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Redistricting discussed

Ellis County Commissioners heard an educational presentation regarding the process of Redistricting that will be required in 2011 during a special meeting on December 3.

“One person, one vote,” a Constitutional guarantee, is the overriding principle in the process, according to attorney Michael D. Morrison.

“Each one of your commissioner precincts has to have 25 percent of the population,” Morrison said. “You can have a 9.9 percent deviation.”

Morrison used a county-wide population of 160,000 in his mathematical examples, explaining that the population in the most densely populated precinct could be no more than 4,000 persons higher than the population in the most sparsely populated district. Additional factors that must be considered are statutes that prevent “creating or maintaining a district that has either the purpose or the effect of reducing minority access to a voting process” and “retrogression” of minority access.

“That means that you can’t make it harder than it was before for a minority group to select the candidate of their choice,” Morrison explained.

Morrison estimated that his firm could handle the redistricting process for Ellis County at a cost of approximately \$25,000 to \$30,000, plus expenses. A retainer of \$5,000 would be required.

No action was taken regarding redistricting during the meeting.

In other business, Commissioners approved an agreement with Grassroots Filmworks to use the Commissioners’ Courtroom as a movie location to film a short scene. The specified that the cost of using the courtroom would be a minimum of \$800 per day, with a day defined as 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. No date has been set.

The Court also approved two proclamations of appreciation: one for 40th District Judge Gene Knize, who chose not to run for another term of office, and one for 378<sup>th</sup> District Judge Al Scoggins who has been elected to serve on the 10<sup>th</sup> Court of Appeal beginning on January 1, 2011.

“I would like to present the proclamations at their goodbye reception on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December,” said County Judge Carol Bush.