

COMMISSIONERS' COURT MEETING

April 13, 2020

BE IT REMEMBERED That the Commissioners' Court of Comanche County, Texas met in a Regular Meeting on the 13th day of April, 2020 with the following members present: Judge Stephanie L. Davis, Presiding in open court. The following Commissioners are present virtually thru Zoom; Gary "Corky" Underwood, Commissioner Precinct #1; Russell Gillette, Commissioner Precinct #2; Sherman Sides, Commissioner Precinct #3; and Jimmy Dale Johnson, Commissioner Precinct #4. Others present virtually include Craig Willingham, County Attorney, Judge Johnny Conine, Justice of the Peace and Tricia Grimshaw, Emergency Management Coordinator.

Judge Stephanie L. Davis opened the meeting at 9:09 a.m.

Commissioner Underwood gave the invocation.

Commissioner Underwood made the motion to approve the Minutes of the March 23, 2020 Commissioners' Court Meeting as presented. Commissioner Sides seconds the motion. All approved. Motion carried.

Commissioner Sides made the motion to approve the Minutes of the April 1, 2020 Emergency Commissioners' Court Meeting as presented. Commissioner Gillette seconds the motion. All approved. Motion carried.

No public comments.

Judge Davis expressed appreciation to Dr. Paul Livingston, Local Health Authority, for his work during the CIVID-19 pandemic. He has been on call 24/7. It was recommended a Deputy Health Authority be appointed to share the work load. Dr. Dwayne Miller has agreed to serve in this capacity. This would allow Dr Livingston and Dr. Miller to work together and develop a work schedule. Dr. Livingston's term expires October 9, 2020. Dr Miller's appointment will run concurrently with Dr. Livingston's term. Both would be subject to reappointment on or before October 9, 2020

Commissioners Gillette and Sides made the motion and second to approve the appointment of Dr. Dwayne Miller as Deputy Local Health Authority with the term ending October 9, 2020. All approved. Motion carried.

Commissioners Underwood and Gillette made the motion and second to approve the purchase of a Belly Dump Trailer for Precinct #4 and furnish some trade in equipment. All approved. Motion carried.

Commissioners Sides and Underwood made the motion and second to approve the purchase of equipment by bid from TXDOT for Precinct #4 when available. All approved. Motion carried.

The use of the two county boat ramps was discussed. Judge Davis suggested the county ramps remain in use as long as the two Corp of Engineer's boat ramps were not closed. The general consensus of the Commissioners was to make the county boat ramps open and available for fishing.

Employee Leave pay during the COVID-19 crisis was discussed. Patsy Phifer, County Treasurer presented the United States Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division guidelines describing which employees qualify for leave related to COVID-19. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act) requires certain employees to provide their employees with paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specific reasons related to COVID-19. These provisions apply from April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. An employee is entitled to take leave related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work, including unable to telework because the employee is subject to state or local quarantine or isolation order, has been advised by health care provider to self-quarantine, is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking medical diagnosis, is caring for an individual who is subject to an order of quarantine or self-quarantine, is caring for his or her child whose school or place of care is closed due to COVID-19 or is experiencing any substantially-similar condition specified by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Patsy Phifer stated administrative leave may be granted by an elected official for employees in their office at their regular pay rate, as long as funds are in their budget, without Commissioner Court approval and it relates to the COVID 19 pandemic. A blanket county administrative leave may be granted with Commissioner Court approval for COVID-19. Approval will need to be approved for each pay period. Proper documentation must be entered on time sheets.

Commissioners Gillette and Sides made the motion and second to allow access to a county blanket administrative leave for eligible employees due to the COVID-19 crisis. All approved. Motion carried.

The county budget as it relates to COVID-19 was discussed. The timeline for the budget as it relates to Senate Bill 2 remain in place. The county does qualify for a disaster exception that allows the county tax rate to exceed the 3.5% rate as set by Senate Bill 2 to help with the COVID-19 crisis. Application for deferral of payment of ad valorem taxes may be obtained from the Comanche Central Appraisal District Office.

The Comanche County Courthouse offices remain closed except for appointment only thru April 30, 2020. Transactions are encouraged on line or by mail. Transactions with the Comanche Assessor Collector may be deposited in a drop box at the door to the Tax Office. These restriction could change upon orders from the Governor after the April 30, 2020 date.

Judge Davis is encourage everyone to complete their 2020 Census. Response rate for the Comanche region is 37.4% complete, state response is 41.1% complete and national response is 45.7% complete. It is important to count everyone. This information determines what benefits Comanche may be eligible for.

The law firm of McCreary, Veselka, Bragg & Allen, P.C., Comanche County's Tax Attorneys informed Judge Davis of their ongoing obligation to collect delinquent taxes for Comanche County. The firm is striving to balance their activities on behalf of the county by modifying and even temporarily suspending some collection activities due to circumstances many tax payers are experiencing with the impact of the Coronavirus. Notices have gone out to each taxpayer who owes delinquent taxes reminding them their taxes are still due and payment may be made by depositing in the mail, pay online or deposit it in the dropbox at the tax office in the Courthouse.

Jo Ann Hohertz, Chief Appraiser, Comanche Central Appraisal District, sent a letter to Judge Davis giving timelines for due dates for property appraisals as January 1 each year. Notices of Appraised values are sent to property owners in April and property owners have a 30 day window to file a protest or talk to the district informally concerning their appraised value. Hohertz expressed her concern related to the current economic status of the county related to the Covid-19 pandemic and property re-appraisals and protest. Last year there were 550 informal inquiries

