

**BURN BAN IN
EFFECT, NO
GROUND FIRES**

by order of Presidio County

**Gunshots
lead to
lock down
of schools
in Alpine,
warrant for
man's arrest**

By ROB D'AMICO
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ALPINE — An arrest warrant has been issued for an Alpine man who allegedly opened fire on a man's pickup truck Tuesday afternoon, initiating a brief lockdown of Alpine ISD schools, according to police officials. The Tuesday shooting incident is one of several events impacting an Alpine family that has seen a tragic death and the arrest of family members in the past two months.

In a text and Instagram message to the community, Alpine ISD Superintendent Michelle Rinehart said the district put schools on a lockdown for about six minutes before a return call from police gave her the "all clear" to remove it.

The Alpine Police Department issued a warrant for Juan Jose Tafoya, 30, of Alpine, after he allegedly fired at least two shots at a truck owned by Justin Vega Lara, 37, of Alpine, near the 1100 block of North 9th Street just after 1 p.m. Tuesday, according to Police Chief Darrell Losoya. Lara and other occupants were in the truck when it was fired upon, but no one was injured. The names of other occupants were not released because of an ongoing investigation into the incident, Losoya said.

Justin Lara is the brother of Ismael Javier "I.J." Vega, 23, of Alpine, who died of a suspected fentanyl overdose on February 15. Authorities in Sierra Blanca then arrested Vega's other brother, Willie "Sapo" Lara III, and two others on March 4 for possession of narcotics (including fentanyl) with intent to distribute. According to a complaint filed in federal court, those arrested said the plan was to sell the fentanyl in Alpine.

Justin Lara — the target of Tuesday's assault — was then arrested on March 7 after officers found methamphetamine and marijuana in his vehicle, and he was jailed briefly in Brewster County before being released on bond. According to police officials, the arrest was not directly related to his brother's death or the other brother's arrest, but it was the result of a Department of Public Safety warrant for Justin Lara after he failed to appear as promised to give information to authorities about both of those cases.

Justin Lara was detained after the shooting but was not arrested, according to police. The Facebook account of his mother, Marta Vega of Alpine, posted Tuesday blaming Tafoya for the shooting. "I just want to say [to] Juan Tafoya you are very lucky the bullet hit my son's truck and not my son," the post stated. "You are a coward." Marta Vega also suffered a suspected fentanyl overdose at the same time her son I.J. died, but survived after

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Photo courtesy of Elvira Hermosillo / Foto cortesía de Elvira Hermosillo

City Hall - Last weekend's annual Binational Bike Ride included a stop at Ojinaga's City Hall, where riders saw Miguel Valverde's murals depicting local history and culture.

Ayuntamiento - La Marcha Binacional Anual en Bicicleta del fin de semana pasado incluyó una parada en el Ayuntamiento de Ojinaga, donde los ciclistas vieron los murales de Miguel Valverde que representan la historia y la cultura local.

**The weight of the badge:
Customs and Border
Protection responds to rash
of agent suicides**

By SAM KARAS
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US-MEXICO BORDER — As journalists and politicians endlessly dissect the current situation on the southwest border, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is dealing with a crisis all its own: a spike in suicides among agency staff.

The issue was first widely publicized in December of 2022 when three Border Patrol agents died by suicide within a month. The agency has been keeping internal tabs since 2007: in that 17-year span, there have been 149 reported deaths, with a spike of 15 in 2008 and 14 in 2022 out of a workforce of around 20,000 Border Patrol agents and 60,000 total employees.

These higher suicide rates appear to be correlated with higher numbers of apprehensions along the border — and their associated waves of violence, suffering and death. Widespread criticism of the Biden administration's border security policies has resulted in intense scrutiny from both ends of

(Continued on page 2)

**Police chase mountain lion
through streets of Presidio**

By ROB D'AMICO
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While mountain lions are not uncommon visitors to remote ranches and parks of the Big Bend, it is rare to see them prowling the streets and alleyways of an area neighborhood — but that was the scene on April 9 as Presidio police officers chased after a "lioness," which eventually fled into the wild.

