

## ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGES REPORT

The County's statutory (legal) obligation for fire protection in Atascosa County — none. According to the Texas Local Government Code, chapter 352, the county "may" conduct certain responsibilities, such as contracting with volunteer fire departments and municipalities, purchasing fire trucks or other fire fighting equipment and hiring a fire marshal. We are not required to hire a fire marshal, but we have. His responsibilities are to coordinate with all FDs in the County and assist with any programs, technical support or training. He is also licensed to investigate arson, and most FDs in the County do not have that capability. This is a service the County provides to all FDs, either in an unincorporated area or an incorporated city. Lytle FD (through an ESD) has gone to a paid fire department, and I am sure they are coping with the changes. For example, the new Lytle area ESD informed us they could not accept donations from the county because they have a tax-based revenue now (property tax).

Even though not required by statute, years ago (I don't know when), the County started contracting with and giving money to the county VFDs. When I became County Judge, I received a request from a VFD for more money. I reviewed the donations and found that they had not increased for several years. The County was paying roughly \$100,000 divided out to the VFDs. I have slowly increased the contribution to the VFDs until we are paying out approximately \$200,000. Pleasanton VFD had been receiving the largest contribution of \$32,000. The donations' specific purpose was to provide some fund assistance for those city units going out into the County to assist fighting unincorporated area fires.

So, concerning the ongoing dispute about the County's contract with Pleasanton: because there had been no change in the average of fire calls for the last three years, we offered to contract with them for \$32,000. In the Pleasanton City Council meeting of Nov. 4, the city council unanimously voted it down. The council voted to reject, unless by Dec. 2 the County added another \$15,000. The County was informed, via an emailed letter dated Nov. 9, that if we did not approve the additional money, the city would withdraw firefighting assistance outside the Pleasanton City limits.

The City of Pleasanton has a great influence on how their protocol is set up for notification by the County 911 office. 911 authority is controlled by Commissioners Court, however we want to assist with any requests the city may have. We want to be a part of assisting all parties in working together.

On April 7, the City of Pleasanton voted to instruct the Pleasanton Fire Department to respond to requests for assistance outside of their city limits. I applaud them for this. Even though Pleasanton FD has been responding, it is so good to have the council ratify the policy.

Thank you for listening, and God bless us all.