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Border enforcement and international commerce among key topics discussed during Rep. Gonzales’ visit to Presidio County

By **ABBIE PERRAULT**
abbie@bigbendsentinel.com

PRESIDIO COUNTY — Freshman U.S. Representative Tony Gonzales made a whistle stop tour through West Texas last week, meeting with over a dozen Presidio County officials to give “a little update of what’s happening in Washington, in the state and in the district,” Gonzales said Wednesday.

In his brief visit, he spoke with officials about Afghanistan, the border and bringing money into the district, and then local officials brought forward their own concerns from on the ground in West Texas.

Gonzales, who served in Afghanistan for five years, said that the U.S. withdrawal from the war-torn country was “very personal” and “it’s been a rough couple weeks to see how things have been handled.” The representative called for more transparency on the drawdown, as well as the recent resettlement of refugees in nearby El Paso’s Fort Bliss.

He supported vetting those refugees, saying, “We need to know who’s coming into this country, but this is America. It’s the land of opportunity.”

Transitioning to another type of migration, Gonzales stated, “The border has not gotten any better. You see that with the sheer number of traffic that’s coming through. Beyond the migrant situation, what worries me the most is a national security threat.” He alluded to “classified briefs that should keep you up at night,” saying, “What worries me the most is a small bomb, biological bomb, all kinds of threats that are real, that could happen.” He told local officials in the county judge’s office in the courthouse, “It’s not this made-up, Tom Clancy novel. It’s real, it’s happening.”

Gonzales took a similar tack as former U.S. Representative Will Hurd, who called for a technology-based “border wall,” rather than a physical one. “We need a wall, a barrier, a natural barrier. We need technology behind it, sensors, drones, blimps, some sort of technology, and the third thing we need is boots on the ground.” He proposed adding more agents and more technologies like sensors that detect movement and notify Border Patrol.

Ten towers have already been installed around Presidio, Presidio City Administrator Brad Newton

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The West Texan Media Group, LLC



Photo by Sarah M. Vasquez

As the 34th annual Marfa Lights Festival neared a close, Marfa resident PJ Serrano proposed to Sonya Murillo during La Fiebre’s set on Saturday night. She said yes.

Marfa Lights comes back after COVID, reuniting families near and far

By **SACHI MCCLENDON**
sachi@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — The 34th annual Marfa Lights Festival went off without a hitch over Labor Day weekend, despite some of the organizers’ worries that it might not be able to happen this year due to the delta variant of the coronavirus spiking the number of positive cases throughout the state.

“I joined the chamber in early July and we weren’t even sure the festival was going to happen at that point. So we had a really short time to make it happen,” said Abby Boyd, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, which organized the event.

“Of course if there had been anything that came up where we had to stop it to protect the community, we would’ve done that at any point. But at some point, we just had to go for it and hope for the best,” Boyd said, adding that if there

were any theme to this year’s festival it was simply to make sure that it happened.

Over the span of two days, there were bands and DJs playing all day long and going well after 11 p.m. in front of the county courthouse. Some of the performers were local groups like Make Up Sex, Primo Carrasco & Hector Sanchez and Marfa ISD Ballet Folklorico Aztlan.

On Saturday, a parade celebrating all things Marfa slowly made its way from the elementary school to kick off the day’s festivities. Those in attendance could see floats from organizations based in the area, like the Chamber of Commerce and Big Bend Community Action Committee, as well as floats — or at least vehicles — celebrating emergency response personnel, like the Marfa and Ft. Davis volunteer fire departments.

Even Rod Ponton, in his role as county attorney, made an appearance, throwing candy out the back of his truck.

TxDOT begins Marfa project that will change intersection in front of Presidio County Courthouse

By **ABBIE PERRAULT**
abbie@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — A months-long road improvement project in Marfa by The Texas Department of Transportation to revamp Highland Avenue and Highway 17 and improve the intersection in front of the Presidio County Courthouse began yesterday, September 8.

New signage is marking the work zone downtown, and drivers are asked to proceed with caution and follow all detour signs while the eight to ten week project is underway. The road improvements span from the northern city limit of Marfa on Highway 17/North Dean Street down to Lincoln Street, jogging west to the front of the courthouse before heading south and terminating at the intersection of Highland Avenue and US

90/US 67 at the four-way stop.

That stretch of roads will see “mill and overlay” improvements — a process of removing the surface of the street and laying new asphalt to strengthen the road. Other infrastructure improvements along the route will be made on sidewalks, ramps and drainages.

The intersection at the front of the county courthouse, which falls along the route, will also be redesigned. Changes to the intersection were approved by Marfa City Council and TxDOT in September 2020, in response to safety issues at the three-way intersection. The Lincoln and Highland intersection currently has one stop sign, one yield sign and one right-of-way with no sign, but will now change to three stop signs.

The intersection saw a higher incidence of crashes over a three-year period, including a

few incapacitating injuries, though no deaths. The dangers prompted the Texas Department of Transportation to study ways to improve that traffic situation, including proposing a roundabout that was ultimately denied by city council.

Pedestrian safety measures will also be added at that intersection, including striped crosswalks, and ADA-compliant ramps and sidewalks. “Bulb-outs” will also be added to push the sidewalks out at intersections so that pedestrians have less of a distance to traverse when crossing the street, and the stop signs can be added to the bulb-outs to put them closer into the line of sight of drivers.

A few parking spots will also be eliminated in the very center of the front of the courthouse, so that drivers aren’t reversing directly into the

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County halts transferring ownership of Lipan Apache cemetery to historical commission

By **SACHI MCCLENDON**
sachi@bigbendsentinel.com

PRESIDIO COUNTY — At a meeting on Tuesday, the Presidio County Commissioners Court voted to postpone a decision on whether to transfer ownership of the Lipan Apache cemetery to the Presidio County Historical Commission (PCHC) after a relative of those buried raised concerns over PCHC being in charge of and maintaining the property. This decision comes as there have been renewed efforts to maintain the cemetery that has suffered from erosion, littering and vandalism over the years.

As it stands now, the City of Presidio owns two lots in the middle of the property, while the county owns the three. In a previous Presidio city

meeting in early June, the council voted to give the city’s lots over to the PCHC. As then interim City Administrator Brad Newton explained, any effort to preserve the cemetery will be streamlined if only one entity, the PCHC, has control over the land.

At Tuesday’s meeting, the commissioners were weighing whether to also give the county’s lots to the PCHC. County Attorney Rod Ponton — who is a current member of the PCHC and soon-to-be chairman of the commission — said that he’s been working with Newton and the Presidio Municipal Development District to build a fence around the cemetery and install a historical marker sanctioned by the Texas Historical Commission on the property. “It’s not going to be an expensive project,” Ponton said.

Christina Hernandez, who is a descendant of two separate families buried in the cemetery, came in front of the court to voice her concerns with the PCHC caring for the preservation of the cemetery and challenged some of the comments made by Ponton, who had earlier said that there’s a few descendants in the area.

“I also wanted to make a correction. There’s not just a few of us. We’re well over probably 500 individuals within Presidio currently are descendants, and many more that live outside the area,” Hernandez said.

Hernandez also noted that building a fence that both helps preserve the land and conforms with the Texas Historical Commission’s standards is no simple task. “I also wanted to correct

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A third dose of vaccine against COVID-19 is limited to immunocompromised for now

By **ABBIE PERRAULT**
abbie@bigbendsentinel.com

FAR WEST TEXAS — Healthcare providers in Far West Texas have begun giving COVID-19 booster shots to immunocompromised people, and in anticipation of new federal guidance, many West Texas residents are looking to get a third dose booster to improve their immunity against the virus that has continued to infect, hospitalize and kill Americans this summer.

Last month, President Joe Biden announced a plan to roll out third dose boosters to the general public beginning September 20. As the president’s rollout draws near, state health officials and local providers say they are holding out for Food and Drug Administration approval of Pfizer and Moderna booster doses before moving forward on boosters for the general public.

Pfizer and Moderna booster doses were approved by the FDA for immunocompromised people as of August 12, and in the Big Bend region, some providers have already begun administering those.

Sul Ross State University gave 130 shots of Pfizer and Moderna at a vaccine drive last Thursday, providing boosters for immunocompromised patients, along with first and second doses for the general public.

The Prescription Shop and Highland Drug in Alpine both said this week that they are offering boosters of the Moderna vaccine for those who have weakened immune systems, and Walmart in Fort Stockton is offering Pfizer boosters to immunocompromised people. Preventative Care Health Services, which operates clinics in Presidio, Alpine and Marfa, was unavailable to comment on their vaccine offerings.

At the region’s only hospital, boosters are not currently available for immunocompromised individuals, but Big Bend Regional Medical Center does plan to open a booster clinic later this month, pending recommendations of boosters for the general public by the CDC. Once the CDC guidance is clear, “We will offer both third doses to immunocompromised and booster shots,” hospital spokesperson Ruth Hucke said, and information on how to sign up will be made available.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began recommending a third dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines at least 28 days after a second dose of Pfizer or Moderna for people with moderate to severe immunocompromisation. That includes people receiving cancer treatments, organ transplant recipients who take immunosuppressant drugs, stem cell transplant recipients, moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome), advanced or untreated HIV infection, and anyone receiving an active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids or other drugs that may suppress your immune response.

“CDC recommendation is that the additional dose be the same vaccine as the first two doses they received. People should talk with their personal physician or healthcare provider about whether they should receive an additional dose,” a spokesperson for the Texas Department of State Health Services said this week.

For those who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, studies are ongoing, but there is not yet enough data about whether they would benefit from an additional dose, the DSHS spokesperson said.

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City develops plan to fix fire hydrants in town, yet faces delays

By SACHI MCCLENDON
sachi@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — The city administration has developed a plan to fix and replace a number of fire hydrants in town following a [report](#) from *The Big Bend Sentinel* that showed that at least 11 hydrants were either malfunctioning or inoperable. While some hydrants only need some minor maintenance, others are to undergo specialized repairs or are slated to be completely replaced.

