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Prepared by: Ellis County Communications
101 W. Main Street
Waxahachie, TX 75165

Contact: Diana Buckley, 972-825-5087, Diana.Buckley@co.ellis.tx.us

Burn Ban Lifted

On the recommendation of Fire Marshal's Investigator Jim Pharr, Ellis County Commissioners voted unanimously to lift the ban on outdoor burning within Ellis County.

"The (Keetch-Byram Drought Index) for Ellis County as of this morning is 141," Pharr told the Court. "The Texas Forestry Service 14-day outlook is for the KBDI to be in the 300 to 400 range."

Historically, the Court has instituted a burn ban when the KBDI exceeds 500. The current ban had been in place since August 9, 2010.

Pharr took a moment to provide the Court with a list of a few items that cannot be burned under Texas law:

- Tires
- Electrical insulation
- Treated lumber
- Plastic
- Chemical waste
- Items that contain natural or synthetic rubber

Pharr said his list was not intended to be comprehensive. Citizens should check with authorities before beginning to burn.

The Court approved renewal of its contract with the SPCA for animal services from October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011.

"The contract is for \$55,560, and it is very similar to what we had for the last nine months," said Commissioner Bill Dodson, pct. 2, who serves as the Court's liaison to the SPCA Board of Directors. "We have not had any problems or issues and I move to accept."

In preparation for the November 2 General Election, Elections Administrator Jane Anderson requested approval for a list of Presiding and Alternate Judges along with the number of clerks each Presiding Judge may hire.

"This is a lot less clerks than we normally use, because we are using laptops, which is a faster pace for doing the elections," Anderson said.

A resolution approved unanimously will be sent to State Representative Jim Pitts requesting intervention on regulations requiring a county with a population greater than 125,000 to develop a Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program.

Commissioner Ron Brown, pct. 4, read the Court's resolution, which noted that the county is experiencing economic difficulties due to the current state of the national economy and requested that the Texas Education Code Paragraph 37.011 be amended to increase the population requirements from 125,000 to at least 175,000 before a JJAEP is required, or alternatively, allow additional time for compliance with the current statute.

In other business, Commissioners:

- Corrected the account number on consent agenda item F10, which should have read "From 001-0370-50804";
- Clarified minute order 287.10 setting the amount of the agreement with the Ellis County Expo at \$20,000;
- Convened into a public hearing on the proposed increase of salary for the Ellis County Court at Law #2 Judge in the amount of \$593 for fiscal year 2010-2011, pursuant to Texas Local Government Code 152.013;
- Voted to set the salary of the Court at Law #2 Judge at the 2009-2010 amount;
- Declared outdated law books from the law library to be surplus;
- Approved the purchase of twelve 2010 Police Chargers for the total amount of \$236,724 from the current budget through HGAC;
- Declared four wrecked vehicles as salvage to be listed for sale as metal scrap;
- Approved the purchase of a Broce CR 350 Broom for precinct 3 at a cost of \$29150.46;
- Approved purchase of two 2010 Ford F-150 extended cab pickups for the Sheriff's Office from the current budget;
- Declared as surplus the modular wall units and cubicle units located at 1201 N. Highway 77 (Old Wal-Mart lease space);
- Approved purchase of one 2009 Chevy Tahoe Defender C1500 Police #4156 for \$18,500 from current budget for the Sheriff's Office;
- Rejected the bids for outfitting police vehicles due to additional information being required;
- Approved purchase of a 1995 Peterbilt truck Model 377 for \$12,500 for precinct 4;
- Secured the professional services of Davis and McDill Engineers and Surveyors for surveying and plat preparation as necessary in association with the future sale of Ellis County's downtown buildings on Rogers and Franklin Streets;
- Authorized the County Judge to sign an AT&T pedestal easement in association with development at the County Farm;
- Secured the professional services of MAS-D Environmental to conduct an asbestos inspection at 1201 N. Highway 77 as a necessary step in returning the leased building to its original condition prior to the end of the lease;
- Approved a replat in the Radney Addition in precinct 4;
- Adjourned for a short executive session to consult with counsel regarding possible sale or lease of real property.

At the conclusion of the meeting, County Court at Law Judge Gene Calvert asked for a moment to speak to the Court.

“For the dignity of the office, the County Court at Law #2 needs to have the same salary as the County Court at Law #1,” Calvert said. “I wasn’t asking for a salary increase. Any other amounts that I am paid would be reduced, but for the dignity of the office I respectfully request that you make that a priority for the next budget year.”