

BURN BAN IN EFFECT, NO GROUND FIRES

by order of Presidio County

Chamber leaders and locals urge City Council to regulate STRs, as some STR owners push back

By ALLEGRA HOBBS
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MARFA — When Marfa City Council convened on Tuesday evening for its regular meeting, it was before an unusually full house — over a dozen residents had packed into the room’s limited seating to share their thoughts on a controversial petition circulated by the leadership of the Marfa Chamber of Commerce imploring officials to explore more stringent short-term rental regulations.

The petition was presented by Chamber President Abby Boyd at Tuesday’s meeting, where she called upon City Council members to “research and enact effective and fair regulations to slow the proliferation of short-term rentals in Marfa,” and pointed to the petition’s 262 signers (residents, former residents, and few visitors, said Boyd) as evidence of a bubbling frustration with the status of housing — or lack thereof — among locals.

“The reason we started this petition is because we know not all of our citizens feel comfortable expressing themselves publicly. Frankly, some have lost hope or confidence in the city’s ability to take charge of this situation,” said Boyd. “I think of these supporters as a quiet majority.”

In an effort to draw out a louder consortium, the chamber had taken to social media the week prior urging any supporters to show up in person for the meeting. On Tuesday, supporters did show up to bolster the chamber’s efforts, including residents who spoke to the difficulty of finding affordable, long-term housing in Marfa — a problem they believe is exacerbated by the saturation of short-term rentals for visitors.

So, in equal number, did detractors and skeptics, who said they feared onerous regulations that could hinder or even prohibit their STR operations.

Marfa elementary school teacher Jacqueline Hernandez, who grew up in town, was among those who questioned the impact STRs had on working class residents’ ability to live in the place they call home. Part of the problem, she said, was that the long-term rentals that were available were simply not affordable for someone living on a teacher’s salary.

“The long-term rental prices are

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE

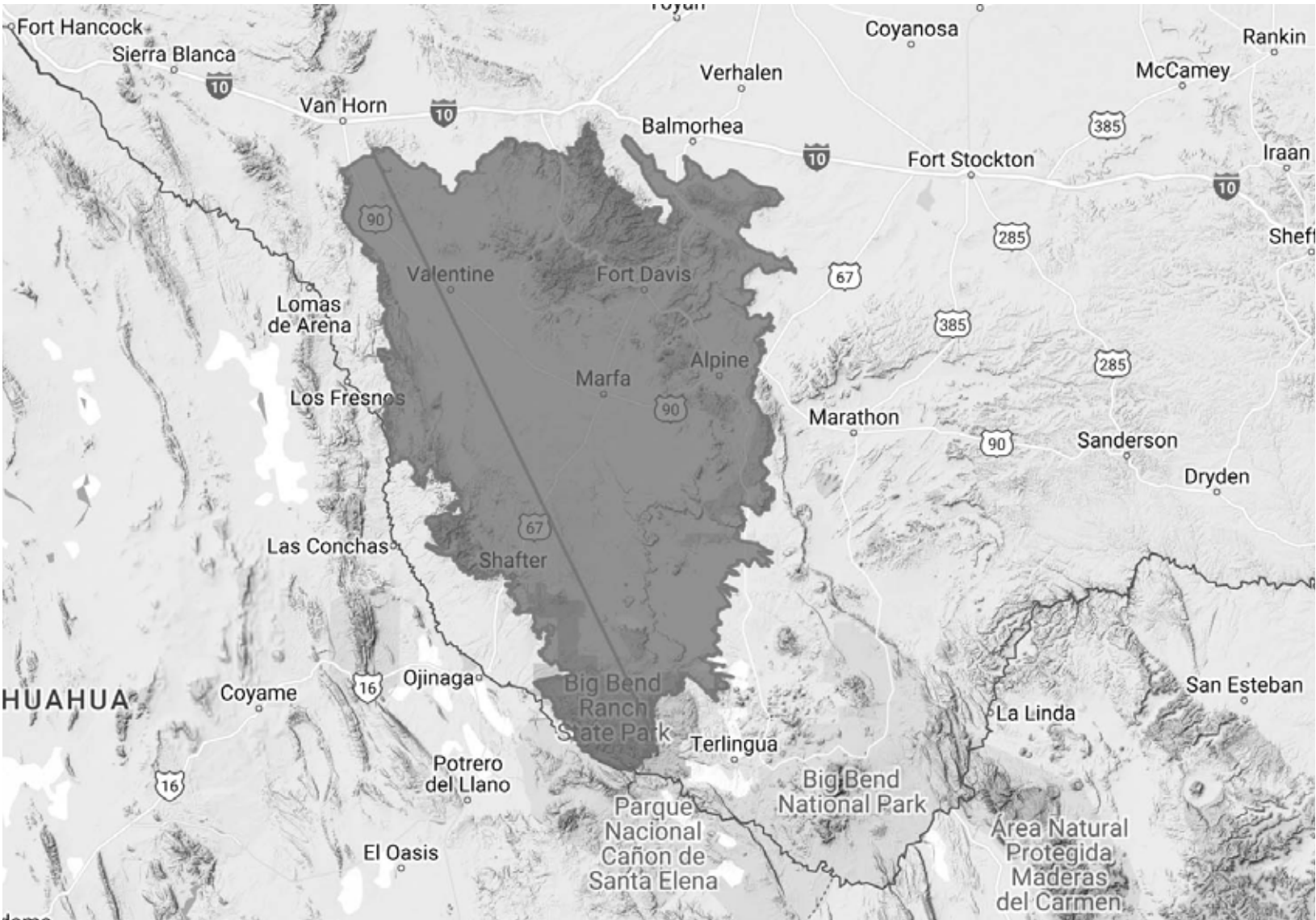
NEWS P. 1 - 3

OPINION P. 4 - 5

COMMUNITY P. 6 - 9

CLASSIFIEDS P. 10

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Map courtesy of the Texas Water Development Board

The Igneous Aquifer spans six counties, including Presidio County, and is the area’s primary water source. In light of the proposed El Cosmico expansion, some are wondering about the status of the water supply beneath our feet.

El Cosmico expansion raises questions of groundwater conservation

By MARY CANTRELL
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MARFA — When news broke that local hotel operator El Cosmico plans to expand to a larger 61-acre site complete with 120 units, pool, bath house and restaurant north of city limits, it soon became clear that the question of water usage — whether a development of such size could result in the depletion of a vital resource — was at the forefront of local concerns.

Residents of Antelope Hills, the site of the relocated resort, cited water conservation as chief among their concerns about the project in interviews with *The Big Bend Sentinel*. As Marfa and its outskirts continue to grow to accommodate a booming tourism industry, locals worry groundwater levels, supplied by an aquifer

experts still know little about, may be depleted. “I wonder about the water situation, the aquifer. We have, I don’t know how many people are out here now, but probably close to 20, maybe a few more than that. Adding 120 units in one fell swoop, obviously, I think raises concerns about wastewater and the aquifer,” said part-time Antelope Hills resident George Hinckley.

Such concerns are not unfounded in an arid climate which relies solely on available groundwater. Last year marked Texas’ 11th driest year on record. Presidio County has been in a state of drought — ranging from bouts of “extreme” drought to “abnormally dry” conditions — over much of the past two to three years, according to data from the U.S. Drought Monitor.

In addition to area residents, *The Big Bend Sentinel* spoke to groundwater experts and the

local groundwater district manager about how much is known about the county’s groundwater supply and whether or not a development like El Cosmico could impact water levels. While the hotel’s expansion is not an immediate cause for concern given the project scope and current water usage in the area, experts said, the limited amount of data available on the county’s primary aquifer and yet-to-be determined levels of human growth necessitate a certain amount of guesswork.

Water as a precious resource in the desert environment

Unlike the state’s urban areas, which are often built around lakes and rivers, remote areas like Marfa lack such resources and therefore rely heavily on groundwater. Statewide, groundwater accounted for 55% of the water used in 2020,

(Continued on page 2)

After mistrial, mother of slain Marfa ISD teacher to be awarded damages in wrongful death suit

By SAM KARAS
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ODESSA — Three years after its filing, a wrongful death lawsuit filed by Teresa Blain — the mother of Sophia Sullivan, a Marfa ISD teacher killed in Fort Davis in 2018 — may soon result in a payout in damages from the alleged killer.

Daniel Sullivan was indicted in 2018 for first-degree murder in the stabbing death of his wife Sophia — but the ensuing trial in Jeff Davis County ended in a hung jury and, nearly four years later, has yet to be retried. While the criminal case has gathered dust, Sophia Sullivan’s mother chose to take action through the civil courts, filing a wrongful death lawsuit against Daniel in 2020.

On March 30, an Ector County court handed

down a ruling in Blain’s favor, stating that Daniel Sullivan had caused Sophia’s death, and is liable under the Texas Wrongful Death Act. A May trial date has been set to determine the matter of damages owed.

Blain’s complaint argued that Daniel had intentionally caused the death of her daughter, which, in addition to taking Sophia’s life, “subjected [Blain] to ongoing and repeated distress.” If Sophia had survived her injuries, the suit argued, she would have been entitled to take legal action.

Blain’s counsel sought damages of at least \$1 million, citing “mental anguish, loss of consortium, grief, bereavement, loss of advice, care and counsel, loss of society and companionship, [and] medical expenses.”

The civil case is an aftershock of the criminal trial that tore apart small-town Fort Davis in

2019 and ultimately ended inconclusively. Central to the trial was the testimony of the Sullivans’ young son — the sole witness of the murder — who identified his father as the killer to authorities, to a neighbor, and on the witness stand. The defense argued that authorities had improperly questioned the child.

As evidence, prosecutors also produced gruesome bodycam footage of the crime scene; testimonies from neighbors, friends and law enforcement; and extensive text message records revealing tensions in the couple’s marriage.

Disagreements about how the evidence was collected — and the conclusions that could be drawn from it — heightened tensions throughout a two-week trial. After nearly 17 hours of deliberation, jurors remained deadlocked, and Judge Roy Ferguson declared a mistrial on

(Continued on page 3)

City of Marfa awards hotel occupancy tax grants, seeks bids for museum repairs

By MARY CANTRELL
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MARFA — Marfa City Council recently approved hotel occupancy tax (HOT) grant applications in a series of two meetings to fund events occurring from April through September 2023.

HOT grants are awarded twice annually, with council approving the first round for this fiscal year in late October. Grants come from \$700,000 the city budgets to receive in HOT revenue, and are allocated to three major categories: arts and culture, historic preservation and advertising. There is also some money allocated towards sporting events that bring in out-of-town visitors.

Per state law, the city is required to spend HOT funds on more tourism promotion. However,

there are current bills being discussed by the Texas Legislature that would allow municipalities to expand use of the tax in order to include infrastructure upgrades, like street repairs — a move City Manager Mandy Roane has voiced support for.

For this budget cycle, the city allocated a total of \$35,000 for arts and culture promotion, \$41,000 for historic preservation, \$4,031 for sports, and \$20,000 for advertising reimbursements.

In total, that amounts to around \$100,000, or roughly 14% of HOT revenue into the grant program. The remaining funds are used to support salaries for the director of tourism and Marfa Visitor Center staff, utilities and building maintenance of the Visitor’s Center (USO), the city’s advertising budget — \$100,000 — and more. This year, historic preservation expenses

accounted for \$185,000 of HOT revenue.

Roane said in total the HOT grant committee received \$61,000 in requests from local arts organizations but was limited to the current budget of \$17,500 this grant cycle. In the end, \$3,000 each was awarded to Agave Festival Marfa, Marfa Invitational and Viva Big Bend, \$2,000 each was awarded to CineMarfa, Maintenant and Ballroom Marfa, \$1,500 was awarded to Saint Mary’s Church for a bazaar and \$1,000 was awarded to In Front Of Us film series.

In historic preservation grants, council voted to approve \$10,000 for the Marfa Lights Festival — considered a historic event since its inception in the late ‘80s — as well as \$8,000 for the Marfa and Presidio County Museum.

