

Private Road inventory presented; DA, partners seek \$500,000 grant
By JOHN SPARKS

Meeting Friday, February 22 in regular session, Wood County Commissioners received a comprehensive listing of private roads in the county and approved details of a memorandum of understanding among several agencies joining together to seek nearly \$500,000 in federal grant funds.

Wood County Judge Bryan Jeanes and Commissioner Roy Don Shipp were not present. Commissioner Roger Pace, Precinct 3 presided.

Jim Dax, a citizen of Wood County and a volunteer fireman with the Ogburn VFD, spent the past year gathering detailed mapping and other information regarding private roads in Wood County. Dax presented his compendium to Commissioners to augment their similar inventories for public roads maintained by the county. The report identified more than 400 private roads throughout the county. Dax said earlier estimates of the number of private roads was in the 200-300 range. Some private roads are identified by signs (reading PR-7XXX), but many are not, creating confusing situations for emergency responders such as EMS, fire departments and law enforcement officers as well as others.

Criminal District Attorney Jim Wheeler and Jalayne Robinson, Crime Victims Liaison/Family Services Coordinator presented details of a cooperative "partnership" effort seeking \$497,210 in federal grant funds. Partnering with CDA office is the Wood County Sheriff's Office, East Texas Crisis Center and Northeast Texas Child Advocacy Center.

Responding to significant increases in criminal cases involving domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking commissioners approved the submission of a grant application for federal funds for the "Wood County Domestic Services Project," a program to aid victims of violence against women. If approved, the grant would help fund protection and services for victims of such crimes over a two-year period. Under the plan:

- The Wood County CDA will dedicate a prosecutor to work with victims of this project and the other partners to ensure judicial responsibility by holding offenders responsible, budget \$135,560.

- The East Texas Crisis Center will provide a legal advocate to work with victims to provide protection and services to pursue safe and healthy lives, budget \$73,106.

- The Northeast Texas Child Advocacy Center will provide forensic interviews and therapy to child victims in a collaborative model with agency partners and enhance public awareness through community education of child abuse and its relationship to domestic violence, budget \$56,900 (with a \$15,000 match).

- The Wood County Sheriff's Office will dedicate two investigators, a vehicle and operating expenses to investigate and process sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking and dating violence reported, budget \$224,690.

Lou Mallory, chairman of the Wood County Historical Commission presented Commissioners with the annual report of the organization, noting that the local commission was active in 15 out of 24 service areas to promote historic preservation last year.

The report also suggests two historical assets are deteriorating and are unused for the past four years and the City of Quitman is trying to acquire ownership to use these buildings for other purposes, the WCHC "...strongly request that the Texas Historical Commission take ownership of them (the Stinson House and the Honeymoon Cottage located at the Governor Jim Hogg City Park in Quitman) restore them to their original beauty and again open them for county residents and visitors to visit."

The WCHC report also suggests progress in remodeling and furnishing a building on the Courthouse square, rented by the WCHC as a historical museum site.

In other action, the Commissioners approved:

- Payment of claims in the amount of \$1726,564.25.
- Payroll in the amount of \$251,784.52.
- Employee/dependent health claims of \$29,308.82.
- Treasurers report.
- Release of \$3-million in securities.
- Contract to remodel Justice of Peace Precinct 2 office at a cost of \$22,878.
- Appointment of Sue Hitzemann to the Wood County Industrial Commission's Board of

directors by City of Winnsboro (replacing Joann Horton).

- Advertising for bids on used dump truck for Precinct 2.
- Payment of \$350 for indigent burial.

In personnel matters, the court approved:

- Terry Lynn Bevill, new hire, deputy sheriff, WCSO, \$16.31/hour.
- Angela Lynn Hammonds, new hire, rural prosecutor, WCCDA, \$48,100.00 (Governor's office funding).

The next regular meeting of the Wood County Commissioners Court will be Friday, March, 7, 2008 at 10 a.m. A special meeting of the court can be called with 72-hour public notice.