

SPOTLIGHT

Texas is made up of 254 counties, each with a team of locally elected and appointed county officials serving their community. Polk County's elected offices include a County Judge and four Road & Bridge Commissioners that make up the Commissioners Court, the County Court at Law Judge, four Justices of the Peace, four Constables, a County Clerk, District Clerk, District Attorney, Treasurer, Tax Assessor-Collector and Sheriff.

There is no hierarchy in county government, so the only boss of these elected officials is ***You, the People.***

There are two District Court systems that serve Polk County, the 258th and the 411th Courts, which are responsible for appointing our County Auditor. The County Judge appoints the Emergency Management Coordinator, and all other officials are appointed by the Commissioners Court to run various county departments. These include Aging Services Director, Environmental Enforcement Officer, Fire Marshal, Grant & Contract Coordinator, Human Resources Manager, IT & Systems Administrator, Maintenance Superintendent, Museum Curator, Permits/Inspections Supervisor, Social Services Director and Veterans Services Officer. Learn more about your local offices by reading this latest installment of

Spotlight on Polk County:

Grants & Contracts

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Polk County

SPOTLIGHT ON POLK COUNTY: Grants & Contracts Coordinator Jessica Hutchins

The Grant and Contract Coordinator is fairly new to Polk County. The position was created in November 2017 as the Commissioners Court found it to be advantageous to have one department keeping track of all the County's grants and contracts. The Coordinator works hand-in-hand with the County Judge's Office and Commissioners Court to help ensure the business of the county stays up to date.

On the grant side, the Coordinator helps identify and develop viable projects, programs and partnerships to meet the priorities and goals of the County and State; assesses departmental program needs; and identifies funding sources and ensures that materials are added to the grants database and Commissioners Court Agenda. The Coordinator provides technical assistance by advising Commissioners Court, County departments and other entities of the funding opportunities that are available; establishes effective networks with representatives from other jurisdictions, state agencies and funding agencies; coordinates and oversees the development of selected grant proposals; instructs staff and administrators regarding funding guidelines; facilitates program planning; develops evaluation designs and procedures; and writes and edits portions of grant applications for County departments.

The majority of grant funding that is currently available to Polk County includes state funded grants from the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) and the General Land Office (GLO). These Agencies primarily focus on funding projects that benefit individuals who have a low to moderate income and typically facilitate improvements to roads, bridges, water/sewage, drainage and housing. Polk County currently has one Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from TDA to help the Dallardsville-Segno Water Supply Corp replace and repair water storage tanks. We also have two ongoing projects funded by GLO to assist in recovery from Hurricane Harvey, including an infrastructure project on Taylor Lake Road and River Road to harden the roads and prevent them from washing away, and a Buyout Program which targets homes in Holiday Lake Estates, Siesta Country #3-5 and Taylor Lake Estates to return areas that frequently flood to green spaces. The people that participate in the Buyout Program will receive assistance in finding a new home in a safer location that meets the State of Texas' requirements. Both projects are in Precinct 1, which sustained the majority of the damage in Polk County from Hurricane Harvey.

On the contract side, the department develops, coordinates, and monitors contract activities for Polk County and serves in a liaison capacity between departmental staff, providers and the agencies involved in the contract development and approval process. Establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with County officials, departmental administrators, and representatives of contracted agencies to secure cooperation in the development of procedures and resolution of contract problems is a major aspect of the work. County contracts range from day-to-day business contracts to Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with local jurisdictions, school districts and volunteer fire departments. MOUs allow the County to help and receive help from all the localities during a time of need, and are important for the safety and security of the entire region when a disaster occurs. It is the Grant and Contract Coordinator's responsibility to ensure all contracts are regularly reviewed so that they are always up to date and beneficial to the County.