There are some setbacks in the plan though, as the public works department needs to secure funding for the purchase of new hydrants, and its employees need to be trained on how to troubleshoot and repair the hydrants.

“There’s a few of them that have to be replaced completely,” said Chuck Salgado, the city’s water utilities supervisor. “I want to ball park it at two or three that need to be completely replaced. One of them is old. The other one we believe the stem is broken on it.”

As *The Big Bend Sentinel* previously [reported](#), one hydrant, on the corner of Galveston and Ridge, is from the 1940s — over 70 years old. Records show that back in 2005, a company surveyed the status of all the hydrants in town and, at the time, recommended the city replace the top of that 1940s hydrant as it was hard to operate and the fire department needed an adapter piece to tap into it.

“That one is from the forties. That one is going to be replaced,” Salgado said.

Yet before the hydrants can be replaced, the public works department has to wait for the city to approve its 2021-2022 fiscal budget, which has to be finalized and passed by September 30.

“We’re going to order them as soon as the new budget kicks in,” said Salgado. “[The city] bumped our supplies for the water department up to \$25,000 for the year so we should have plenty of room.” Mayor Manny Baeza confirmed to *The Big Bend Sentinel* that funds are to be allocated for these new hydrants in the coming year, saying, “There is money in next year’s budget to replace the hydrants that need repair.”

Another issue stalling the fire-hydrant-overhaul plan: water works employees will have to undergo training in order to learn how to make certain repairs. “The ones that aren’t going to be replaced but that need repairs, we’re waiting on the training,” Salgado said. “They’re going to show us how to take them apart and do repairs on them.”

The crew was set to attend a training in August through the Texas A&M

Engineering Extension Service in August, but that has since been postponed to December.

As *The Big Bend Sentinel* previously [reported](#), City Manager Mandy Roane confirmed that many of the issues with the hydrants have gone unaddressed in the past. In the past year and half, none of them have been repaired, Roane said.

“Our former public works director [Jeff Boyd] was given the list of faulty hydrants in 2019, but did not conduct repairs. Additionally, repairs weren’t conducted in 2020,” Roane said in a previous interview. “With so much shut down because of COVID and public works being short-staffed, they weren’t able to complete them.”

Salgado — who recently came into his position — said that he doesn’t believe that the public works department had been repairing the hydrants either. “I’m pretty sure it’s never been done. As long as I’ve been here I’ve never seen them done,” he said, adding that the department didn’t even have the proper tools to conduct the repairs, much less the training.

While the public works department waits for its scheduled training, it has been lubing up hydrants with oil to ensure they are not stuck shut when needed most. “A few of them that were on the inspection list that we went and tested were real tough to open, so we put hydrant oil to get it to open up smoother,” Salgado said. “But that’s as far as we’ve done on the maintenance is that we’ve used the hydrant oil to get them easier to open.”

“Usually you have to do that about every year and put hydrant oil [on the hydrants] so that way the shaft, once you need to open it, it’ll turn easily. It won’t be getting jammed up or anything like that. It won’t be rough,” Salgado said, adding that his crew will be oiling the hydrants more regularly going forward. “We’re going to start oiling them on a yearly basis. We’re going to try and do it right after the fire department does their flushing — that way we will know exactly which ones need it.”

Salgado did say that his crew was able to figure out why the hydrant across the street from the Judd Architecture building wasn’t working on the morning of the fire. The hydrant had previously been disconnected from the city’s water supply due to a faulty piece of equipment. The flat valve at the bottom was damaged, causing the hydrant to leak water. “And so what [Boyd] did is that [he] shut the valve in front of the hydrant to kill the hydrant completely,” Salgado said.

That hydrant, Salgado said, is still not operational. He said, “That one is just going to need the training to get it repaired,” but added that in the event of a fire, he could reconnect the hydrant to the city’s water supply.

Rep. Gonzales

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told Gonzales, showing him a photo of a surveillance tower. “When you’re in Presidio, you’re on camera,” added Judge Cinderela Guevara.

“We’ve got a wall that talks to us and we’re not giving up the Rio Grande and Mexico by fencing this off,” Newton said. “Good job to Will Hurd who started this, and I hope you pick up and start using this to secure the border.”

Similar to his approach to Afghan refugees, Gonzales called for a focus on improving legal immigration paths. “A lot of folks can circle behind that, and the reality is we have a lot of labor shortages in all kinds of industries throughout.”

Local officials responded eagerly to talks about improving conditions at the Presidio border. Newton asked for more personnel at the port of entry, citing the growing, hours-long wait times at the bridge. “Basically they don’t have enough hands,” Newton asserted. “Presidio, we’ve got the housing there, so there’s no reason not to add personnel there.”

County and City of Presidio Attorney Rod Ponton also asked for port improvements, saying officials wanted a new port in their budget this coming year. “All it needs is you to bring us about 150 million,” Ponton said. “That’s all?” Gonzales jokingly replied. Ponton explained that port traffic and a lack of cold storage has recently led Mexican farming operations to reroute a share of their harvests through the McAllen port in South Texas rather than put up with the Presidio port.

Justice of the Peace Juanita Bishop chimed in to flag another issue at the crossing: the persistent closure of the border to Mexicans during the pandemic led Bishop to say, “I think it’s hurting the economy in



Staff photo by Maisie Crow

Presidio County Judge Cinderela Guevara accompanies U.S. Congressman Tony Gonzales (R-TX-23) during last week’s Marfa High School homecoming parade. Gonzales visited Presidio County to meet local officials, who were eager to talk about the impacts of border enforcement and struggles of international commerce in Presidio county.

Presidio.”

Gonzales said he shared the concern. “I’ve been pushing on the [federal] administration to secure the border, but I’ve also been pushing on the administration to open up the border for commerce and traffic for those that have the proper documentation to shop, go to the hospital, do all those different things.”

The representative also praised the vaccine against COVID-19, adding that he has been advocating for vaccines in the U.S. and for communities along the U.S. Mexico border, saying, “A lot of times those communities are one.”

When Gonzales opened up the floor for questions or comments, Newton asked Gonzales’ office to help administer grants. Even as areas like Presidio and Marfa become eligible for federal funds, the smaller towns struggle to find someone qualified and available to administer those programs.

“There’s a lot of money out there and sadly a lot of communities don’t know how to reach that money,” Gonzales said. He referenced his office having a dedicated staff member that helps share information about federal economic development and infrastructure grants.

Judge Guevara shared that the county is planning to pursue a \$5 million grant for the city of Presidio to get an emergency clinic built, and Gonzales offered to write a letter of support for the project if it came across his desk.

“A large part of me coming out here today is I am looking for partners,” Gonzales told officials from Marfa, Presidio, the county and various emergency response departments. “I’m looking for people that want to put all the other things that are happening aside and go, ‘What are some tangible, meaningful things we can get done?’”

County meeting

(Continued from page 1)

an assumption that it would be a small fence that would go around the cemetery,” she said. “Per our conversation with [the Texas Historical Commission], this fence has to be engineered and has to have an architect to design the fence in order to meet their criteria.”

Shelley Bernstein, who is the executive director of the Big Bend Conservation Alliance and has been involved in the efforts to preserve the cemetery, agreed with Hernandez. “This is not a small endeavor. This is very similar to what y’all faced with the Ruidosa Church. The costs of the fence are potentially enormous. Just the fact that THC, depending on how the fence is built, may require ground penetrating radar. That radar is just \$6,000 for the perimeter,” Bernstein said.

“And then you also have to do all the permitting around that, so you have to have an archeologist who you are paying to do all the permitting. You have to have an architect and an engineer and all those plans have to be submitted to THC. And then you also have to have the fence built in a way that THC will approve,” Bernstein said, adding that the BBCCA estimates the project to cost anywhere from \$20,000 to \$50,000.

Both Bernstein and Hernandez asked the commissioners to postpone any action on this item until the descendants of those buried in the cemetery have a seat at the table in deciding how the preservation process is handled. “I would ask that this be delayed so that we can provide the commissioners with more information about how we would like to see this land transferred to the county without necessarily having to go through the Presidio County Historical Commission and THC to be able to maintain this cemetery,” Hernandez said.

The commissioners overall were persuaded by Hernandez and agreed that the families of those buried should be able to have a more active role in how things play out. Presidio County Judge Cinderela Guevara said, “It is important to preserve this and have consideration for them since it is their relatives that are in this cemetery.”

Ponton also agreed. “I think that’s all a great idea,” he said. “The historical commission really wants to make sure that the families are respected.”

Booster shot

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There have been hiccups since Biden announced a September 20 rollout date for boosters to the general public. The FDA has not yet said it is safe and useful to have a third dose, and the CDC has not recommended the booster.

Last Friday, officials from the two government agencies, speaking anonymously, told *The New York Times* that at first, boosters for the general public may only be available to people who received the Pfizer vaccine. With 11 days until the planned start date, trial data for the Pfizer Comirnaty vaccine is still under review by the FDA and an advisory committee meeting isn’t scheduled until September 17. Data review from Moderna’s third dose trials are further behind.

The Pfizer vaccine has received full FDA approval while Moderna is still being administered under an Emergency Use Authorization, which may inform which booster is available first.

“A transparent, thorough and objective review of the data by the FDA is critical so that the medical community and the public continue to have confidence in the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines,” the FDA wrote in a news release on September 1. “The FDA will review the supplemental application as expeditiously as possible, while still doing so in a thorough and science-based manner.”

According to the White House plan, people who aren’t immunocompromised and who have received two doses of Pfizer or Moderna would be eligible for a third booster dose of their vaccine eight months after receiving their second dose. By sticking to that schedule, those who were highest risk and eligible earliest when the vaccines first rolled out would also be the first to get the booster dose.

Since December 2020, tri-county healthcare workers have administered more than 21,800 doses of the Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines to residents in the area. While the bulk of those vaccinations took place in the spring of 2021, each of the three counties in the area saw slight increases in vaccination starting after the first week of July, coinciding with news of the delta variant spreading.

