

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Meals on Wheels deliveries see major increase and county invests in decontamination system for first responder vehicles

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Reporting a 41-percent increase in deliveries, Silver Sage Executive Director Art Crawford said volunteers prepared and carried meals to 5,082 people in April. In March, the number of meals on wheels recipients was 3,296.

“That’s how many people are afraid to go out to go grocery shopping,” Crawford told county commissioners.

Crawford said 371 volunteers, most of whom are 65 or older, deliver the meals daily to people in need throughout Bandera County.

Also in April, Sheriff Dan Butts said the Sheriff’s Office deputies traveled 24,308 total miles and responded to 540 calls, five of which were within the city limits. Butts said the average call to on scene time was 11.4 minutes. Deputies made eight felony arrests and eight misdemeanor arrests.

“It was relatively slow for criminal cases,” Butts said.

The average inmate population at the jail was 54, nine of whom were contract inmates. He said Kendall County is beginning to send inmates again, only a year after building their new jail.

“It’s called poor planning,” Judge Richard Evans said on why the Kendall County jail has already reached capacity.

Butts said he is being careful about who is being accepted, especially inmates from Bexar County.

High-risk inmates are placed in a 14-day isolation, Butts said.

Bandera County EMS Director Calvin Plummer said EMS calls also slowed down during April. Emergency calls totaled 203 for the month, he said.

Reducing dependence on a San Antonio team to clean ambulance units after transporting patients, commissioners approved the \$3,294 purchase of an Ambustat System decontamination system and solution. Plummer said the process takes about 40 minutes total - 20 minutes to dry fog and 20 minutes to air out - all first responder units can use it.

“There’s no doubt this would qualify as a CoVid-19 response,” Evans said, adding if it meets criteria, it would be completely reimbursed under the CARES Act.

Plummer said in addition to coronavirus, the treatment kills numerous other viruses and bacterias. Butts suggested ordering more cases of solution, depending on its shelf life.

“It may be the time to stock up,” Evans said, adding the CARES Act grant will cover expenses through the end of the year.

EMS building and other county offices

Plummer said he hopes completion of the new EMS building on Hwy. 16 is within striking distance. Speculating it may be move-in ready by the end of the month, commissioners brainstormed ideas for the vacated building at the end of Main Street.

Evans said the county has several different options for the 4,400-square-foot building, which is valued at approximately half-a-million dollars.

“We have to decide what to do with the building,” Evans said, stating the county could keep it or sell the property. “We just need to know which way to go.”

Numerous suggestions were brought to the table, all of which factored in satellite offices that house the county attorney, county engineer and fire marshal; JP Pcts. 1 and 4; tax collection and elections administration office; veterans services; and the county HR department and county auditor.

“We’ve got 20 pounds of people in a 10-pound office,” Pct. 1 JP Mike Towers said, adding he expects to see an uprise in cases and workload

with people who are having problems paying their rent and other bills. “We need office space somewhere.”

Tax Collector and Elections Administrator Gwenda Tshirhart said her shared office is “wall to wall.”

“There’s no privacy,” Tshirhart said regarding veterans services. “I can hear his conversations, he can hear mine...Elections is something we really need to pay attention to. I’m not saying the EMS building is the solution. I don’t know what the solution is.”

Evans said whatever commissioners ultimately decide, he expects it to be a multi-year project. We just need to know what do we do in the interim, he said.

Commissioners Jordan Rutherford and Bobby Harris suggested selling the buildings and constructing a county municipal center. Every county office is busting at the seams, Harris said.

“Build a two-story building, put them all in there, raze the other buildings and be done with it,” Harris said.

Evans said the county has a relationship with four architects, one of whom could analyze the best use for the EMS building both in the short- and long-term.