

Cost for large animal burials to increase in Midland County

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Midlanders needing assistance in laying their horses to rest will have to pay a bigger fee from now on.

Midland County commissioners approved on Monday an increase from \$40 to \$125 in the charge for large animal burial.

"They've been \$40 since I can remember," County Judge Mike Bradford said.

And with the cost of burying large animals, such as horses, coming in at \$100 or more, Bradford said it was time to make a change.

The increase in price will make the county more competitive with others who offer the service, he said, which could prevent the county from receiving a large percentage of the calls simply because it's the most affordable.

Animals typically are buried on the animal owner's property, Bradford said.

The change in pricing will begin on Saturday Oct. 1.

In other business, commissioners:

- Heard a report from Carl R. Griffith and Associates, Inc. on cost savings found at the Midland County Detention Center since 2007.

When the firm came in during March of 2007, Midland County was sending 45 to 60 inmates every day to other counties at a cost of more than \$800,000 a year, said Richard Kirkland, CRG Midland Project Manager. Additionally, it was spending between \$400,000 and \$600,000 on overtime annually and was watching its jail population inch toward 400 per day.

At that time, plans for a new jail had been submitted that would have followed a similar design as the former detention center.

Through work with county staff from various departments and more than 30 recommendations, Kirkland said they were able to see several improvements and cost savings.

The new jail was designed for direct supervision and will allow for more inmates without requiring additional staff, he said. They worked with the district attorney's office to reduce the backlog of cases and ensure individuals weren't sitting in jail longer than necessary.

A data sharing system that could be shared with all criminal justice agencies also was worked on. Kirkland said that system still needs to be improved in Midland and across the state, but that improvements made thus far have been helpful.

In total, he said, the county has saved or avoided spending \$4.5 million during the last four and a half years through implementing new methods of supervision, preventing overtime and preventing the need to send inmates to other counties, among other initiatives.

- Approved a resolution for the Texans Feeding Texans program that allows Community and Senior Services to accept a grant for providing meals to seniors. The nonprofits' Meals on Wheels program delivered more than 160,000 meals last year, said Jody Sneed, development director for CSS.

- Agreed to donate surplus furniture from the Court Residential Treatment Center to Helping Hands of Midland. The state now requires addiction treatment programs to have metal furniture so the wooden desks and other pieces in the facility can no longer be used, purchasing agent Bob Henderson said. "I need more furniture like I need a hole in the head," Henderson said, adding with its age the county wouldn't be able to make money off of the items.

- Voted to pay \$166,222.35 to the Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone board.

The county entered into the TIRZ board in 2001 when the property values for the downtown area included in the zone were at \$97 million, said Kathy Reeves, tax assessor/collector.

The values in that area now have increased to \$176 million. In agreeing to be part of the TIRZ, the county consented to provide the TIRZ board any property tax revenue generated when values increased beyond the \$97 million point. The county has a representative on the board and any money the board agrees to utilize is to be invested in a way that further increases downtown property values.

- Signed contracts with Alternative Life Solutions Counseling and Centers for Children and Families to work with the Juvenile Probation department.

- Recognized a presentation of certificate from the Drug Enforcement Agency to Dale Little, Midland County Emergency Management coordinator.

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