

## **ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGES REPORT**

The Medical Examiner Transport program I reported here as being started is now in full swing. Our team, led by Bob Hunt, has hauled over 12 bodies to be autopsied at the nearest medical examiner. This is filling a real need. We are also covering for Wilson, Karnes, McMullen and Frio counties. Even better news is that we are doing it for less money than we have been paying. My hat is off to the ACMET (Atascosa County Medical Examiner Transport) team.

We are getting ready to pass our county budget for 2022. We will be adopting the “No New Tax Rate” as defined by the state. It used to be called the “Effective Tax Rate.” It produces the same revenue as the previous year for the county. We have been doing more costcutting, so we could find the money it takes to give our county employees a 3% COLA (cost of living adjustment) pay increase. They did not get a raise last year because of our challenged 2020 budget caused mainly by COVID.

The American Rescue Plan Act passed in Washington is allowing us to reimburse ourselves out of the funds for lost revenue. Last year we were down about \$4.5 million which meant we had to pull over \$3 million out of reserves to balance. Therefore, we are paying those funds (\$4.5 million) back into our reserves. We are experiencing a shortfall this 2021 year also. So next year we can use the funds for the same purpose. Believe me, it is a nice feeling to get that money back into county reserves (savings, to us normal folks).

Our employees work hard and are serious about doing a good job for all of Atascosa County’s citizens.

Thanks for listening. Your county government is getting better all the time.