

ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGES REPORT

I am winding down on the most difficult aspect of my job as County Judge and that is the annual budget. It is large and complicated, and that is a big part of the difficulty. But the hardest part is making difficult decisions related to that function. As I have told you, I have spent 6 months working on a replacement group medical insurance program for our employees. I am hopeful that my recommendation to Commissioner's Court will be successful. It will go into place on October 1. It looks very good and could save the county some serious money. The existing "county self insurance program" we have been under since 2004 has been losing money since I got here and each year it grows worse. I would describe the system as "circling the drain". We were facing at least \$1M cost overrun this year and it probably would have been more. So if we were to keep it we would have to make radical reductions in the coverage and increases in the deductible that would have been very hard on our employees. The new plan is through Texas Association of Counties and is the Blue Cross / Blue Shield program. The coverage is very close to what the employees have now. A few pieces of the coverage are a little worse but there are some nice adds. So, I pray it will go well on October 1.

Many difficult decisions are also involved this year and I will share a few of those with you when we have certainty on our direction. People's jobs and therefore their lives depend on what we do with the budget and I can never forget that. So, I must leave this with what I repeat often: It is your money and I am your employee. I never forget that. So, when I work on the budget it is always on my mind – "Is it necessary? Is there another way to do it? Is it an essential function of our county government? Can it be reduced or should it be eliminated?"

Quote, "Love conquers all things except poverty and toothache." – Mae West, Actress.

Thank you for listening. 😊

We want you to be proud of your county government.