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Commissioners' Court provides direction for generosity

Ricardo Hernandez of Ennis was the picture of both generosity and humility on Monday evening when he approached the Commissioners' Court with an unusual request: he wanted to donate some money to the county in order to help others. Hernandez spoke in Spanish, with his daughter to translate.

"I am very impressed by your father's gesture, his desire to give back to a community that is obviously important to your family," said County Judge Carol Bush. "But we want him to have the opportunity to sit down and see that there are lots of organizations with needs, to know that he can say exactly where the money should go – and we can provide you with a list of the organizations."

Bush said that after Hernandez has learned about the numerous charitable organizations in the county, he is welcome to return to the Court if he still desires to donate his money to the county.

Speaking then in Spanish, Bush thanked Hernandez directly for his generosity and promised to send him a list of charitable organizations. Several were suggested verbally by those in attendance at the meeting: Hope Clinic, Greater Ennis United Way, United Way of West Ellis County, Meals on Wheels, and others.

No action was taken on the agenda item relating to Hernandez' request.

The Court took no action on several other items during the meeting as well, including the question of whether to waive, issue, or reallocate the county's portion of the Recovery Zone Economic Development Bonds and the Recovery Zone Facility Bonds.

According to County Auditor Mike Navarro, a letter from the Texas Bond Review Board was received on October 18 setting the deadline of October 29 for the County's response.

"The Court needs to decide whether it intends to issue the bonds, let another political subdivision within the county use the funds, or let the State decide," Navarro said, noting that 45 percent of the interest owed on the low-interest bonds would be paid by the Federal government. "It's a cheap way to get some projects done. You must issue the bonds by December 31, 2010."

Ennis City Manager Steve Howerton, having discussed the Court's agenda with Commissioner Bill Dodson, pct. 2, had also contacted Navarro and Bush with regard to a project that

would be enhanced by the ability to issue such low cost debt; but members of the Court wanted to make sure they allowed other municipalities the same opportunity.

“I think they all have plans,” said Commissioner Dennis Robinson, pct. 1. “Even Palmer, as small as they are, they’ve got plans for improvements.”

Consequently, the Court took no action on the agenda item, choosing instead to set a special meeting for Friday, October 29, at 9 a.m. and to contact each municipality within the county to give them the opportunity to request a portion of the reallocation.

Any municipality interested in issuing the bonds would still have to apply to the BRB for the amounts designated by the Court to be reallocated. That application must be made on Friday, and must include the following:

- Request for Recovery Zone Bonding Authority;
- Evidence of the Recovery Zone designation;
- A letter from legal counsel indicating that the bonds will qualify as Recovery Zone Bonds.

If approved, the municipalities must issue the debt by December 31, 2010.

A third item on which the Court took no action was a request to license a salvage yard at 2585 S. Highway 77 in Waxahachie.

“My constituents have been here before on a similar issue, and we had a room full last time,” said Dodson. “Before I approve one, I’d have to go back to the people and talk to them, and get their opinions.”

In other business, Commissioners:

- Took no action on a request for variance from the County of Ellis Rules, Regulations and Specifications for Subdivisions and Manufactured Homes relating to the fire hydrant requirement for property on Highway 287 at Reagor Gateway;
- Granted a variance from the County of Ellis Rules, Regulations and Specifications for Subdivisions and Manufactured Homes relating to road frontage requirements for 15 lots within a proposed subdivision off of Highway 66 that is being designed as a gated community with a sewer system and larger-than-required lots;
- Took no action on a preliminary plat for the same subdivision to allow time to address additional issues with safe ingress and egress;
- Approved on-site sewage interlocal agreements with the City of Ferris and the City of Milford, allowing the county to continue providing inspection services for those cities;
- Approved the replat of two lots in Hidden Lake Trail, precinct 4;
- Authorized the Emergency Management department to apply for a State Homeland Security grant that will allow the county to purchase equipment to enhance the communication system infrastructure to improve radio coverage throughout the county and purchase end-user radio equipment to meet the Federal mandate to be narrow band compliant by January 1, 2013;
- Authorized application to the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board to implement structural repairs to Chambers Creek Flood Prevention Sites Number 2F, 6, 23, 24, 100, 110, 115, and 126 and Ten Mile Creek Flood Prevention Site Number 9, pursuant to the existing Watershed Protection Operation and Maintenance Agreement with the Ellis Prairie Soil and Water Conservation District;
- Authorized application to the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board to implement structural repairs to Mountain Creek Flood Prevention Sites Number 10 and

11, pursuant to the existing Watershed Protection Operation and Maintenance Agreement with the Dalworth Soil and Water Conservation District;

- Took no action on a request to accept replats by the City of Waxahachie in regard to the properties on which the Ellis County Courts and Administration building is presently located;
- Accepted the resignation of ESD #7 Board Member and Treasurer, Darryl McGee, effective November 1, 2010;
- Approved interlocal cooperation contracts with the City of Italy, the Italy ISD, the City of Milford, the Milford ISD, the Midlothian ISD, the City of Waxahachie, and the Waxahachie ISD from October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011;
- Authorized the County Judge to execute the contract for Inmate Medical Services which was awarded at a previous Commissioners' Court meeting to Correctional Healthcare Management.

The Court did not enter into executive session.