



EL PASO COUNTY

Commissioner
David Stout
Precinct 2

Newsletter - Volume 4 - Issue 2 - 2018



Updates on Ascarate Park

New Boat at Ascarate Park

On April 9, the Commissioners Court approved the purchase of an Aquatic Vegetation Removal Workboat for Ascarate Park. The \$73,000 investment is one that I supported as this new boat will help keep the lake at Ascarate Park clean. In the past, the park lake has been negatively affected by the spread of golden algae, which severely impacted the fish.

This new boat will help maintain the lake and address some of the issues with the spread of golden algae.

I am happy to announce that the boat arrived in mid-June. Parks staff spent a week training on how to operate the boat, and cleaning of the lake has already begun.

Analysis of Ascarate Golf Course Presented at Commissioners Court

Recently, at a Commissioners Court Special Meeting, we received a presentation regarding an analysis of the Ascarate Park Golf Course operations from our Budget department.

A couple of key takeaways from the presentation included a breakdown of revenue and expenditures. The highest revenue areas in FY17 were the green fees and golf cart rentals. Meanwhile, the highest expenditures were related to salaries and benefits, as well as the water bill.

The presentation compared Ascarate's Golf Course to Butterfield Trail Golf Club and Painted Dunes Desert Golf Course and included detailed breakdowns of the various characteristics of each course.

A couple of recommendations of this presentation included the need to review a master plan, improve marketing, revisit fee schedule, evaluated food vendor contract, increase tournaments and pro shop sales. The presentation also included recommendations to manage expenditures by using reclaimed water and restructuring the workforce.

Ultimately, the Ascarate Park Golf Course is provided to the public as a quality of life investment. Most public golf courses are not intended, nor do they make a profit. We aim to continue improving the park and golf course in order for residents to enjoy and use a family friendly environment.

Moms on Board Proposes an “All Needs Park” at Ascarate

On June 25, a local nonprofit called Moms on Board made a presentation to the Commissioners Court about installing and building an “all needs park” at Ascarate Park.

All needs parks have equipment tailored to be made accessible to all members of our community, including those who live with mental health illness, autism, IDD, and the disabled.

This would lead to the development of physical and cognitive growth of children. The park would serve regional counties and people in those counties, especially those visiting El Paso to see specialized doctors.

Some ideas for park include a train, all-inclusive playgrounds, huts, see saws, open play areas for those in wheelchairs, the use of bright colors, mini golf, a splash pad, interactive sculptures, paddle boats, exercise equipment including for those in wheelchairs, mini village, mini racetrack, sensory tunnels geared to children with autism, slope slide, and mini baseball field.

The County would maintain the park and possibly work with community groups to help. Moms on Board is committed to raise funds for the equipment and though we don't have a set timeline, we hope to have the project ready for groundbreaking within a year.

This is a goal I fully support, and it appears that the other members of the Commissioners Court support as well. Our staff has been directed to begin work with Moms on Board to start working on an agreement to keep moving forward. There will also be opportunities for public input as this project is rolled out. We will advise the public when these opportunities arise.



Strategic Planning Priorities



Recently, the Commissioners Court held a strategic planning meeting. This was in addition to one we held back in January to offer updates to our strategic plan. There were a number of issues we discussed and considered, including:

Census 2020: We have decided to play a larger role for the upcoming Census. In particular, we want to ensure that as many County residents are counted. Census figures help us secure state and federal grant dollars, so we must make sure that the count is as accurate as possible.

We plan on working with a number of stakeholders over the next two years to create Complete Count Committees to make sure disenfranchised and hard to reach residents are counted in the census.

I volunteered my office to help work on this important item over the course of the next couple of years to participate in important meetings and efforts to increase census participation.

Ultimately, both the County and City will have to consider allocating funds to make this work, so that is something that we will consider during our current budget talks, as well as for Fiscal Year 2020.

We're also very concerned about the fact that the federal government wants to include a question asking about citizenship and immigration status because it may push many residents away from participating. In order to ensure all residents are counted, the County has taken legal action and joined a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Strategic Planning Priorities (Continued)

I am very proud that El Paso County was among the first in Texas to join the state of New York as a plaintiff in their lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Commerce as it relates to the upcoming 2020 Census.

