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BURN BAN IN EFFECT, NO GROUND FIRES

by order of Presidio County

City of Presidio receives clean bill of financial health

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO — On Monday, Presidio city council celebrated another positive audit, marking an upward trend in the city's financial history. Preston Singleton, a certified public accountant from the firm Singleton, Clark & Company, came all the way from Cedar Park to present his findings to city officials. With a few caveats and recommendations, he was pleased to report that the city had been in good shape in fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

An audit basically works like a credit score, affecting whether or not the city can receive grants and loans for emergencies and special projects. From 2013 to 2018, the City of Presidio received a series of adverse audits — the lowest score an auditor can give. The audits reflected bad bookkeeping practices and allegations that the city had not been paying its FICA payroll taxes.

Presidio's finance specialist, Malynda Richardson, discovered just how dire the city's financial straits were in 2019, when she attempted to apply for grants to buy the city a new ambulance in her previous role as EMS director. The city's inability to provide adequate financial documentation would end up costing Richardson the grant — and bungle a few subsequent attempts to buy a new ambulance.

The drama crescendoed in early 2021, when both the city's previous auditor, Doak Painter, and city administrator, Joe Portillo, quit, leaving the city a few years behind on audits. The city hired Singleton, a new auditor, in the fall, as well as Brad Newton, a new city administrator. (Newton has since been fired and a new administrator has not been selected to fill his role.)

Singleton helped the city to catch up on the backlog, and as of December, the city was finally up to date. "The audit today is being presented within nine months of the fiscal year, which is timely," he said to open Monday night's presentation. "That's very good to be able to say that the city is back on track for a regular audit schedule."

He summed up a few of the issues that had come back in the last audit report, delivered to city council in December. "By the time all that was reported in December, the year 2021 was already overdue, so the finance department wouldn't have had time to implement all those recommendations," he explained. "So the approach we took for the fiscal year 21 audit was not to re-report all those issues, even though many of them will most likely still come up in 2021."

The most serious criticism Singleton had offered to the council back in December were weaknesses identified in the area of

(Continued on page 2)

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Despite "hoopla," 4th of July weekend drag racing event to continue

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO — Last week, rumors swirled around town that the drag race scheduled for July 2nd would be canceled. "There's been a lot of hoopla," Visitors and Convention Bureau director Arian Velázquez-Ornelas told her board at Tuesday night's meeting.

Presidio Municipal Development District (PMDD) executive director Jeran Stephens — whose organization leases the property around the drag strip — threatened to pull the plug over safety concerns. Stephens asked the organizers of Presidio Drag Racing to provide proof of general liability and race day insurance, safety regulations posted in English and Spanish, contracted security, and past-due payment on their lease.

"The risk of catastrophic injuries or death to both the racers and the spectators is real. Should there be an accident out there, without liability insurance, PMDD could be considered liable," Stephens explained. "I love drag racing. I think it's a welcome entertainment venue for Presidio — done correctly and safely."

The organization's president, Robert Romero, explained that his crew had been hard at work finishing their improvements to the track, and hadn't had time to take care of the particulars with construction in full swing. "People tell us that our track is pretty legit," he said. "We've been working our asses off."

They typically purchase race-day insurance 48 hours before the event — not because they don't care about participant safety, said Romero, but because they're a family operation and don't want to pay thousands of dollars to insure an event that could get canceled at the last minute.

Romero explained that the race day insurance can cost up to $3,000, which comes out of his own pocket. "What happens if we don't get the track done or something happens or breaks? I don't get reimbursed for that," he said.

Stephens had given Romero and Alex Jimenez, who helps administer the drag strip, until this Wednesday to send her all the necessary paperwork. Romero and Jimenez delivered their documents on time, and Stephens gave the event the green light. "I am very happy to announce that the Drag Strip is officially in compliance," Stephens wrote in a press release. "Let the races commence!"

Jimenez and Romero are looking forward to race day, and have been getting attention from drag racing stars across the country. Teams from all over the Permian Basin and Mexico will be coming to Presidio for the event. "It's all about having fun for the community," Romero explained. "It's fun to be out there and have some drinks and barbecue and just chill out with people. It's a family affair."

The Fourth of July drag races will kick off on Saturday, July 2nd at 5:30 PM. The Presidio Visitors and Convention Bureau will also be hosting a fireworks celebration and cookout at Daly Park on Sunday, July 3rd from 7 to 11 p.m.

Presidio County Commissioners court talks water infrastructure, birth & death certificates

By SAM KARAS
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MARFA — At last weeks' regular Commissioners Court meeting, Trey Gerfers, chair of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District, gave a brief update on the many water infrastructure projects that the county had applied to fund back in March, and offered an opportunity to apply for even more support from outside entities.

"We were looking to update sewage in various parts of Marfa, and to bring water and wastewater to East Heights and Antelope Hills," he explained. "There's a ton of other projects, but those are probably the ones that people in Marfa want to know about."

County Judge Cinderela Guevara and Commissioner Brenda Bentley worked with Gerfers to compose a list of projects that would benefit the entire county. Guevara made a point to advocate for Colonia, a community outside Presidio city limits where residents still have to haul water for basic necessities like drinking and bathing. "That's one of the last frontiers," she said.

In addition to the grant money that the county had already been seeking, Gerfers urged the commissioners to take advantage of a rare opportunity to apply for loans from state "revolving funds" dedicated to water infrastructure. The revolving funds are federal dollars apportioned to each state — mostly holdovers from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

The revolving funds are loans, but Guevara and Gerfers reminded the commissioners that because of Presidio County's demographics, there was a high likelihood that 75% or more of the loans would eventually be forgiven. "We're already coming in as an economically disadvantaged county, and we are on the border. That's one of the reasons that they're really looking at us."