Sul Ross State University is planning to offer monthly vaccine events, as long as turnout remains high, said SRSU’s Mike Pacheco, the chief of staff in the office of the president. While the school is planning another vaccine event in late September, they will give first and second doses to anyone, but only give third boosters to immunocompromised people, unless guidance from the CDC changes and opens the booster up to the general public.

The vast majority of the tri-county’s vaccinated general population do not yet qualify for a booster, even if it were approved for the general public, since eight months have not elapsed since their second dose. And while some tri-county residents are eager to get a third dose to boost their immunity against COVID-19, for now, only immunocompromised West Texans can get vaccinated with a third dose.

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Alpine City Council selects new chief of police after Chief Martin exits

By SACHI MCCLENDON
sachi@bigbendsentinel.com

ALPINE — In a meeting at the end of August, the Alpine City Council appointed Darrell Losoya as the new chief of police for the Alpine Police Department. The decision comes as the former chief, Robert Martin, has decided to leave the department partially due to medical reasons and also a desire to spend more time with his family.

At the meeting, Interim City Manager Megan Antrim recommended Losoya for the position as he was the captain of the police department, the second highest position on the force, and has been acting as interim chief in Martin’s absence.

Antrim said Losoya, who has been with the department since December 1994, should be rewarded for his commitment to the city and that his appointment makes sense considering his rank within the force. “Darrell has been with the police department for over 27 years. As an employee when you get hired with the City of Alpine, you are encouraged for day one: Learn more, do more, get the training, get the certifications and you will move up. You will advance,” she said.

While not trying to doubt Losoya’s qualifications for chief of police, Councilmember Chris Rodriguez said that the council should open the application process up to the public. “I feel we should put it out there for advertisement to see if there is anybody that is interested. There’s plenty of officers even within the Alpine Police Department that have been there for quite a long time and may be interested in it,” Rodriguez said. “It has nothing to do with Darrell’s capability.”

“Yes, there are many people who may be able to fill the position,” Antrim later responded. “They should all work up to that position. So that is why I am recommending Darrell.”

During the meeting, Losoya came before the council to talk about his qualifications and why he’s the right person to lead the department, saying that he’s been committed to Alpine his entire life. “This is the community I was born and raised in, and I love this town. I would do anything for my community to make them have a safe and productive life. So whatever I can do to help this community, I’m going to do it,” Losoya said in an interview later.

Prior to working for the city, Losoya was in the military until 1993 when he returned home to Alpine. After going to the police academy in 1995, Losoya became a reserve police officer at the department for an entire year. Then in 1996, he started working full time for the department.

Through the years, Losoya said, he has steadily risen through the ranks. “The entire time [I was] just building my way up: as a full-time police officer, sergeant,

lieutenant, and then in 2016 I was appointed as the captain of the police department,” he said.

Back in 2019, Losoya, while captain, was in the running to become the new chief of police after Chief Russell Scown left the department, yet was passed over for Chief Martin. At the time, Losoya was the acting chief of police while the council looked for a new head of the department.

As Losoya explained it, then City Manager Erik Zimmer had the applications vetted by an officer from another police department who had recommended Losoya be nominated for the position. Despite that, the city council chose Chief Martin, who at the time had 23 years in law enforcement including eight years in a supervisory role at the Katy Police Department and almost three years with the Brewster County Sheriff’s Office and was working as a security officer assigned to the Brewster County Courthouse, as *The Big Bend Sentinel* previously [reported](#).

“I don’t know what happened in 2019, to be honest with you. I don’t know what happened,” Losoya said. “I appreciate Chief Martin because I did learn things from him. But this is my home. I’m born here. I’ll die here.”

If chosen, Losoya said that he plans to smooth over relations with other law enforcement agencies in the area, particularly with the Brewster County Sheriff’s Office. As *The Big Bend Sentinel* previously [reported](#), the two agencies have publicly butt heads in recent years. Back in the summer of 2020, then District Attorney Sandy Wilson claimed that the sheriff’s office was refusing to work with the police department or let police use its jail, which she said was a threat to public safety at the time.

Despite past tensions, Losoya said he has what it takes to bring the two law enforcement agencies together. “The main thing is to unify with the other law enforcement agencies better than what we’ve been in the past. We’ve had some rough relationships but we are going to work on those,” Losoya said in an interview following his nomination. “Of course, with all agencies, there’s always some differences, but we’ve been able to get past them.”

Brewster County Sheriff Ronny Dodson said that he was pleased to see Losoya selected for the position. “I’ve known Darrell all through his law enforcement career from the very beginning when he was a dispatcher. I think he’s going to do fine,” Dodson said. “He’s not a bully. He’ll work with anybody. I was very supportive of him getting the job.”

“I think for several years now, Darrell has been running the police department without the title or the pay,” Dodson later added.

When it came to the vote, all council members present at the meeting voted in favor of appointing Losoya.

TxDOT

(Continued from page 1)

middle of the intersection when leaving the courthouse parking spots.

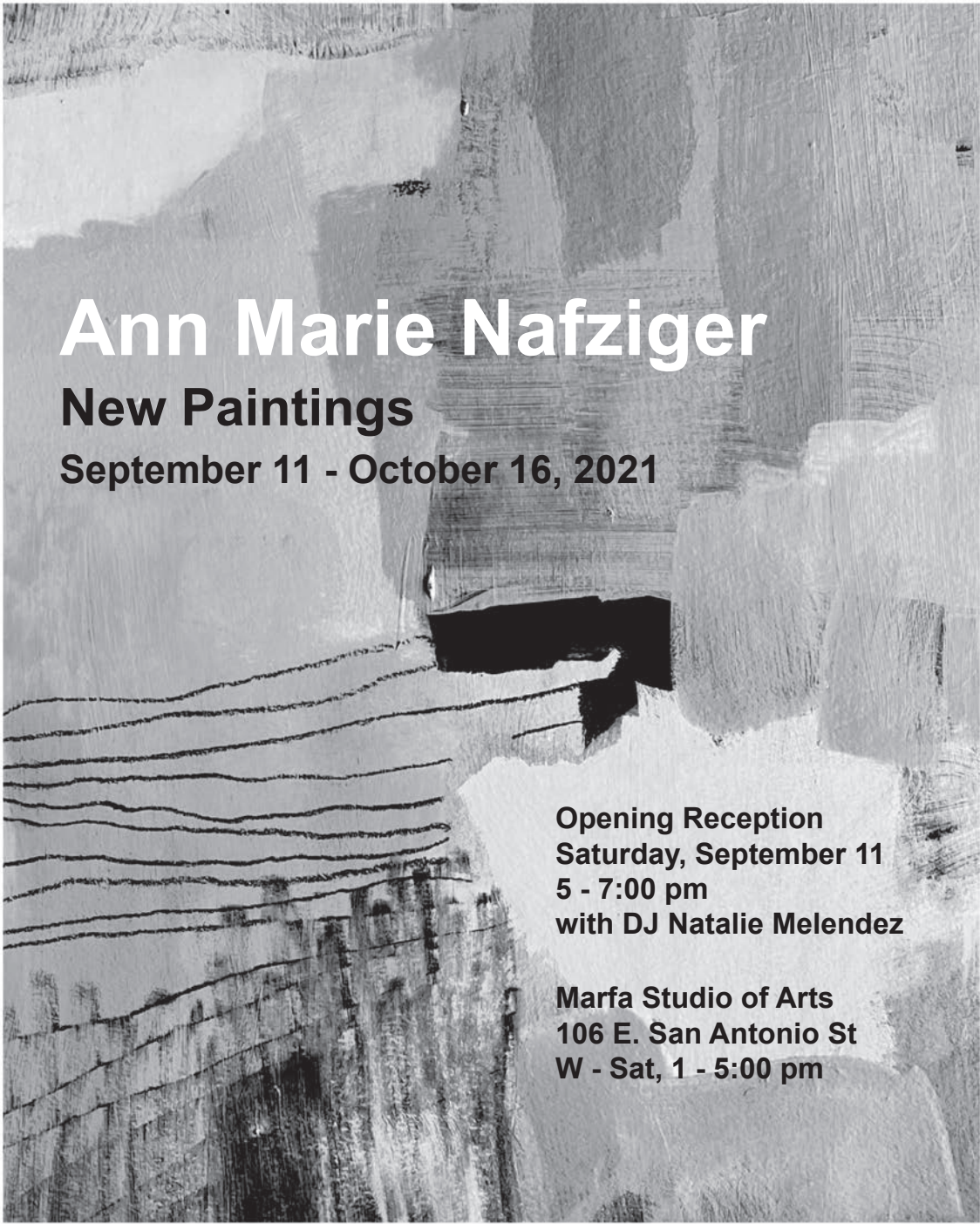
Lauren Macias-Cervantes, a public information officer with the Texas Department of Transportation, explained that the mill and overlay work will rely on a “spray paver” instead of a traditional seal coat under the hot mix surface, which will make the construction project less noisy and decrease the amount of time that businesses on the city’s main drag will be impacted by construction.

Along with the paving and intersection improvements, the first phase of the project will focus on drainage work near the Marfa water tower on Highway 17/North Dean

Street. Drivers in town will be rerouted through the neighborhood for about a month while crews rebuild a damaged concrete box underground that is part of the drainage system, which has degraded over time from use.

According to Omar Moreno, the Alpine assistant area engineer, construction work by TxDOT should last eight to ten weeks. “We’re going to try to phase the projects so that we can minimize the impacts to the residents, the businesses and the people traveling through the area,” Moreno said.

Street parking along Highland Avenue will be affected, but sidewalks and businesses along the downtown strip will remain accessible.