It is unfortunate that the Trump Administration is seeking to place a new question on the census asking about citizenship. This lawsuit will challenge the constitutionality of that question as well as the manner in which it is being added. This action was taken arbitrarily and capriciously and is being done without proper testing.

An undercount in El Paso County would negatively impact our community and taxpayers as we receive state and federal grant dollars which are tied to our population. Some consequences of that would result in the County not having the necessary resources to pay for services we need and could result in higher tax rates.

An undercount would also negatively impact the redistricting of County, State, and Federal representative districts and maps. Ultimately, our decision to take part in this lawsuit is about protecting our taxpayers.

Moving forward, my office will also be highly involved in the efforts related to the 2020 Census. My staff has begun meeting with Census staff in the region as a joint-collaborative effort to get the word out about the Census and encourage residents in the area to participate.

Security upgrades: We discussed security upgrades at the County in light of an assault last year and smokers smoking in our parking lots and garages. Additional security would include the possibility of hiring one more employee with the Sheriff's Office. This is an item we agreed would be a management and budget item to be discussed very soon.

Immigrant services: Another item we discussed that is a priority of mine is the possibility of creating an immigrant services department or contributing funds to organizations in the community which help immigrants.

We were given broad guidance from our attorneys who would need to conduct more research depending on what exactly we decide to do.

Ultimately, we can fund services that help children, despite immigration status. Anything else would require more legal work and research.

Staff will do research and offer a job description at first to allow us to create a position in our jail that will help detained migrants.

Regional and Cross Border Collaboration



On April 18-19, 2018, elected officials, top administration and key staff members convened over the course of two days for the U.S.-Mexico Border Leaders Summit with the purpose of increasing communications among leaders in the Paso del Norte region. This event provided the opportunity for leaders from El Paso, Texas, Juarez, Chihuahua and Las Cruces, New Mexico to share knowledge and information and build relationships with counterparts on both sides of the border.

This convening, planned by my office, with the assistance of the Municipalidad de Ciudad Juarez, The Borderplex Alliance, The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, The El Paso Community Foundation, Doña Ana County Commissioners Isabella Solis and Ramon Gonzalez, and El Paso City Representative Peter Svarzbein, was the second in a two-day event put on in conjunction with The Hunt Institute for Global Competitiveness' Local Government Forum.

The Local Government Forum, which took place at the University of Texas at El Paso, provided the opportunity for leaders to hear a presentation that outlined a comparative analysis of local governments in Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua. The event also included panel discussions with elected officials and administrators from city, county, and state governments, to allow attendees to gain a more practical understanding of ways each government in our region compares and contrasts.

The following day, the U.S.-Mexico Border Leaders Summit took place in Ciudad Juarez and included presentations by speakers such as Alejandra de la Vega Foster and Jorge Vazquez Salazar on how local, state, and federal government works in Ciudad Juarez.

Participants of the two day events ranged from city managers to elected officials to department heads, from all three states. After each of the presentations, local leaders then sat down in breakout sessions to discuss further collaboration on issues like economic development, healthcare, and transportation infrastructure planning.

I am very proud of all of the work that went into making this exchange happen, because I believe it comes at a time that it is most needed. Now, more than ever, there is a need for our region to work together and bridge gaps between our communities by maintaining close communication. There are issues on all levels of government that impact our region, and facing those issues as a united front can only be beneficial to the area.

After the event, my staff compiled a report summarizing the results from the conference along with follow up research related to creating a bi-national board that would continue to work on the issues brought up at the summit. Since then, my staff has been giving a presentation to the various governing bodies in the region in order to pitch the idea of creating this board.

As my staff presents to the governing bodies, we are asking each body to consider contributing a portion of about \$150,000 to create and staff the board and asking them to consider discussing this idea further during their FY19 budget cycles. So far, my staff has presented to the City of Las Cruces, Doña Ana County Commissioners Court and our own El Paso County Commissioners Court.