In addition to the positive prospects for the county's water infrastructure, the commissioners also approved a proposal from the Presidio County clerk, Florcita Zubia, to take on the responsibility for writing and filing birth and death certificates from the Justice of the Peace for Precinct 1. "She has decided that it is best if all the records stay in her office, since she is here in the county seat and she does hold those records already," Judge Guevara explained.

Presidio County has two Justices of the Peace: Precinct 1, which covers Marfa and the northern half of the county, and Precinct 2, which covers Presidio and everything south of Elephant Rock on Highway 67. Previous JP-1 David Beebe had taken on the responsibility of being the electronic registrar for birth and death certificates — since the Justice of the Peace pronounces births and deaths — but Zubia and the new JP-1, Dina Jo Losoya Marquez, decided it would be easier for the County Clerk to serve as electronic registrar instead.

(Continued on page 2)

A pesar del alboroto, el evento de carreras de resistencia del fin de semana del 4 de julio continuará

Por SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO — La semana pasada, corrieron rumores en la ciudad de que la carrera de resistencia programada para el 2 de julio sería cancelada. "Ha habido mucho alboroto", dijo la directora de la Oficina de Convenciones y Visitantes, Arian Velázquez-Ornelas, a su junta en la reunión del martes por la noche.

El director ejecutivo del Distrito de Desarrollo Municipal de Presidio (PMDD), Jeran Stephens, cuya organización alquila la propiedad alrededor de la pista de carreras, amenazó con desconectarse por preocupaciones de seguridad. Stephens pidió a los organizadores de Presidio Drag Racing que proporcionaran prueba de responsabilidad general y seguro del día de la carrera, reglamentos de seguridad publicados en inglés y español, seguridad contratada y pago atrasado de su contrato de arrendamiento.

"El riesgo de lesiones catastróficas o muerte tanto para los corredores como para los espectadores es real. Si hubiera un accidente, sin seguro de responsabilidad civil, el TDPM podría considerarse responsable", explicó Stephens. "Me encantan las carreras de resistencia. Creo que es un lugar de entretenimiento bienvenido para Presidio, hecho de manera correcta y segura".

El presidente de la organización, Robert Romero, explicó que su equipo había estado trabajando arduamente para terminar las mejoras en la pista y no había tenido tiempo de ocuparse de los detalles con la construcción en pleno apogeo. "La gente nos dice que nuestra pista es bastante legítima", dijo. "Hemos estado trabajando muy duro por esto".

Por lo general, compran un seguro para el día de la carrera 48 horas antes del evento, no porque no les importe la seguridad de los participantes, dijo Romero, sino porque son una operación familiar y no quieren pagar miles de dólares para asegurar un evento que podría ser cancelado en el último minuto.

Romero explicó que el seguro del día de la carrera puede costar hasta $3,000, que sale de su propio bolsillo. "¿Qué sucede si no terminamos la pista o algo sucede o se rompe? No me reembolsan por eso", dijo.

Stephens le había dado a Romero y Alex Jiménez, quien ayuda a administrar la pista de carreras, hasta este miércoles para enviarle toda la documentación necesaria. Romero y Jiménez entregaron sus documentos a tiempo, y Stephens dio luz verde al evento. "Estoy muy feliz de anunciar que Drag Strip cumple oficialmente", escribió Stephens en un comunicado de prensa. "¡Que comiencen las carreras!"

Jiménez y Romero esperan con ansias el día de la carrera y han llamado la atención de las estrellas de las carreras de resistencia en todo el país.

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La corte de comisionados del condado de Presidio habla sobre la infraestructura del agua, los certificados de nacimiento y defunción

Por SAM KARAS
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MARFA — En la reunión regular del Tribunal de Comisionados de las últimas semanas, Trey Gerfers, presidente del Distrito de Conservación de Agua Subterránea del Condado de Presidio, brindó una breve actualización sobre los muchos proyectos de infraestructura de agua que el condado había solicitado financiar en marzo y ofreció la oportunidad de solicitar aún más apoyo de entidades externas.

"Estábamos buscando actualizar las aguas residuales en varias partes de Marfa y llevar agua y aguas residuales a East Heights y Antelope Hills", explicó. "Hay un montón de otros proyectos, pero esos son probablemente los que la gente de Marfa quiere conocer".

La jueza del condado Cinderela Guevara y la comisionada Brenda Bentley trabajaron con Gerfers para redactar una lista de proyectos que beneficiarían a todo el condado. Guevara hizo hincapié en abogar por Colonia, una comunidad fuera de los límites de la ciudad de Presidio donde los residentes todavía tienen que transportar agua para necesidades básicas como beber y bañarse. "Esa es una de las últimas fronteras", dijo.

Además del dinero de la subvención que el condado ya había estado buscando, Gerfers instó a los comisionados a aprovechar la rara oportunidad de solicitar préstamos de los "fondos rotatorios" estatales dedicados a la infraestructura del agua. Los fondos rotatorios son dólares federales asignados a cada estado, en su mayoría remanentes de la Ley del Plan de Rescate Estadounidense (American Rescue Plan Act, ARPA).