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- Beehive Cheese with Hatch Chili
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- Lavender Smoked Gouda
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- Mature Gouda
- Salumis: Loukanika, Saucisson Sec, Chorizo Rioja, Finocchiona

Crackers and Snacks

- Moonshot Sourdough Crackers
- Quinoa Crackers
- Rosemary Crackers
- Cassava Crackers
- Seed Crackers
- Black Truffle Almonds
- Ranch Smoked Almonds Edamame
- Beans
- Seasoned Sunflower Seeds
- Barbecue Roasted Corn Snack

Teas, Coffees and Creamers

- Pour Over Vietnamese Coffee
- Chai Iced Tea
- Thai Iced Tea
- Matcha Iced Tea
- Elderberry Healing Tea
- Organic Matcha Tea
- Organic Gunpowder Green Tea
- Wellness Detox Tea
- Adaptogenic Matcha Latte
- Adaptogenic Turmeric Latte
- Marfa Coffee
- Oat creamer, Coconut Creamer and Collagen Creamer

Drinks

- Dozen Cocktail Mixers & Shrubs
- Espresso and Dark Chocolate Milk
- Kombuchas
- Diverse Beer Selection
- Flavored Waters
- Sodas
- Delta Eight Products
- Red, White and Rose Wine
- Champagne and Prosecco

Olive Oil & Sauces

- Japanese Barbecue Sauce
- Chipotle Marinade
- Moroccan Harissa Sauce
- Sichuan Chili Sauce
- Umami Ketchup
- Specialty Olive Oils and Vinegars
- Rustic Vodka Pasta Sauce
- Romesco Sauce
- Over a Dozen Salts
- ...And More

Spreads

- Quince Paste
- Fig Paste
- Hazelnut Spread
- Various Nut Butters
- Uncured Bacon Jam
- Fig Spread
- Rhubarb, Raspberry & Vanilla Jam
- Black Cherry, Dark Chocolate, Espelette Pepper Jam

Chips and Salsas

- Siete Corn Chips
- Taco Deli Corn Chips
- Tiny But Mighty Popcorn
- Crispy Potato and Bacon Chips
- Pipcorn Cheddar Cheese Balls
- Cheddar Jalapeño Crunchies
- Parmesan Truffle Crunchies
- Native Andean Potato Chips Golden Plantain Chips
- Cactus Grain Free Tortilla Chips
- Salsas, Hot Sauces & Sriracha

Sweets and Bars

- Dried Fruits
- Moon Pies and Mindy Lou’s Pies
- Oaxacan Shortbread Cookies
- Oreo Fudge
- Bonbons with Sea Salt Caramel
- Bonbons with Peanut Butter Toffee
- Mexican Wedding Cookies
- Killer Sweet Pecans
- Organic Sour Chewy Candies
- Matcha Butter Waffles
- Lemon Blueberry Bar, Chocolate Cherry Bar, Figgy Chai Bar & Mexican Hot Chocolate Bar
- (many soy-free, gluten free and no refined sugar)

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Opinions

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

We would like to give a huge thanks to the citizens of Marfa and our extended community for making this year's Marfa Lights Festival a success! After the challenges of the pandemic, it was a joy to see friends, families and neighbors in the streets around the courthouse enjoying music, food and each other's company.

As always, this event would not have been possible without our volunteers, vendors, performers, sponsors and everyone who came out to celebrate with us. A number of businesses, organizations and individuals went above and beyond, deserving mention: AEP, Marfa PD, Marfa VFD, Marfa EMS, the City of Marfa, TXDot, Presidio County, Presidio County Sheriff's Department, the Paisano Hotel, Cactus Liquors, El Cosmico, Republic Services, Budweiser, Sarah Vasquez, Lisa Kettyle, Junie Villarreal, Manny Baeza, Mark Rodriguez and Patrick Haly, thank you for your contribution.

We look forward to seeing you all at the 35th Marfa Lights Festival in 2022!

Sincerely,
The Marfa Chamber of Commerce
Abby Boyd, President
Albert Dominguez, Vice President
Audrey Herrera, Secretary
Consuelo Chavez, Treasurer
Eddie Pallarez, member
Virgie Pallarez, member
Patrick Rivera, member
Tim Johnson, member

...

Dear Editor,

How Dare You!

Headline: "Governor signs 'Texas Heartless Act' — New September 1 state holiday 'Forced Into Labor Day' replaces annual workers' holiday"

Texas is ground zero for an ideology's theocratic tyranny. I'm not exaggerating, nor quoting *The Onion*. Joined by one Democrat representative and senator, GOP legislated dystopian-level cruelties concerning the personal issue of abortion.

There's no exemption when impregnated through rape or incest, when the mother's health is at risk or if fetus has serious medical problems.

"Unprecedented," said Chief Justice Roberts dissenting in SCOTUS's failure to enjoin SB-8.

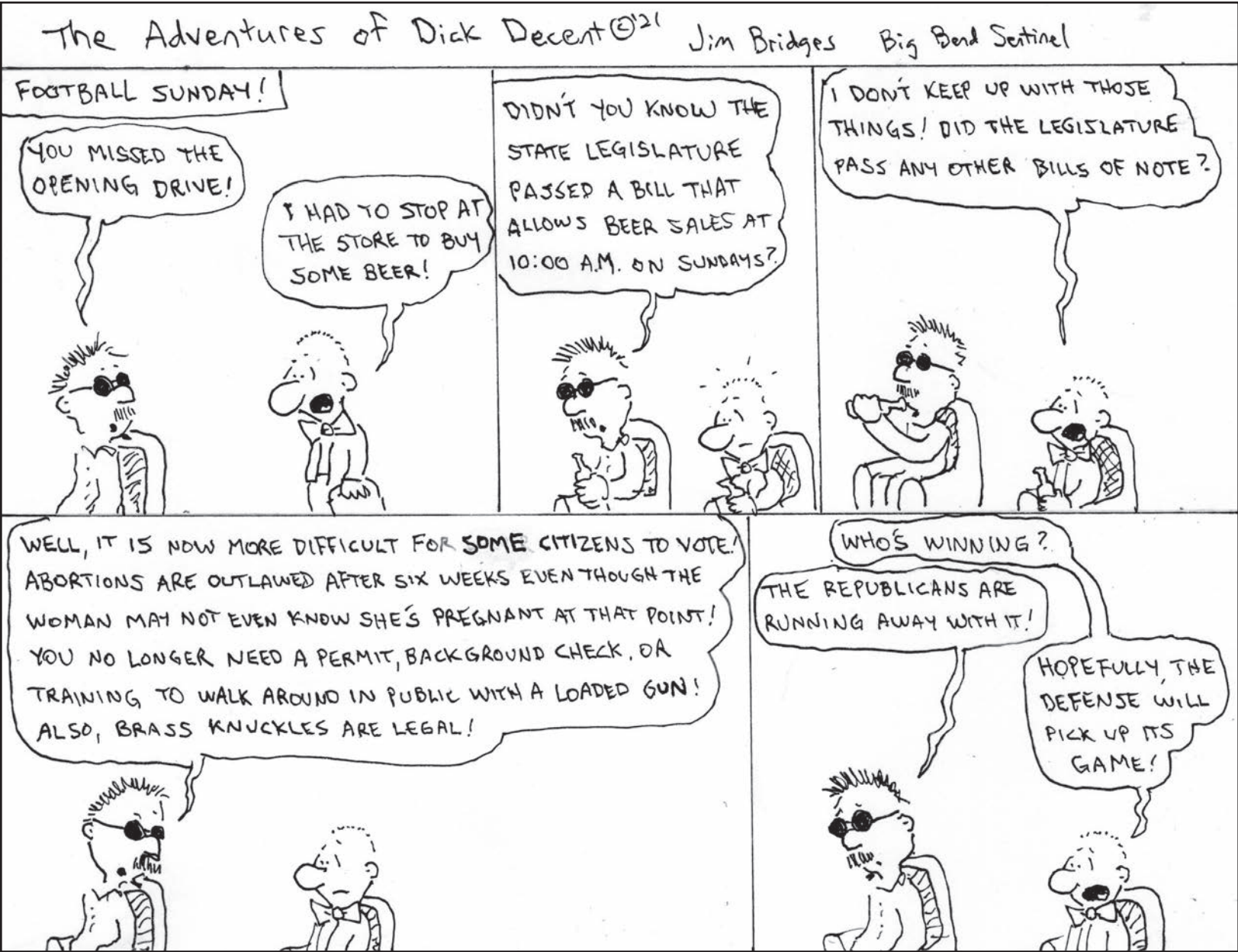
The German anti-Nazi lament "*They came for me, too, and there was no one left to help*" has new meaning. Potentially everyone is a bounty hunter or hunted. Shredding long-established Constitutional and civil law principles, what is the "causal connection" creating financial liability, either intentionally or unwittingly "facilitating" a post-6-week abortion?

Don't want to be called CINO (Conservative In Name Only) showing an ounce of milk of human kindness or compassion instituting Puritanical Piety? Heartlessness created a monster adept at ensnaring Conservative True Believers! Nature lands in the lives of legislators (themselves, their wives, daughters, girlfriends) too.

Needing emotional and physical support the most during a natural biological function — pregnancy — has been turned into a political bloodsport. How dare you?!

What demon seed spawned such imprudent madness? It certainly wasn't the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew Ch. 5-7). Fertilized without a scintilla of empathy, it has been proposed in other GOP states.

This is the time of a woman's greatest vulnerability. Please, apply divine grace and mercy in a widening circle of love. Do so before your time of



great vulnerability finds you confronted with the jack-heel boot of arbitrary, authoritarian despotism planted firmly on your throat — and reproductive organs.

Rev. Barry Abraham Zavah
Alpine

...

