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Dam improvements continue

State grant funding has been approved, with a five percent local match, for structural repairs on flood control dams in Ellis County.

According to County Engineer David Ridgway, the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board funding will require a commitment of up to \$75,000 from the County. However, because of work that county staff members can do, or have already done, instead of hiring outside contractors, the net cash outlay will be very near to zero.

Other work already underway did require an increase in the County's match, but approximately \$9,500 was pledged by the Dalworth Soil and Water Conservation District to help with that increase. If contingency funds must be paid, the County will then expend approximately \$54,300 for the \$1.3 million in necessary improvements to the Mountain Creek Floodwater Retarding Structure Number 9.

Additionally the court agreed to enter into a cost sharing agreement, contingent upon legal review by the Ellis County and District Attorney's Office, with Dalworth Soil and Water Conservation District, Trinity River Authority, City of Midlothian, City of Venus, City of Grand Prairie, and One Windsor Hills, L.P. for funding of the local match portion of the grant to rehabilitate and repair the Mountain Creek Floodwater Retarding Structure Number 10.

"I have been working on this for eight years and four months," said Watershed Technician Tom Sulak, with Ridgway adding the repairs are expected to cost approximately \$3 million.

"If this all works out as we have it now, we will pay only four tenths of one percent of the total cost," he said.

Commissioners voted unanimously to provide the matching funds for all three agenda items.

County Treasurer Cheryl Chambers reported to the Court that she has successfully implemented a direct deposit system for vendors through the County's accounts payable process.

"I am pleased to say it is up and running. We tested it with a few attorneys and others that were willing to be guinea pigs, and there were no glitches," she said.

"Thank you for looking for new ways to do things," said County Judge Carol Bush.

“We are trying to take advantage of all the technology that is available to us,” Chambers said. “The next project is for our retirees that pay their insurance monthly. Several of them have asked if we can draft those payments from their bank accounts, and we hope to have that up and running by the September first payments.”

After a public hearing in which no member of the public stepped forward to comment, Commissioners approved changes to the Ellis County Flood Damage Prevention Order #98-355, which was originally adopted on November 30, 1998 pursuant to Subchapter 1, Section 16 of the Texas Water Code, to comply with the requirements and criteria of the National Flood Insurance Program.

Most significantly, the changes appoint Ellis County Engineer Joe White or his designee as the Flood Plain Administrator.

“I have spoken with Joe several times, and I have spoken with most of you – this is not a surprise,” said Department of Development Director Delton Ake. “When something comes in on this, I am dealing with an engineer, and I have to turn to Joe for his assistance. This is where this needs to be.”

Ake assured the Court that the Department of Development would continue its role in managing paperwork and other requirements of the permitting process related to flood prevention.

In other business, Commissioners:

- Authorized the County Judge to issue a letter of support for the City of Red Oak’s application to establish a Foreign Trade Zone to be located at the Red Oak Industrial Park;
- Approved two replats under the Department of Development;
- Authorized Sheriff Johnny Brown to sign an interagency agreement with the City of Mansfield for participation in the Tri-County Auto Theft Task Force;
- Took no action on a proposed interagency agreement with the North Central Texas Council of Governments for the Rural Law Enforcement Initiative Analysis Portal;
- Took no action on a proposed interagency agreement with Tarleton State University for the Rural Law Enforcement Initiative;
- Took no action on a proposed memo of understanding allowing for additional technology services from Justice Solutions;
- Appointed Billy R. Hill to the Ellis County Emergency Service District #9 Board for a term to expire December 31, 2012;
- Recessed to convene in executive session to confer with legal counsel regarding the possible sale or lease of real property and to confer with legal counsel regarding Cause Number 66,519 Holnam Texas Limited Partnership vs. ECAD, et. al. and all related cases pending in the 40th Judicial District Court of Ellis County, with no action taken on either issue after the executive session.