

COLORADO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
NOTICE OF OPEN MEETING

DATE OF MEETING: August 9, 2024 – 9:00 A.M.
BUILDING: Colorado County Courthouse, County Courtroom
STREET LOCATION: 400 Spring Street
CITY OF LOCATION: Columbus, Texas 78934

Pursuant to the authority granted under Government Code, Chapter 551, the Commissioners Court may convene in a closed meeting to discuss, deliberate and take action on any of the agenda items listed below and may use a telephone conference call, video conference call, or communications over the Internet to conduct a public consultation with its attorney in an open meeting of the governmental body or a private consultation with its attorney in a closed meeting of the governmental body. Immediately before any closed meeting, the specific section or sections of Government Code, Chapter 551, which provides statutory authority, will be announced.

On this the 9th day of August 2024, the Commissioners Court of Colorado County, Texas met in Special Session at 9:00 A.M., in their regular meeting place at the Colorado County Courthouse, County Courtroom, 400 Spring Street, in the City of Columbus, Texas.

The Following Members were present to wit:

Honorable Ty Prause	County Judge
Honorable Doug Wessels	Commissioner Precinct #1
Honorable Ryan Brandt	Commissioner Precinct #2
Honorable Keith Neuendorff	Commissioner Precinct #3
Honorable Darrell Gertson	Commissioner Precinct #4
By: Michelle Kollmann	Deputy Clerk

The Honorable Kimberly Menke, County Clerk was unable to attend.

The County Judge Ty Prause called the meeting to order at 9:25 A.M.

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DELIBERATE AND CONSIDER ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- __1. Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag and the Texas Flag.

Judge Prause led the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag and the Texas Flag.

- __2. Agenda as posted.

**Motion by Commissioner Wessels to approve the agenda as posted; seconded by
Commissioner Neuendorff; 5 ayes 0 nays; motion carried; it was so ordered.**

(See Attachment)

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FILED FOR RECORD
COLORADO COUNTY, TX

2024 AUG -6 AM 8:44

KIMBERLY MENNE
COUNTY CLERK

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DELIBERATE AND CONSIDER ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- 1. Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag and the Texas Flag.
- 2. Agenda as posted.
- 3. Budget Workshop: Colorado County FY 2025 proposed draft budget.
- 4. Announcements (without discussion and no action) by elected officials/department heads. (Types of Announcements: Events, Road Conditions, Weather Occurrences, Important Dates, Vacancies in Offices or Positions, Accomplishments of Individuals, and Notices)
- 5. Adjourn.

CERTIFICATION

NAME: Ty Prause
TITLE: Colorado County Judge
SIGNATURE OF CERTIFYING OFFICIAL:
DATE: August 6, 2024
TELEPHONE NUMBER: (979) 732-2604
FAX NUMBER: (979) 732-9389



The Colorado County Courthouse is wheelchair accessible and accessible parking spaces are available.

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__3. Budget Workshop: Colorado County FY 2025 proposed draft budget.

Judge Prause opened the workshop by stating there are no action items today.

The 2024 Tax Rate Calculation Worksheet was shared with the audience via slides.

Judge Prause stated the county had the benefit of Connie Rhodes to help train on preparing the tax worksheet. It is much more than plugging in numbers.

Per Judge Prause the voter approval rate is 0.464913.

Michelle Lowrance explained that the tax levy is consistent revenue with fee, fines, and sales tax being other revenue makers. She went on to say for every \$1 in wages it costs approximately \$1.40 to pay an employee (including benefits etc.). Without adding any new positions, \$700,000 would need to be added to cover the 5% increase for employees. If new positions (grant writer, fire marshal, etc.) are added on top of the 5% increase, it will take the new amount from CAD. She also said she expects sales tax to increase unless a recession happens and people stop spending. Sales tax revenue has repeatedly been higher than budgeted but is always paid two months later. Ms. Lowrance explained that for 2024 sales tax and interest are over budget, but fees are down. She went on to say the county is not underbudget anywhere and some departments are over at the half year mark. Commissioner Wessels questioned whether the precincts budget would stay the same or see an increase. Judge Prause reminded the court they have the ability to move money from the general fund to road and bridge by line-item transfer if needed. He also stated he is not worried or concerned because history shows the court has moved money as needed in the past.