Los fondos rotatorios son préstamos, pero Guevara y Gerfers recordaron a los comisionados que debido a la demografía del condado de Presidio, había una alta probabilidad de que el 75 % o más de los préstamos finalmente fueran perdonados. "Ya estamos entrando como un condado económicamente desfavorecido y estamos en la frontera. Esa es una de las razones por las que realmente nos están mirando".

Además de las perspectivas positivas para la infraestructura de agua del condado, los comisionados también aprobaron una propuesta de la secretaria del condado de Presidio, Florcita Zubia, para asumir la responsabilidad de escribir y presentar los certificados de nacimiento y defunción del Juez de Paz para el Precinto 1. "Ella ha decidido que es mejor si todos los registros se quedan en su oficina, ya que ella está aquí en la sede del condado y ya tiene esos registros", explicó el juez Guevara.

El condado de Presidio tiene dos jueces de paz: el distrito electoral 1, que

(Continúa en la página 3)

POR ORDEN DEL CONDADO DE PRESIDIO ENTRA EN VIGOR UNA PROHIBICIÓN SOBRE EL USO DEL FUEGO, NO SE PUEDE HACER FUEGO SOBRE LOS TERRENOS

La ciudad de Presidio recibe un certificado de buena salud financiera

Por SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO — El lunes, el ayuntamiento de Presidio celebró otra auditoría positiva, marcando una tendencia ascendente en la historia financiera de la ciudad. Preston Singleton, un contador público certificado de la firma Singleton, Clark & Company, vino desde Cedar Park para presentar sus hallazgos a los funcionarios de la ciudad. Con algunas advertencias y recomendaciones, se complació en informar que la ciudad había estado en buena forma en los años fiscales 2020 y 2021.

Una auditoría básicamente funciona como un puntaje de crédito, determinando si la ciudad puede o no recibir subvenciones y préstamos para emergencias y proyectos especiales. De 2013 a 2018, la ciudad de Presidio recibió una serie de auditorías adversas, la puntuación más baja que puede otorgar un auditor. Las auditorías reflejaron malas prácticas contables y denuncias de que la ciudad no había estado pagando sus impuestos sobre la nómina FICA.

La especialista en finanzas de Presidio, Malynda Richardson, descubrió cuán terribles eran las dificultades financieras de la ciudad en 2019, cuando intentó solicitar subvenciones para comprar una nueva ambulancia para la ciudad en su cargo anterior como directora de EMS. La incapacidad de la ciudad para proporcionar la documentación financiera adecuada terminaría costándole la subvención a Richardson y arruinaría algunos intentos posteriores de comprar una nueva ambulancia.

El drama alcanzó su punto máximo a principios de 2021, cuando tanto el auditor anterior de la ciudad, Doak Painter, como el administrador de la ciudad, Joe Portillo, renunciaron, dejando a la ciudad unos años atrás en las auditorías. La ciudad contrató a Singleton, un nuevo auditor, en el otoño, así como a Brad Newton, un nuevo administrador de la ciudad. (Desde entonces, Newton ha sido despedido y no se ha seleccionado un nuevo administrador para desempeñar su función).

Singleton ayudó a la ciudad a ponerse al día con el retraso y, en diciembre, la ciudad finalmente se puso al día. "La auditoría de hoy se presenta dentro de los nueve meses del año fiscal, lo cual es oportuno", dijo para abrir la presentación del lunes por la noche. "Es muy bueno poder decir que la ciudad está nuevamente encaminada para un programa de auditoría regular".

Resumió algunos de los problemas que habían surgido en el último informe de auditoría, entregado al consejo de la ciudad en diciembre. "Para cuando se informó todo eso en diciembre, el año 2021 ya estaba vencido, por lo que el departamento de finanzas no habría tenido tiempo de implementar todas esas recomendaciones", explicó. "Entonces, el enfoque que

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ENGLISH NEWS

Financial health

(Continued from page 1)

bank reconciliations, which ensure that payments have been processed and that balances are accurately recorded. "It looks like bank reconciliations were not really being done effectively," he said. "It really is a big problem because your accounting is not guaranteed to be accurate."

That was one of the issues he chose to skim over in his latest presentation to City Council, satisfied that city staff was taking active measures to keep cleaner books — a process that can take awhile to show up in audits, which rely on months-old financial data.

One worrying aspect of the latest audit was that the city's revenues came in about $500,000 under budget, meaning that the city had planned to take in more money than it actually did. The city's primary moneymakers are its water, wastewater, and landfill services, though grants can also be factored into the city's revenue; the general fund, which rakes in tax money, operates city services that generally operate at a loss, like the city pool. "The expenditure section shows that the budget was overspent by about $200,000," he said. "That's a swing in the wrong direction. The general fund actually needed something like a rescue bailout."

That "bailout" came in the form of revenue from the landfill, and the city closed out the year with a $0 balance in its general fund. "That's not exactly a normal scenario, because there were no financial reserves. There's no financial cushion. The best practice for government entities is to try to have your general fund balance equivalent to two or three months of general funds expenditures."

Singleton offered the disclaimer that there wasn't a lot of time to "change course" in Fiscal Year 2022, but that the city could implement new policies in time for 2023. "Staff is already working on that budget," Mayor John Ferguson assured him.

The water fund was another area where the city will need to make adjustments: the account looked flush on paper, but Singleton reminded the Council that that was because of a one-time grant the city had received from the federal government for infrastructure improvements. Cesar Leyva, head of the Presidio Water & Sewer Department, explained that that money had gone to building a new water tank and expanding the city's water services to previously underserved areas along Highway 67.