For advertising reimbursement grants, \$3,500

(Continued on page 3)

Fatal crash on US-67 south of Marfa leaves two dead, one injured

Details remain scant as DPS investigates

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PRESIDIO COUNTY — Two women died in a car crash on U.S.-67 south of Marfa on Monday evening, according to authorities, while a male survivor suffered injuries. As of press time, details were still coming into focus as the Texas Department of Public Safety continued its investigation.

The Marfa Police Department and the Marfa Volunteer Fire Department were paged to the scene around 5:45 p.m. on Monday, said Marfa Police Chief Gilbert Carillo. According to Marfa Fire Chief Gary Mitschke, who was at the scene, the crash occurred about 28 miles south of Marfa.

Mitschke said he was awaiting the results of a DPS investigation into the crash, but the severity of the scene indicated a head-on collision.

“It was a head on, which was pretty obvious by the amount of damage,” he said.

Two women were pronounced dead at the scene, he said. A man, whose truck had gone off the road and caught fire following the collision, was transported to an El Paso hospital with internal injuries. A passerby had pulled the survivor out of the flaming vehicle and up out of the steep ravine where it burst.

Responders had to close the highway for about an hour in order to extricate the bodies from the wreckage, said Mitschke. The corridor is so heavily traversed that during that time, northbound traffic was piled up for about five to six miles.

The damage to the vehicle of the deceased was so severe, said Mitschke, that responders had to cut the vehicle in order to get one of the bodies out.

“It was one of the worst ones I’ve seen,” said Chief Carillo of the crash.

On Wednesday, as *The Big Bend Sentinel* was going to press, a DPS spokesperson said the investigation was ongoing, as the survivor had yet to be interviewed. The agency would not release any information pending the completion of a crash report and has yet to publicly identify the deceased.

The fatal crash is the latest of its kind along the stretch of highway between Marfa and Presidio, which Mitschke has said can be dangerous due to a high volume of traffic and a tendency of drivers to speed and pass other drivers in no passing zones.

In May of last year, a Chihuahua man was killed while traveling home for Mother’s Day when another vehicle veered into his lane and struck him head-on, causing his car to flip. In 2021, two Presidio residents — a mother and daughter — were killed on the highway when a vehicle veered into their lane and struck them head-on.

The Texas Department of Transportation has taken steps aimed towards addressing safety issues along the corridor, adding additional passing lanes to the route after conducting a years-long study. Those passing lanes are positioned between mile markers 966 and 968 near Cibolo Creek Ranch Airstrip.

This is a developing story. The Big Bend Sentinel will provide updates as they become available.

El Cosmico expansion

(Continued from page 1)

according to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). In Marfa, groundwater is pumped via wells from the Igneous Aquifer, classified by the state as a “minor,” or smaller, aquifer.

Groundwater in Texas is managed at the local level — in Marfa’s case, by the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District (PCUWCD), where a general manager and board receive and approve well-drilling permits, among other duties. The district can only deny a well-drilling permit if a proposed well is too close to an existing well — by and large well-drilling applications are approved, according to General Manager Trey Gerfers.

The groundwater district is responsible for setting Desired Future Conditions (DFCs) — benchmarks groundwater districts and management areas are required to adopt that identify the amount of groundwater needed to sustain local natural resources as well as the human population and economy.

“Kind of the long and short of it is that the current levels of pumping appear to be sustainable, but as more pumping comes online, the risk is that the aquifer begins to be produced in an unsustainable manner.”

Presidio County’s DFCs were developed by the five counties within Groundwater Management Area 4, which also includes Brewster, Jeff Davis as well as Culberson and Hudspeth counties before their inclusion in Presidio county’s 2020-2025 groundwater management plan, which states the Igneous Aquifer’s average drawdown should not exceed 14 feet within the next 50 years.

Robert Mace, a hydrogeologist and the executive director at the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment out of Texas State University, authored a 2021 report on Texas’ groundwater sustainability in which he used groundwater availability models to compare estimates of current groundwater pumping to sustainable levels of groundwater pumping.

Mace said that in evaluating Presidio County’s DFCs, he found that current pumping levels from the aquifer were sustainable, but if as much development as the groundwater district anticipates occurs, the aquifer will be on an unsustainable trajectory as of 2070.

“For the Igneous Aquifer, what I found was that current pumping is just about equal to that estimate of sustainable pumping from the Igneous,” said Mace. “What’s projected for use from the desired future condition is about twice that sustainable level.”

“Kind of the long and short of it is that the current levels of pumping appear to be sustainable, but as more pumping comes online, the risk is that the aquifer begins to be produced in an unsustainable manner,” he continued.

To further complicate matters, there is no means of determining conclusively whether a district is meeting its DFCs. And counterintuitively, a groundwater district may adopt unsustainable desired future conditions, something current House Bill 4532 aims to amend.

“We don’t know enough to know if we’re even close

to our DFC, and we need to keep an eye on it,” said PCUWCD Data Manager Kevin Urbanczyk, also a Sul Ross professor who serves on the board of directors for the Brewster County Groundwater Conservation District.

While groundwater is technically a renewable resource — able to recharge with rainwater — the level of recharge often does not keep up with rates of extraction, which, in the area, are permitted by the state to occur 100 times the rate of necessary recharge, according to Urbanczyk. Groundwater Availability Models from the TWDB, which Urbanczyk helped develop around 20 years ago, included thorough recharge models that showed just 1 to 2% of the total amount of precipitation flows into the Igneous Aquifer, and that recharge isn’t distributed uniformly.

That small percentage could decline even more, explained Urbanczyk, as a result of changes in precipitation intensity due to climate change.

“If you don’t have that nice slow-soaking rain, it’s going to run off to a lower portion of the aquifer. According to our model, there’s whole regions where there was zero recharge, because that’s in an area where instead of recharging, [rainwater] just gets distributed out into a dry arroyo and it’s going to evaporate,” said Urbanczyk.

Experts call for more data on the under-studied Igneous Aquifer

Experts’ ability to assess groundwater sustainability is complicated by a lack of consistent, thorough water level data as well as the sheer complexity of the area’s geology — and subsequently its hydrogeology, or the movement of water underground.

“The science is a bit imperfect in fully understanding these aquifers,” said Mace. Some experts, he said, reasonably question the reliability of the groundwater availability models given a lack of data. Because the Igneous is considered a minor aquifer, said Mace, there is a lack of data and information on it.

Urbanczyk largely agreed — there is simply a lack of data on the Igneous Aquifer, he said, making it difficult to make informed decisions regarding new development.

“We need more data. We need monitor wells,” said Urbanczyk. “Without more of that kind of information I don’t know how we’re going to know [about the status of our aquifers] until our wells start going dry.”

The PCUWCD’s monitoring efforts are in early stages, meaning there’s a lack of historical data that can show changes to the aquifer over time. The City of Marfa has two public supply wells that have been measured consistently since the 1970s by the TWDB, but while one shows steady declines in water levels since around 2010, the other has remained stable, making it difficult for experts to draw any conclusions from the data.

And current working maps of our aquifers are not even fully developed, said Urbanczyk. Areas of South Brewster County, including Terlingua and parts of Big Bend National Park, for example, do not have an officially-delineated aquifer, meaning there is still groundwater being pumped from the Igneous as well as the West Texas Bolsons and Edwards Trinity aquifers, but there is no formal regulation or management of those resources.

As far as water level monitoring efforts go, Presidio County is ahead of Brewster County, said Urbanczyk. There are currently seven monitoring wells in Presidio County, three of which are in Marfa. But with preliminarily-approved grant funding from the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the district soon plans to install 16 more monitor wells in the county.

He encouraged Presidio County’s citizens to vote in favor of the PCUWCD becoming a taxing entity in the upcoming May 6 General Election. If voters were to shoot down the proposal, the groundwater conservation district would cease to exist, meaning better monitoring efforts and other key regulatory practices could go by the wayside and jeopardize management of the area’s

water supply.

Urbanczyk also advocated for more strategically-located monitoring wells. While metrics associated with groundwater management are aquifer-wide, locally-specific data is important in assessing the impacts of particular developments, he said, due to the fact that the hydrogeology is complex, and water isn’t “just uniformly distributed under ground.”

Potential El Cosmico impacts

How exactly water wells and wastewater systems will work on the site of the newly-proposed El Cosmico resort, a 61-acre expanse devoid of city resources, has yet to be determined. In a statement to The Big Bend Sentinel, Lambert said her team was still in the exploration phase.

“We’re studying and surveying the land with a team of engineers who have a full scope,” said Lambert. “We are exploring all available options, including using existing and new wells onsite, septic systems and the possibility of a standalone wastewater treatment system. We will be meeting with Antelope Hills residents this week to understand their concerns.”

Though Lambert did not directly address questions from *The Big Bend Sentinel* regarding whether a city services extension was among the possibilities being considered, her March 9 letter to the editor announcing the plan indicated it was not; her team was working with an engineer to develop its own system for well water and septic, the letter states. City Manager Mandy Roane said El Cosmico had not been in touch about the extension of city services — an undertaking that would be extraordinarily expensive for the developer, she said.

Gerfers said he has spoken to Lambert and her team for a preliminary conversation about their options moving forward. He recommended that El Cosmico run tests to prove the well — or wells — on their new property can produce as much water as their operation will require. The groundwater district may also place probes in neighboring wells in order to measure impacts of the new El Cosmico resort.

“They’re going to want to know, too, if the aquifer is going down or their particular portion of the aquifer is going down, because you can’t invest millions and millions of dollars in an operation whose water supply is not stable,” said Gerfers.

The groundwater district has the options of asking El Cosmico to drill a monitoring well, or putting a condition into the hotel’s operating permit — which it will be required to obtain, in addition to any well-drilling permits, because it is a commercial enterprise — mandating that if neighboring wells are negatively impacted, El Cosmico will be required to curtail pumping.

Permits for drilling new wells are quickly and easily obtained and inexpensive — much like the cost of pumping water once a well is drilled. The county’s largest water user, Village Farms, a commercial tomato growing business, pays around \$400 annually for their water, said Gerfers.

El Cosmico’s water would also be subject to a certain amount of state oversight — the projected number of users would require it to become a “public water supply,” per the Texas Center of Environmental Quality (TCEQ), meaning they will have to meet specific requirements for water treatment, storage and distribution.

“If you have more than a certain number of users, then TCEQ requires you to be a public water supply, in which case, they’ll get an operating permit, have a meter on that well and then report to the groundwater district every year how much water they’re using,” said Gerfers.

As for concerns that El Cosmico’s expansion could strain the local water supply, Gerfers said such a scenario was unlikely. The Igneous Aquifer has supported a larger local population and more ranching in the past, he noted.

That’s if conditions remain largely unchanged. The future thinking around the water supply may have to become more stringent, he said, if significant events

occur to alter Marfa’s ecosystem — it didn’t rain for several years in a row, or if years with no rain became more frequent, for instance.

The practice known as “water ranching,” were it to occur in Presidio County, could also significantly alter the aquifer levels. The practice has reared its head locally in the past — El Paso Water, the city’s utility, purchased 25,000 acres in Valentine in the ‘90s with the intent to secure future water supplies for the City of El Paso, prompting local concern over water resources. Pumping never began at the site. But that concern, ultimately, is what led to the formation of the PCUWCD.

“I don’t think people should be super overly concerned about something like El Cosmico coming in and suddenly their wells are gonna go dry. I really don’t see that as a realistic scenario under current conditions,” said Gerfers. “If we have one of those big changes, we will need to re-examine.”

Mace largely agreed with Gerfers’s conclusions after assessing the scale of the project and reviewing available water level data but did note that new wells drilled by El Cosmico could lead to lower water levels for neighboring wells.

El Cosmico-adjacent landowners, if concerned, can reach out to the PCUWCD to request their wells be measured over time to assess potential water level impacts, said Mace.

“I don’t know that I see anything alarming, that is like, ‘Holy cow it’s gonna drop water levels down considerably,’ I don’t see anything like that,” said Mace. “I think it warrants watching, just [to] verify that if they drill wells out there that it’s not going to have much of an impact.”