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- Letters should be sent to editor@bigbendsentinel.com, and must provide the writer's full name, city of residence and an email or phone number, so that we may follow up and verify information as needed.
 - Your letters may be edited for clarity and brevity. While opinions of all kinds are welcome, when it comes to claims of fact, we strive to only publish what is verifiable.
 - We have limited staff capacity to fact check unsubstantiated claims, so letters that include those may be held or remain unpublished if information is not easily verifiable.
 - We may reach out to ask questions and verify the identity of the sender. We do not run letters anonymously unless the sender is privately identified and has a reasonable claim to anonymity.
 - We reserve the right to hold or refrain from publishing a letter for any reason and we thank you for always sharing your letters with us.
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The Rio Grande Area Agency on Aging Benefits Counselors want to make sure that Medicare beneficiaries have the most-up-to-date information about their Medicare benefits

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Colorectal cancer screenings
Depression screening
Diabetes screenings
Diabetes self-management training
Flu shots
Glaucoma tests

Source: *Medicare & You Handbook*

Hepatitis B shots
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Hepatitis C screening test
HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) screening
Lung cancer screening
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Obesity screening and counseling
Pneumococcal shots
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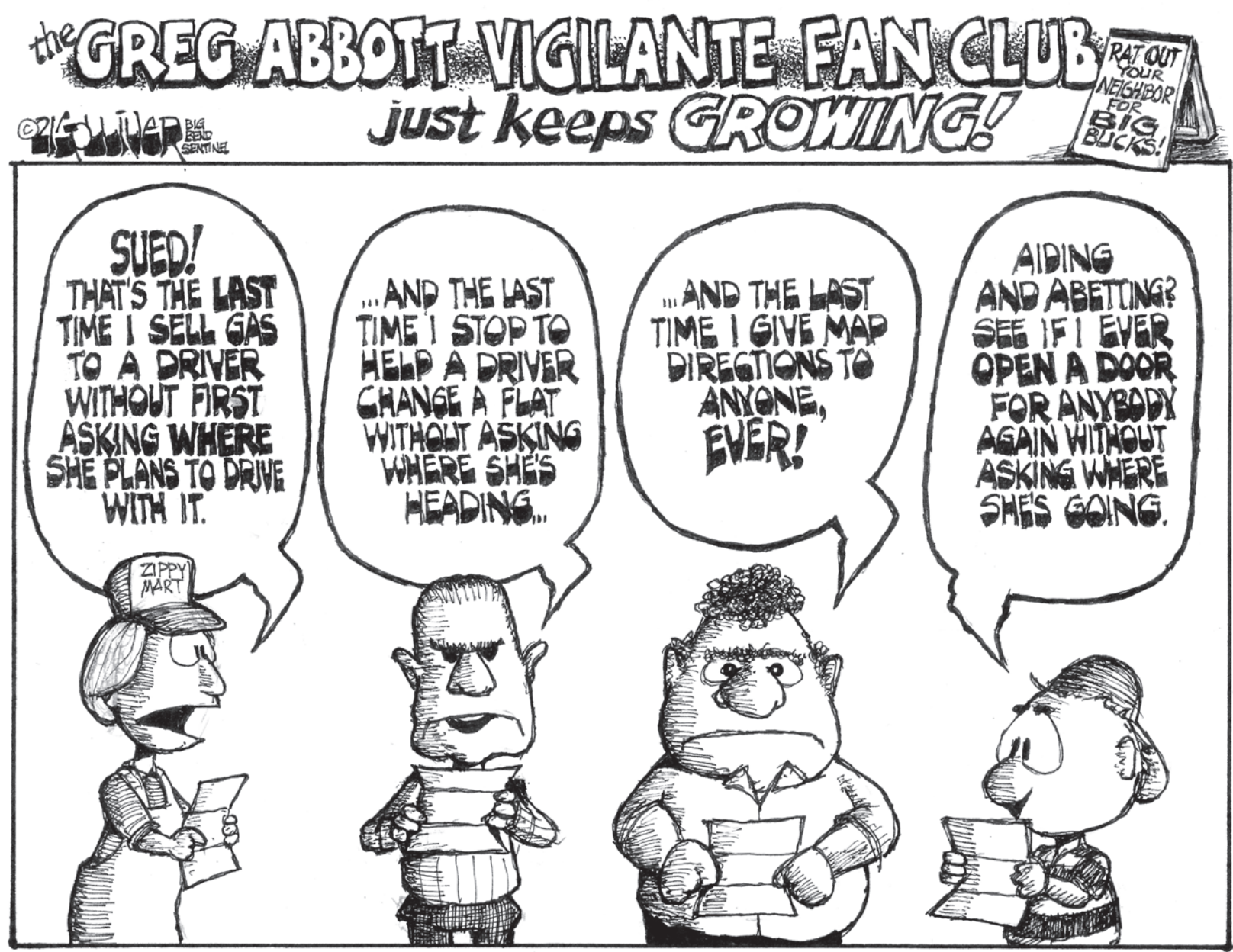
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Our business operations have temporarily changed. Currently, we are not open to the public for in-office appointments, however we are available to assist you by phone.

The Rio Grande Area Agency on Aging serves persons 60 years of age and older and their families that reside in El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, Brewster and Presidio Counties. It is funded by the Older Americans Act through the Texas Health and Human Services Commission



HIGH DESERT SKETCHES

Schools, the pandemic and modern education

By GEORGE A. COVINGTON

If the so-called “constitutional carry” law had been in effect in 1950, I would have never made it out of the first grade at Grim Elementary. When Miss Steele wrote a word on the board and told us to copy it down, she turned to find me standing behind her. She immediately wanted to know why I was not at my desk, and I explained that I had to be a few feet from the word to see it. She asked, “Where are your glasses?” and I explained that glasses did not help my eye condition. Despite the fact that I had a note from the eye doctor, my poor mother was forced to buy me glasses that did not help me one bit. Miss Steele then informed me that I was to sit on the front desk of the first row despite the fact that I could not see any better. Later that day I was disciplined for talking for the third time and received a paddling with a ping pong paddle in the cloakroom. Before the year was out, three ping pong paddles had been broken trying to impede my free speech.

One day Miss Steele caught me talking and decided to give me the ultimate punishment, “George if you have something to say come up to the front of the room and tell the whole class.” Half an hour later she realized she had made a terrible mistake.

For the rest of the year, when she reached a point of despair she would call me to the front of the room and simply say, “Tell them a story,” and she would leave the room for half an hour. I thought she was being rather brave because half the room consisted of us kids from the housing project. I really enjoyed these times when I had free reign over my First Amendment rights and imagination. The class remained silent during my most creative stories, most involving cartoon characters. If we had been wearing masks when Miss Steele returned to the room she would have called for the local SWAT Team after emptying her Colt .45 at anything that moved.

Toward the end of the school year, she said, “Covington, come to my desk.” I protested because I had not been talking. When I arrived at her desk, she said, “If you ever earn an honest dollar in your life it would be as a writer, now go back to your desk.” That was the first piece of wisdom I got from Grim Elementary. The second bit of wisdom I received came a few years later when I discovered a quote from Albert Einstein. He stated (although I later discovered he may have not said it, but he should have): “Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I’m not sure about the universe.”

The third thing I learned was that anything outside the norm of the day was communist-based. I didn’t know what a communist was, but I knew it was applied to people who wanted to warp our little minds and probably send us to hell. If you look around today, we could be back in 1950. Is it any wonder that I began to write satirically in high school? Gov. Abbott’s party has decided that they are all super educators and can decide what is best for the state’s children because the word communist is too complex for most of the gov’s political base and they have trouble spelling it. The gov has discovered a shiny new set of words with which to engage and enrage his followers. Making his usual pious pronouncements with righteous rectitude, he proclaimed that he will save all the school children from “critical race theory.”



Never mind that the governor and his followers don’t have the slightest idea of what “critical race theory” is all about or why the theory was created. I recently heard an interview with the creator of racial political theory. The academician stated, “I created critical race theory as a tool for graduate students in the social sciences. It was always intended as a research tool for these graduate students, not for the elementary, secondary or high school students.” It’s obvious that the governor likes to pick terms he knows nothing about and then defines them in any way that suits his current political cause.

The gov’s latest dip into schizophrenic politics is to proclaim himself fit to ignore the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control while every medical professional is proclaiming that the new COVID-19 delta variant can be slowed if children returning to class are told to wear a protective mask. He has proclaimed that only he can make mandates — not the local educational or medical professionals. School districts in Houston, Austin, Dallas, and at least 41 other school districts have announced they will ignore his rantings. Their common sense may save hundreds of lives, but who cares, the kids can’t vote in the next election. This kind of political non-thinking will allow my readers to understand why I have always had an appreciation for the absurd.

George A. Covington has worked in the fields of law, education, journalism and disability rights. He considers himself retired from every one of them with the possible exception of journalism. He is a graduate of the University of Texas schools of Journalism and Law. He moved to West Texas – Alpine - in 1997 after a 20-year career in Washington, D.C. where he once served on the staff of the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives (Democrat) and shortly thereafter served as Special Assistant to the Vice President of the United States (Republican) 1989 to 1993.

Crowcrumbs is a Houston-based illustrator. Follow her on Instagram @crowcrumbs.

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OUR WATER MATTERS

2021 Texas
Groundwater
Summit

By TREY GERFERS

TEXAS — Another successful Texas Groundwater Summit wrapped up at the end of last week in San Antonio. The event, which has been held every year since 2011, is organized by the Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts and attracts hundreds of groundwater professionals, scientists, lawmakers, attorneys, consultants and vendors from across the state.

This year’s summit included a fascinating look at aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) projects in Texas. ASR is a human-induced process or a natural process enhanced by humans to convey water underground. This usually involves the injection of water from the surface into a well leading to an aquifer below the surface, where the water can be stored and recovered in times of need. ASR has a lot of benefits because the water is stored underground (rather than in reservoirs) so it doesn’t evaporate and is less likely to be contaminated. Also, there is no need to condemn someone’s land for a reservoir, and recovering the injected water is usually fairly straightforward. There are currently three such projects in Texas: one was built in El Paso in 1985 to inject recycled water, a second was developed in Kerrville for the Upper Guadalupe River Authority in 1995, and the third one was completed by the San Antonio Water System in south Bexar County in 2004. ASR could be a future solution for the Big Bend region, where water tends to fall profusely during major rain events. Instead of allowing this water to run off or stand somewhere and evaporate, it could be captured and stored underground.