The landfill seemed to be the entity keeping the city in the black. "It appears that the landfill has been a cash cow for the city," Singleton said. "That's the saving grace for the other funds. I'm hoping to sound the alarm for you guys as you set your budget for next year, because the time might come that the landfill can't sustain [other funds] anymore."

Councilman John Razo agreed. "Every department should sustain itself," he said. "We're working on it, and we need to put a lot of our focus on it."

Finance director Malynda Richardson explained that water rates had been re-negotiated in the past year had finally gone into effect in the last month. The city had not increased its water rates in five years to keep pace with inflation, but city officials finally reached a compromise that would allow rates to go up without hurting older Presidians on fixed incomes who were not the city's major water users. "We're only gonna see a few months of that impact in this fiscal year," she explained. "We'll have a much better idea of what that looks like in June or July."

Mayor Ferguson pointed out another area of shortfall on the budget: something called "intergovernmental revenues." Richardson explained that intergovernmental revenues are funds the city expects to receive from other governmental agencies, like money for the library from the state or funds from the county for miscellaneous projects. "You should never budget for grants," Singleton advised.

Other than a few suggestions, Singleton was happy to offer the city a positive financial report. "We've really been trying to reign things in," Mayor Ferguson said. "This is a great audit for us to see, and really reflects positively on city staff."

Commissioners court

(Continued from page 1)

"We all felt for the community that it was better served from the County Clerk's office," Marquez explained.

The commissioners hoped that keeping all of the records in the same office would help their constituents be able to access their records more quickly and easily — especially for Presidio County families that hoped to bury their loved ones in Mexico, a process that can take weeks. "I know a lot of families were very upset," Zubia said. "Now, everything that's processed through the state and as filed with the state we'll be able to see [electronically] on our site."

The commissioners thanked Zubia for her hard work. "Thank you for stepping up and seeking more responsibility," Commissioner Eloy Aranda said. "This is really going to help our constituents."

Texas Border Coalition asks governor for special session to address gun violence

By SAM KARAS
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AUSTIN — On Friday, the Texas Border Coalition sent a letter to Governor Abbott requesting an emergency session of the state legislature. The letter is part of a wave of outrage following a school shooting in Uvalde last month that claimed 21 lives, and calls for "bipartisan commonsense policies" to address the crisis.

The Texas Border Coalition is an association of mayors, county judges, and members of local economic development associations along the US-Mexico border. The organization strives to be non-partisan and has advocated for borderlands residents on a number of issues over the years, notably in legal disputes over border wall construction.

The letter to Abbott was drafted by Eddie Treviño, Jr., who serves as both the chairman of the Coalition and as Cameron County Judge. Co-signer C. LeRoy Cavazos-Reyna serves as the Vice President of Government and International Affairs for the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

An early version of the letter was leaked to local officials in the Big Bend last week, but the final draft was sent to Governor Abbott's office early Friday afternoon. The version that ended up in the governor's inbox details many of the major shootings in the state since 2009. "The catastrophe at Uvalde comes less than three years after our border community of El Paso experienced a terrible gun violence tragedy on August 3, 2019," Treviño and Cavazos-Reyna wrote. "With each year of legislative inaction, new communities across our state are added to the roster of sorrow, pain, carnage, and grief."

The letter calls for gun reform that "respect the Second Amendment": increasing the minimum age to 21 for assault weapon purchases, requiring criminal background checks and a "cooling off" period between applying to purchase a weapon and picking it up, "red-flag laws" that help law enforcement prevent individuals with histories of violence to take possession of guns, and better funding for mental health resources.

> *"Our great state has suffered more mass shootings over the past decade than any other. Our families and communities are depending on you. Please call an emergency special session."*

The legislature isn't scheduled to reconvene until January, after the fall's elections. According to State Senator César Blanco, as of last week, the governor's primary legislative response had been to ask representatives to form committees to investigate aspects of the gun violence epidemic. The state's investigation of the tragedy in Uvalde is ongoing.

"Our great state has suffered more mass shootings over the past decade than any other," Treviño and Cavazos-Reyna wrote. "Our families and communities are depending on you. Please call an emergency special session."

Sudoku & Crossword puzzles:

UNIVERSAL Sudoku Puzzle

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

					3	8	1	
				6	1	5	2	
					8	4		
			1	3		2		9
	5	1				3	7	
3		9		2	4			
		2	3					
	4	3	9	5				
	6	5	8					

6/1

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

SOLUTION:

4	2	6	3	8	5	9	1	7
8	5	1	6	9	7	4	3	2
3	7	9	4	2	1	8	5	6
6	1	2	9	5	4	3	7	8
7	3	8	1	6	2	5	4	9
5	9	4	7	3	8	6	2	1
1	4	5	8	7	9	2	6	3
2	8	3	5	1	6	7	9	4
9	6	7	2	4	3	1	8	5

5/25

Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg June 13, 2022

ACROSS
1 Like a recently robbed vault's door, say
5 "Money, Money, Money" group
9 Lowest point
14 Sheltered bay
15 Borrowed sum
16 "A girl can dream!"
17 Trip to a celebrated wine region?
20 See 48-Across
21 Rapper Kool ___ Dee
22 Babysitter's charge
23 Oxford, e.g., in British slang
24 Not go out
28 Jiro of "Jiro Dreams of Sushi"
29 Clothes to pack for the Riviera?
32 Japanese coin
33 Many a prom queen, age-wise
34 First responder, often: Abbr.
35 It's distinct from "fewer"
37 Colors after a breakup, maybe
39 "Hold your horses!"
41 Prepare for a picture
43 Ewe's sound
44 College app letters
48 With 20-Across, nonkosher deli order
49 Luxury hotel in the City of Light?
53 Lines of credit?
54 Raising to the third power
55 Bloc of docs
56 Cardinals' city, in the 57-Across
57 See 56-Across
58 "We're live!" sign
60 Annual bike race, and a theme hint
65 Absolutely adore
66 Spiritual glow
67 Get really high?
68 Some are titled "To do"
69 Have on
70 "___ well that ends well"

