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Grant applications approved

During Monday morning's regularly-scheduled meeting of the Ellis County Commissioners' Court, Commissioners gave their permission for two grant applications to be submitted.

Constable Terry Nay, precinct 2, received permission to apply for a grant of state funds awarded by the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality for regional disbursement on the "Stop Illegal Dumping Enforcement" portion of the Regional Solid Waste Plan for North Central Texas. Nay proposes to use the funds to hire a Texas Peace Officer to investigate environment-related offenses for all of Ellis County.

"I am here this morning to discuss and ask for your guidance and willingness to participate in a program to address illegal dumping in Ellis County," Nay said. "I know it's a big concern and you get a lot of those complaints."

Currently, illegal dumping complaints are made through the Fire Marshal's Office, with the Sheriff's Office, the Road and Bridge Precincts and the Department of Development assisting the Fire Marshal with investigation and remediation.

"I looked for some funding sources so taxpayers didn't have to bear the burden of the project," Nay told the Court. "I did find some – unfortunately we are on a deadline."

According to Nay, a grant of between \$15,000 and \$125,000 may be available through TCEQ; applications are due to NCTCOG by Friday, June 18. A large scoring deduction will be made if the grant application does not show that the Commissioners' Court is in support of the project and willing to continue the enforcement effort after grant funding is depleted.

"I can submit it that way, but the odds are slim to none on getting the money," said Nay, noting that today's request was only for permission to apply. If funds are awarded, the Court will have to vote on whether or not to accept those funds.

"I don't think we can make a decision today on whether we accept it," said Commissioner Dennis Robinson, pct. 1. "In that case, is it worth your time?"

Nay agreed he would put in the effort and Commissioners voted unanimously to allow him to submit the application, noting their hesitation to commit to the project long term.

Commissioners also approved a resolution designating and authorizing South Ellis County Water Supply Corporation to prepare and submit a Texas Community Block Grant (TXCDBG) Program application through Ellis County for the 2013/2014 grant program cycle. According to Tim Glendening, who will coordinate the effort for South Ellis County, the funds will flow through the County, but the County is not faced with any monetary expense.

“It’s a good benefit for the Water Supply Corporation, and it’s minimal work for the County,” said County Auditor Mike Navarro.

Fire Marshal Joe Stewart told the Commissioners that the current drought index does not reach the threshold necessary to enact either a burn ban or a ban on the use of certain fireworks. There is a June 15 deadline for a County to ban the fireworks for the July 4 holiday, and it seems unlikely that the threshold will be reached by that date.

In other business, Commissioners:

- Denied a request to locate a salvage yard at 3230 S. Highway 77 in precinct 3;
- Approved early voting schedules for the July 31, 2012 Democratic and Republican Primary Run-Off Election;
- Approved the lease of one handicap voting machine to the City of Milford for a Local Option Alcohol Election on November 6, 2012;
- Accepted funds of \$14,585.42 from the Texas Association of Counties Health and Employee Benefits Pool as an approved plan sponsor of the Early Retiree Reinsurance Program;
- Selected three public members and three alternate members of the Elected Official Salary Grievance Committee for FY 2012-2013 by drawing names from a list of Grand Jurors;
- Approved an interlocal contract with ESD #6 for road maintenance;
- Approved an amended lease agreement for the City of Midlothian for office space for Justice of the Peace and Constable, precinct 4;
- Approved an amendment to a license agreement with American Tower Corporation.