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County Opposes LCRA Project

Continued from front page

"Sometimes I think you start with your foot down," Helmcamp said.

Wessels also said a \$43 million study of the feasibility of the project should have addressed some of those issues impacting the county.

Helmcamp said he had heard that LCRA officials had agreed to abide in Colorado County to rules of neighboring water conservation districts in pumping groundwater.

A proposal for a groundwater conservation district in Colorado County was voted down in 2002 by a margin of 651 votes.

But Helmcamp said he noted that there was no reference to that type of agreement in Beal's letter, which stated: "LCRA commits to adhere to all rules of the local ground water districts to the extent ground water districts exist."

Contacted after the meeting, a spokesman for LCRA, Robert Cullick, said that LCRA, in areas not covered by groundwater districts, would implement practices, such as spacing wells, that were similar to those in other counties.

"Groundwater district rules vary from county to county, and in areas where there are no districts, we would try to operate in a way that is generally consistent with neighboring counties that have districts," Cullick said.

The commissioners heard from Richard Heffley of Columbus, who is part of a group that

has organized in opposition to the project.

"I look to you to be concerned about our property rights," Heffley told commissioners.

He referred to the possibility of a 10,000 acre reservoir as a "big wart" on the county.

Heffley said he felt that LCRA wants groundwater from Colorado County.

He also said that the San Antonio area will not need water until 2040.

In answer to a question, Cullick said he was not aware of the accuracy of the Year 2040 figure.

Heffley also said the question should be asked: "What's in it for Colorado County?" He said the answer is that there is nothing in the proposed project for Colorado County.

"Do your vote and tell them no," he said.

He also urged Gertson, who acknowledged his wife works for LCRA, to vote for the resolution.

After the meeting, Gertson said he was offended by the implication that his wife's employment with LCRA would affect his vote on the issue.

The chief appraiser for the Colorado Appraisal District, Billy

Youens, also addressed commissioners about the project.

"If you're satisfied with the letter, you're satisfied with very little," he said.

Youens said he also had been told that plans by LCRA to drill up to 70 wells in the range of 1,000 feet deep, had been announced in Austin.

"Stand tough now," he urged the commissioners.

Cullick said that drilling of 70 wells is projected in the plan to provide groundwater for agriculture use in times of drought. He said the wells would be scattered in the Rice producing counties of Colorado, Wharton and Matagorda.

He noted that the LCRA owns 1,000 miles of canals that are used for Rice irrigation in the three counties.

He said he understood approximately half of the Rice currently grown in the three counties is irrigated by wells.

Jamison said that regardless of the LCRA-San Antonio water plan, Houston and San Antonio will be looking for water.

"I would rather deal with the LCRA than San Antonio or Houston," he said.

County Discusses Courthouse Work

Continued from front page

a two-year term on the Texana Mental Health Mental Retardation Board.

—Agreed not to adopt a ban on outdoor burning because of recent rains in the county.

—Set the pay scale of election judges and clerks at \$7 per hour.

—Agreed to renewal of an agreement for indigent health services with the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston.

—Agreed to a service agreement for maintenance of county computers for \$9,000 a year, to provide 100 hours of service. The agreement is with Tek-Com Technologies Inc. of Bellville.

—Received an update from the Colorado County 4-H Council on work of the 197 members of the nine 4-H clubs in the county.

—Agreed to leave the county road and bridge fee at \$10 for reach vehicles registered in the county.

—Readopted tax abatement guidelines and application procedures for new or expanding businesses.

—Approved awarding a bid for pest control for county building to Double C pest control for a year for \$3,924.

NEWSBRIEFS

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p.m. Advance tickets are \$25; at the door \$30; 12 and under, \$10. Door prizes will be given and there will be a live and silent auction. Corporate tables are available for \$400. For more information call Dwight Mazac at 979-732-5786 or 732-5635 or Todd Radke at 732-0486.

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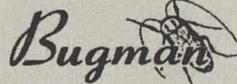
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County Begins Talks For New Budget

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allow the staffing of the dispatch office with two individuals at all times.

Commissioners also discussed replacing an additional patrol car next year for an additional \$24,000. That would bring the total of replacement cars to five.

Budgeting of \$50,000 to begin making electronic copies of records in the sheriff's department was also discussed.

Kana said the total budget for the sheriff is projected at \$1,646,750, an increase of \$221,000.

Commissioners also discussed the budget for Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

Kana noted that the service should approach \$700,000 in fees collected this year. Through June, the figure was \$382,000.

In 2005, the total for the year in fees collected was \$394,000.

Commissioners discussed adding a full-time paramedic to the budget for an additional \$30,000. Currently there are three full-time paramedics budgeted.

The budget also includes increases of \$36,000 for overtime and \$60,000 for billing services.

The total increases the county is considering for EMS amount to \$212,700, Kana said.

That would bring the EMS budget to \$1,001,825.

In answer to a question, EMS Director Chuck Rogers said EMS was starting up a first-responder unit in Sheridan to provide first aid while an ambulance is enroute.

He said he felt the training of

first responders would help in cutting the time for aid to be given to an injured person.

Commissioners also discussed briefly precinct road budgets.

Precinct budget requests were \$695,500 for Precinct 1; \$832,500 for Precinct 2; \$798,800 for Precinct 3 and \$598,600 for Precinct 4.

Kana said it might be possible to provide some additional funds when the commissioners divide taxes between the general fund and the road and bridge funds.

Last year \$50,000 was earmarked for each precinct by that method.

Kana noted that she expected that the county would see an increased income due to higher property taxes in the range of \$500,000.

Preliminary estimates show an increase in property values in the county of 13.1 percent or \$164.6 million.

At the current tax rate that would generate \$700,000 in additional income.

But Kana noted that the county could face a tax rollback election if it increased tax revenues more than 8 percent over the previous year.

County Judge Al Jamison said earlier he felt there will be a slight decrease in the current tax rate of 42.758 cents per \$100 valuation.

Jamison also said he was also proud of efforts made by county department heads and employees to keep expenses down.

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