DOWN
1 New user's creation
2 ___ Walker (Scotch whisky brand)
3 Extreme greed
4 "Ratatouille" protagonist
5 In the manner of
6 Mire
7 Prohibit
8 Iron deficiency
9 River in 11 African countries
10 ___ tuna
11 Bones and tennis balls, e.g.
12 Mobile devices with Messages
13 Gymnastics great Mary Lou
18 Nuisance
19 Affectionate
25 Megan ___ Stallion
26 Hand holders?
27 "... so far"
30 Puts the kibosh on
31 Cal Poly city, for short
36 ___ of Sandwich
38 "Uh-huh!"
39 Coy reply to "You were joking, right?"
40 Kathryn of "WandaVision"
41 Noodle dish often served with peanuts
42 Egg dishes often served with potatoes
43 Dribble guard
45 Biofuel option
46 Ludicrous
47 They saw logs, figuratively
48 Cheap lodging
50 Rights org. that RBG worked for
51 Really chafe
52 Composer Stravinsky
57 Janitors' tools
59 Org. for Curiosity and Perseverance
61 Disapproving syllable
62 Expected
63 Time named for a queen, perhaps
64 Not even close

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

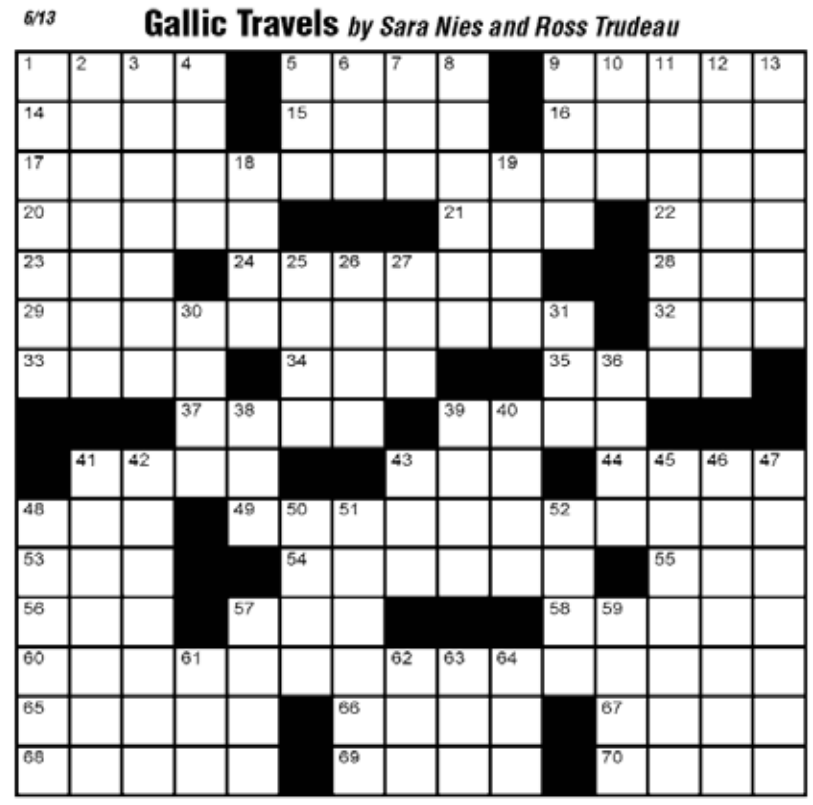
A	P	P	S		B	U	S			C	H	E	E	K
P	O	S	E		A	R	C		H	Y	M	N	A	L
T	T	Y	L		B	L	I	M	E	Y	M	A	T	E
		W	I	S	E		F	I	L	O		C	S	I
O	M	A	N	I		H	I	N	D	U		T	I	N
D	U	R	A	G		O	C	D		N	Y	E	T	
D	M	S		H	A	L	O		A	G	E	D		
			Z	O	N	I	N	G	L	A	W			
		L	O	F	T		V	I	E	W		C	A	B
	B	O	O	R		R	E	F		A	G	A	V	E
P	E	C		E	V	E	N	T		R	A	P	A	T
A	H	A		L	A	S	T		A	D	D	S		
C	A	T	S	I	T	T	I	N	G		G	I	G	S
E	V	O	K	E	S		O	A	R		E	Z	R	A
S	E	R	I	F			N	B	A		T	E	R	M

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Gallic Travels *by Sara Nies and Ross Trudeau*

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NOTICIAS EN ESPAÑOL

Salud financiera

(Continuación de la página 1)

adoptamos para la auditoría del año fiscal 21 fue no volver a informar todos esos problemas, aunque es probable que muchos de ellos sigan surgiendo en 2021".

La crítica más seria que Singleton había ofrecido al consejo en diciembre fueron las debilidades identificadas en el área de conciliaciones bancarias, que aseguran que los pagos se hayan procesado y que los saldos se registren con precisión. "Parece que las conciliaciones bancarias realmente no se estaban haciendo de manera efectiva", dijo. "Realmente es un gran problema porque no se garantiza que su contabilidad sea precisa".

