

Animal shelter back in court

Proposed tax rate receives no comment

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The Walker County Commissioners Court needed just over three hours to take care of a 33-item agenda Monday morning, including a public hearing on the proposed tax rate for 2008-09.

The five-member court also heard a presentation by Bob Ernst, asking that the county hold a bond election to help pay for a new Rita B. Huff animal shelter.

The court also gave approval to Connie Heiland to apply for a \$2,500 Texas Historic Preservation grant to provide assistance for the Gibbs-Powell House.

The first of two public hearings regarding the proposed tax rate last but few minutes as County Judge Danny Pierce asked if anyone had a comment.

There were no comments and the hearing ended.

The second hearing on the tax rate begins at 5:30 p.m. Sept. 2 at the courthouse when the court is scheduled to adopt the tax rate.

The budget hearing will be held Sept. 15 during the court's regular meeting and the court will consider adopting the budget.

"I was a little surprised that we had no one present for the public hearing concerning the tax rate," Pierce said. "I don't know whether this was a vote of confidence or trust that there were no questions asked."

The five-member court has proposed a tax rate of \$0.5450 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation — the same rate as this past year — and a proposed \$23 million budget that includes a 5 percent pay increase for county employees.

The effective tax rate is \$0.5279 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation.

Pierce said overall increases in the cost of living kept the

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court from continuing its streak of lowering the tax rate as it has done the past four years.

Pierce said the effective tax rate is set to generate the same amount of tax revenue that it produced the previous year.

He said the court is not proposing to increase the tax rate, "but by adopting the \$0.5450 cents that will generate more revenue than it generated last year because of an increase in property values."

Pierce said discussion about the county-called bond election to build a new Rita B. Huff animal shelter is in the early stages.

"We had lot of interest generated today in the workshop discussion and possibility of a county-called bond election for the animal shelter," Pierce said. "I think there needs to be a lot of conversation before that situation is called."

"We're going to call Galveston County and study their process toward that endeavor. This is only proposed and we are in the very early stages."

Pierce said the Rita B. Huff group has "done a tremendously good job since they have been in operation. You can see the results of this endeavor."

"It's rare to see a stray dog within the city limits of Huntsville after what it used to be years ago," he said. "and they're greatly reduced in the county."

that El Paso County is the only county where a bond election has been held and they recommended the county obtain the services of a bond counsel.

He said the county has not held a bond election in the 20 years-plus he has been in the county.

Also Monday, the court approved:

- Renewal of contract with the OAG to handle Child Support. Current contract expires 8/31/08

- Upcoming training classes for EMS from budgeted funds

- Report and recommendations by Ben Sanford, our telephone consultant

- Claims/invoices submitted for payment

- Budget amendments for FY 2008

- Renewal for Bid #C2360-7-001 for Asphalts, Oils and Emulsions and Bid #C2360-7-010 for Asphaltic Concrete Patching Material to Cleveland Asphalt Products for the period October 1, 2008, through September 30, 2009.

- Purchase of equipment for DPS officers out of operation budget for clerical support office

- Renewal and price increase for Bid #C2360-7-004 for Limestone to Frost Crushed Stone Company for the period October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009

- Renewal and price increase for Bid #C2360-7-011 for Crushed Concrete Base to K.C. Crushed Concrete for the period October 1, 2008, through September 30, 2009

- Renewal for Bid #C2360-7-004 / Limestone; Bid #C2360-7-005 / Aggregate; Bid #C2360-7-006 / Cement Stabilized Sand; Bid #C2360-7-007 / Hot Mix/Cold Laid;

Bid #C2360-7-008 / Hot Mix;
 Bid #C2360-7-009 / Rip Rap
 & Bid #C2360-7-010 /
 Asphaltic Concrete Patching
 Material & Bid #C2360-7-
 012 / Reclaimed Asphalt
 Pavement (RAP) to Pavers
 Supply for the period October
 1, 2008, through September
 30, 2009

- Renewal for Bid #C2360-7-005 for Aggregate, Type L, Grade 4 and Grade 5 to Texas Industries, Inc. for the period October 1, 2008, through September 30, 2009

- Renewal of policy for Commercial Automobile Policy, General Liability, Crime Employee Dishonesty, Portable Equipment and Management Liability (for Director & Officers to include sexual harassment, discrimination, wrongful termination) for the EMS department with VFIS of Texas for the period 10/01/08 - 10/01/09 in the amount of \$33,920.00

- Acceptance of Phase I - Needs Analysis Report from Ben Sanford and Associates in accordance with RFP #C2360-8-001 for Independent Telecommunications Consultant authorization to continue with Phase II - System / Network Design

- Request for Proposal #C2360-8-002-REP for Telecommunications System

- Renewal and price increase for Janitorial Contract with JZ Services for SPU - Criminal, Civil and Juvenile offices for the period September 1, 2008 through, August 31, 2009

- Renewal of Bid #C2360-7-002 / Caliche and renewal and price increase for Bid #C2360-7-004 / Limestone; Bid #C2360-7-006 / Cement Stabilized Sand; Bid #C2360-7-009 / Rip Rap; Bid #C2360-7-013 / Select Material and Bid #C2360-7-025 / Volcanic Ash to Grisham Construction for the period October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009

increase for Bid #C2360-7-009 for Towing to Pete Johnson Towing Service for the period October 1, 2008, through September 30, 2009 - Linda McKenzie

- Ratifying Commercial Service Order & Agreement with Sudden Link in accordance with their terms and conditions for television and internet service for the Storm Shelter

- Renewal and price increase for Bid #C2360-8-003 for Bread for the Jail to Bimbo Bakeries, USA for the period October 1, 2008, through September 30, 2009

- The replat of the Ferguson 37.055 Acre Tract Subdivision in A-373, the Robert Marsh League

- Proposal of Texas Historic Preservation Grant for the Gibbs Powell House

- Title III request by Pine Prairie VFD in the amount of \$17,500 to purchase a new cab/chassis

- Appointment of Charles M. Brandewie of Riverside to the Emergency Service District #1. He is a firefighter with Thomas Lake Road Volunteer Fire Department

- Sheriff's and constable fees for 2009

- Dry hydrant water usage agreements for Wire Road Hydrant, 1696 East Hydrant, Spring Circle Loop Hydrant, Swann Hydrant and J.C. Walker Loop Hydrant.

- Presentation by Rita B. Huff Humane Society and discussion of their request for a county bond issue for an animal shelter.