

ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGES REPORT

I want to address an issue that came up on Facebook that illuminated the fact that many people did not hear or have forgotten about the plan for the "Atascosa Justice Center." This building has been highly successful, providing two new state of the art courtrooms and state of the art secured holding cells for prisoners coming to trial. The misinformation is that some people think that the unfinished second floor with four closed-in elevator shafts exists because the county "ran out of money." That is very incorrect. The plan from the very beginning stages was to build what we needed with a plan for the future. That "vacant" second floor is pre-planned, by architectural blueprints, down the final detail to build out two more courtrooms with offices, restrooms and storage. The idea was to enable those who come after us to be able to cope with the growth of the justice system in Atascosa County in the years to come. We felt it would have been irresponsible to build only what is sufficient for the present time and cost much more money to build another courtroom building at the future need point. I was against finishing out the second floor because it made no sense to encumber the citizens of Atascosa County with a couple of million dollars of extra bonds when not needed now.

By doing so we eliminated a whole floor to furnish, maintain and provide personnel to secure and clean. But let me assure you we had our heads on straight and planned ahead with vigorous discussions with all the Judges and Department heads involved and came up with a master plan that works. My only admonition to the future County Judges and Commissioners is to resist seeing that as extra space and clogging it up with miscellaneous storage and functions that will prohibit its future design purpose. Please do not forget that in this space I have told you many times that 75%+ of the Counties budget monies go the support of the Justice System in Atascosa County. That includes courts, staff, probation management, prosecutors and law enforcement (and much more).

Quote of the week: "Humor is mankind's greatest blessing." Mark Twain.

Thanks for listening.

We want you to be proud of your County Government.