

ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGES REPORT

As I write this column on Monday, I have a little over 53 days left to be your County Judge. By the time you read this, the voters will have selected a new County Judge to take office on January 1, 2023.

I am happy to report to you that, thanks to work by Assistant County Attorney Trent Rowell, we have a termination agreement completed with Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid. It has been a frustrating experience to deal with these people. It is not one I would recommend to anyone. However, our grant is in place, and the four counties (Frio, Karnes, Wilson, and Atascosa) have our own control over the P.D.O. (public defender office). The P.D.O. board has hired a Chief Public Defender and we are on our way to getting it fully functional. We still must employ 12 attorneys and four staff members. So, if you know any attorneys that might be looking, our pay and benefits should be attractive.

Another concern of mine that I have wanted to get up and running before I leave is the Post-Treatment Program for Juveniles in the Juvenile Detention Center. Its purpose is to create positive revenue for the county to offset the severe losses we experience in the center. Law enforcement and detention will never be positive revenue. They are expenses we must incur to protect law-abiding citizens. However, as elected officials, we should do all we can to minimize the extent of the cost. The post-treatment now has its first one or two clients from other counties, who will pay us \$250 per night. Each client will stay at least six months and up to nine months. We have a capacity of 12 in the detention pod, so I will let the reader do the math.

And lastly, I want the Commissioner's Court to appoint an official committee to use the County Hotel-Motel Occupancy Tax (H.O.T.). This money, by statute, must be used to build a professional rodeo arena and convention center.

I will be sending in my last column as your County Judge in mid-December.

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