Ultimately, Gerfers said, concerns over local water supplies — and infrastructure concerns more broadly — are not tethered exclusively to any single development, nor are they unique to the tri-county area. Texas’ population is expected to double by 2050, according to 2015 projections by the state demographer. (Just last year, the state’s population increased by 470,708 people, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, making it one of the fastest growing states in the country.)

Even in the remote Marfa subdivision of Antelope Hills, resident Lori Flores and her family, who have lived there for the last 17 years, have witnessed the area’s steady development over time. Flores said the previous owner of their property anticipated growth and decided to drill a deep well, which they still utilize.

“We were one of the first out there and there have been many, many changes,” said Flores. “It’s very different out there, the scenery has changed. We see houses all over the place now. We’re neutral to all of it.”

While they were impartial on the new El Cosmico, Flores said it would be important to monitor how more pumping in the area might affect neighboring well-owners.

Resident Kristal Cuevas said water conservation was among her concerns when it came to the El Cosmico development — her family is in the process of building a home in the subdivision, which they will move into from an Airstream. “It would not be great if we had to limit our water consumption for reasons other than just being conservative,” she said.

And potential impacts on her own family aside, water consumption needed to be assessed, she said. “It’s a concern of ours in terms of: it’s not unlimited,” she said. “That’s something we have to keep in mind.”

The matter of Presidio County’s water supply — and infrastructure concerns more broadly — are a topic of public discourse now due to the potential establishment of an expansive resort. But development within the county is bound to occur, said Gerfers, and discussions needed to continue.

“How do we get ready for growth? How do we get ready for the things that are coming at us?” said Gerfers. “You’re not trying to say no growth, you’re not trying to say no concerts, you’re just trying to be ready.”

“It’s not if,” he continued. “It’s when.”

STRs

(Continued from page 1)

not realistic for the working people in Marfa,” said Hernandez. “I don’t know if y’all want us to live with our extended family for the rest of our lives here.”

Hernandez said she had perused available short-term rentals and noticed that many of the operators don’t live in Marfa, leading her to question their investment in the community.

“I’m not against STRs, but I just want us to take a closer look at who we’re really affecting in this community,” she said. “I was looking at the Airbnbs today — a lot of them ... live in New Orleans, Austin, LA. I don’t know who those people are. What do you bring to this community? Are you here to make money? Are you here to benefit the community? How, the tourists?”

Marfa native Yasmine Guevara, a Judd Foundation employee, said she also was unable to afford a long-term rental in her hometown. She worried about how the lack of affordable housing would impact her son, who she hoped to raise in Marfa, and future generations.

“I’m passionate about this — I want to live in this town, I want to be able to afford a home,” said Guevara. “I want my son to grow up here. I want him to go to school. I want him to be able to enjoy the things I was able to enjoy.”

A few locals who manage properties expressed confusion at complaints about a long-term rental deficit, claiming they had struggled to find long-term renters for their properties.

“I’ve been looking for long-term renters: come out, come out, wherever you are,” said Melissa Bent of Marfa Realty, who said she manages properties with multiple bedrooms that were under \$2,000 a month.

Bent said she had clients who rent out STRs who live out of town, but either spend part of their time in Marfa or hope to retire in the town one day. “Not once has anyone made a solely investment purchase,” she said.

George Miles, who spoke at the meeting, is among that set. He said his wife Claire grew up in Marfa, where her family had resided since 1978, and that they inherited the family home in 2019. They’re currently

fixing it up and plan to rent it out as an STR — a necessity to keep up with rising property taxes, he said — before retiring there. Miles said he was concerned about losing that option.

“We’re very concerned about how this petition will directly affect our ability to keep this house which has been with Claire’s family for almost half a century, and thus our ability to retire here in Marfa,” he said.

Longtime local Carolyn Pfeiffer, meanwhile, said she rents out a casita on her property for \$125 a night, which allows her to make “just enough to help pay county taxes.” She doesn’t believe anyone would want her small, kitchen-less casita as a long-term rental.

“It would be really painful to have it shut down,” she said.

The chamber’s leadership has never advocated for the shuttering or prohibiting of STRs — in fact, it has not advocated for any specific regulations at all. Boyd has stated that it is incumbent upon the City Council to do the work of researching options.

The chamber, in its petition, does argue that the proliferation of STRs negatively impacts the community by depleting long-term rental availability and raising the cost of living.

There is research to suggest unregulated STRs make it more difficult for locals to find affordable housing. A study from the Economic Policy Institute, a nonprofit think tank, on the “economic costs and benefits of Airbnb” found that evidence suggests the expansion of Airbnb reduces local housing supplies and drives up housing costs.

But the matter of regulating STRs in Texas has been contentious, and fraught with legal challenges. In 2022, a group of property owners sued the City of Austin over an ordinance prohibiting STRs that fell into a certain category — properties not occupied by the homeowner. A trial court ruled in the city’s favor, but an appeals court overturned that ruling, declaring it unconstitutional. Years prior, in 2018, the Texas Supreme Court ruled in favor of a San Antonio resident whose homeowners association had tried to prohibit him from renting out his home.

Still, Austin is relatively heavy-handed in its regulation of its STR market. The city enforces various

rules by zoning and according to which category an STR falls into — those that are not owner-occupied, for instance, “may not be located on a lot that is within 1,000 feet of a lot on which another short-term rental (Type 2) use is located,” per the city website. The city also enforces strict licensing requirements and imposes steep fines on those who violate them.

As for current STR regulations in Marfa, the city requires operators to obtain a permit for \$500 and to pay an additional \$100 per unit — those permits must be renewed annually. Operators must also pay city HOT taxes in order to keep their permits and fulfill a host of requirements upon applying. The city imposes noncompliance fees. Marfa does not impose restrictions on the number of STRs or their location.

A bill currently making its way through the Texas Legislature would restrict cities’ ability to regulate STRs. If passed, the bill would make it illegal for cities to “expressly or effectively prohibit the use of a property as a short term rental property,” limit the duration or frequency of use of a property as an STR or limit the number of occupants.

After Tuesday’s meeting, Mayor Manny Baeza told *The Big Bend Sentinel* that he plans to explore potential regulations if he is re-elected in the upcoming May election, but that the city has been hesitant to pull the trigger in the past given current legislation and the history of the courts.

“If I’m re-elected, we’ll look into the matter, of course. It also depends on the legislation right now — that’s why we’ve been on hold as far as more regulations [go],” said Baeza. “The state usually sides with property owners versus cities, so we’re trying to see what the regulations are before taking this further.”

Beyond the state courts and halls of power, the issue has become heated within the small community of Marfa. Boyd’s advocacy in her capacity as Chamber of Commerce president — in February, she voiced support for a strongly-worded letter to Texas legislators advocating for local STR control — has garnered some backlash from critics, who see the advocacy as an attack on STR operators and anti-business.

At Tuesday’s meeting, STR operator Nina Dietzel characterized the chamber’s actions as a “witch

hunt,” and said its actions have been “divisive and polarizing.”

Boyd, when presenting the petition at the start of the meeting, said that “a few of the people who profit off of STRs don’t want us to even have this conversation,” and have “attacked us personally.”

Ultimately, Boyd’s advocacy on behalf of the chamber led to her departure from a job with the City of Marfa, where she was director of tourism. Following the chamber’s advocacy around the letter in February, she was given an ultimatum: continue to work for the city, or continue her volunteer work for the chamber. She chose to leave the city, tendering her resignation in mid-February. Her last day was March 17.

“I felt the city deserved for this conversation to continue,” said Boyd. “I checked and no one in City Council was moving forward, so I felt it was my duty to stick with what I had started.” (Mayor Baeza declined to comment on Boyd’s departure, saying the city does not discuss personnel matters).

Moving forward, chamber leaders will be launching a “community committee” of citizens called Help Occupy Marfa Equitably (HOME), which will operate independently and will aim to tackle housing issues in Marfa.

“It’s free from any overarching organization,” said Chamber Treasurer Kate Calder, who owns local business Communitie Marfa. “It’s just an independent gathering of people that have the same goals.”

The launching of the committee comes amidst criticisms that the Chamber of Commerce should not be taking such hardline stances on STR operations — a criticism Calder said she and Boyd were happy to address.

“This is a sticking point for people, that it shouldn’t be related to the Chamber of Commerce, and that’s fine,” she said.

Boyd said the committee will “start with the STR issue, because that’s what we’re tracking progress on right now,” but will concern itself with housing issues beyond just STR regulations in Marfa.

“This is a very long-term problem for Marfa, and it’s going to take a long time to find all the different solutions that it’s going to take,” said Boyd.

City of Marfa

(Continued from page 1)

each was awarded to the Marfa Lights Festival, Viva Big Bend, Marfa Invitational and Ballroom Marfa, \$3,000 was awarded to CineMarfa and \$2,500 each to Agave Festival Marfa and St. Mary's Church.

For sports, the only applicant was the Presidio County Golf Association, who was awarded \$2,000 for a sporting event as well as an additional \$4,000 in advertising reimbursement.

The small HOT grant committee consists of Mayor Manny Baeza and Mayor Pro Tem Irma Salgado, and previously included ex-Director of Tourism Abby Boyd. In the public comment portions of each of the council meetings where HOT grants were discussed, Marfa Live Arts Director Jennie Lyn Hamilton expressed frustration over what she felt was the small slice of the HOT tax pie dedicated to arts and culture funding — \$17,500 each grant cycle.

"The majority of [tourists] are coming in for arts and culture events, since Marfa is seen as the arts and culture destination," said Hamilton. "Frankly, it feels embarrassing that we only have \$17,000 right now to fight over, like we're little rats, for the crumbs."

"Without all of these arts and culture events, the whole hospitality infrastructure would fail and we would lose jobs and a lot as a town," she continued.

Hamilton argued that at least 20% of HOT tax revenue should be allocated for arts and culture grants next budget cycle, and for council to host conversations with arts and culture organizations about the budget.

Marfa Live Arts did not receive any grant money this cycle, but received a total of \$1,000 earlier in the year for arts and culture programming and another \$4,000 in advertising reimbursements.

Later on, Mayor Baeza addressed the matter, stating that this year, arts and culture funding was down in order to funnel more money into the historic preservation pot, which was in dire need of major funds to get long-awaited repairs completed to the Marfa and Presidio County Museum.

"We've had issues with this building for years," said Baeza. "That's why we have more money allocated this year so we can fix the Marfa Museum, a historical building."

City Manager Roane said next year the city hopes to

have more grant dollars to give out to arts and culture organizations, if museum repairs go according to plan this budget cycle. She and Baeza also noted the Marfa Volunteer Fire Department building was given historic preservation funds to see their expansion project come to fruition this year.

"Next year's HOT budget, I would think, will be able to look totally different because we're not going to have the large expenditures from the two buildings," said Roane.

Marfa and Presidio County Museum

City Council also voted recently to put projects to repair the Marfa and Presidio County Museum roof and floor out for bid. Due to recent wind storms, the museum's roof was severely damaged, said Roane, and would require immediate repair.

"The shingles are off, there's water damage on the inside, [we need] to get [repairs] done sooner rather than later," said Roane.

While some of the funds, around \$13,000, for the new roof would be covered by insurance, more money would be required to complete the \$28,000 project, she said. Luckily, according to Roane, the money budgeted for the floor slash east wall repair would be sufficient to cover the roof as well.

The museum's east-facing adobe wall has been sagging and floors sloping, making certain rooms of the site uninhabitable for visitors, for some time now, but Roane said the city was ready to move forward with a restoration plan after receiving engineering advice from Insights Structures and more.

The working plan, she explained, was to put new footing on the west side of the east wall, while adding joists to raise up the floor, making it level once again. Mark Morrison, a local contractor and soon-to-be city council member, who removed and helped assess the floor's damage, suggested a floating floor be installed to help alleviate the load bearing on the crumbling wall.

"I'm hoping maybe we can put in a new footing and joists and then not and then have the floor floating so that it's not further deteriorating that wall," said Roane.

Museum Board Vice President and Secretary Mary Williams, who was present at the council meeting in which the roof and floor repairs were discussed and put out for bid, voiced support for the initiatives.

Wrongful death suit

(Continued from page 1)

November 4, 2019.