Ese fue uno de los temas que eligió analizar en su última presentación ante el Concejo Municipal, satisfecho de que el personal de la ciudad estaba tomando medidas activas para mantener los libros más limpios, un proceso que puede demorar un tiempo en aparecer en las auditorías, que se basan en meses de antigüedad. Datos financieros.

Un aspecto preocupante de la última auditoría fue que los ingresos de la ciudad fueron aproximadamente $500,000 por debajo del presupuesto, lo que significa que la ciudad había planeado recibir más dinero del que realmente recibió. Los principales generadores de dinero de la ciudad son sus servicios de agua, aguas residuales y vertederos, aunque las subvenciones también se pueden incluir en los ingresos de la ciudad; el fondo general, que recauda el dinero de los impuestos, opera los servicios de la ciudad que generalmente operan con pérdidas, como el fondo común de la ciudad. "La sección de gastos muestra que el presupuesto se gastó en exceso en unos $200,000", dijo. "Eso es un giro en la dirección equivocada. El fondo general en realidad necesitaba algo así como un rescate de rescate".

Ese "rescate" vino en forma de ingresos del vertedero, y la ciudad cerró el año con un saldo de $0 en su fondo general. "Ese no es exactamente un escenario normal, porque no había reservas financieras. No hay colchón financiero. La mejor práctica para las entidades gubernamentales es tratar de que el saldo de su fondo general sea equivalente a dos o tres meses de gastos de fondos generales".

Singleton ofreció el descargo de responsabilidad de que no había mucho tiempo para "cambiar de rumbo" en el año fiscal 2022, pero que la ciudad podría implementar nuevas políticas a tiempo para 2023. "El personal ya está trabajando en ese presupuesto", aseguró el alcalde John Ferguson. a él.

El fondo de agua fue otra área en la que la ciudad necesitará hacer ajustes: la cuenta se veía bien en el papel, pero Singleton le recordó al Concejo que eso se debió a una subvención única que la ciudad había recibido del gobierno federal para mejoras de infraestructura. César Leyva, jefe del Departamento de Agua y Alcantarillado de Presidio, explicó que ese dinero se había destinado a la construcción de un nuevo tanque de agua y a la expansión de los servicios de agua de la ciudad a áreas anteriormente desatendidas a lo largo de la Carretera 67.

El vertedero parecía ser la entidad que mantenía a la ciudad en el negro. "Parece que el vertedero ha sido una fuente de ingresos para la ciudad", dijo Singleton. "Esa es la gracia salvadora para los otros fondos. Espero hacer sonar la alarma para ustedes mientras establecen su presupuesto para el próximo año, porque podría llegar el momento en que el vertedero ya no pueda sostener [otros fondos]".

El concejal John Razo estuvo de acuerdo. "Cada departamento debe sostenerse a sí mismo", dijo. "Estamos trabajando en ello, y tenemos que concentrarnos mucho en ello".

La directora de finanzas, Malynda Richardson, explicó que las tarifas de agua que se renegociaron el año pasado finalmente entraron en vigencia el mes pasado. La ciudad no había aumentado sus tarifas de agua en cinco años para mantener el ritmo de la inflación, pero los funcionarios de la ciudad finalmente llegaron a un compromiso que permitiría aumentar las tarifas sin perjudicar a los presidentes mayores con ingresos fijos que no eran los principales usuarios de agua de la ciudad. "Solo vamos a ver unos pocos meses de ese impacto en este año fiscal", explicó. "Tendremos una idea mucho mejor de cómo se ve eso en junio o julio".

El alcalde Ferguson señaló otra área de déficit en el presupuesto: algo llamado "ingresos intergubernamentales". Richardson explicó que los ingresos intergubernamentales son fondos que la ciudad espera recibir de otras agencias gubernamentales, como dinero del estado para la biblioteca o fondos del condado para proyectos diversos. "Nunca debe presupuestar para subvenciones", aconsejó Singleton.

Aparte de algunas sugerencias, Singleton se complació en ofrecer a la ciudad un informe financiero positivo. "Realmente hemos estado tratando de controlar las cosas", dijo el alcalde Ferguson. "Esta es una gran auditoría para nosotros y realmente se refleja positivamente en el personal de la ciudad".

La corte de comisionados

(Continuación de la página 1)

cubre Marfa y la mitad norte del condado, y el distrito electoral 2, que cubre Presidio y todo el sur de Elephant Rock en la autopista 67. El JP-1 anterior, David Beebe, había asumido el responsabilidad de ser el registrador electrónico de las actas de nacimiento y defunción —ya que el Juez de Paz pronuncia nacimientos y defunciones— pero Zubia y la nueva JP-1, Dina Jo Losoya Márquez, decidieron que sería más fácil para el Secretario del Condado servir como registrador en su lugar.

"Todos sentimos por la comunidad que estaba mejor servida desde la oficina del Secretario del Condado", explicó Márquez.

Los comisionados esperaban que mantener todos los registros en la misma oficina ayudaría a sus electores a acceder a sus registros de manera más rápida y sencilla, especialmente para las familias del condado de Presidio que esperaban enterrar a sus seres queridos en México, un proceso que puede llevar semanas. "Sé que muchas familias estaban muy molestas", dijo Zubia. "Ahora, todo lo que se procesa a través del estado y se presenta ante el estado, podremos verlo [electrónicamente] en nuestro sitio".

Los comisarios agradecieron a Zubia su ardua labor. "Gracias por dar un paso adelante y buscar más responsabilidad", dijo el comisionado Eloy Aranda. "Esto realmente va a ayudar a nuestros electores".