Ms. Lowrance said it is often encouraged to pay for routine recurrent expenses out of a consistent revenue stream. Payroll, benefits, and insurance should come from this consistent revenue stream. Judge Prause reminded the court that the 5% increase is for everyone and the county needs to keep good employees.

Commissioner Wessels suggested taking \$100,000 out of road and bridge to cover the increase for employees. Four hands in agreement to take \$25,000 out of each precinct to help cover the employee increase.

Sheriff Elect Justin Lindemann addressed the court and explained he has been working tirelessly on figuring out positions and pay based on rank. He said with the 5% increase the Sheriff's Office can be competitive with surrounding counties. He plans to use the 5%

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increase in his budget and distribute it appropriately through the different positions. He is also requesting an additional deputy and a grant writer. He agrees to the grant writer position to help obtain additional funds for the Sheriff's Department.

The next item discussed was the fire departments. Judge Prause suggested using the formula Fayette County uses to determine how much each department should receive. It was discussed disbursing the funds twice a year based on departments' rosters, miles, and call numbers in hopes an ESD will be formed eventually. Commissioner Wessels stated he felt Garwood Fire Department should receive more funds because they have an ambulance service. It was agreed to use \$250,00 and use a formula to determine an amount for each department.

An agreement was also made to keep the budget for Youth and Family Services and WCJC (Meals on Wheels) the same, increase the Boys and Girls Club by \$250, and increase the Fire Fighters Association to \$4,000.

Michael Furrh discussed the budget for EMS. He acknowledged that he would be over budget for personnel this year. He is looking at reworking the pay scale and pay according to a ranking system. He stated he is doing his due diligence in bringing in revenue. In September 2022 when he started back with the county EMS was making less than one million dollars. Now, two years later, they are bringing in over two million dollars. He explained there has been an increase in calls and several times they have gone to a zero status (meaning there are no available ambulances). He would like to add a paramedic position and mentioned that looking towards the future, talks would be needed about expanding into Frelsburg and Sheridan. An agreement was made to add \$96,000 for a new position and \$54,000 for incentive pay to the EMS budget.

Judge Prause said in his opinion, a grant writer should be hired as soon as possible.

Michelle Lowrance said \$70,000 was in the proposed 2025 budget for this position.

Chuck Rogers with the Office of Emergency Management spoke on his budget request. He would like to add a part-time position to handle radios. He stated he is aware of the 5% increase, but some positions never had a starting point in pay, and he feels they should. He is asking for a pay increase due to what other counties pay and his qualifications and certifications. Mr. Rogers would also like an increase to his communication line item as

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well as radio repair maintenance line item. It was agreed to raise the salary to \$58,000. It was also agreed to pay Mr. Rogers and an additional \$6,000 to take over as airport manager.

- __4. Announcements (without discussion and no action) by elected officials/department heads. (Types of Announcements: Events, Road Conditions, Weather Occurrences, Important Dates, Vacancies in Offices or Positions, Accomplishments of Individuals, and Notices)**

Commissioner Brandt apologized for his tardiness.

Commissioner Gertson announced that the concrete has been poured at Station 3. There are still water issues with the septic, but things are moving along.

Michael Furrh said he appreciated Commissioner Gertson and his crew for the work that has been done on Station 3. They are working on getting electricity and will be ordering furniture soon.

Chuck Rogers announced that the installation of new radios will begin in about two weeks. He's preparing for the GLO to release money so work on the tower project can begin. It's slow moving on that project.

- __5. Adjourn.**

Motion by Judge Prause to adjourn at 12:39 P.M.; seconded by Commissioner Neuendorff; 5 ayes 0 nays; motion carried; it was so ordered.

An audio recording of this meeting of August 9, 2024 is available in the County Clerk's Office.

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**Minutes were taken and prepared by Kimberly Menke, County Clerk on the
9th day of August 2024 with Judge Ty Prause presiding.**

**I, KIMBERLY MENKE, COUNTY CLERK AND EX-OFFICIO OF THE
COMMISSIONERS COURT IN AND FOR COLORADO COUNTY, TEXAS do hereby
certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the
Commissioner Court in session on the 9th day of August 2024.**

Given under my hand and official seal of office this date August 9, 2024.