Daniel Sullivan was released on bond in 2019 and currently resides in Illinois.

Blain's 2020 complaint to the 161st District Court argued that "divorce was imminent," and that Sophia was actively researching legal avenues for taking over sole custody of her son and moving into teacher housing in Marfa. The complaint also suggested that Sophia may have been privy to Daniel's "habitual drug [use]" and "online solicitation of male prostitutes."

According to the complaint, if Sophia had been able to divorce Daniel, Daniel would have been removed as the beneficiary of her \$150,000 life insurance policy, which he attempted to collect on the day of his arrest.

Daniel — representing himself — filed his original answer to Blain's complaint shortly after its filing. He denied the claims made in the complaint, requesting "strict proof thereof."

The suit languished until the start of 2023, when Blain enlisted new counsel. On January 24 of this year, Daniel was served with a series of questions and "Requests for Admissions," and was asked to produce an array of documentation, including cell phone, employment and court records within a 30-day time frame.

Among the Requests for Admissions included in the filing were requests that Daniel Sullivan admit he had intentionally killed his wife. "Admit that the reason that you intentionally killed Sophia Sullivan ... was because she had decided to divorce you," the document reads.

Blain's attorneys cited Rule 198 of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, stating that the statements set forth would be deemed admitted unless the defendant responded within the prescribed 30-day time frame, "setting forth in detail the reason why it cannot be truthfully admitted or denied."

Daniel did not file a response. On February 24, Blain's counsel filed a motion for partial summary judgment, and on March 30, the court granted that motion, ruling that Daniel Sullivan had intentionally caused the death of Sophia Sullivan, and that Daniel was liable to Blain pursuant to the Texas Wrongful Death Act. A hearing date to determine damages has been set for May 4 in Odessa.

John Sopuch, Blain's attorney, anticipated that the proceedings would be difficult for all involved. "What we're trying to do is something that's almost impossible — which is to put a monetary value on the relationship between a mother and daughter," he said.

Sopuch said that the damages would go to support Daniel Sullivan's son, currently in the care of Blain. (Though the child has been named in court documents, *The Big Bend Sentinel* has chosen not to use his name because he is a minor.)

A favorable ruling in the wrongful death suit would also remove Daniel as the beneficiary of Sophia's life insurance policy — which Daniel has not been able to collect, given his indictment. That payout would then also be entrusted to their son.

The criminal case, meanwhile, has seen no movement since the 2019 mistrial. District Attorney Ori White said that the criminal charges against Daniel would be retried, but didn't have a firm timeline, thanks to a series of pandemic-related delays.

"This is a very important trial," he said. "But our backlog of cases — it's just staggering."

White also said that he was considering filing for a change of venue because his office has had difficulty enlisting jurors — a move that might ultimately appeal to the defense, given the nature of the crime and the limited jury pool in Jeff Davis County.

"Justice needs to be served in this case," he said.

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WWW.MARFALIVEARTS.ORG

Artwork by Aubrie Aguilar

Opinion

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

On behalf of the Marfa Chamber of Commerce, I would like to thank all the families who attended the Second Annual Easter Egg Hunt. The weather was perfect, the egg-seekers were exceptionally cute, and it was a wonderful way to spend the afternoon. What a delight to see the community gather and hunt for more than 4,000 candy-filled eggs!

The event could not have been possible without the help of so many. First and foremost, I would like to thank the amazing volunteers who donated their time to stuff eggs and make this event possible: Adri Pineda, Angela Pastor, Ash Marquez, Cary Wilson, Jasmin Pineda, Kristina Sanchez, Larry Rivera, Michael Roch, Mitch Borden, Molly Bondy, Sonya Murillo, Phil Boyd and Suzy Simon. Thank you for your dedication and support!

Additionally, a huge thank you to Alamito Creek, Cactus Liquors and Esperanza Vintage & Art for sponsoring this year's event. We are also grateful to the City of Marfa, Albert Dominguez, Michael Serrano and Hector Parras for their assistance.

Lastly, we would like to thank Tara and Irma Salgado for joining in on the fun and serving their delicious food!

We can't wait to see you all next year!

Audrey Herrera
Secretary, Marfa Chamber of Commerce

...

Editor:

On behalf of Jerry Johnson and his family, we would like to express our appreciation for the love and support the community of Alpine has shown. Thank you to the American Legion Post 79 in honoring Jerry's military career at the memorial services at Elm Grove Cemetery. Many thanks to the City of Alpine and city council members for the proclamation honoring Jerry. Jerry was a well known citizen, businessman, board member, and all around Cowboy. Anyone who knew Jerry, knew how much he cared deeply for Alpine, his friends, his family and it was an honor to spend time with him. He was proud to represent the city of Alpine and the great state of Texas.

We ask that you remember to:
Vote for Jerry Johnson Ward 5 Alpine City Council in May!

The Johnson Family

...

Dear community:

With deepest appreciation during our loss of our beloved mother, Lorina, we want to thank you. You lifted our hearts by your generosity and kindness. Thank Father Victorino and Lee for the beautiful Mass.

Thank you to the Lady of Guadalupe Church of Ft. Stockton and hospice, Marfa ISD, Boyle family, Springfield family, Marcy and Mariana Mitchell for the bouquet /flower arrangements.

Pallbearers, thank you for your support, it was appreciated beyond words — Elijah Bristow, Javier Prieto, Conrado Almance, Tony Tejada, Jose Tejada Jr., Erik Quintana and Will Mitchell.

Thank you to the following ladies for your help and contribution to the reception — Linda Vasquez, Carolina Catano, Sara/Glenn Ontiveros, Josie Martinez, Silvia Norman, Rosie Garcia & Bee, Rosa Prieto and Angels restaurant.

Thank you for the delicious food brought to our house and Tavi Vasquez for all your help. Thank you Marfa ISD, Marfa National Bank, Mr. Hall of Mobile Mortuary of Texas, Focus Care of Ft. Stockton and Pecos Memorial Hospital.

God Bless Everyone.

Love,

The Tejada, Mitchell and Medrano Family

We want to hear from YOU!

- Letters to the editor 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.

- The Big Bend Sentinel Editorial Staff



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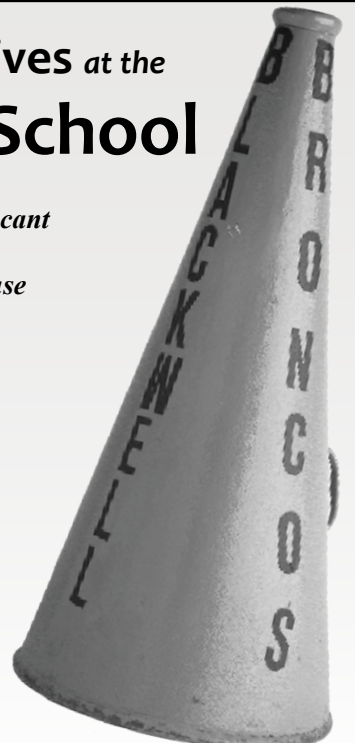
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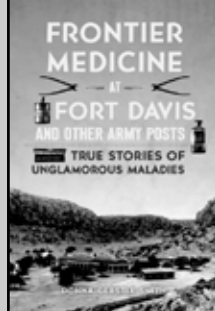
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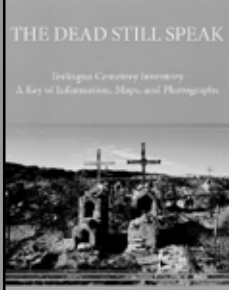
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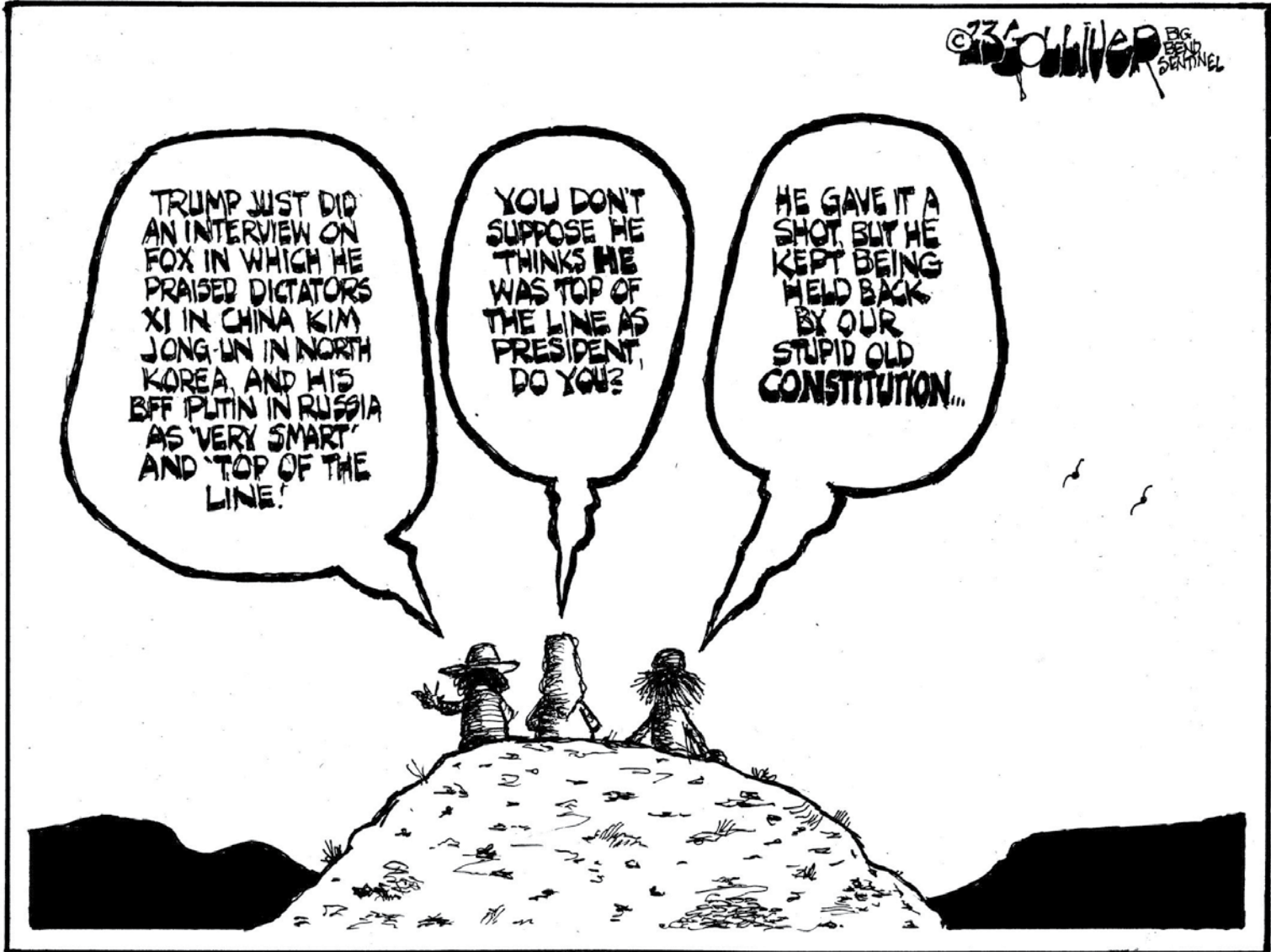
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OP-ED

A Walk on the Wild Side: A 100-mile hike through Texas’ best idea

By TYLER PRIEST

This column is part two of a series on public lands in Texas.

I was in desperate need of a new adventure to pull me out of a deep funk that had set in after my Pacific Crest Trail thru-hike. I needed something to get me out of bed and move me forward, literally. Enter the poet, wildland firefighter, and long-distance hiker known on the trail as Haiku.

It’s fitting that I met Haiku on the literal and figurative high point of my Pacific Crest Trail hike, Mount Whitney, highest point in the lower 48 states. We unexpectedly bumped into each other at 14,505’ above sea level on another planet, where our home state of Texas felt a million miles away. But that meeting would foreshadow future mountain-top experiences that we’d share back in Texas.