Carreras de resistencia

(Continuación de la página 1)

Equipos de todo el Permian Basin y México vendrán a Presidio para el evento. "Se trata de divertirse para la comunidad", explicó Romero. "Es divertido estar ahí fuera y tomar unas copas y una barbacoa y simplemente relajarse con la gente. Es un asunto de familia.

Las carreras de resistencia del 4 de julio comenzarán el sábado 2 de julio a las 5:30 p.m. La Oficina de Convenciones y Visitantes de Presidio también organizará una celebración de fuegos artificiales y una comida al aire libre en Daly Park el domingo 3 de julio de 7 a 11 p.m.

La Coalición Fronteriza de Texas pide al gobernador una sesión especial para abordar la violencia armada

Por SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

AUSTIN — El viernes, la Coalición Fronteriza de Texas envió una carta al Gobernador Abbott solicitando una sesión de emergencia de la legislatura estatal. La carta es parte de una ola de indignación luego de un tiroteo en una escuela en Uvalde el mes pasado que cobró 21 vidas y pide "políticas bipartidistas de sentido común" para abordar la crisis.

La Coalición Fronteriza de Texas es una asociación de alcaldes, jueces de condado y miembros de asociaciones locales de desarrollo económico a lo largo de la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México. La organización se esfuerza por no ser partidista y ha defendido a los residentes de las zonas fronterizas en varios temas a lo largo de los años, especialmente en disputas legales sobre la construcción del muro fronterizo.

La carta a Abbott fue redactada por Eddie Treviño, Jr., quien se desempeña como presidente de la Coalición y como juez del condado de Cameron. El co-firmante C. LeRoy Cavazos-Reyna se desempeña como Vicepresidente de Asuntos Gubernamentales e Internacionales de la Cámara de Comercio Hispana de los Estados Unidos.

La semana pasada se envió una primera versión de la carta a los funcionarios locales en Big Bend, pero el borrador final se envió a la oficina del gobernador Abbott el viernes por la tarde. La versión que llegó a la bandeja de entrada del gobernador detalla muchos de los principales tiroteos en el estado desde 2009. "La catástrofe en Uvalde se produce menos de tres años después de que nuestra comunidad fronteriza de El Paso sufriera una terrible tragedia de violencia armada el 3 de agosto de 2019. ", escribieron Treviño y Cavazos-Reyna. "Con cada año de inacción legislativa, se agregan nuevas comunidades en todo nuestro estado a la lista de tristeza, dolor, carnicería y duelo".

La carta pide una reforma de armas que "respete la Segunda Enmienda": aumentar la edad mínima a 21 años para la compra de armas de asalto, exigir verificaciones de antecedentes penales y un período de "enfriamiento" entre la solicitud de compra de un arma y recogerla, "rojo- leyes de bandera" que ayuden a las fuerzas del orden público a evitar que las personas con antecedentes de violencia tomen posesión de armas, y una mejor financiación para los recursos de salud mental.

> *"Nuestro gran estado ha sufrido más tiroteos masivos en la última década que cualquier otro. Nuestras familias y comunidades dependen de ustedes. Por favor llame a una sesión especial de emergencia"*

La legislatura no está programada para volver a reunirse hasta enero, después de las elecciones de otoño. Según el senador estatal César Blanco, hasta la semana pasada, la principal respuesta legislativa del gobernador había sido pedir a los representantes que formaran comités para investigar aspectos de la epidemia de violencia armada. La investigación estatal de la tragedia en Uvalde está en curso.

"Nuestro gran estado ha sufrido más tiroteos masivos en la última década que cualquier otro", escribieron Treviño y Cavazos-Reyna. "Nuestras familias y comunidades dependen de ustedes. Por favor llame a una sesión especial de emergencia".

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Portraits from the Big Bend: Nakaya Flotte, advocate and student of traditional Lipan Apache culture

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

FAR WEST TEXAS — After more than a decade in academia studying sociocultural anthropology, Nakaya Flotte, who grew up in Presidio-Ojinaga, is entering into a new phase of her career, prioritizing broadening West Texas' understanding of indigenous ecological and cultural knowledge through a variety of community projects.

Flotte, who is currently based in Austin but travels frequently to the Big Bend region, is working as a freelance consultant and has recently contributed her efforts to the ownership transfer of the Lipan Apache cemetery in Presidio from the county to tribe descendents as well as the ongoing Judd Foundation/Big Bend Conservation Alliance grasslands project.

Flotte said at the root she is looking to expand the collective cultural understanding of the region beyond the widely-discussed history of Mexico, as told by Spanish conquistadors, to bring more awareness to West Texas' earlier occupants, including the Plains Lipan Apache peoples, which were one of dozens of indigenous groups that are generally classified as the Jumano, Apache and Comanche.

"That's not the entire story. There's much more complexity and many other cultures that are also part of that. I think that West Texas would definitely benefit quite a lot in understanding that indigenous people are still there and that we still have knowledge," said Flotte.

The Big Bend Sentinel recently met with Flotte at the Marfa Garden, a small native plant sanctuary complete with casitas and a walking trail, to discuss her bi-national upbringing, lasting connections to the Big Bend region and career as an anthropologist moving forward.



Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Nakaya Flotte, a sociocultural anthropologist who grew up in Presidio-Ojinaga, at the Marfa Gardens. Flotte works as a traditional ecological and cultural knowledge consultant, offering indigenous perspectives of the West Texas landscape to various community projects around the Big Bend.

