



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 25, 2012

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County enacts burn ban

In a regularly scheduled meeting of the Commissioners' Court on Monday, June 25, 2012, Ellis County Commissioners approved a 90-day ban on outdoor burning.

The ban does not affect fireworks.

"Those are two entirely separate issues," said Fire Marshal Joe Stewart. "Last year there was a complication of a disaster declaration by the Governor, which gave more teeth to the burn ban – that's not here this year, so we fall back to the regular statutes and this is strictly a ban on outdoor burning."

"In order to address the fireworks, the (drought index) number has to be 575," added Assistant County Attorney Lee Auvenshine. "The Court has the authority to do a burn ban, and it is broad in regard to anything that emits a spark. But your burn ban is silent as to fireworks."

As Auvenshine has previously explained, Texas counties may only take actions that are specifically authorized by statute.

Commissioners accepted the resignation of Dr. Thomas Glenn Ledbetter as the Ellis County Health Officer and approved a proclamation expressing appreciation to him for his service.

"I just want to say thank you, Dr. Ledbetter, on behalf of the Court, for what you have done," said County Judge Carol Bush. "Every time we have a crisis situation – say the (tuberculosis) outbreaks, the fire situations we've had – any emergent episode that could impact the health of our community, we have somebody to make recommendations so we have the information we need to get out to the citizens of this community to protect their health."

Bush noted that the County Health Officer is an entirely volunteer position, with Ledbetter serving in the role since 2006.

"It's an important position, and we have relied heavily on Dr. Ledbetter," she added.

Ledbetter recommended Dr. Leigh Nordstrom to take on the role, with Commissioners appointing her for a two year term, beginning July 1, 2012.

"Dr. Nordstrom has been a colleague of mine for eight years, in our Midlothian office," he said. "She is an internal medicine specialist and provides great care for the patients in our community. She will be a great resource and it is a privilege to recommend her."

The appointment was approved unanimously.

A second resignation accepted by the Court was that of Human Services Director Diana Buckley. Buckley has worked at Ellis County since January of 2003.

“She’s done a great job for us, wearing many hats,” Bush said. “She feels it’s time to move on to something else. I am going to ask you to accept her resignation and wish her the best.”

“Diana, I want to express my gratitude for all you’ve done,” added Commissioner Bill Dodson, pct. 2.

In other business, Commissioners:

- Accepted the completed construction of the infrastructure for the private Maypearl Hidden Hills subdivision on Highway 66 in Precinct 3 and released the “guaranty agreement” to Citizens National Bank for that infrastructure;
- Cancelled the legally platted, undeveloped subdivision of Tre Vasca Estates in Precinct 1 at the request of the property owner;
- Approved interlocal agreements with Ennis ISD and the City of Ennis allowing the Ellis County Tax Office to provide tax assessment and collections services for those taxing entities, as provided by Texas Property Tax Code Sections 6.23 and 6.24 and Texas Government Code Chapter 791 and at the recommendation of Tax Assessor/Collector John Bridges;
- Took no action on a similar interlocal agreement with the City of Bardwell, pending further discussion with the Bardwell City Council;
- Accepted a tax resale offer of \$6126 for property at 402 S. Mulberry Street in Ennis, previously struck from the tax rolls;
- Heard an update on the radio, narrow banding, and microwave tower projects from Special Projects Director Kathy Eriksen.