After catching a mindblowing sunset from that otherworldly peak, Haiku’s pace would leave me in the dust, and he’d press on to reach the Canadian border several days ahead of me. But as we would both reunite at the Trans-Pecos Festival in Marfa after our PCT hikes, our friendship and adventures would continue.

As PCT thru-hikers from Texas, we bonded over our shared cynicism for a variety of sacred Texan cows, Haiku’s jaded perspectives cutting much deeper than mine, and generally proving more accurate in time. With a shared hunger for more hiking, we began discussing future adventures. And in what would be a welcome twist, Haiku invited me on a journey through my own region that would, in short, help pull me out of that post-trail depression and deeply renew my love for Far West Texas.

If the national park system is America’s “best idea we ever had,” as novelist and environmentalist Wallace Stegner once put it, I’d argue that Big Bend National Park and Big Bend Ranch State Park are, together, Texas’ best idea. These two incredible parks combine to create a million-plus-acre desert, river and mountain playground across the most scenic and epic landscape Texas has to offer. And there’s an unofficial 100+ mile route that connects these two rugged parks, envisioned and created by one of my best friends and former state parks leader Ky Harkey.

This amazing multi-day backpacking route begins in the northwest corner of Big Bend Ranch, traverses the state park, crosses FM 170 in Lajitas, enters the national park and climbs up and over the Mesa de Anguila and finishes with a victory lap around the South Rim before descending to the Chisos Basin.

While I’d helped shuttle a vehicle for Ky’s initial 100-mile hike in 2018 and had a general sense of the route, up until then I had only hiked the 50+ mile section that traversed the state park. I was well overdue to hike the full route. That’s when I got a text from Haiku in early November of ‘21. I rearranged some plans and soon I was all in. The excitement of a new adventure was back.

Suffice it to say, neither the state nor the national park recognize or encourage this route for various reasons, some of which involve concerns of limited search and rescue resources becoming tied up by those inexperienced with long-distance desert hiking. So I won’t explicitly mention the name of this unofficial route or provide any juicy details other than to say it’s named after the region (the Big Bend) and a round

number of the miles it covers (100).

On a cool day in mid-November after securing our backcountry permits, Haiku, his hiking partner, Cowpatty, and Gamechanger (that’s my trail name) made it to the remote starting point in the northwest corner of the state park and began walking southeast toward our finish line, the distant Chisos Mountains. We moved across a wild and seemingly inhospitable expanse of the Chihuahuan Desert with the ease that comes with thousands of miles of desert travel experience.

In four days’ time we traversed 107 miles through lovely cottonwood-lined arroyos with gurgling streams, we hiked above the second and third highest waterfalls in Texas, caught some beautiful golden hours, sunsets and sunrises, ventured across the beautifully remote and harsh Mesa de Anguila, night hiked into a full moon rise and witnessed the red moon of the lunar eclipse at 3 a.m., howled with coyotes, drank chip tequila from plastic flasks, crossed lunar landscapes and badlands, laughed our faces off at Haiku’s dry wit and silly antics, climbed up into the Chisos Mountains for what felt like a victory lap around the South Rim, and had the smoothest 107-mile trail experience possible across such seemingly harsh terrain, covering a marathon distance per day.

We were in the best shape of our lives hiking across the very best landscapes that Texas has to offer. It was, in short, a magical trek through the very best wilderness Texas offers.

After hiking through 700 miles of Southern California desert on my Pacific Crest Trail journey some six months prior, I realized that no 100-mile stretch of PCT desert could hold a candle to what we experienced over those four days in the Big Bend.

To top off our peak Big Bend experience, we drove from the Chisos Basin to Boquillas Crossing just before the newly reopened port of entry closed its gates for the day, and we caught the last ferry raft across the Rio. We hopped in the back of a truck and made our way to Jose Falcon’s, where we got a room and a delicious cabrito taco dinner and then extra beers for a walk down to the local hot springs. We caught a lovely sunset reflecting off the calmly flowing waters of the Rio as we soaked our trail-weary bodies in the gushing *agua caliente*.

Looking back toward the Chisos Mountains from the sleepy village of Boquillas, I was basking in the afterglow of such a great hike and my mind was opened again to new adventures and new vistas in Far West Texas. The experience re-filled my cup, and it made me thirsty for more. I began to see new possibilities in this vast region, and I was reminded that, even after a 100-mile hike, there is so much more I have yet to explore of this million-acre desert playground.

The hike was, in a sense, a celebration of Texas’ best idea: the Big Bend as public land. I returned to Texas and saw with new eyes a vast region where the Texan spirit is truly free to roam. An inspired landscape that opens wide its prickly arms and says Yes. An unfenced land where wild desert dreams run free.

As Texas as it gets.

As it turned out, Far West Texas had cured my post-trail blues. And it wholly reframed for me the Big Bend region. What I could now see was an expansive and contiguous desert landscape where I was truly free to roam. The Big Bend once again felt big. And I once again felt strangely at home roaming this wild expanse, embraced by those prickly arms.

That epic hike got me moving again. And it planted the seed for another adventure almost exactly one year later, one that would also feature Haiku. I began scheming what a friend and park ranger referred to as another one of my “hair-brained hikes,” a 75-mile hike through Texas biggest state park, which I named the Big Bend Ranch 75.

In celebration of Texas’ biggest state park, an ideal park for desert backpacking, the route would hit several waypoints that highlight the very best that the 300,000+ acre Big Bend Ranch has to offer. Where wild desert dreams run free.

To be continued.

Tyler Priest is a former park ranger and outdoor guide who plots adventure by day and bartends by night. He can be reached at tylerdrewpriest@gmail.com.

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- April 19 at 4pm - **Preserving the Big Bend Region's Night Skies** - Stephen Hummel, McDonald Observatory
- April 20 at 8 pm- **Blackness, Bright Lights, and Big Cities** - Dr. Celeste Henery, The University of Texas at Austin
- April 21 at 8 pm- **Indigenous Astronomies of the Big Bend and Beyond** - Marc Molina, The University of Texas at El Paso
- April 22 at 8 pm - **Archaeoastronomy and Rock Art as Sacred Space in the Black Hills** - Roger Boren, Center for Big Bend Studies, Benny & Gena Roberts

mcdonaldobservatory.org/dark-sky-week

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Community

McDonald Observatory celebrates 1-year anniversary of Greater Big Bend International Dark Sky Reserve

FORT DAVIS — This week, McDonald Observatory and numerous partners join in celebrating the first anniversary of the Greater Big Bend International Dark Sky Reserve. Covering more than 15,000 square miles in Texas and Mexico, the Reserve is the largest dark sky place in the world certified by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA).

This achievement builds on a rich history of efforts to preserve the night skies in the region. McDonald Observatory's ongoing conservation work, including its support of the reserve, has helped to ensure that it maintains the darkest skies of any research observatory in the continental United States.

“The observatory has played a major role in informing, educating, and recognizing good lighting,” said Stephen Hummel, dark skies initiative coordinator at McDonald Observatory. “One of the biggest developments has been the Night-Sky Friendly Recognition Program, which recognizes the efforts of businesses and organizations who use good lighting and thus supports the broader reserve.”

The reserve was established through a diverse collaboration between communities, parks and organizations. “These partnerships have been truly amazing for working together to preserve the night skies, which we all hold in such high regard,” said Kaylee French, the West Texas education and outreach

coordinator for The Nature Conservancy — a member of the reserve.

Dark skies are crucial for preserving the natural beauty of the night sky and for reducing the negative impacts of light pollution on scientific observations, human health, wildlife, and the environment. “The daily cycle of light and dark is vital for the survival of all life on earth in some way, shape or form,” said French. Light pollution can disrupt ecosystems, interfere with the sleep patterns of humans and animals, and affect astronomical observations.

To assess light pollution levels in the Big Bend region, Hummel uses a method developed by the National Parks Service known as “all-sky photometry.” For these measurements, Hummel photographs the horizon and night sky above and works with the National Parks Service to stitch them together and isolate artificial light.

While light pollution is increasing by an estimated 9.6% annually in North America, Jeff Davis County presents a very different picture from the national average. Combining Hummel's measurements with contributions from volunteers using sky quality meters, the data reveal that the skies have become nearly 3% darker on average over the last year. “It's progress, and we were a part of that change,” said Hummel.

A paper published earlier this year, “Light pollution indicators for all the major astronomical observatories”

by Falchi et al., uses a different method to compare sky brightness above 28 major observatories across the globe. The authors used a model applied to the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) 2021 satellite radiance data to compute and analyze indicators of light pollution. These indicators include radiance at zenith, which you can think of as the point in the sky directly above your head, as well as other measures. The study calculated the percent change in sky radiance compared to the assumed natural background levels, and the results show the zenith night sky brightness at McDonald Observatory compares favorably with our peers. “It is reassuring to see the skies over McDonald Observatory as the darkest of any professional observatory on the North American continent in this comprehensive study” stated Taft Armandroff, director of McDonald Observatory.

In collaboration with the IDA, McDonald Observatory will participate in Dark Sky Week from April 18-22, an annual event to raise awareness about the adverse effects of light pollution and the importance of preserving dark skies. During the week of celebrations, McDonald Observatory will host a series of events along with its regular programs, including pop-up labs and talks on topics ranging from archaeoastronomy to nature's need for darkness. Visitors may also participate in special tours of the observatory facilities and learn more about the state-of-the-art equipment used to study the night sky.

In addition to the exciting events planned for Dark Sky Week, McDonald Observatory is proud to continue showcasing the Preserving Dark Skies exhibit at the Frank N. Bash Visitors Center.

This exhibit, which opened in conjunction with the designation of the Greater Big Bend International Dark Sky Reserve last year, has been a popular attraction for visitors to the observatory. With an estimated 50,000 visitors having viewed the exhibit in the past year, Preserving Dark Skies has served as a vital tool for educating and raising awareness about the importance of protecting the night sky.

The exhibit's success has been made possible through funding from Apache Corp., who have been strong allies and champions of night sky-friendly lighting in the Permian Basin. McDonald Observatory extends its deepest gratitude to Apache Corp. for their unwavering support and partnership in preserving the natural beauty of the night sky and for their outstanding leadership in promoting the conservation of night skies.

McDonald Observatory encourages visitors to come and experience the wonders of West Texas' dark skies and practice night sky-friendly lighting. “There are lots of great things everyone can do to help,” said French. For more information on light pollution, the Greater Big Bend International Dark Sky Reserve, and the events at McDonald Observatory, visit mcdonaldobservatory.org.

Marfa Education Foundation hires Abby Boyd as first executive director

MARFA — As the 2022-23 school year draws to a close, the Marfa Education Foundation (MEF) announces the hire of its first executive director, Abby Boyd. Boyd, a Marfa resident since 2016, comes most recently from the City of Marfa where she served as director of tourism. She has been at the helm of the Marfa Chamber of Commerce since 2021, where she has focused on community-driven programming with a reinvigorated board and body of business members.

“We are so very pleased to bring Abby Boyd onboard as our first executive director for MEF,” said Susan Kirr, president of MEF. “Abby brings a lot of passion, vision and energy to the school and to our mission to facilitate and augment the education of Marfa students. Abby has excellent ties throughout the wider Marfa community, and will help us to grow, and to take MEF to the next level.”

MEF's mission is to support and enhance the education of the district's students and to facilitate enrichment projects, both curricular and extra-curricular. The organization's 2022-23 budget was \$267,000, an amount that has increased annually to accommodate long-standing programs, such as robotics, Marfa Live Arts writing programs, dual credit classes, literacy assistance, teacher grants, Marfa Studio of Arts art classes, teacher appreciation events, and support improvements to the school library. These programs have been made possible by relationships with major funders Permian Basin Area Foundation, the Still Water Foundation, Abell Hanger Foundation, the Wayne & JoAnn Moore Charitable Foundation, the Cynthia & George Mitchell Foundation, Donald & Carole Chaikin Foundation, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, and many individual donors in

the Marfa community.

