

COMAL COUNTY CORNER

The county's official quarterly newsletter

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'17 budget set, tax rate unchanged

In September, the Commissioners Court finalized the 2017 budget and the tax rate to fund it.

The \$84.02 million budget is 5.8 percent larger than 2016's, funding 10 new positions, \$2.5 million in Sheriff's Office equipment and \$2.1 million in Road and Bridge Department equipment.

The tax rate will remain unchanged at 34.29 cents per \$100 of property value for the fourth straight year – equivalent to about \$700 per year on a \$200,000 home.

The county has maintained or lowered the tax rate every year since 2012, although new construction and increasing values have led to higher tax revenues overall.

More Info

The *Comal County Corner* is published by the Comal County Public Information Office, 100 Main Plaza, New Braunfels, TX 78130. Contact Paul Anthony, public information officer, with questions or story ideas at anthop@co.comal.tx.us or 830-221-1110.

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October 11 voter registration deadline fast approaching

With the Nov. 8 general election coming up, the Comal County Elections Office has seen a rush of new voters. More than 91,000 residents are now registered to vote, with more coming in every day.

The deadline to register is Tuesday, Oct. 11. If you haven't registered yet, you can do so by:

- 1) Printing out and mailing the voter registration form on the Secretary of State's website, votetexas.gov, or
- 2) Visiting the Elections Office in person and filling out a card.

Meanwhile, early voting begins Oct. 24. Voters can cast their ballots at any of the following four locations:

- The Elections Office in New Braunfels
- Garden Ridge City Hall

Elections Office

178 E. Mill St., Ste. 101, N.Br.
www.votecomal.com
830-221-1352

- Bulverde/Spring Branch Library
- Water Oriented Recreation District headquarters in Sattler.

Voters heading to the polls on Election Day should be aware that six polling places have changed locations since the last election. You can find updated information on polling places, sample ballots, early voting times and addresses, and much more at the Comal County Elections Office website, votecomal.com.



2022 Facilities Plan calls for new courtrooms, Elections Center

The Commissioners Court in September approved an update to the Comal County five-year Facilities Plan, setting in motion a series of dominoes that will lead to a new Elections Center, additional courtrooms, and renovation of the county's two largest buildings in downtown New Braunfels.

The revised plan reflects the completion of two projects – moving the Public Health Office to the county's Goodwin Annex on Church Hill Drive and the construction of the Bulverde Annex on Cougar Bend (see right) – and the beginning of turning the former TCOR building in downtown New Braunfels into the Comal County Elections Center, expected to open in 2017.

Next on the plan's list is the total remodel of the Comal County Annex Building at 150 N. Seguin Ave. and the Landa Building at 199 Main Plaza. Together, the two buildings house the district courts and county courts-at-law, as well as offices for the district attorney, district clerk, county clerk and other county support staff.

Although the plan anticipates shifting all courtrooms into the Annex and certain offices into the Landa Building, final plans, including cost and timeframe, will await an architectural feasibility study.

A link to the plan is available at comalcountytexas.com/facilities-plan.

With snip of the ribbon, Bulverde Annex officially open

It's official!

The Comal County Bulverde Annex – a one-stop shop for Bulverde- and Spring Branch-area residents to take care of vehicle registrations, property tax, land records, traffic tickets and other county business – celebrated its grand opening with a ribbon cutting and open house on Sept. 30.

The new facility, which took about a year and \$1.6 million to build, houses local representatives of the Comal County Tax and Clerk's offices, as well as offices and a courtroom for the Precinct 2 Justice of the Peace and Constable.

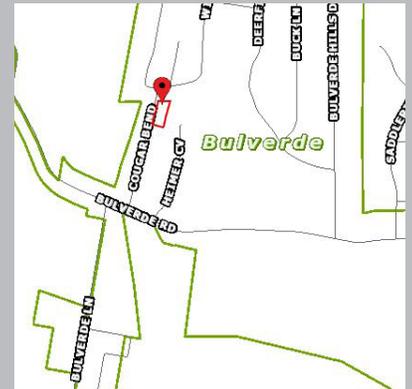
At the ceremony, County Judge Sherman Krause, Precinct 2 Commissioner Scott Haag and Bulverde Mayor Bill Krawietz hailed the building as an essential addition to serve residents of western Comal County.

"I am proud of everything you're doing out here, and proud of this facility," Krawietz said.

Crews broke ground on the Bulverde Annex last summer, starting the next phase in the county's five-year Facilities Plan (see sidebar). Phase 2 of the project – removal of the old Tax Office building next door and expansion of the parking lot – is scheduled to begin in early 2017.

Bulverde Annex

30470 Cougar Bend



- Comal County Tax Office
- County Clerk's Office
- Pct. 2 Justice of the Peace
- Pct. 2 Constable

The county's Veterans Services Office, which holds office hours in Bulverde the last Wednesday of each month, now does so in the new Annex. The old Justice of the Peace Office building on Bulverde Road remains in use as a Sheriff's Office substation.



County Judge Sherman Krause and Bulverde Spring Branch Area Chamber of Commerce President Rhonda Zunker prepare to cut the ribbon at the Bulverde Annex.

Elmo paid a visit to this summer's National Infant Immunization Week event at the Public Health Office.



Flu shots available in Public Health Office

For all of the publicity diseases like Ebola and Zika have received of late – for good reason – it's worth remembering that in 2017 more people in the United States will die from the flu than either of them.

