



Rockdale County Board of Commissioners Summarization: **April 26, 2011 Work and Voting Sessions**

Board of Commissioners Receive Legislative Update, Appoint Interim Fire Chief

ROCKDALE—The Rockdale County Board of Commissioners, county officials, staff and citizenry met at the assembly hall, 901 Main Street early Tuesday morning to discuss legislation in progress and various county matters.

The work session began at 9 a.m. with a legislative update given by Rusty Paul, Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy Practice at Arnall Golden Gregory LLP.

The first bill Paul addressed, concerning the increase in probate judge salaries, has been approved in both the House and the Senate and currently awaits Governor Deal's signature.

Next, Paul discussed the proposed bill for the use of prisoners to remove graffiti on private property. The bill initially encountered legal opposition, as Georgia law bans inmate work on private property; however, with strict police supervision and the consent of the property owner, the program has been approved.

"The longer graffiti stays up, it sends a signal to the people that gangs rule that particular place," Paul said. Removing graffiti as soon as possible, he added, will not only discourage vandalism, but hopefully restore a sense of security within the community.

Unfortunately, Paul said there was also a significant amount of difficulty with Rockdale's attempt to encourage nonpartisan elections. Paul explained that current House laws do not allow nonpartisan elections, and changing the law requires a vote from all state delegates, not just those representing the district. Despite the extended process, the bill has been passed through the House and is now pending in the Senate.

To conclude his review, Paul said the county has also gained significant ground to legalize Sunday alcohol sales, as the bill has passed in both the House and the Senate. The Georgia General Assembly adjourned April 14th, leaving Governor Deal 45 days to sign or veto the document. Paul said the Governor has every intention of supporting the bill and it should be signed by the end of May.

The floor was then opened to Fire Chief Cedric Scott, who proposed a new section of Chapter 46 of the Code of Ordinances of Rockdale County, Georgia Providing for Fire Prevention and Protection to become stricter on fire safety laws such as illegal fire lane parking.

Other Fire Department representatives included Station 8's Lt. Dan Morgan and Battalion Chief Joe Yoder, who approached the board to call attention to the restoration of Rockdale's original 1951 fire engine. Lt. Morgan says the department wishes to raise funds for the required maintenance work so the engine can be used for educational and parade purposes. The department estimates the total cost of restoration to be \$35,000.



“We’re hoping to have it ready for the annual Rockdale County Parade in December,” Lt. Morgan said. “It will almost be 60 years to the day that it first rolled into town.”

A voting session followed at 10 a.m., beginning with Commissioner JaNice Van Ness’ sponsored proclamation, declaring Friday, April 29th Relay for Life Day in Rockdale County.

The BOC then proceeded to approve its latest contracts, including an agreement for Zumba Fitness at Johnson Park and an indenture with D.L.G. Properties, LLC for the completion of infrastructure in the Carillon subdivision. The board also voted for maintenance on the Johnson Park roof, a planned library expansion, as well as a sale of surplus equipment for the Fire and Rescue budget.

Later, Commissioner Osborn Nesbitt, Sr. was assigned on the Conyers-Rockdale Economic Council. Commissioner Nesbitt will officially replace Commissioner Van Ness on the council Thursday, June 30th.

Fire Chief Scott then returned to the podium to recommend Battalion Chief Joe Yoder as Interim Fire Chief and Lt. Dan Morgan as Interim Deputy Fire Chief upon his transfer to Savannah and the present Deputy Fire Chief Mike Lee’s retirement. Chief Scott mentioned the merits and experience that both Yoder and Lt. Morgan bring to their department, reassuring the county would be “in very capable hands.”

“I want to thank Chief Scott for his service and wish you luck in your future career,” Chairman and CEO Richard A. Oden said. The commissioners then invited the room to join them in singing “Happy Birthday” to the Chief, as Friday the 29th will be his 45th birthday.

Chairman Oden said he is both pleased and confident with Chief Scott’s recommendations. “I am thankful for Chief Yoder and Chief Morgan stepping forward and I believe they’ll provide good continuity for the community,” the Chairman said. “These are fine, outstanding men and I’m looking forward to their leadership.”

Interim Fire Chief Yoder says he feels grateful for the opportunity and believes he is equal to the task. “I’m honored the Chairman thinks enough of me,” he said. “With the staff we have, in both the Fire Department and Rockdale County, it’ll be smooth going forward.”

In his closing comments, the Chairman commended Rockdale County’s Department of Community Affairs and Innovative Programs Director Erica Fatima and Technical Producer Sean Kimbell for their successful intern program. Fatima’s department is being highlighted by the Association County Commissioners of Georgia for its efforts to give local students the opportunity to learn about local government and community development while expanding the skills and experience required for their future careers.

The Chairman also thanked all county departments for their cooperation and input in his departmental update meetings. The Chairman holds at least two comprehensive meetings per department a year to assess the progress and needs of each branch. “I appreciate all Rockdale staff for being honest and thorough in their suggestions,” said the Chairman. “The meetings have been both informative and insightful.”