Another exciting presentation at the Groundwater Summit involved the work of the Southwest Research Institute (SwRI) in the Balmorhea springs complex. Although scientists have been studying these springs for decades, each spring’s source area and the interconnections among the springs have remained poorly understood. As demand for water in the area continues to increase at unprecedented rates due to oil and gas exploration, there is an urgent need for a better understanding of these source areas in order to eventually enable smarter decisions about where to pump groundwater. With funding from the Big Bend Conservation Alliance, SwRI scientists Ron Green and Rebecca Nunu collected water samples from all six major springs in the area: San Solomon (which feeds the pool at the state park), Phantom Lake, Giffin, Saragosa, West Sandia, and East Sandia. By identifying distinguishing features in the isotopes and chemical signatures of these waters, the scientists were able to solve one of the mysteries that has evaded past research. They definitively determined that the springs are not all connected. It turns out that San Solomon, Phantom Lake, and Giffin springs form one group that is supplied from the same source. East and West Sandia springs are a separate system supplied from a different source. And Saragosa Spring appears to be a shallow seepage spring supplied mostly by rainfall. Further research will involve more sampling to the west and southwest of Balmorhea to continue tracing these distinct sources based on the isotopes and chemical signatures revealed in the SwRI study.

The Texas Groundwater Summit also included a presentation on the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) and how it relates to Texas water. The federal government has already disbursed billions of dollars in ARPA funds (also referred to as “COVID funds”) to state, county and city governments throughout the country. But many officials are still unclear about what these funds can be spent on. Carlos Rubinstein of RSAH2O, an environmental regulatory and compliance consulting firm in Austin, recommends taking a flexible approach based on the wording of the act. According to Rubinstein, the law gives local governments and entities a lot of leeway in how they allocate ARPA funds to boost “resilience” among “underserved communities,” such as our unincorporated areas, and improve “readiness” in the face of natural disasters, such as drought, floods and wildfires. Projects such as aquifer storage and recovery as well as routine groundwater monitoring are just a few of the tools that promote this kind of resilience and readiness. County and city leaders should be encouraged to allocate ARPA funds to these efforts.

Stay tuned for future issues of *Our Water Matters* where I’ll be covering these topics in greater depth to help improve your understanding of water, research and policy.

Trey Gerfers is a San Antonio native and serves as Board Chairman of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District. He earns his living as a translator of technical documents from German to English for the German and Swiss pharmaceutical and medical-science industries. Trey has lived in Marfa since 2013.

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Staff photos by Maisie Crow

Top left: Marfa High School Homecoming Queen Soraya Vallez chats with friends as she waits for last week’s homecoming parade to begin. Top right: Junior Class Homecoming Duke Juan Bautista and his mom, Angela Gutierrez, get ready for the homecoming court to be presented prior to the homecoming football game last Friday. Bottom left: Sophomore Homecoming Duchess Liani Salcido smiles at her grandfather, Arturo Gutierrez, as they walk off of the football field after the homecoming court presentation. Bottom right: Ian Marquez scores a touchdown for the Shorthorns during Marfa High School’s homecoming game against Holy Cross last Friday.

Shorthorns stampede to victory in Friday homecoming football game

By ABBIE PERRAULT
abbie@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — The Marfa Shorthorns varsity football team put on a dominant performance this past Friday as they beat the Holy Cross Crusaders 61 to 13 in front of an enthusiastic homecoming crowd. The home team’s impressive shutdown defense and relentless offense set the stage for individual players to shine with penetrating runs, crucial tackles, and key interceptions, as the cheers from the stands mixed with the sounds of music from the nearby Marfa Lights Festival on this festive Friday. As storm clouds passed along the horizon, the sun shone down on a lively scene at Marfa High School’s Martin Field. Before the game, the Marfa Highschool Homecoming Court was announced, with students proceeding onto the field, flanked by parents or family members, as their names, accomplishments and aspirations were announced over the PA system to cheers from the crowd. Homecoming King Ian Marquez and Homecoming Queen Soraya Vallez were crowned by Principal Allison Scott, smiling for photos from the stands. Classmates also named Cristian Ontiveroz and Odalys Chacon as homecoming prince and princess.

Home and away fans filled the stands — unless

they were waiting in line at the concessions stand for the Booster Club’s ample menu of nachos, hot dogs, popcorn and more. Meanwhile, Marfa’s cheerleaders, including Marfa’s tutu-wearing mascot, Bullette, brought energy, enthusiasm and choreography to the game with chants, dances, the wave, and even some impressive aerials. “It’s great to have Friday night lights back, to turn on the lights and have the feeling of the rush of the boys running through the tunnel,” said Head Coach Arturo Alferez. Dual quarterbacks #6 Ontiveroz and #26 Juan Avila were taking snaps on game day, rocketing the football into the arms of their team. The game itself started with bang, as the Shorthorns in purple scored quickly after receiving the kickoff. On the initial drive, #33, freshman Derrick Campos, ran the ball through the Crusader defense to get Marfa on the board. The point after touchdown attempt, a pass into the end zone, was also good, giving the Shorthorns a quick 7-0 lead. This set the tone for much of the game: whenever in possession, the Shorthorns steadily moved the Crusaders off the ball and advanced the line of scrimmage up the field, consistently outmatching their defensive opposition. Later in the first quarter, after Ethan Bollinger ran the ball in for the Crusader’s first points of the game, the Shorthorns responded in kind, with

#1 Ian Marquez exploiting and running through holes in the Crusader’s defense with ease. This was followed by a successful two-point kick attempt. Shortly after, in the second quarter, #33 Campos broke through the Holy Cross defense once again for a touchdown, with a burst of speed and agility that put him 20 yards ahead of the nearest defender. This was then followed by another touchdown by #10 on the Shorthorns, Uriel Torres. Moments before the end of the first half, Holy Cross scored for a second time, bringing their total to 13. But this would be their last points of the game, as the Shorthorns clamped down on defense and extinguished any chance of a comeback. At the start of the third quarter, Torres once again found his way into the end zone, powering through and past the Crusaders’ defensive line, to bring the score to 41-13, but the Shorthorns weren’t done scoring yet. Soon after, Coach Alferez’s team showed they were a passing threat just as much as a running one, with Ian Marquez finding space to collect a ball lofted to him in the Crusader’s endzone. With the points after touchdown kick attempt successful, a pattern throughout the night, the score now stood at 49-13 in the Shorthorns’ favor. The Crusaders kept fighting to the end, giving the home fans a scare at one point as they ran the

ball through a gap in the defensive line and looked to have broken free. Fortunately, Shorthorn Zach Wilson, the last defender between the Crusaders and the endzone, provided a key tackle that snuffed out the away team’s charge. The Shorthorns continued to put on a defensive clinic in the second half, with multiple interceptions by Marquez, the second of which he ran all the way back for a touchdown bringing the score to 55-13, as well as another pick six by Wilson and relentless tackling from Torres. #21 Ana Gallegos also scored her first tackle on defense on Friday, the sole young woman playing for the Shorthorns. Finally, halfway through the fourth quarter, number #13, Adrian Cataño, punched his way through the Holy Cross defense for what would be the last time. Carrying the ball down most of the field, Cataño found space and didn’t let off the gas until he had crossed into the endzone, bringing the score to 61-13. The game was over with 4:56 minutes left on the board, as six-man football games end if a team has a lead of 45 at any point in the second half. It was a fitting finale: the crowd screaming, cheerleaders cheering, and a Marfa Shorthorn, Cataño, a purple blur dodging and weaving his way through the opposition, leaving them behind and racing down the field.

DRAWING OF THE WEEK



Aubrie Aguilar,
Painting
11th grade

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MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

THU, SEP 9: JH Football vs St. Marks : 5:00pm
SAT, SEP 11: HS Volleyball vs Balmorhea @ Marfa Varsity 12:00pm JV, 1:00pm
TUE, SEP 14: JH Volleyball vs Sierra Blanca @ Sierra Blanca 4:00pm
TUE, SEP 14: Varsity Volleyball vs Sierra Blanca @ Sierra Blanca 5:00 pm, 6:00pm

Community



Staff photo by Maisie Crow

Genevieve Bassham, a former Marfa mayor and city council person, leads the 34th annual Marfa Lights Parade as its grand marshall. Bassham, who is a descendant of the Jumano people, was followed by a long line of parade participants including members of the Jumano tribe during their first time participating in the event.

Marfa lights

(Continued from page 1)

“It’s everything you hope a small town festival will be. I think it’s a lot about the real Marfa.”

Bassham, who was this year’s grand marshal riding in a convertible at the head of the parade, said she was impressed by how many organizations participated in the celebration. “We were in front leading the parade. We were going slow but at the same time, I turned around and it was a long line,” she said. “I couldn’t even see the end of it.”

Bassham said it was nice to see the Jumano tribe, of which she is a member, have a float in the parade. “I think that was the first time they participated,” she said.

David Chavez has been coming every year since he moved here in the 1990s to become city manager, albeit for only a short while. He said, “Of course [Marfa Lights] diminished in size a lot. It used to be quite an event. But just like everything else in Marfa, the population has declined. The opportunities for young people have declined. After they graduate, it’s a mass exodus somewhere else. You gotta go where the jobs are.”

Yet for Boyd that’s what makes Marfa Lights so special, as it serves as a homecoming for those that have left town. “I saw a lot of people’s sons, nephews and cousins reuniting. I saw people with family reunion



Photo by Sarah M. Vasquez

Marfa residents Elizabeth Farrell and Zeke Raney dance during The Grand Tourists performance Saturday evening at the 34th annual Marfa Lights Festival.

T-shirts on,” she said. “I know a lot of the members of the chamber who’ve lived here, born and raised here, had family in town that they don’t get to see all the time. I think a lot of people make this their annual family reunion.”

There was even a marriage proposal at the La Fiebre show on Saturday in which PJ Serrano asked Sonya Murillo to be his wife. “We met a little over four years ago. We made plans to meet up that weekend and go to Marfa Lights. It just so happened that La Fiebre was playing that weekend and we shared our first dance together at the Marfa Lights,” Serrano said.

“Though I was nervous I still asked without skipping

a beat,” he said. “As far as I know I am the only one to get on stage in front of thousands and ask someone to marry them during Marfa Lights weekend!”

