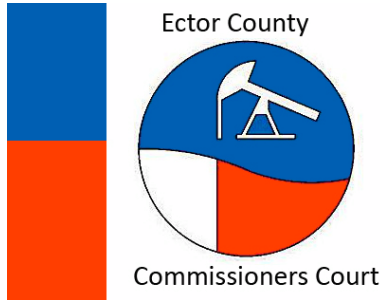




Commissioners approve pretrial prevention budget

BY NATHANIEL MILLER

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Confusion over the Pretrial Intervention Budget was cleared up enough before Tuesday's Ector County Commissioners' meeting to allow the previously denied agenda item to finally pass in a unanimous vote.

County Judge Susan Redford said that when the budget was first presented [during the July 25 commissioners' meeting](#), commissioners and the county judges had questions about what offenses would be allowed through the program and which wouldn't. The commissioners then denied the budget.

Since that meeting, County Attorney Cindy Weir-Nutter wrote a detailed budget and met with each individual commissioner and Judges Redford, Jim Bobo and Mark Owens to go over what the pretrial program would include, from budgets to newly hired personnel.

"I'm excited to provide some relief to the jail," Weir-Nutter said during the meeting. "I think you'll be very pleased."

The program, with assistance from the Ector County Attorney's Office, aims to helping first-time offenders avoid jail time by offering them an agreement in which they pay a \$500 administration fee, six months of community supervision and 40 hours of community service.

People who commit misdemeanor offenses of theft, possession of marijuana, traffic and driving offenses, public intoxication and prohibited weapons could participate. Assault, violation of protective orders and selling or furnishing alcohol or tobacco to a minor are some offenses not allowed through the program.

Weir-Nutter and Redford said the program was to be completely self-sustaining as the administration fees would pay for the program. Five new positions in the County Attorney's office, including a Pretrial Intervention Officer, an Intake Attorney, an Investigator, and two legal secretaries would be hired to overlook the program.

Redford said no money from the County's general fund is used to start the program and funds from the pretrial special fund were used as the start up money.

During the commissioner's meeting, Redford warned that the program would not be getting money from the general fund and told Weir-Nutter she wanted to see a report at the end of each month to see how the program was doing.

"Remember, if there is nothing in the budget, the people you hired will not have a job," Redford said.

Another item on the agenda that caused some discussion was offering a contract to TelResources, Inc., which would be used to see how the County could save money with their phone services.

Commissioner Dale Childers said he and a company representative talked about a 50 percent cost savings, meaning the county would pay the service 50 percent of whatever Ector County saved. However,

Commissioner Greg Simmons said he and the representative talked about a 35 percent cost-savings agreement.

After some discussion amongst themselves, Childers and Simmons agreed on offering TelResources a contract of 40 percent before the court approved the motion.

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IN OTHER ACTION, COMMISSIONERS:

- Approved a proposed order exercising local option to tax goods-in-transit personal property that is otherwise exempt under Texas Tax Code Section 11.253.
- Recognized Shawnte Clawson for the 2011 ESP Meritorious Service Award on behalf of the District 6 Epsilon Sigma Phi.
- Approved the Purchasing Cooperative Interlocal Agreement with Lubbock County.
- Approved the contract of the third-party health and dental claims administrator.

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