I strongly believe this bi-national board will be beneficial, because members will have the opportunity to work together on issues such as economic development, transportation, healthcare, border enforcement and the environment and devise planning and problem solving processes that will allow the Paso del Norte region to progress as exactly that, a region.



Photos from U.S.-Mexico Border Leaders Summit





Detention of Migrants at El Paso County Jail



During a special meeting on June 28, Commissioner Vince Perez posted an item to discuss the County ending its contract with the U.S. Marshals to detain federal inmates. This was specifically related to the detention of immigrants held in our facilities.

While I do not agree with the policy of jailing people for such minor infractions, just because we take immigrants out of our jail doesn't mean they will be set free.

Last year, my staff and I spoke to numerous entities which help immigrants locally, and this year we did the same. Those included the U.S. Federal Public Defender, Border Network for Human Rights, and Hope Border Institute. The overwhelming response we received was that we would be creating further hardships for these people as they go through the deportation process.

The major concerns were that if they are sent away, immigrants:

- Would be housed in other jails that may have records of terrible conditions, abuse, and no oversight;
- Would be separated from their families because of the distance and dangers of travelling outside of El Paso to visit them;
- Would no longer have access to the community based services they are receiving now in El Paso;
- Legal representation would suffer because they would be further away from the public defenders and the Mexican Consulate that provides such assistance to its nationals.

I strongly urged the Commissioners Court to take these points into account as we move forward with any decision we make in regards to this issue. We don't want to be complicit with what is going on with the Trump Administration, but I think the moral high road here is to make sure we aren't making things more difficult for immigrants by being the cause of further family separation and the loss of services that are so important for their wellbeing.

Recent Travel to Conferences

I recently traveled to three different national conferences. They were for Local Progress, the National Association of Counties (NACo), and the Texas County & District Retirement System (TCDRS).

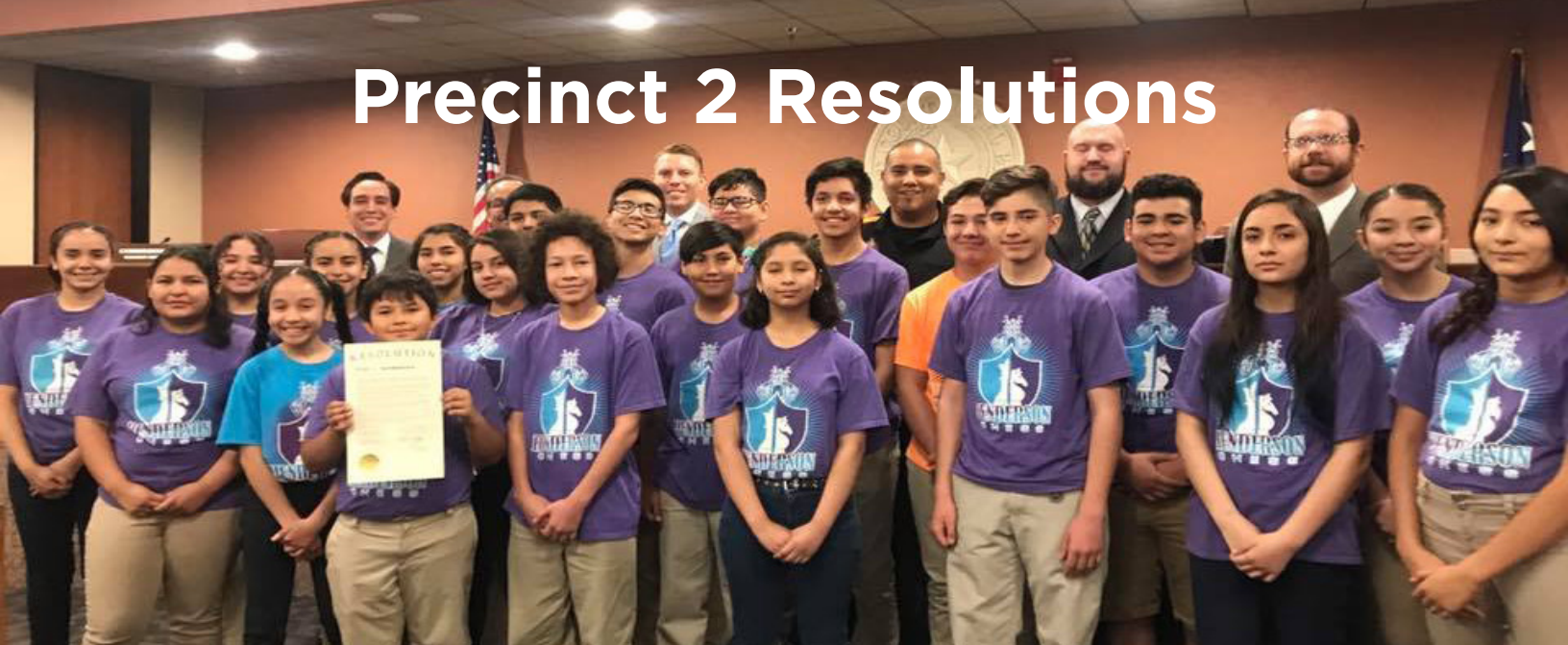
The Local Progress Convening was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota and had extensive programming highlighting best practices and examples of successful progressive policies taking root in cities, towns, and counties across the country. We will also celebrate ongoing efforts to defend and protect our communities in the fight against policies that are threatening our people, especially those that are fueled by hate, xenophobia, and racism.

