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Supplemental building projects move forward

Remodel of the facility purchased from Ellis County Auto as part of the County's facilities bond program is expected to be completed in early September, allowing the Community Supervision Department to move out of the temporary facility on Highway 77 on schedule.

According to County Engineer Joe White, only a slight delay has been caused by the need to replace the roof as part of the remodel.

"When we started on the project, we assessed the roof, but once we started changing the skylights out and getting enough traffic on the roof, it became obvious that we needed to do a new roof," White told the members of the Ellis County Commissioners' Court during Monday's regularly scheduled meeting.

The Court unanimously approved White's request for a change order for the roof replacement in the amount of \$34,000, as well as an increase of \$46,000 in the computer and communications cabling and fiber connection contract.

"We already have the existing phones and the same network basically set up in the new (courts and administration) building, and we need to continue that link," White said. "It has a long life expectancy and will work for us well into the future."

The Court listened to presentations from Diana Rawlins, James Mays, and Patsy Goss on the efforts of a community group self-designated as Citizens Against Slaughter House (CASH).

"We started meeting in February of this last year and we have been having regular meetings, at least once a month," said Rawlins. "There are three actions we have taken – two motions to overturn the (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) executive director's approval, and in order to protect our interest we filed in Travis County, Texas a plaintiff's original petition in an abundance of caution because of time limitations."

The group specifically opposes the construction of a slaughterhouse located on Slama Road just over the County line in Navarro County, but Rawlins noted that no lawsuit has been filed against the individual landowner.

Under the authority of Local Government Code 234.033, Ellis County Commissioners voted to deny location of the slaughterhouse at 855 Slama Road, finding that the operation would be incompatible with existing land use of the neighboring area. The action came after extensive public testimony both for and against the proposal during a meeting of the Commissioners' Court on November 23, 2009.

Property owner Shamsul Ahmed had told the Court he wanted to establish a slaughterhouse that was USDA inspected in order to be able to sell his meats out of state. He estimated he would slaughter 600 goats and lambs, combined, per week and about 20 to 25 head of young cattle and said he had chosen the 200-acre parcel, of which an estimated 70 acres is within Ellis County and 130 acres within Navarro County, as a location for his business because it is temperate, not within a flood zone, and close to Dallas where a market is available for the produce.

After Ellis County rejected Ahmed's proposal, he reportedly obtained "permits by rule" from TCEQ to locate his business on the Navarro-County portion of his property.

"Thank you for turning down this slaughterhouse," said Goss. "While it is being built in Navarro County, the impact will be on Ellis County – the smell, the air, the roads, the water supplies, the property values, the quality of our lives, our tax assessments, our health, and our children's future."

A proposal to appoint Marshal Evans to fill the unexpired term to the Emergency Service District #6, left vacant following the resignation of Jimmy Roy earlier this year, failed for lack of a second.

In other business, Commissioners:

- Took no action regarding renewal of employee health insurance coverage;
- Approved changing the hours of the November 2, 2010 General Election Early Voting Schedule, extending the weekday hours of the branch locations to 6 p.m. rather than 5 p.m., in keeping with recent practice;
- Authorized application for the Edward Byrne Memorial 2010 Justice Assistance Grant in the amount of \$14,758 and reaffirmed Captain Chuck Laubach as the signing authority for JAG;
- Convened a public hearing for comment on the JAG application, during which there was no input from the public;
- Approved an interlocal agreement with the City of Midlothian regarding right of way acquisitions along Mockingbird Lane from Onward Road to Walnut Grove Road at a cost of approximately \$50,000 to be funded through the existing budget in Road and Bridge pct. 4;
- Approved an interlocal agreement with the City of Ovilla to grind and chip seal portions of Westmoreland Road and Red Oak Creek Road;
- Approved a Supplemental Watershed Plan Agreement No. 2 between Ellis County, Dalworth Soil and Water Conservation District, and the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Services for the improvements to Flood Retarding Structure No. 10 of the Mountain Creek Watershed;
- Approved the purchase of approximately \$50,000 of cold laid asphalt from APEX Company as necessary for the preservation and/or protection of the public health or safety of the residents of the county under Local Government Code 262.024 (a)(2);
- Convened in executive session to discuss the future sale of real properties located in downtown Waxahachie and the purchase of land in Palmer; and

- Authorized the purchase of approximately 2.5 acres of land from J.B. Mercer on I-45 Business in Palmer, Texas, immediately adjacent to property owned by Ellis County and utilized by Ellis County Road and Bridge Precinct 1.