

ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGES REPORT

Three school superintendents, their staff, several county officials and I had the chance to tour the new Navistar Truck Manufacturing facility on north State Highway 281. It was quite an experience. In my previous 16-year stint with an automotive distribution and manufacturing company, I have had the opportunity to visit manufacturing sites before. I have always valued these opportunities. People who are interested in seeing how things are made usually love it. I know I do. In the past, I have been to an automotive parts remanufacturing plant tour, one of the biggest auto and equipment filter manufacturers, a major automotive and equipment engine parts manufacturer, and a wonderful tour of the GM Plant in Arlington.

The Navistar plant, compared to others I have toured, is high-tech and state of the art. I have never been in a plant so clean and so quiet! They have battery powered forklifts with hydrogen tanks that charge the batteries (please do not ask how they work. Yikes! I have no idea). The transport tugs are powered similarly and pull carts from the storehouse to the assembly lines with component assembly items. They are equally quiet.

The building where the robots assemble the truck cabs is also very quiet. This is true even though sparks are flying while the robot arms weld. The robot arms place the panels and then weld them. The best part was meeting the first two supervisors who assisted with the tour. One was from Somerset, and one lives in Pleasanton. Even at this early stage, the plant employs over 400 personnel. They plan to gradually bring on up to 600 as they get up to speed. The jobs start at \$18 per hour and go up from there. Even though it is in southern Bexar County, just a few miles over the county line, our county benefits from its existence. How fortunate we are for Navistar, Toyota, Brooks Base, and others that are moving to the southside of Bexar.

Thanks for listening. May God bless us all. And, God, thank you for the rain. Please bring more! Amen.