

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Briefings from Commissioners Court

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The Bandera Prophet

Bandera County commissioners approved a proposed five percent Cost of Living Allowance increase (COLA) for county employees.

That's not enough to keep their buying power even, but maybe it's enough to not lose so many employees, County Judge Richard Evans said during commissioners court last week. The lone nay vote came from Pct. 3 Commissioner Jack Moseley, who said he preferred to raise the COLA to at least six percent.

Commissioners also approved a proposed five percent increase for elected officials' salaries.

"I've been doing this for 16 years. I'm retiring so it doesn't affect me," Pct. 2 Commissioner Bobby Harris said. "Commissioners are the lowest paid elected officials."

Harris said although they knew what the salaries were, compared to Bandera's peer counties, "it's a disgrace what we pay all of our elected officials."

Evans declined the proposed pay increase for himself, stating he received a supplement from the state.

"Leave the increase for the others," Evans said.

~ During their budget workshop, commissioners approved a proposed block grant awarding \$91,000 each to the Bandera Kronkosky Public Library, Medina Community Library and Lakehills Community Library. Expressing concern for the county's ability to maintain its fiscal contributions to the libraries, Pct. 4 Commissioner Jordan Rutherford

suggested encouraging the libraries to host more of their own fundraising.

“I don’t see how we can keep funding the libraries at this pace,” Rutherford said. “We have employees who we need to be paying.”

Harris said the libraries do have fundraisers, and serve their communities in many ways.

“My library is packed every day,” Harris said of the Lakehills Community Library. “It’s an activity center; it provides computers for people who don’t have them; they’ve put a playground in for after school. It’s running better than ever... We just passed out a five percent COLA, so we’re taking care of our employees too.”

Evans reiterated that the proposals are not set in stone, and can be revisited before the county’s final budget is approved.

~ Commissioners approved a proposed personnel change with the county’s EMS department, adding three paramedic positions. EMS Director Shannon Griffin said the addition is required to operate three full-time crews around the clock.

“We don’t have a hospital, so we have to do something,” Evans said.

“Our county is getting older. There’s no way around it,” Harris said.

“We’re collecting taxes. [People] don’t mind paying if they know an ambulance will show up in a timely manner.”

Commissioners approved a mileage rate increase for EMS, going up from \$18.75 per mile to \$20 per mile, effective immediately. The first increase in 13 years, the change will affect private insurance and cash paying patients. Medicare will continue to reduce charges to its adjusted rate.

~ In other business, commissioners approved, with Harris opposed, the final plat for Phase 1 of Elk Mountain Ranch Subdivision on Hwy. 46, consisting of 108 lots. The developers maintained they were not legally bound to install a protected turn lane, however they reportedly agreed to provide one.

~ Commissioners are going back to square one with the remodeling of the 1881 jail buildings and 1877 courthouse, at 202 12th Street. The county will solicit a Request for Qualifications for architectural and professional services to develop a visitor's center at the complex.

~ Commissioners plan to investigate a price hike for garbage service at the county's solid waste stations. Harris said all of the collection sites have had losses this year, particularly in April. Expenditures have gone through the roof, Harris said, adding, "something's out of whack."