

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Briefings from Bandera County Commissioners Court

By Jessica Nohealapa'ahi
The Bandera Prophet

Having opened and evaluated five competitive sealed proposals for the Bandera County Annex building project, commissioners unanimously approved moving forward with a \$7,347,777 bid from Tegrity Contractors.

With an overall score of 99.8%, rounded up to 100, Tegrity ranked the highest, according to DRG Engineer Wayne Gondeck.

“We recommend the court select Tegrity as the best value proposer on the project,” Gondeck said.

The other contractors ranked as follows:

Bandy Constructors, of San Antonio - \$7,630,000 - 97%

Greystone Construction, of Round Rock - \$7,650,000 - 95%

Frontera Construction, of Del Rio - \$8,360,000 - 88%

AR6 Construction, of New Braunfels - \$8,510,000 - 86%

The Tegrity home office is in Allen, however they have a satellite office in Austin, Gondeck said. Additional sampling by an environmental engineer and investigation for toxic building materials have pushed the construction/demolition timeline back, which is expected to begin in mid- to late-May.

In other business, Bandera County Sheriff Dan Butts presented a proclamation for Public Telecommunicators Week, from the Office of the Governor.

The proclamation states, “Daily, across the nation, public safety telecommunicators are on the front lines, communicating and coordinating public safety services in the face of critical need...I

encourage all Texans to learn more about the impactful role these dedicated professionals play in our lives...They ensure that help arrives swiftly to those in need.”

~ After a tie-vote, commissioners failed to approve a request allowing child-care facilities a property tax exemption.

“There is a shortage of child care facilities throughout rural America,” Pct. 3 Commissioner Jack Moseley said. “We know Bandera County is growing. The more facilities we have in town, the more competition there will be, and the rates will go down.”

Katie Harper, owner of Little Barn Owls Learning Center, which opened in February, said high property taxes have driven her tuition rates up. She said without an abatement, she would have no choice but to pass the rising expense on to the families, many of whom are already struggling to afford child care.

Moseley said he supported a 100 percent tax exemption, however Pct. 4 Commissioner Jody Rutherford said he opposed granting abatements for businesses competing with other well-established businesses that have paid taxes since their origins.

“This is a private business to make money for its owners or investors... why should the public pay for a for-profit business,” Rutherford said.

“There’s no such thing as a free lunch. Other taxpayers will pay the taxes for the child care center, while the owners collect the profit.”

Pct. 1 Commissioner Bruce Elikier said he was concerned that a tax abatement did not specify how much acreage would qualify for an exemption, whether one or 500 acres.

Pct. 2 Commissioner Greg Grothues said he would not support a 100 percent exemption for a for-profit business, however he said he would agree with 50 - 75 percent, considering the need for child care facilities in the county.

“I’m in business, too,” Grothues said. “I wish we could give a tax abatement to all businesses.”

Moseley's motion to grant a 100 percent exemption failed with Rutherford, Elikor and Grothues opposed; Moseley was the sole yay vote.

Grothues' motion to grant 50 percent resulted in a tie vote, with Rutherford and Elikor opposed. The motion failed without a tie-breaker. Bandera County Judge Richard Evans recused himself and exited the courtroom before discussion began, due to a conflict of interest because of his personal affiliation with the Children's Depot child care center. There are three full-time child care facilities in the county, two of which are for-profit: Children's Depot in Pipe Creek and Little Barn Owls Learning Center in Bandera; Grace Noah's Ark Day Care and Early Learning Facility in Bandera is a registered non-profit.