That's why the Comal County Public Health Office – in addition to taking steps to fight Zika and be prepared for other deadly infections – is offering flu vaccines to the public.

“The best time to be vaccinated

is before flu starts showing up in our community,” said Gwen Mills, director of public health. “We recommend everyone over 6 months old get flu shots every year to keep themselves and their families healthy.”

The Public Health Office, 1297 Church Hill Drive in New Braunfels, accepts cash, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Medicaid and CHIP. Call 830-221-1150 for more information, including cost, and to set up an appointment.

Public Health Office

1297 Church Hill Drive
co.comal.tx.us/health.htm
 830-221-1150



Jail project progresses behind the scenes

Looks can be deceiving.

A trip to the site of the new Comal County Jail, next door to the current facility, reveals no changes since voters last November approved issuing \$76 million in bonds to build a new, 589-bed jail and expand the Sheriff's Office.

But progress has been occurring nevertheless, as the Commissioners Court has sought and interviewed applicants and hired key positions that will oversee construction once it gets underway, possibly next year.

In March, the Court selected HDR Architecture to design the two facilities, beginning several months of contract negotiations; a contract with the century-old firm was finalized in August.

Also in August, Austin-based Broaddus and Associates

was named project manager – essentially, the county's representative in working with contractors and their crews to ensure the project finishes on time and within budget.

Finally, the county now is in the process of selecting a construction manager-at-risk who – as the name implies – will oversee the work itself.

Once those three positions are set, they will work with each other and the county to establish the final set of plans for construction. Groundbreaking is still expected to be several months away.

“We are taking our time to make sure we do this correctly,” said County Judge Sherman Krause. “We would rather spend a little longer before we begin construction than rush into it and need to spend more money because we didn't plan properly.”

University of County Government starts in March! Apply at comalcountytexas.com/ucg.



Comal County Calendar

Services

Recycling (weekly)

- Mon, 6:30-11:30 a.m. – Spring Branch VFD Station, 9850 FM 311
- Tue, 6:30-11:30 a.m. – Garden Ridge City Hall, 9400 Municipal Parkway; Canyon Lake Fire/EMS Station, 160 Oblate Drive
- Wed, 6:30-11:30 a.m. – Sattler VFW, 16425 River Road
- Thurs, 6:30-11:30 a.m. – Mystic Shores boat ramp, 22100 Cranes Mill Road
- Fri, 6:30-11:30 a.m. – Bulverde, former JP2 building, 2350 Bulverde Road

Veterans Services (monthly)

- 2nd Wednesday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. – Sattler Annex, 160 Oak Drive
- 3rd Wed, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. – Garden Ridge City Hall, 9400 Muni. Pkwy.
- Last Wed, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. – Bulverde Annex, 30470 Cougar Bend

Boards & Commissions

Commissioners Court

- Thursdays, 8:30 a.m., Historic Courthouse, 100 Main Plaza, N. Br.

Pct. 1 Commissioner

Donna Eccleston

- 2nd/4th Wed, 1:30-4:30 p.m. – BSB Fire Station #1, 353 Rodeo Drive
- 2nd/4th Thurs, 1:30-4:30 p.m. – Tye Preston Library, 16311 S. Access Rd.

Pct. 4 Commissioner

Jen Crownover

- 1st/3rd Tues, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. – Canyon Lake Fire Station #1, 1074 Scissortail
- 2nd/4th Tues, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. – BSB Fire Station #2, 2016 Puter Creek

Commissioners' and service schedules may change without notice.

Changes to Commissioners Court agenda published at least 72 hours before meeting.

Elections

Tuesday, Oct. 11

Voter registration deadline

Monday, Oct. 24 – Friday, Nov. 4

Early voting. Locations:

- Elections Office, 178 E. Mill St., New Braunfels
 - WORD Building, 1928 FM 2673, Sattler
 - Library, 131 Bulverde Crossing
 - Garden Ridge City Hall, 9400 Municipal Parkway
- See votecomal.com for polling times.

Friday, Oct. 28

Deadline to apply for mail-in ballot

Tuesday, Nov. 8

7 a.m.-7 p.m.: Election Day

Sample ballots and list of polling places available at votecomal.com. See votetexas.gov for information about changes to Texas' photo ID law.

Court for veterans wrapping up first year

The Comal County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) was established by Commissioners Court last summer and held its first hearing Jan. 4. The VTC is a proactive approach to dealing with veterans who have been arrested for certain offenses, especially drug- and alcohol-related misdemeanors.

Many veterans return from war scarred not just physically but mentally. Those scars make readjustment to civilian life difficult, and that can lead to problems with substance abuse and violence that time in jail would likely exacerbate rather than help.

The VTC can serve veterans up front – as a program to complete a pretrial



diversion – or on the back end, as a condition of probation.

In either case, veterans work through the 12 month program with their mentor's support, VA assistance, counseling and other services as needed. When they graduate, they are better prepared to re-enter society.

County Court-at-Law No. 2 Judge Charles Stephens presides over the court – and, along with District Attorney Jennifer Tharp and her office – was

instrumental in planning and laying the groundwork for its implementation.

With an intensive hands-on program, the court can help veterans re-enter society better prepared to take on life's challenges after returning from service.

If you would like to be one of the volunteer mentors who help serve these veterans, please email court coordinator Jacquelyn Dixon at dixonj@co.comal.tx.us, or call 830-221-1122.