The last two years have seen major increases in programs in part thanks to special gifts like the one from Erin Barker of Marfa Art Supply, who provided high-quality art materials. Other recent additions to resources facilitated by MEF include teacher stipends, new software for yearbooks, magazines and periodicals, software for PE classes, improvements to art classrooms, environmental field trips, travel to state and national competitions, renovation of the MISD auditorium, teacher workroom upgrades and improvements to campus security. MEF has also given out \$30,000 in scholarships to former MISD students who are sophomores, juniors or seniors in college. Mary Lynne Reinagel and Billy and Kay Hester — parents of Marfa resident Jeffrey Hester, who passed away in 2021 — gave a very generous donation from

the sale of Jeffrey's art, supporting initiatives in the school that will be used in the 2023-24 school year.

Looking to the year ahead, Boyd says she is excited to continue MEF's established work with MISD and find even more ways to support students and staff. “We want to make sure to get as much time with Mr. Agüero as we can before his departure in June, and we will do all we can to support the incoming superintendent. We want to make sure Marfa kids have access to the tools that will let them reach their full potential,” said Boyd. MEF will continue to host events and offer support through the end of the school year, concluding with a lunch for MISD teachers and staff at Cibolo Creek Ranch. More information can be found on their website at marfaeducationfoundation.org.



Photo by David Brendan Hall
Matt Haimovitz, Charline von Heyl and Jeffrienne Young with von Heyl's Primavera 2020 in Marfa, January 2020.

Cellist Matt Haimovitz to perform compositions inspired by Botticelli re-interpretation at venues across Marfa

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — Original compositions on solo cello that have been inspired by painter Charline von Heyl's re-interpretation of Sandro Botticelli's *Primavera* will be performed live in Marfa this weekend by cellist Matt Haimovitz. The concerns will take place 6:30 p.m. Friday at the Chinati Foundation Arena, 3 p.m. Saturday at Marfa Book Co. and 3 p.m. Sunday at the Crowley Theatre.

Performances will last around an hour and are free to the public. The concerts are being put on by the collaborative Primavera Project, which began in 2019 when co-founders Haimovitz and Jeffrienne Young met artist von Heyl in her Marfa studio, and asked if she would consider creating a modern reimagining of the Renaissance painting *Primavera* by Botticelli, which they had recently seen in Florence.

Von Heyl agreed to participate in the project and the resulting work debuted last spring at the Venice Biennale. The painting is also the subject of 50 original musical works by contemporary North American composers, commissioned by the project, with 30 more in progress. Recent performances have taken place in Tel Aviv, Israel, and Naples, Italy, but Haimovitz said the Marfa iteration marks the first three-day experience and brings the project back to where it all started.

“I think Marfa made it possible for us to have this kind of a project and bring music and art together. We're looking forward to giving back to the community and also to just seeing what the interest is in the community,” said Haimovitz.

The large-scale Primavera painting by von Heyl will not be on display during the performances but has

inspired the themes of the three concerts, which are titled “Figures and Shadows,” “Rites of Spring” and “Through the Centuries.”

Each commissioned composer took a different approach in crafting their musical contribution to the project, said Haimovitz. Composers include Philip Glass, Missy Mazzoli, Gabrielle Smith, Tomeka Reid and more.

“Some of the composers have really bridged the centuries beautifully between the Botticelli and the von Heyl,” said Haimovitz. “Some of them are really interested in one specific character [in the painting], or even David Sanford, for example, is interested in some of the blossoming flowers.”

Jazz cellist and recent MacArthur Genius Grant recipient Reid, for example, focused on the bird in flight in von Heyl's painting for her solo cello composition, imagining it flying over the ocean for weeks at a time.

The Primavera Project has recorded some of its music — including in von Heyl's studio while she worked on additional *Primavera* painting interpretations — which is available on their website, along with videos of performances set in the Chihuahuan Desert landscape.

Haimovitz and Young said while the project was ever-evolving, they are excited to bring the works to life for a Marfa audience, and that while it was not required to attend all three concerts by any means, it would give the viewer the full opportunity to hear the music in a variety of settings.

“When you take music out of the concert hall and put it in a different space, it suddenly has a different meaning,” said Haimovitz. “That is sort of what we're doing in Marfa. You're going to get a very different experience of the music and each one of these spaces.”

BLACKWELL BLOCK PARTY

Saturday, April 22, 2023
11 am to 4 pm
Marfa, Texas



A free, family-friendly festival celebrating the rich culture and heritage of Marfa and the borderlands, and honoring the designation of the Blackwell School National Historic Site.

The Blackwell School is located at 501 South Abbott Street in Marfa. From the 4-way stop, go two blocks west and three blocks south.

Everyone is invited. Everyone is welcome. Learn more about the Block Party and the history of the Blackwell School at www.theblackwellschool.org





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FOR ADVERTISING RATES

Jeff Davis County Democrats host Raise Your Hand Texas for education legislation update

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

FORT DAVIS — The Jeff Davis County Democrats will host Larry John Porras, regional advocacy director with Raise Your Hand Texas, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that supports public education in Texas, for an education legislation update this Saturday, April 15, from 1 to 3 p.m. at Cueva de Leon in Fort Davis.

Porras, who is originally from Valentine, will give legislative updates on a broad range of education issues, including school vouchers — a controversial law that would see public school dollars flowing into private schools that passed the Senate last week — the school assessment system, teacher retention, raising of basic allotment funding per pupil and more.

“We will be covering school vouchers, the accountability system and some of the stuff that I feel that really resonates more with how Fort Davis ISD, Marfa ISD, the whole tri-county area is going to be

affected [by new legislation],” said Porras.

Genie Mitchell, chair of the Education Action Committee for the newly-reinvigorated Jeff Davis County Democrats, said the entity has been getting reorganized as of late, publishing a new website and rallying around the formation of three action committees of education, immigration, and voter rights.

Mitchell said considering Fort Davis ISD’s struggles with funding — Superintendent Graydon Hicks has spoken publicly, including in a letter to the editor in this newspaper, about how the district could go bankrupt soon without more state funding — and the role of the district as an primary local employer, it is important for citizens to care and invest in public education issues.

“[Porras] is going to speak about the importance of advocacy in West Texas rural communities in order to champion our public schools, teachers and students. Our Texas public schools have suffered from lack of adequate funding for over 25 years,” said Mitchell.

“We would love to bring back programs in music,

band, arts, drama and civics that add value to students’ educational experience,” she continued.

Porras said that among its issues, Raise Your Hand Texas is advocating against school vouchers, and for greater per pupil allotments for school funding as well as a more comprehensive school accountability rating system. As it stands, Texas schools are severely underfunded and facing harmful threats like school vouchers, which would negatively impact rural schools as well, said Porras.

“This is about getting people to realize the value of advocacy in general, but specifically public education advocacy, because this is preparing our students for the future,” said Porras. “I’m one of those small town kids and every single student needs that support.”

Mitchell said the Jeff Davis County Democrats are hopeful the event will draw a crowd from around the tri-county area. Moving forward the organization hopes to connect locals with opportunities to make their voices heard by learning more about how to contact their

representatives and track issues that matter to them.

“Because [we’re] out here in the middle of nowhere, I think a lot of representatives do not realize some of the issues we have as being small communities so far located so far from services,” said Mitchell.

Porras, who represents West Texas from El Paso to Bracketville for his organization, said he is looking forward to fostering partnerships with local districts in the tri-county area, representing their concerns on the state level, and being back in the area he grew up in for Saturday’s talk.

“Just the fact that the event is going to be Cueva de Leon — I haven’t eaten there since I was in high school, at a basketball tournament, so it’s going to be so surreal,” said Porras.

“We have policies like vouchers and we have regulations that are inserted that really make it difficult for small schools to really implement. It’s an honor to go back to them and get their voices, get their input and then work with the Legislature,” he added.

Marfa Live Arts’ One Act Plays staged at Crowley Theater on April 19

By JD GARCIA

MARFA — Marfa Live Arts presents the 12th Annual One-Act plays on Wednesday, April 19, at the Crowley Theater in Marfa. This year’s selection of award-winning plays has been written by freshman Piper Donaldson, sophomore Jack Marquez, junior Amber Hinojos, and senior Janelly Pereira during the 2023 Marfa Live Arts Playwriting Workshop under the tutelage of playwright Raul Garza. The words of the student playwrights will be brought to life and performed onstage by regional thespians including: Jerram Rojo, Fatima Anaza, Belen Garcia, Rachel Tate, Olivia Pertuso, Dillon Orr, John Aguero, Sabine Blaese, Evan Louison, Christie Alexander, Abby Boyd, Lily Aguero, Oscar Aguero and Caitlynn Almance.

According to the winners of the competition, their plays being picked to be performed were a surprise. “I didn’t think I was going to win,” Donaldson said of her play “Colors,” which she said was inspired by a video she watched in elementary school of an American icon. “We watched this video about Helen Keller and how she learned sign language and it always stuck with me. Sometimes I get memories of it, and I thought, ‘What if I wrote a play about an artist who’s blind?’”

Marquez’s play, titled “OK,” according to the student

playwright, “is a story of an unrequited crush.” Hinojos’ work, “Ice Cold,” she said, was inspired by a story told to her by her grandmother. And the idea for Pereira’s play, “Future Kids of America,” came about after a fellow student interviewed her about time travel. “I said if I could go back, I’d go back to the ‘80s and be my mom’s best friend,” she said.

For Garza, who ran the Marfa Live Arts workshop, the students have shown great promise as playwrights. “I’m grateful for the opportunity to have worked with MHS students. My role was to offer tools to help the writers get out of their own way. I’m proud that the students — and the winning writers in particular — showcased the ability to write from the heart without filters or barriers.”

Garza is also excited for the upcoming performances that will demonstrate the students’ newfound writing abilities. “They created plays that transform everyday experiences into moments of transformation,” he said. “Audiences will be wowed by their boldness and imagination.”

The Marfa Live Arts One-Act Plays is at 7 p.m. on April 19, and made possible by support from the Marfa Education Foundation. The community is invited to attend this free event. For more information visit www.marfalivearts.org.

City seeks lifeguards, funding to keep community pool open for the summer

MARFA — With the summer swimming season quickly approaching, the City of Marfa is seeking applications for lifeguards who are willing to be trained to help run the Marfa Activities Center pool from June to August as well as funding to help recruit and retain lifeguards.

In a letter to the editor in last week’s *The Big Bend Sentinel*, Chinati Foundation Education Director Michael Roch, who also helps organize Summer Shake Up, an annual month-long summer camp for Marfa kids, taking place in June this year, said they specifically wanted to add swim lessons to the program this year and were pushing for the lifeguard search and donations to make it happen.

“Local swim lessons have been available only sporadically over the years, and none in recent memory. Many Marfans both young and old lack this important life skill. Likewise, it’s been difficult to hire and retain lifeguards to stay for the entire summer,” wrote Roch.

Roch said the goal was to recruit a total of four lifeguards, who will be paid \$13 an hour, with a

supervisor earning \$15 an hour. Training will be provided. Lifeguards are expected to keep the pool open all of June, July and into mid-August. If lifeguards stay through the end of the summer, they will receive a bonus up to \$500, or \$550 for the supervisor.

Roch said in total the swim classes, for which they have located qualified instructors and could accommodate up to 64 children, would cost around \$5,300. With \$2,000 in existing funds from the Marfa Parks and Recreation board as well as \$1,500 in other donations, there is \$1,800 left to raise in donations to bring swim lessons to Marfa’s kids this summer.

If you are interested in becoming a lifeguard, contact City Manager Mandy Roane, at mroane@cityofmarfa.com or (432) 729-4315.

If you are interested in donating, contact Michael Roch at mroch@chinati.org. All donations will be made to the Marfa Education Foundation (501-C3).

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.

