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Commissioners hear final report from assistant county engineer

Monday's meeting of the Ellis County Commissioners' Court was the last such meeting to be attended by Assistant County Engineer David Ridgway, who leaves the County's employ as of March 31, 2012.

"I would like to bring three projects to the front to talk about in particular," said County Engineer Joe White.

Specifically, White said Ridgway saved the County approximately \$60 thousand by providing engineering services as the County's five-percent match on dam rehabilitation projects financed by grants from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, another \$40 thousand by performing required breach analyses on some 28 dams in the County, and \$40 to \$60 thousand more in site design at the County Farm.

"He gave you a list of several other projects, and I'd like you to have one last chance to grill him if you want to put him on the spot," White added.

Ridgway took a few minutes to explain the status of the projects under his oversight, including those mentioned by White.

"You leave a really great legacy behind," said County Judge Carol Bush. "You've brought an incredible level of commitment, expertise and professionalism to the work already started by Joe White. I truly, truly hate to see you go and wish you the very best."

"I appreciate all the things you've done, the bridges you've helped me complete," added Commissioner Bill Dodson, pct. 2. "I will miss you."

"I've enjoyed working with you," agreed Commissioner Ron Brown, pct. 4. "I wish you all the best."

Members of the Court also heard an update from Jason Brown, representing the North Central Texas Council of Governments, regarding the AirCheck Texas Drive a Clean Machine program.

According to Brown, funding for the program, which assists motorists with repair or replacement costs for passenger vehicles that fail to meet emissions testing requirements, was

reduced by 88 percent during the last Legislative session. To ensure that the remaining funds are most effective, NCTCOG is focusing its attention on the repair aspect of the program, to swiftly return drivers to the roadways with their vehicle emissions problems resolved. However, it is hoped that the replacement program will be able to operate for at least a portion of this year.

“AirCheck Texas also continues to help out the counties on the aspect of emissions enforcement,” Jason Brown added. “Ellis County is one of the leaders as far as the success of those local initiative project funds.”

In other business, Commissioners:

- Did not enact a ban on outdoor burning;
- Reauthorized the purchase of approximately 2.5 acres of land along I-45 Business in Palmer, immediately adjacent to property already owned and utilized by Ellis County Road and Bridge Precinct 1, originally authorized in July of 2010;
- Authorized the placement of a gate across Cowan Road, a third-class County roadway, pursuant to Transportation Code Section 251.010;
- Reduced the speed limit inside the Plum Creek Subdivision, on Plum Creek, Plum Creek Court, Creekside Court, and Bent Creek Court, to 30 mph, as allowed under the Transportation Code Section 251.154;
- Approved an Interlocal Agreement with the Red Oak ISD;
- Held an executive session to discuss both real estate and personnel matters, with no action taken following the discussion.