The NACo Annual Conference & Exposition in Nashville, Tennessee is the only meeting that draws a cross section of elected officials and county staff from across the country. Attendees from rural and urban counties, large and small budgets and staff – all come together to shape NACo's federal policy agenda, learn, network and share best practices all aimed to help improve residents' lives and the efficiency of county government.

In addition, I also serve on NACo's important Health Steering Subcommittee. I was very proud to participate and elevate El Paso County's voice and perspective during this important meeting.



Precinct 2 Resolutions



Unions

Fifty years after Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, where he marched in support of city sanitation workers on strike to demand their union be recognized, the County Judge and Commissioners Court passed a resolution supporting the freedom of all employees to exercise their rights to a voice and dignity through joining together in a union. The Commissioners Court also acknowledged that the upcoming Janus v. AFSCME Supreme Court case will have a monumental impact on the residents of our community and urged the Supreme Court to consider the legacy of Dr. King and the benefits created by workers organizing in rendering its decision.

I believe that all families should have the means to thrive and that the working people who make our community run should have good jobs. People today across the country and in our community struggle for basic freedoms, such as freedom from discrimination, from degrading work conditions, and to come together in unions to improve their place of work. I supported this resolution because I believe being able to come together in unions gives people, especially women and people of color, a powerful voice.

Global Youth Service Day

Even though today's youth are tomorrow's leaders and our hope for the future, not all youth are provided with the opportunity to get involved or give their time in their community. Due to this fact, the Juvenile Justice Center provided and enhanced youth's community service learning involvement by participating in the Global Youth Service Day. This project involved literacy and education around Ascarate Park and the Juvenile Justice Center. For these reasons, the El Paso County Judge and Commissioners Court set April 20 and 21 of 2018 to be known as "Global Youth Service Days."

National Recognition

Our community is grateful to have various programs that allow for citizens to engage with, improve, and strengthen their community. This year the City of El Paso awarded over \$80,000 to support the activities of such programs like the City of El Paso Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, the City of El Paso Foster Grandparent Program, and Centro De Salud Familiar La Fe's Senior Companion Program. These programs have a combined average of 497,187 volunteer service hours annually. To recognize the impact programs like these have on our community, the El Paso County Judge and Commissioners Court passed a resolution setting April 3, 2018 as "National Recognition Day."

Jury Appreciation Week

I believe that the right to a trial by a jury of your peers is one of the core values of United States citizenship and having the privilege to serve as a juror is as fundamental to our democracy as the right to vote. The courts depend upon its citizens to serve as jurors and views this service as indispensable to the judicial system. Because of this, all citizens should be encouraged to respond when summoned for jury service and the court system should show appreciation for the jury system, more specifically the thousands of citizens who annually give their time and talents to serve on juries.