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

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

Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg April 10, 2023

ACROSS

- Jamaican tangelo
- Material for a professorial blazer
- W-2 IDs
- Invoice stamp
- Remove stubble
- Gem with a jelly variety
- Rice-shaped pasta
- Mythological word “protection”
- Sink your teeth into, literally
- Org. with Hawks and Pelicans
- Garden lattice
- Expected
- Humanity’s home
- Give permission
- Prevent, as disaster
- Greeting in Sydney
- Put in stitches
- Thin cable
- Something owed
- Pay to play poker, perhaps
- Org. concerned with job hazards
- Raison d’—
- Warns up the crowd
- Waikiki wreaths

- Complete disaster
- Ballpark foods
- “I can’t unhear that!”
- Sunisa Lee’s Olympic team
- She may have a little lamb
- All ready
- “All’s well that ___ well”
- Audie Cornish’s former station
- Iowa city
- Askew
- Inherent behaviors, or what the answers to the starred clues are?
- Person being celebrated
- Throw away
- Stop lying?
- Striped house cat

- Member of a South Asian diaspora
- Cry loudly
- “Supernatural feeling of imminent danger
- Walks in the woods, e.g.
- Wintny mix
- Biblical possessive
- Tool that can be used as a musical instrument
- Crispy cookie brand
- ___ Davis, first Black woman to achieve the Triple Crown of Acting
- Adroit
- Hecklers’ sounds
- Letters in the subject of a racy email

- ___ prof.
- Eggy dessert
- Pragmatic sort
- Musical orphan
- ___ & Young
- Actor and “SNL” alum
- Wayans
- Skillet
- High-IQ group
- Strong beer
- Old Pontiac
- Sounds of comprehension
- “Just kidding!”
- Two peas ___ pod
- That’s corny!
- Movie popcorn container
- Mess metaphor

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

4/9 © 2023 Andrews McMeel Universal
www.upuzzles.com

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
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66										67				

Come worship with us



First United Methodist Church

Do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid,
for I am your God;
I will strengthen you,
I will help you,
I will uphold you with my
victorious right hand.
Isaiah 41:10

Sundays 9 am
Pastor Stephen White
110 W Washington Steet
Marfa 432-729-4534

PLEASE RECYCLE
THIS PAPER

DRAWING OF THE WEEK



Dustin Martinez
11th Grade
Box

MARFA SCHOOL LUNCH MENU

APR	Thu, Apr 13	Fri, Apr 14	Mon, Apr 17	Tue, Apr 18	Wed, Apr 19
BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST STRUDEL, CHEESE CUBES	CEREAL, TOAST	BREAKFAST SANDWICH	FRENCH TOAST, SAUSAGE	POWER BREAKFAST
LUNCH Menu courtesy of  Celebrating 70+ years of serving our customers. 432-729-4375 www.myporters.net	BONELESS CHICKEN WINGS, CELERY STICKS, CARROTS, MIXED FRUIT, SHERBET	STEAK FINGERS, CURLY FRIES, TEXAS TOAST, TINY TOMATO CUP, DRIED CRANBERRIES	CORN DOG MINIS, BAKED FRIES, TINY TOMATO CUP, MIXED FRUIT	QUESADILLA, SALSA, BEANS, CUCUMBER CUP, APRICOTS, ICE CREAM CUP	GRILLED CHICKEN SANDWICH, FRESH VEGGIE CUP, GARDEN SALAD, FRUITY GELATIN

CELEBRATION LIQUOR MARFA Mon - Thu 11:30 am - 9 pm Fri - Sat 10 am - 9 pm 432-837-7479 • Marfa Mon - Sat 10 am - 9 pm 432-729-4682 • Alpine	RAUL LARA CITY COUNCIL MEMBER Cell# 432-249-1189 councilmemberlara@cityofmarfa.com Post Office Box 787 432-729-4315 / fax 432-729-3158	CONVENIENCE WEST BBQ Friday • Saturday www.conveniencewest.com Order in advance online 1411 W San Antonio/Hwy 90	PRESCRIPTION SHOP MARFA <i>A full-service pharmacy. Now accepting many insurance plans for service while you wait.</i> 105 East Oak Street, next to Marfa Country Clinic 432.729.4244 rxshopmarfa@gmail.com
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ALTA MARFA
WINERY & VINEYARD



MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

THU, APR 13: HS Area Track Meet @ Rankin
FRI, APR 14: HS Softball
MON, APR 17: HS Girls Golf, Regional Meet at Maxwell Golf Course
TUE, APR 18: HS Boys Golf, Regional Meet at Bentwood CC & Estates

The Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute Conant Lecture Program to feature Dr. Lauren Esposito

MARFA — Twice annually, the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute (CDRI) offers the Roger Conant Distinguished Guest Lecturer Program, which has become a favorite of conservationists, naturalists and environmentalists throughout the Big Bend region.

The upcoming spring 2023 program promises to be no exception. CDRI is pleased to welcome Dr. Lauren Esposito, assistant curator and Schlinger chair of arachnology at the California Academy of Science, San Francisco, California.

Everyone is invited to hear Esposito speak on the topic of arachnids on Thursday, April 13, 2023. The program will take place at the Crowley Theatre in Marfa, Texas. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The program begins at 7 p.m.

Dr. Esposito will give an informative and exciting talk about scorpions

that will have her audience looking at arachnids in a different way, she said.

“Scorpions are the oldest living terrestrial arthropods on the planet. They’re approximately 400 million years old: They were here before dinosaurs and ever since haven’t changed in their overall form,” said Esposito.

Dr. Esposito points out that scorpions are found in every ecosystem on the planet, from cave systems below sea level, to the mountain peaks of the Andes, to the arid climate of the Chihuahuan Desert. Scientists have recorded 2,200 species of scorpions; Esposito’s conservative estimate is that number only encompasses 60% of the group’s total diversity.

A light reception will follow the program. The program is free for attendees. Contact CDRI at 432-364-2499 or events@cdri.org for information.

AROUND THE BIG BEND

Thu
Apr
13

Historic Alpine Ghost Tours
April 13 - 15 at 8:00pm - 9:00pm in Alpine
Tours begin at the Reata Restaurant in Alpine and include stops at historical landmarks such as the Brewster County Courthouse, the Alpine Avalanche building, and the Holland Hotel. All proceeds from the tours are donated to SRSU theatre scholarships. To buy tickets, visit: <https://historicalpine.org/ghost-tours/>

Fri
Apr
14

Alpine Gem and Mineral Show
April 14 & 15 at 9:00am and April 16 at 10am at the Alpine Civic Center, 801 W. Holland Ave in Alpine
This FREE Annual three day gem and mineral show features rocks, rough & finished stones, beads and tools... PLUS Door Prizes!

The Primavera Project presents Matt Haimovitz, cello
6:30 pm at The Chinati Foundation - The Arena, 1 Cavalry Road in Marfa
The first of three FREE concerts of solo cello music by J.S. Bach & new commissions from The Primavera Project. For more information visit: theprimaveraproject.com

Sat
Apr
15

School of Constructive Arts “Earthen Vaults” Workshop Taught by Master Earth Builder Jim Hallock
April 15 & 16 at School of Constructive Arts, 1316 Snake Road in Alpine
Receive an introduction to soil testing and compressed earth block while studying earthen roofs, arches, vaults, and domes and participating in the construction of a 10-foot span barrel vault roof. Only \$150 for locals in the tri-county region, breakfast and lunch included on both days. Register: www.constructivearts.org/earthen-vaults

The Granada Theatre presents Pet Adoption & Fundraiser
10:00am - 2:00pm at 207 E. Holland Ave in Alpine
Meet-the-Pet stations, information about spay/neuter clinics and pet care, and more! Bring your family and come join the fun, meet some adorable new best friends, and learn how to be the best pet owner you can be.

Local Band Night at the Granada Theatre
7:00pm - 10:00pm at 207 E. Holland Ave in Alpine
Come see three favorite local bands/ musicians: The Swifts, Ross Fleming, and Marijuana Sweet Tooth! In this collaborative live music event, each band will play a set while you dance the night away. Admission is FREE, or buy a wristband to BYOB! <https://www.granadatheatre.events/>

Tue
Apr
18

Dark Sky Week at McDonald Observatory Begins
April 18 - 22 at McDonald Observatory, 3640 Dark Sky Drive
Special telescopr tours and activities. Food for purchase (cash only.) Free star party passes with code BIGBENDSKY. Educational talks. More information at: mcdonaldobservatory.org/dark-sky-week

Wed
Apr
19

Marfa Live Arts presents 12th Annual One Act Plays
7:00pm at the Crowley Theater, 98 S Austin St in Marfa
By Marfa High School award-winning playwrights performed by Marfa actors Jerram Rojo, Fatima Anaza, Belen Garcia, Rachel Tate, Olivia Pertuso, Dillon Orr, John Agüero, Sabine Blaese, Evan Louison, Christy Alexander, Abby Boyd and more! Free event! marfalivearts.org

Presented by



Ongoing
Weekly
Events &
Classes

Free Meditation Classes for Local Law Enforcement, City, County, and Healthcare Workers
Thursday at 5:30pm at Marfa Public Library

Mira Marfa
Monday: Yin Yoga at 6:00pm
Tuesday: Flexibility Flow at 9:30am; Dance Family at 6:00pm
Wednesday: Astanga Inspired Yoga at 5:30pm
Thursday: Asana Clinic at 6:00pm
Sunday: Primary Series at 10:00am; Dance Family at 6:00pm
105 W Texas St, \$15 drop-in fee; no one will be turned away for lack of funds

Big Sky Yoga
Monday: Vinyasa at 6:00pm
Tuesday: Hatha at 9:00am
Wednesday: Restorative at 3:00pm; Vinyasa at 6:00pm
Thursday: Yin Yoga at 6:00pm
Friday: Breathwork at 9:00am; Vinyasa & Core at 12:00pm
Saturday: Vinyasa at 10:00am
New location: 105 E Oak #4 (in the ally behind the Wrong Store)

Step it Up (Step Aerobics)
Tuesday at 6:00pm, Thursday at 9:00am & Saturday at 9:00am @ Big Sky Yoga
All fitness levels welcome. New location: 105 E Oak #4 (in the ally behind the Wrong Store)

Free Zumba Classes
Monday & Wednesday at 6:00pm at Marfa Public Library

Free Meditation Classes
Tuesday at 6:00pm at Marfa Public Library

Life Drawing with Model
Tuesday from 7:00pm - 9:00pm at Talent Studios in Alpine
Join this vibrant artist community, make new friends and hone your drawing skills. Reserve your easel by texting 206.619.4699

Baby & Toddler Storytime
Wednesday at 11:00am at Marfa Public Library

AA (online & sometimes in-person)
Saturday at 12:00pm at <https://tinyurl.com/y686nnw2> & in-person at Marfa Public Library

Saturday Farmer’s Market
Saturdays at 9:30am at the pavillion behind he Visitors Center in Marfa

The Alpine Farmers Market
Saturday at 9:00am on historic Murphy Street in Alpine

Note: Schedules are subject to change. Please call or visit business websites to confirm that event is happening.

Have an upcoming or weekly event?

Please submit a two sentence maximum description of your weekly event including who, what, when, and where by Tuesday at 10 am to ads@bigbendsentinel.com

OBITUARIES



Dutchover

Maria Gloria Dutchover of Fort Davis, Texas, passed away on Wednesday, March 29, at the age of 90. She was born in Valentine, Texas, to the late Porfirio and Julia Granado. She was married to her first husband, Patricio D. Olivas, in 1948. Together, they raised a family of five before Patricio’s passing. Following his death, Maria Gloria married her second husband, Guillermo Dutchover Jr., in 1987. She was a faithful, longtime member of St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Fort Davis and a member of the Catholic Daughters of America in Marfa.

Maria Gloria will be remembered as an incredibly hard worker and one of the best cooks in her community,

maybe even the world. She not only dedicated her life to serving the Lord but by loving people in one of the only ways she knew how: to cook her best meals and bake for them until her hands hurt. Her silliness, love of storytelling, and feeding anyone who walked in her front door will be some of the things her family will miss most.

She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Mary and Edward Dutchover; her son and daughter-in-law, Pat and Diana Olivas; her daughter, Betty Jones; her 15 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren; and all those who loved her and her cooking.

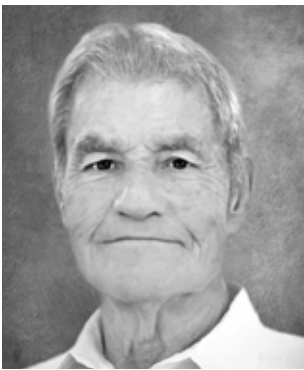
She was preceded in death by her first husband, Patricio D. Olivas; and her second husband, Guillermo Dutchover Jr.; her daughter, Shirley Olivas; her son, Tony Ray Olivas; and her grandson, Joshua Vasquez.