Flotte spent the first 15 years of her life living in Ojinaga and first moved to Presidio in eighth grade. At Presidio High School she was a student of Patt Simms, science teacher and advocate of the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem, who passed away in 2020. Growing up along the U.S./Mexico border, Flotte was eager to spread her wings after graduating high school and moved to Austin in 2008 to study at the University of Texas.

"As a young queer person, I was just trying to leave and go to the city," said Flotte, who is a transwoman. "I really paid attention in school just to be able to leave."

Flotte said being a first generation student entering Texas' capital city from a rural community was a culture shock initially, but her commitment to academic rigor earned her a degree in cultural anthropology in 2012. After a stint living in the Bay Area in California, Flotte decided to apply for graduate school to continue her studies.

She was accepted into a number of programs around the country, but opted to move to Boston to study at Harvard University, where she went on to earn a PhD in anthropology in 2021. During her time at Harvard, Flotte researched immigration and border externalization, volunteered to assist migrants seeking asylum and worked as an ethnographer interviewing unaccompanied minors with the nonprofit Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) in El Paso. While the work was heavily rooted in community involvement and field research which benefitted Flotte in her overall education, she ultimately felt the work lacked a vital connection to her own experiences.

"The project was a bit too distant for me from my own identity," said Flotte. "I was pressured at Harvard, because I'm an anthropologist — they push you to work on other communities that are not necessarily yours."

Flotte, as of late, has found a deeper appreciation for her craft by working on projects closer to home — like last fall, when she helped with the ownership transfer of the Lipan Apache cemetery back to the tribe. By connecting cemetery plots to current families residing in Presidio, primarily the Aguilar and Ornelas families, Flotte said some locals were spurred to think differently upon realizing the extent of their family's lineage in the region.

"It's changing everything in Presidio," said Flotte. "A lot of people, it changed the way in which they see themselves and that in turn changes the way in which they see their homeland."

Flotte is also working to revive the long lost language of the Lipan Apache with the goal of one day creating a dictionary. Flotte, working without the benefit of comprehensive knowledge passed down for generations or any formal texts, has taken the time to research the language via archives, books and oral histories. A Navajo language class she took while studying at Harvard has also aided her efforts.

"Every time I go to a bookstore I go to the Native American section and look for anything that's Lipan Apache. I have so many books that have a paragraph or two paragraphs, maybe a page on Lipan Apaches," said Flotte. "From there we gather new words that we don't know and we add them to the database."

Working with a cousin who lives in South Texas and shares her interest in reconstructing the language of the Lipan Apache, Flotte dove into a variety of research materials, including a 1903 interview between linguist Henry Hojier and Augustina Zuazua, a displaced Lipan woman living on the Mescalero Apache reservation. Talking to elders and researching archival materials can help piece together a more complete picture of the language's nuances, said Flotte.

For example, Lipan Apache, who were also referred to as prairie grass people, used the word ḷibai to describe the coloration of the native grasses, which in part led their migrations. While older generations might be familiar with the concept of the color of the grass as meaningful, they might be unaware of the exact term, said Flotte.

"We have knowledge. We have just lost a lot of the specificities of it. It's a matter of being open to being wrong and to having people give you contradictions," said Flotte.

The work Flotte is performing with the help of others will hopefully one day lead to federal recognition of the Lipan Apache tribe, she said. The tribe submitted an application in 2012 but has yet to hear back on their status from the federal government. If federal recognition were achieved, the tribe would likely have access to additional funding sources. The tribe only recently became recognized by the state of Texas in 2019.

"Federal recognition might not happen in my lifetime. But it can definitely happen in the future because of the work we're doing right now. [Future generations] won't have to relearn all these things from scratch," said Flotte.

Flotte is also working in the region as a consultant offering an indigenous perspective on the Judd grasslands project, a partnership between the Judd Foundation and Big Bend Conservation Alliance to open a public park slash grassland preserve in Marfa.

Flotte is in the process of writing up recommendations for signage, educational materials and a land acknowledgement text, which will include information such as what the grasslands meant to indigenous peoples, different ways they interacted with the land and the language they used to describe it. Flotte said in addition to sharing her hard-won knowledge of the colloquial or indigenous names for certain flora and fauna, another key focus of the work is to emphasize the need for conservation of the land.

"I don't think I've seen signage in West Texas that includes indigenous traditional ecological knowledge, I think it's quite innovative," said Flotte. "It's also going to allow for the sacred aspect of the land and teach people there the ways in which we can relate to the land because after all, we have to be able to take care of it."

The grasslands project is conducting ongoing community engagement efforts in the form of meetings, which have already taken place among invited community members and will be opened up to the community at large this fall, said Shelley Bernstein of Big Bend Conservation Alliance.

While Flotte herself will not be present for the community meetings, she is keeping in mind ways to make everyone feel welcome in the space and said there will be some barriers for the project organizers to overcome in order to successfully attract members from across the community.

"People that don't always interact with public greenspaces — elders, people with disabilities, local indigenous people, people that are lower class — tend to see green spaces as these wealthy places where only the wealthy have access to," said Flotte.

Flotte said as a transwoman who didn't always feel a sense of community growing up, for a while she was uneasy about returning home to the Big Bend region, but now envisions herself returning frequently to collaborate on projects.

"I think there's value to me being queer," said Flotte of her role as a sociocultural anthrpoloogist and consultant. "It just adds to my ability to be more tolerant, and my ability to be more open minded, and find beauty in places where people might not find beauty or knowledge."

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JOB SUMMARY:
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