And overall, Boyd said that Marfa Lights went over about as well as she could’ve hoped for. “We weren’t sure at the beginning, because of COVID, what the turnout would be like or what the community response would be, but in the end we got a lot of positive feedback from the attendees, and we got a lot of support from the community and we are super grateful for that,” Boyd said. “I think next year, hopefully when things are a little more clear, hopefully we will have more time for strategic thinking on this next one.”

Motorcycle rally returns to Presidio



Photo by Hannah Gentiles for The Big Bend Sentinel

Participants pull their final card from Arian Velazquez-Ornelas, after the closing of the River Run to The Post event on Saturday afternoon.

By SACHI MCCLENDON
sachi@bigbendsentinel.com

PRESIDIO — The sixth annual River Run to the Post was held last Saturday over Labor Day weekend at the Presidio Trading Post & Cantina. The motorcycle rally, which begins at the Trading Post, winds its way down FM 170, also known as River Road, all the way to Terlingua, at which point the bikers turn around and head back to Presidio.

To spice things up this year, the bike rally did what’s known as a “poker run” with a \$15 entry fee. According to Hiram Carrera, whose father owns the Trading Post, as the bikers make their way down to Terlingua, they make a series of stops along the way. At those stops, the bikers each pick up a card from a playing deck. “At the end of the run, whoever has the best hand wins the pot,” he said.

While Carrera doesn’t know what stops the bikers made along the way this year, he said that they usually frequent classic biker stops — like bars and specific rest stops off the side of the road. “I honestly don’t know what stops they are going to take. It’s an all day thing. They’re going to leave at like 10 a.m. and they won’t be back until 6ish,” he said.

The first River Run to the Post happened in 2016, right around the time Carrera’s dad opened the Trading Post. “There’s a handful of my dad’s customers that come to the bar regularly that are bikers. When we first did our grand opening, we decided to do a bike rally to celebrate,” Carrera said.

The Trading Post did play host to the River Run in 2020, just on a much smaller scale. “Last year was just a small one, just like with a couple of my dad’s friends because of the pandemic and all that,” he said.

“Supposedly it’s one of the most scenic routes to cruise down on a motorcycle.”

This year, Carrera was expecting 40 to 50 riders to join in on the rally. He said that the biking scene has grown over the years with the discovery of the river road’s beauty. “Supposedly it’s one of the most scenic routes to cruise down on a motorcycle,” he said. “It’s really more about how much more popular that drive between Presidio and Lajitas has become. A lot more people have kind of found out about it.”

The day before the rally on Friday, the Trading Post hosted a social night at the post. Bikers were also invited to camp on the Trading Post’s grounds and all participants were given free food. “We provide breakfast in the morning, like breakfast burritos,” Carrera said.

For Carrera, he’s just happy to host this rally in Presidio during Labor Day weekend. He said that even though there’s bigger events going on in Marfa, like the Marfa Lights Festival, that there’s still plenty to do in south county over the weekend leading up to the federal holiday.

Exhibition of new paintings by Ann Marie Nafziger opens Saturday at Marfa Studio of Arts

MARFA — An exhibition of new paintings by Ann Marie Nafziger opens Saturday evening, September 11, at Marfa Studio of Arts on East San Antonio Street. The opening runs from 5 – 7 p.m. and DJ Natalie Melendez will play music outdoors under the front awning. Everyone is invited.

Nafziger is showing 16 paintings, all of them made over the past two years in her studio in Marfa. The work is abstract and made mostly with acrylic on canvas or paper. In many of the paintings transparent washes, brush marks and drips contrast with flat planes of color or dark pockets of black or gray. Lines made with graphite or marker sometimes appear, adding areas of pattern or, in some cases, connecting parts of a painting like threads. In two of the works on paper, the artist uses collage and other mixed media.

The show marks Nafziger’s return to painting after time away from the studio, and her interest in color is apparent — from the exuberant combination of crimson, pink and bright blue in “Tilt-a-Whirl” to the more subdued rosy-browns and pale yellows in “Cusp of September.”

Born and raised in rural Ohio, Nafziger spent a decade in the Pacific Northwest before moving to Far West Texas in 2002. These places (and especially their contrasts) are significant to the artist; a few titles nod to them including “Ohio Rose (for AK),” “Canopy” and “Western Skies.”

Nafziger’s show runs through October 16. Marfa Studio of Arts is located at 106 E. San Antonio Street in Marfa. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 1 - 5 p.m.



Ann Marie Nafziger in her studio.

Photo by Shannon Duncan

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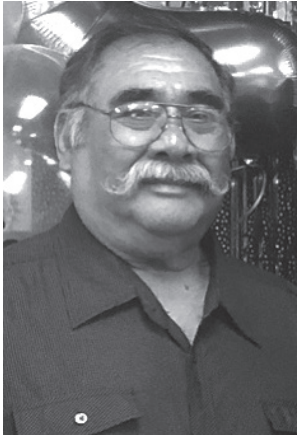
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OBITUARY



Yslas

Francisco “Pancho” Yslas, 74, beloved husband, father and grandfather was called to his eternal resting place on August 19, 2021. He was born on April 1,1947, to Andres and Enriqueta Yslas in El Paso, Texas.

After graduating from Jefferson High School, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and served during the Vietnam War where he was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Marksman M-14, Bronze Star, Vietnam Service Medal and two Purple Hearts. He moved back to El Paso after being honorably discharged where he met the love of his life, Rita Roman Yslas, and they were united in marriage on August 26, 1972.

In 1974 he proudly started his career at the El Paso Sector with the United States Department of Justice as a detention enforcement officer with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. He was promoted to supervisor and relocated his family to Marfa, Texas, the little town that captured his heart. He retired after 34 years of service alongside his inseparable

sidekick Johnny Sanchez.

Francisco is preceded in death by his parents, and brothers Antonio Yslas, Luis Yslas and Enrique Yslas.

Those left to cherish Francisco’s memory are his beloved wife, Rita Yslas; daughters Lorraine Yslas Holzheuser and Cassandra Yslas; grandchildren Tyler Holzheuser, Aiden Holzheuser and Lena Holzheuser; brothers Andres Yslas and Victor Yslas; sisters Maria Elena Murphy and Claudia Yslas; and many nieces, nephews, family and friends.

Visitation for family and friends will be held on Thursday, September 16, at 11 a.m. in Marfa at St. Mary’s Catholic Church, rosary will precede at 1 p.m. followed by mass. Burial will be held on Friday, September 17, in El Paso at Ft. Bliss National Cemetery at 2 p.m. MST.

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Thank you

We, the family of Frank "Pancho" Martinez, would like to take this time to thank everyone for their prayers, flowers, cards, food & phone calls during this very difficult time.

It was such a blessing to know so many people cared for him.

Again thank you so much,
The Martinez Family

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Explanatory Statements for the November 2, 2021 Constitutional Amendment Election

Proposition Number 1 (HJR 143)

HJR 143 proposes a constitutional amendment expanding the circumstances in which a professional sports team charitable foundation may conduct raffles to raise money for the foundation’s charitable purposes. The proposed amendment would allow professional sports team charitable foundations of organizations sanctioned by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association or the Women’s Professional Rodeo Association to hold charitable raffles at rodeo events.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: “The constitutional amendment authorizing the professional sports team charitable foundations of organizations sanctioned by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association or the Women’s Professional Rodeo Association to conduct charitable raffles at rodeo venues.”

Proposition Number 2 (HJR 99)

HJR 99 proposes a constitutional amendment allowing the legislature to authorize a county to issue bonds or notes to finance the development or redevelopment of an unproductive, underdeveloped, or blighted area within the county and to pledge for repayment of those bonds or notes increases in property tax revenues imposed on property in the area by the county. The Texas Constitution gives the legislature the power to authorize an incorporated city or town to issue such bonds or notes but does not expressly give the legislature the power to grant that same authority to counties. The proposed amendment also provides that a county that issues bonds or notes for transportation improvements may not pledge for the repayment of those bonds or notes more than 65 percent of the increases in ad valorem tax revenues each year, and a county may not use proceeds from the bonds or notes to finance the construction, operation, maintenance, or acquisition of rights-of-way of a toll road.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: “The constitutional amendment authorizing a county to finance the development or redevelopment of transportation or infrastructure in unproductive, underdeveloped, or blighted areas in the county.”

Proposition Number 3 (SJR 27)

SJR 27 proposes a constitutional amendment barring the State of Texas or a political subdivision from enacting, adopting, or issuing a statute, order, proclamation, decision, or rule that prohibits or limits religious services. The proposed amendment would apply to religious services, including those conducted in churches, congregations, and places of worship, in the state by a religious organization established to support and serve the propagation of a sincerely

held religious belief.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: “The constitutional amendment to prohibit this state or a political subdivision of this state from prohibiting or limiting religious services of religious organizations.”

Proposition Number 4 (SJR 47)

SJR 47 proposes a constitutional amendment changing certain eligibility requirements for a justice of the Supreme Court, a judge of the Court of Criminal Appeals, a justice of a court of appeals, and a district judge. The proposed amendment provides that a person is eligible to serve on the Supreme Court if the person, among other qualifications, is licensed to practice law in Texas; is a resident of Texas at the time of election; has been either a practicing lawyer licensed in Texas for at least ten years or a practicing lawyer licensed in Texas and a judge of a state court or county court established by the legislature for a combined total of at least ten years; and during that time has not had the person’s license to practice law revoked, suspended, or subject to a probated suspension. The same eligibility requirements would apply to a judge of the Court of Criminal Appeals and to a justice of a court of appeals. The proposed amendment further provides that to be eligible for appointment or election as a district judge, a person must be a resident of Texas; be licensed to practice law in Texas; and have been a practicing lawyer or a judge of a court in Texas, or both combined, for eight years preceding the person’s election, during which time the person’s license to practice law has not been revoked, suspended, or subject to a probated suspension.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: “The constitutional amendment changing the eligibility requirements for a justice of the supreme court, a judge of the court of criminal appeals, a justice of a court of appeals, and a district judge.”