The viewing was held on Tuesday, April 4, followed by a Rosary service at 11 a.m. and the funeral service at 11:30 a.m., all at St. Joseph’s Church in Fort Davis, Texas.

Online condolences may be left at: www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, Texas.

• • •



Ward

“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid ...” John 14:1

John “Jay” William Ward, age 90, of Fort Davis, Texas, passed away on Sunday, April 2, 2023 in Alpine, Texas. John was born on May 21, 1932, to John Irby and Cora Ellie (Cole) Ward in Gainesville, Texas. He was the fifth child — the first son — of eight children. Jay moved with his parents and siblings to Denver City in 1946 where he attended school and earned his high school diploma — Class of 1952 — from Denver City High School via correspondence after being drafted into the U.S. Army for service during the Korean Conflict.

On June 27, 1953, while serving in the U.S. Army, Jay was married to his high school sweetheart, Anna Beth Anderson, also of Denver City, Yoakum County. Following his military service, Jay and Anna Beth opted to return to West Texas to attend Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas; He was the first in his family line to attend college, a dream not easily fulfilled in the 1950s! Jay played football for the Lobos and baseball for the ‘06 Cowboys. He earned a degree in physical education in 1959 with hopes of becoming a teacher and coach. As well, he continued his studies in industrial technology and earned a master’s degree by 1961.

Jay and Anna Beth moved to Fort Davis and embarked on what would become a 60+ year venture for him. They started their teaching careers with Fort Davis ISD and their family of four flourished: Valynda Zoe (‘58), Shawn Michelle (‘60), Tanya Monique (‘62), and Revis Levette (‘64). Jay served as the beloved “shop” teacher — a role which he relished — as well as a history and math teacher, a coach, and a school administrator. In the early 1970s, Jay and Anna Beth helped to charter and open a residential treatment facility/boarding school at Prude Ranch for students with exceptional emotional and social needs. Jay was named principal and guided the school through relocation to the Blue Mountain facility and then retired a decade later as it made its final move/name change: High Frontier. To accomplish these lofty goals, Jay was required to earn yet an additional master’s degree in special education, and he did so through Texas Tech University with Anna Beth as his classmate and companion ... always!

With 20+ years of service in the education field, Jay decided to

launch his own business, putting his industrial technology degree to great use: Wayside Enterprises was birthed, and Jay embarked on a venture that lasted well into his seventies! Quite frankly, he continued to tinker and create in his woodshop right up to his 90th birthday and then some! It was his passion, as was his family! His passion, as well, was studying the Word — the Scriptures — and he did so at the First Baptist Church of Fort Davis before helping to charter a nondenominational congregation at Church in the Mountains. Again, with Anna Beth at his side. In his final years, Jay loved gathering for fellowship with community members of all faiths at the Stone Village Grocery Store to discuss life and love. He was a giant in living life well, modeling for others how to do it while explaining the whys for doing it. He was truly a teacher at heart!

Funeral services were held on Friday, April 7, at 11 a.m. at the Fort Davis High School Auditorium, with a brief graveside service immediately following at Hillcrest Cemetery in Fort Davis (military honors conducted by Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas). Judge Greg Henington, Jay’s eldest son-in-law, presided as the master of ceremonies, while Jay’s four daughters conducted the services along with their spouses: Greg Henington (Valynda of Alpine, Texas) Richard Nolen (Tanya of Artesia, New Mexico) and Lea Daggett (Revis of Fort Stockton, Texas). Dakota Zimmerman, Shawn’s son, served as her significant other for services in light of “Zimmer’s” very recent illness and death.

Pallbearers were Joshua Cannon, Zeke Cannon, Ronnie Young, Reese Zimmerman, Casey Nolen, Mason Daggett, and Cole Daggett. Honorary Pallbearers were Asher Cannon, Dakota Zimmerman, and Jared Massingill.

The family requests memorial contributions be made to the Jeff Davis County Food Pantry in Fort Davis (432.426.3886).

Death and Life: Jay is preceded in death by his beloved Anna Beth (2007) as well as by his parents and four of his siblings: Irma, Charlotte, Francis and Charles. Also preceding his death is his grandson, Burke Jay Matinez (1983), while immediately followed in death by Carl Maurice “Zimmer” Zimmerman, his son-in-law and caretaker of more than a decade. Jay is survived by his four daughters and their husbands, nine grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren with two additional on the way, as well as one great-great-grandchild arriving in November! Additionally, Jay is survived by three siblings: Ruth (94 of Gainesville, Texas), Ann (86 of Lubbock, Texas), and Beth (78 of Payette, Idaho).

Online condolences may be left at: www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, Texas.

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JOBS

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Please call Sarah at 432-837-4812 for more information.

Applications may be picked up at 1605 N. FT. Davis Hwy
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Please call first before arrival.

Family Health Service of Alpine • 1605 N. FT. Davis Hwy

The City of Marfa is hiring part-time, temporary
lifeguards for summer.

For information visit <https://cityofmarfa.com/jobs>
or contact Mandy Roane at 432.295.3323
or mroane@cityofmarfa.com.

Deadline to apply is April 28, 2023.

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Remember to Render! Taxable property renditions are due April 15.

Does this apply to you?

If you own tangible personal property that is used to produce
income, such as the equipment or inventory owned by a business,
it does.

What is a rendition?

A rendition is a report to your appraisal district that lists all of
the taxable property that you owned or controlled on Jan. 1 of
this year. This often applies to furniture, fixtures, equipment or
inventory owned by a business.

What are the advantages of filing?

- You give your opinion of your property's value.
- You record your correct mailing address so your tax bills will go
to the right address.
- If your property's value depreciated, you can file a report of
decreased value.

What is the deadline?

- For most property types, renditions must be filed with the
appraisal district after Jan. 1 and no later than April 15. Different
deadlines apply in certain appraisal districts. A property owner
may apply, in writing, for a mandatory extension to May 15.
- Different deadlines apply for regulated properties.
- The chief appraiser may extend the deadline another 15 days
for good cause shown in writing by the property owner for
each type of property.

REMEMBER!

Filing is your responsibility. If you render late, don't render, or file
an incomplete or false rendition, you may face a 10 to 50 percent
penalty.

File renditions with your local appraisal district at:

PRESIDIO COUNTY APPRAISAL DIST.
P O BOX 879
107 E. TEXAS ST
MARFA, TEXAS 79843
(432)729-3431/Presidio (432)229-3963
info@presidiocad.org

A public service announcement courtesy of your local appraisal district.

PUBLIC NOTICES

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.

The CITY OF MARFA will be accepting SEALED BIDS for the purchase
of SURPLUS VEHICLES until 3:00 PM Friday, May 3, 2023 at which
time they will be opened at MARFA CITY HALL located at 113 S.
Highland Ave. by the City Manager and/or designated staff. Any
proposals received after the deadline shall be returned unopened.
Proposals submitted via faxes or email will not be accepted.

A complete bid packet can be picked up at MARFA CIY HALL located
at 113 S. Highland Ave. or at the City of Marfa's website, [www.
cityofmarfa.com](http://www.cityofmarfa.com). Complete packet must be submitted and shall
be addressed to Mandy Roane, City Manager and clearly marked
"SEALED BID-SURPLUS VEHICLES 2023."

The City of Marfa reserves the right to postpone,
to accept or to reject any or all proposals or to waive any
informalities in the process.

**Please direct questions to Mandy Roane,
City Manager at 432.295.3323.**

SUBMIT PUBLIC & LEGAL NOTICES ONLINE.



The Big Bend Sentinel has
partnered with Column to offer
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Fort Davis, TX 79734

GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

PRESIDIO COUNTY
Judge Jose Portillo:
(432) 729-4452

Presidio Mayor John Ferguson:
City Hall: (432) 229-3517
Email: jferguson@presidiotx.us

CITY OF MARFA
Manny Baeza, City of Marfa Mayor
mayor@cityofmarfa.com
(432) 295-0048

BREWSTER COUNTY
Judge Greg Henington:
(432) 837-2412

Irma Salgado, Mayor Pro Tem
councilmembersalgado@cityofmarfa.com

Alpine Mayor Catherine Eaves:
City Hall: (432) 837-3301
Email: mayor.eaves@ci.alpine.tx.us

Mark Cash
councilmembercash@cityofmarfa.com
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councilmemberlara@cityofmarfa.com
Eddie Pallarez
councilmemberpallarez@cityofmarfa.com

JEFF DAVIS COUNTY
Judge Curtis Evans: (432) 426-3968

FEDERAL:

U.S. Sen. John Cornyn:
(202) 224-2934 (D.C. office)

U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz:
(202) 224-5922 (D.C. office)



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The City of Marfa is accepting proposals for a flooring project at
the Marfa and Presidio County Museum.

Project specifications are available online
at <https://cityofmarfa.com/rfps>.

**Sealed bids are due at City Hall (113 S. Highland Ave.) no later
than May 5, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. CST.**

The City of Marfa is accepting quotes for a full-roof replacement
at the Marfa and Presidio County Museum.

For more information, contact City Manager Mandy Roane at
432.295.3323 or mroane@cityofmarfa.com.

Deadline for quotes is April 28, 2023.

FOR SALE

MOVING SALE

High end furniture sale! China cabinet, dining table with
four chairs and a leaf, entertainment center, dresser,
2 large bookcases, computer desk all at great prices
and seller is open to offers.

If interested, call 432-294-1264.

2 FAMILY GARAGE SALE

LOCATION:1508 W San Antonio, behind/beside Mandy's

Large sale with Furniture, Tools, Kitchen Appliances,
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**OPEN: Saturday April 15th 8:00 - 2:00
Sunday April 16th 8:00 - 12:00**

**For more information call Faron Prausa 432-296-0427
Or Cheryl Donaldson Prausa 432-295-0679**

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¡Recuerde a Rendir! Las rendiciones de propiedades imponibles son debidas el 15 de abril.

¿Se aplica esto a usted?

Si usted posee bienes personales tangibles que se utilizan para producir
ingresos, tales como el equipo o el inventario de un negocio, entonces sí.

¿Qué es una rendición?

Una rendición es un reporte a su distrito de tasaciones que lista todas
las propiedades imponibles que usted poseyó o controló el 1ro de
enero de este año. Muchas veces esto se aplica a los muebles, elemen-
tos fijos, equipo o inventario de propiedad de un negocio.

¿Cuáles son las ventajas de declarar?

- Usted brinda su opinión sobre el valor de la propiedad.
- Registra la dirección exacta con el fin de recibir la factura de los
impuestos a la dirección correcta.
- En caso de que el valor de la propiedad depreciara, puede presentar
un informe del valor depreciado.

¿Cuál es la fecha de vencimiento?

- Para la mayoría de los tipos de propiedades, las rendiciones deben ser
presentados en el distrito de tasaciones después del 1ro de enero y
no más tarde del 15 de abril. Diversos plazos se aplican en ciertos dis-
tritos de tasaciones. El propietario de una propiedad puede solicitar,
por escrito, para una extensión obligatoria para el 15 de mayo.
- Las fechas de límites diferentes aplican para las propiedades regu-
ladas.
- El jefe de tasaciones podrá extender la fecha de limite por otros 15
días por una buena causa indicada por escrito por el dueño de la
propiedad para cada tipo de propiedad.

¡RECUERDE!

La registración es su responsabilidad. Si presenta una rendición tarde
o nunca, o presenta una rendición incompleta o falsa, puede enfrentar
una penalidad de 10 a 50 por ciento. Presenta sus rendiciones con su
distrito de tasaciones local en:

PRESIDIO COUNTY APPRAISAL DIST.
P O BOX 879
107 E TEXAS ST.
MARFA, TEXAS 79843
(432)729-3431/Presidio (432)229-3963
info@presidiocad.org

Este es un servicio público cortesía de su distrito de tasaciones local.