On April 30, 2018, the El Paso County Judge and the Commissioners Court passed a resolution showing they are committed to follow goals on these matters, including educating the public about jury duty and its importance, applauding the efforts of jurors who fulfill their civic duty, ensuring that the responsibility of jury services is shared fairly by supporting employees who are called upon to serve as jurors, ensuring that all jurors are treated with respect, and providing jurors with tools that will assist their decision making. The resolution also designated May 1 – 4, 2018 as “Jury Appreciation Week.”

Mental Health Awareness

On May 7, 2018, the County Judge and Commissioners Court recognized the month of May 2018 as “National Mental Health Awareness Month.” The El Paso County recognizes mental health as a vital part of overall health and well-being of individuals and families. Several affiliations and health groups recognize that with the elimination of stigma and negative biases associated with mental illness persons affected with mental health conditions experience resiliency, recovery, and wellness. We need to work to provide advocacy, education, support and public awareness so that all affected by mental health conditions can build better lives. It is my belief that all individuals in the County of El Paso deserve to have the knowledge and skills to understand mental illness in order to cope, seek treatment, recover, and maximize their health and quality of life. I will work so that policies that eliminate gaps in services, improve community outreach and engagement, reduce barriers to access, and ensure culturally competent care are developed, implemented, and advocated for.

Henderson Middle School Chess Team

The Henderson Middle School chess team recently continued their winning streak with team and individual titles at the United States Chess Federation’s National Junior High Championship in Atlanta, Georgia. Competing against peers from across the nation, player from Henderson Middle School brought home two first place team national awards and first place individual awards. Members Saul Ramirez, Alessandra Ruiz, and Sebastian Gonzalez won first place titles in three different categories while players Juan Ramirez, Carlos Palomino, Aime Argandona, and Devante Aguirre earned national rankings as well.

Since the team’s creation in 2013, chess players have honorably represented our community, having competed each year in state and national competitions. They have brought home eight state titles and four national titles in addition to five first place trophies. The El Paso County is proud to be represented by such a team that has demonstrated high mental dexterity as they compete across the state and country. For their efforts, the El Paso County Judge and Commissioners Court recognized the great accomplishments of the Henderson Middle School and wishes them further successes in their future.

Stout in the News

Avala Condado uso de juegos pirotécnicos, El Diario, (6-19-18)

Tent city at Marcelino Serna Port of Entry in Tornillo called disservice to its namesake, El Paso Times, (6-19-18)

Ganancias de UMC aumentan y hospital infantil sigue en números rojos, Univision, (6-4-18)

Será en Ascárate la fiesta de Independencia, El Diario, (5-24-18)

Fiesta de independencia en el parque Ascarate, Univision, (5-21-18)

Tendrá 18 pisos Torre WestStar, El Diario, 5-15-18

Dan luz verde a torre de 18 pisos, El Diario, (5-15-18)

County, local hotels facing loss in revenue after cancellation of Sun City Music Festival, KVIA, (5-11-18)

Se une la Ciudad a litigio vs pregunta de ciudadanía en Censo 2020, El Diario, (5-7-18)

Some EP County Commissioners want to address sprawl to unincorporated areas, CBS 4, (4-20-18)

Unen fuerzas Chihuahua, Texas y Nuevo México, El Diario, (4-20-18)

El Paso County Commissioner David Stout says state is overreaching into local affairs, El Paso Times, (3-31-18)

Move over chicken wire, El Paso County buys \$73K boat to rid Ascarate Lake of algae, El Paso Times, (4-10-18)



Gallery



Commissioner Stout at a groundbreaking ceremony for a new USDA Wastewater project in the Square Dance area



Commissioner Stout with Nellie Mendoza (NAMI) and Representative Joe Moody



El Paso County Law Enforcement Wall Dedication Ceremony



Commissioner Stout at Opening Ceremony for Ciudad Juarez Feria (Fair)



Commisisoner Stout at Camino Real Ysleta Mission



Commissioner Stout recognized for providing internships to SISD students with disabilities



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