Proposition Number 5 (HJR 165)

HJR 165 proposes a constitutional amendment allowing the State Commission on Judicial Conduct (SCJC) to accept complaints or reports, conduct investigations, and take any other authorized action with respect to a candidate for a state judicial office. Currently, the Texas Constitution only permits the SCJC to take such actions as to persons holding a judicial office.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: “The constitutional amendment providing additional powers to the State Commission on Judicial Conduct with respect to candidates for judicial office.”

Proposition Number 6 (SJR 19)

SJR 19 proposes a constitutional amendment establishing that residents of certain facilities have the right to designate an essential caregiver with whom the facility may not prohibit in-person visitation. The proposed amendment would apply to a nursing facility, assisted living facility, intermediate care facility for individuals with an intellectual disability, residence providing home and community-based services, or state supported living center. The proposed amendment also would authorize the legislature to provide guidelines for these facilities to follow in establishing essential caregiver visitation policies and procedures.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: “The constitutional amendment establishing a right for residents of certain facilities to designate an essential caregiver for in-person visitation.”

Proposition Number 7 (HJR 125)

HJR 125 proposes a constitutional amendment permitting a person who is 55 years of age or older at the time of death of their spouse who is receiving a limitation on school district property taxes on their residence homestead on the basis of a disability to continue receiving the limitation while the property remains the surviving spouse’s residence homestead.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: “The constitutional amendment to allow the surviving spouse of a person who is disabled to receive a limitation on the school district ad valorem taxes on the spouse’s residence homestead if the spouse is 55 years of age or older at the time of the person’s death.”

Proposition Number 8 (SJR 35)

SJR 35 proposes a constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to exempt from ad valorem taxation all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a member of the United States armed services who is killed or fatally injured in the line of duty. The Texas Constitution provides a property tax exemption to the surviving spouse of a member of the armed services who is killed in action, but the current exemption does not include members of the military who die during their service due to injuries sustained that are not combat-related.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows: “The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a member of the armed services of the United States who is killed or fatally injured in the line of duty.”

Classifieds & public notices

Alpine City Council approves 1-year manager contract

ALPINE — The Alpine City Council voted to approve a one-year interim city manager contract for Megan Antrim, CPFIM, at the September 7 council meeting. Antrim was hired in October 2013 as project coordinator, was promoted to finance director in 2014, and was appointed assistant city manager in 2016. Prior to working for the City of Alpine, Antrim served Brewster County as deputy district clerk and deputy treasurer. Antrim has roughly 20 years of experience in local government, and the city looks forward to her continued leadership. A copy of the contract is available in the news section of the city website at www.cityofalpine.com.

Undocumented immigrant killed crossing I-10

VAN HORN — On the morning of September 2, Yairet Zuleima Nunez, 23, of Moreleon, Guanajuato, Mexico, was struck and killed by a vehicle as she attempted to cross the eastbound lanes of Interstate 1-10 near mile marker 138, one mile west of Van Horn. The Mexico citizen was traveling with a group of 11 other undocumented immigrants who were being pursued by U.S. Border Patrol agents.

According to a report from the Department of Public Safety, the driver, Keith Elliot Buonafede, 57, of Peoria, Arizona, was not injured. Buonafede told troopers that he “observed a large group of 10 to 12 people running across the highway.” The report went on to read that he had “attempted to avoid the pedestrians but struck one as they crossed.”

The incident is being investigated by the Texas Department of Public Safety and is being reviewed by the CBP Office of Professional Responsibility. The DHS Office of Inspector General was also notified.

An infectious disease expert answers questions on COVID-19 breakthrough cases, vaccines during pregnancy and booster shots

By KEVIN REYNOLDS
The Texas Tribune

TEXAS — With coronavirus hospitalizations in Texas hovering just below the pandemic’s winter peak, Texans are again grappling with how to deal with the virus in their day-to-day lives.

Last week, the Texas Education Agency announced that at least 45 small school districts shut down in-person classes due to high COVID-19 numbers. On top of that, major metropolitan hospitals are halting elective surgeries — as they did during prior surges when hospitals filled up with COVID patients.

Although vaccines have slightly changed the calculus on safety protocols, many of the same factors that drove the winter surge are also driving the current wave of cases.

The Texas Tribune spoke with Dr. James Cutrell, an associate professor at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center who specializes in COVID-19 treatment, to answer questions about masks, vaccinations and breakthrough cases. Cutrell completed a fellowship in infectious diseases in 2013 at UT Southwestern and now is the director of the adult fellowship program in infectious diseases.

If you get vaccinated, do you still have to wear a mask?

Although the COVID-19 vaccines continue to provide very good protection, particularly against severe disease, hospitalization or death, there remains a risk of milder infection in those who are fully vaccinated.

Moreover, if infected, those who are fully vaccinated are able to transmit that infection to others, although their overall risk of transmission is lower than those who are unvaccinated. In order to reduce both the personal risk of infection and risk of spreading it to others, masking can be one effective strategy to protect yourself and others.

Therefore, the current CDC recommendations are that fully vaccinated individuals should continue to wear a mask when in public indoor spaces if they live in an area of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission. The definition of an area of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission is more than 50 cases per 100,000 people or a test positivity rate greater than 8%. This would currently include many areas of the country, including Texas.

How common are breakthrough cases for vaccinated people? Is the state tracking that?

Although early data from the end of April 2021 reported that breakthrough cases were very uncommon (about 0.01% among the first 100 million Americans vaccinated), breakthrough cases have become more common as community cases and transmission with the delta variant have risen across the country.

Precise estimates of the frequency of breakthrough cases are not known because since May 2021 the CDC has primarily been tracking breakthrough cases only in those who are hospitalized or die. There are some states that have continued to track the rates of breakthrough cases, but Texas is only tracking hospitalized or fatal cases due to COVID-19 breakthrough infections.

The CDC is conducting focused studies in 10 states through the Emerging Infections Program to determine better estimates of the overall rate of breakthrough cases during the current delta variant surge, including milder disease and infection.

What are the timelines around expanding eligibility for the vaccine? When can children under 12 get it?

Current clinical trials are ongoing, evaluating the safety and efficacy of the mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) for children under 12.

We expect that the data in the group of children ages 5-11 will be submitted to the FDA at some point in the early to mid-fall for review. There is less certainty around how long the FDA review process will take.

The CDC is recommending that pregnant women get vaccinated. Is there any research on how the vaccine affects pregnancy?

The CDC recently strengthened their recommendation of the COVID-19 vaccines for those who are pregnant, breastfeeding or considering pregnancy. This is based on increasing data showing that the vaccines are safe in pregnancy, with no signals of increased risk of miscarriage, preterm birth or other adverse pregnancy outcomes.

Additionally, the vaccine has proven effective at reducing the risk of COVID-19 infection in pregnancy.

Finally, there is a growing body of evidence showing that pregnant women who develop COVID-19 have a higher risk of severe disease leading to hospitalization or death and also a higher risk of pregnancy complications due to the infection. For all of these reasons, the benefits

of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy strongly outweighs potential risks or side effects.

I live with someone who is immunocompromised. They already got their Pfizer booster. Should I get the booster early, too?

Currently the additional third doses (boosters) are only being administered to those who are moderately to severely immunocompromised. Those who are close or household contacts of an immunocompromised individual are not yet recommended to receive a booster.

At this point, the most important things for those who are close contacts to an immunocompromised patient are to be sure they are fully vaccinated (with their first two vaccine doses) and to be sure that they are wearing masks and taking other precautions when in public settings to minimize their risk of developing COVID-19 and spreading it to their loved one.

Are the mRNA boosters developed specifically for the delta variant? I’ve seen reports that Moderna and Pfizer are working on vaccines that target the delta variant.

The current boosters being administered and considered are the original mRNA vaccine, which was targeted for the original SARS-CoV-2 virus. These vaccines still show good efficacy against the delta variant, particularly in preventing more severe disease.

Clinical trials of updated mRNA vaccines, which are designed specifically to target the delta variant, began in August 2021, so in the future there will likely be boosters approved specifically for that variant.

When will the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines get FDA approval?

Moderna completed its submission of data for full FDA approval in late August 2021. The FDA is reviewing under priority review so we expect that this fall it will be approved (for reference, it took 97 days from full submission of the Pfizer vaccine data to full approval). The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is expected to have its data submitted for full approval by the end of 2021.

This article originally appeared in The Texas Tribune at <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/09/08/covid-19-vaccines-breakthrough-boosters/>. The Texas Tribune is a member-supported, nonpartisan newsroom informing and engaging Texans on state politics and policy. Learn more at texastribune.org.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

Big Bend Regional Hospital District Medical Enhancement Grants

BBRHD is now accepting grant proposals for the FY2022 Medical Enhancement Grant program, the deadline to apply for funding will be on October 29, 2021. Brewster and Presidio County entities that provide healthcare or other related services, consistent with the mission and objectives of the District, to residents of Brewster or Presidio Counties are eligible to apply. The grant application package and additional information are available at www.bbrhd.com.

The Marfa Parks and Recreation Board meets every third Thursday of the month at 6:00pm in the Casner Room at City Hall. The public is invited to attend.

MARFA 12 STEP MEETINGS

Go to zoom.us or download the app:

- **AA - Mon 6 PM** <https://tinyurl.com/y25rsguo> (online only)
 - **AA - Mon, Wed 6 PM** St. Paul's Episcopal Church (in person)
 - **ACA - Thur 5:30 PM** <https://tinyurl.com/y7qyghga> (online)
 - **AI-Anon, Thur 6 PM**, <https://tinyurl.com/kaef22a6>
 - **AA - Sat 12 Noon** hybrid meeting: in person Marfa Public Library courtyard and online at <https://tinyurl.com/y686nnw2>
- *Please note, you can find online meetings at any time at <https://aa-intergroup.org/oiaa/meetings/>



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Office: 209 1/2 W. El Paso St., Marfa, Texas
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Telephone: 432.729.4342

Contact: editor@bigbendsentinel.com
Advertising Inquiries: ads@bigbendsentinel.com
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