, come in, bring your family, and ten percent of the proceeds will go to Healing Hearts.”

To call the Healing Hearts Crisis Hotline, dial 1-800-828-7893. Volunteer training is available, and Peters is available to speak to churches and civic organizations.

In other business, Commissioners:

- Heard a presentation by Patricia Crowe with Tri-Stem, Inc. regarding analyzing utility and telecommunication billing for potential refunds, to determine eligibility for lower rates and, if necessary, assist the County with the negotiation of new or modification of existing contracts with the County’s current utility and telecommunication providers;
- Awarded the sub-depository bank bids for offices in Midlothian and Red Oak to Wells Fargo and in Ennis to Ennis State Bank;
- Approved the certification of a Local Initiative Project (Emissions Enforcement Program) with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality from September 1, 2011 through January 30, 2012;
- Directed that all money that otherwise would be deposited in a salary fund created shall be deposited in the general fund of the county;
- Approved an order to tax tangible personal property in transit which would otherwise be exempt pursuant to Texas Tax Code, Section 11.253, to preserve the County’s right to tax such property in the future if it so orders;
- Approved renewal of the salary supplements to the justices on the Tenth Court of Appeals in the amount of \$1,632 for fiscal year 2011-2012, with Commissioner Heath Sims, pct. 3, casting the only dissenting vote.

