

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
AND INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS**

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**ROCKDALE COUNTY
PRESS RELEASE**

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Rockdale County BOC and Sheriff Jeff Wigington Reach Grant Application Agreement

Rockdale—On Tuesday, May 24, Rockdale County Board of Commissioners and Sheriff Jeff Wigington met to discuss additional options regarding the 2011 U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Hiring Program grant, following the Board of Commissioner’s voting session.

Initial findings, submitted by county senior staff indicated that the Sheriff, under the grants primary funding provisions, did not meet criteria for the grant, given his current staffing patterns. Senior staff, throughout earlier meetings, also presented information to Chairman and CEO, Richard A. Oden, and to the at-large Commissioners, as well as Sheriff Wigington, that the grant would increase the county’s budget for 2012 and beyond.

The terms, reached in the agreement, allows the Sheriff to move forward and apply for the grant; with the understanding that the Sheriff would reduce his 2012 budget and other funding sources to offset expenses related to the grant (i.e., uniforms, vehicles, fuel, etc).

The Sheriff also agreed to apply for four certified deputies, instead of seven, to help meet budgetary concerns raised by the BOC. In return, if the Sheriff is approved for the grant, the County will receive funds for the salaries and benefits of the four deputies for three years. In the fourth year, the County would assume the costs of the salaries and benefits of the officers in full.

“I remain steadfast in my commitment to providing Rockdale County with a fiscally constrained budget, and to my resolve that budgetary choices do not adversely affect Rockdale County stakeholders,” Chairman and CEO Richard A. Oden stated. “The Commissioners and I are doing our best to deliver options that will have the least amount of financial impact on the County. Under the terms of this agreement, the Sheriff will absorb the costs that my colleagues and I agree, would otherwise not be sustainable in 2012.”

“I recognize that these are difficult times and the challenges we face as a county are tough,” Commissioner Oz Nesbitt, Sr. said. “With this agreement we can continue to provide a safe environment for everyone and maintain low costs to the taxpayers of this community.”

“All three commissioners are unified in their efforts to uphold one of the most important functions of county government, which is to serve and protect our residents,” Commissioner JaNice Van Ness stated. “The commitment of the Sheriff in applying for this grant is commendable and follows his spirit of service to the community.”

“I’m glad that we have reached an agreement, and that I can apply for the COPS grant,” Sheriff Wigington stated. “As public servants, we all want the best for this county and sometimes we have to compromise to ensure that happens.”

ROCKDALE COUNTY IS A PERFECTLY POSITIONED COMMUNITY WITH A ROCK-SOLID APPROACH DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE, QUALITY OF LIFE, AND GLOBAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

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