

The Bandera PROPHECY

June 30, 2021

By RK Lewis

Special to the Prophet

During the June 24 Commissioners' Court meeting, it seemed that the entire court was in agreement that Whartons Dock Road has a serious issue and needs to be addressed. Commissioner Jordan Rutherford placed the reconstruction on the agenda and Judge Evans combined it with the open forum, as several people had signed up to speak on the matter.

The first person to speak was Billy Walker. He is a long time land owner in the area and has a wide range of experience over the years. After expressing his concern regarding the reconstruction, he told the court he would take it upon himself to widen and improve the shoulder of the road that runs along his land. Furthermore, he said he would to encourage his neighbor, the owner of the flying A, to do the same. Evans told Walker he was definitely free to do that, since it is his property.

Carla O'dell was next to speak on the many dangers and pitfalls of the road. She presented a petition to the court, signed by people who reside in the area. Brandi Hanson cited some of the accidents, including fatalities, that have occurred on the road. She went on to speak about the dangers of the narrow bridge, no shoulders, and very deep potholes that have damaged a large number of vehicles. She presented the court with a binder that included accident reports, photos of the various danger areas, and statements from victims of the road's hazards.

After the public forum, Commissioner Jack Moseley spoke on how the road's condition doesn't just affect those residents, but also the entire county. Ambulance and fire apparatus have been damaged traversing this roadway. Sheriff's deputies, EMS and fire have all been delayed because of how slow they must drive. Commissioner Bruce Elikor invited John

Andrade, head of the Road and Bridge department, to speak to the issue. Andrade said not only is the Road and Bridge department short six people, they can't find workers to fill the available positions. They utilize three crews of five to six people. The crews are now short two men per crew. He said the shortage makes it very difficult to get the work done in a timely and safe manner. Andrade further explained the delays on the Privilege Creek project.

Not only have materials increased from \$80,000 per mile to \$82,000 per mile, they have had to start over several times because of the heavy rains. When it is not raining, they are inundated by dust from drivers who fail to utilize any of three alternate routes; they speed down the dusty road, choking the workers and often pelting them with gravel. The remaining crews are short handed and trying to keep up with potholes and issues on other county roadways. Andrade said the longer it takes them to finish the project, the longer it is before they can do any additional roadways. Commissioner Bobby Harris said the county needs to recruit more workers; if we don't, he said, it's going to cost us all a lot more in the long run. Rutherford thanked those who participated and said he will set this on the court's docket to get the discussion and analysis started on the best and fastest way to address this issue. The court went on to discuss annual benefits of county officials, employees and retirees.

While most counties saw an increase of 8 percent, Bandera County insurance only increased 2 percent. The rest of the session covered the replats of several lots in various areas of the county.

The session ended with the monthly recap of statistics by Sheriff Dan Butts and EMS Director Calvin Plummer.

Butts said the deputies drove over 24,000 miles; responded to 624 calls; made six felony arrests; and 12 misdemeanor arrests. There were 25 agency assists; 29 property crimes reported, and 56 crimes against persons reported. Dispatch made and or received 7,420 calls.

There were 1,480 911 calls received (the sheriff indicated that this rate is steadily increasing and has been over 1,000 for several months)

There were 27 indictments returned by the grand jury; 55 persons booked into jail, resulting in an average jail population of 61 (five are contracted from other counties that do not have room). The average pound population was 16 dogs and one cat.

Plummer said EMS responded to 224 calls; drove 12,400 miles; average response time (from tone out to on scene) was 11.95 minutes. Director Plummer indicated that the increased response time was as a result of having to call in off duty personnel when all three ambulances are tied up at the same time. (personal observation: on one occasion I heard five EMS calls drop in just over 10 minutes!) Plummer said the new ambulance is now up and running.

A motion was made, and seconded to adjourn.