A Presidio resident spotted the mountain lion, and two Presidio Police Department officers and an animal control officer responded to the 400 block of Park Street and found it "hiding between a stretch of hallway between an apartment and a wall fence," according to a Presidio Police Department Facebook post.

"It's uncommon for them to be found in areas where there are lots of people," said Rachael Connally, the Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist for Presidio County. "It could just be that the animal was passing through and may have gotten confused or lost in town and wasn't able to find its way out. Or it may have been that it found an easy source of food in town."

The police Facebook post noted the mountain lion "ran all the way through the city streets, crossing U.S. Highway 67 ... and finally running away into the wild." The post included a blurry photo of what appears to be the cat trying to leap a fence, along with photos of paw prints found later. A subsequent post advises: "If you see a mountain lion, remain calm, pick up small children and pets, and back away slowly while maintaining eye contact with the lion. Do not turn and run. When given space to flee, the lion

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**El peso de la insignia:
Aduanas y Protección
Fronteriza responde a una
ola de suicidios de agentes**

Por SAM KARAS
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FRONTERA ESTADOS UNIDOS-MÉXICO — Mientras periodistas y políticos analizan sin cesar la situación actual en la frontera suroeste, Aduanas y Protección Fronteriza (CBP) está lidiando con una crisis en sí misma: un aumento en los suicidios entre el personal de la agencia.

El tema se publicitó ampliamente por primera vez en diciembre de 2022, cuando tres agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza se suicidaron en un mes. La agencia lleva un control interno desde 2007: en ese lapso de 17 años, se han reportado 149 muertes, con un aumento de 15 en 2008 y 14 en 2022, de una fuerza laboral de alrededor de 20.000 personas.

Estas tasas de suicidio más altas parecen estar correlacionadas con un mayor número de detenciones a lo largo de la frontera y sus oleadas asociadas de violencia, sufrimiento y muerte. Las críticas generalizadas a las políticas de seguridad fronteriza de la administración Biden han dado lugar a un intenso escrutinio desde ambos extremos de la curva política.

(Continúa en la página 3)

**La policía persigue a un
puma por las calles de
Presidio**

Por ROB D'AMICO
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Si bien los pumas no son visitantes infrecuentes de ranchos y parques remotos del Big Bend, es raro verlos merodeando por las calles y callejones de un vecindario de la zona, pero esa fue la escena el 9 de abril cuando los agentes de policía de Presidio perseguían a una "leona", que finalmente huyó a la naturaleza.

Un residente de Presidio vio al puma, y dos oficiales del Departamento de Policía de Presidio, más un oficial de control de animales acudieron a la cuadra 400 de Park Street y lo encontraron "escondido entre un tramo de pasillo entre un apartamento y una cerca de pared", de acuerdo a la publicación en Facebook del Departamento de Policía de Presidio.

"Es poco común que se encuentren en áreas donde hay mucha gente", dijo Rachael Connally, bióloga de Parques y Vida Silvestre de Texas del condado de Presidio. "Podría ser simplemente que el animal estuviera de paso y se haya confundido o perdido en la ciudad y no haya podido encontrar la salida. O puede haber sido que encontró una fuente fácil de alimento en la ciudad".

La publicación de la policía en Facebook señaló que el puma "corrió por las calles de la ciudad, cruzó la autopista estadounidense 67... y finalmente huyó hacia la naturaleza". La publicación incluía una foto borrosa de lo

(Continúa en la página 3)

**Los disparos
provocan
el cierre de
escuelas
en Alpine
y orden
de arresto
contra un
hombre**

Por ROB D'AMICO
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ALPINE — Se emitió una orden de arresto para un hombre de Alpine que supuestamente abrió fuego contra la camioneta de un hombre el martes por la tarde, iniciando un breve cierre de las escuelas de Alpine ISD, según funcionarios de policía. El incidente del tiroteo del martes es uno de varios eventos que impactaron a una familia alpina que ha visto una muerte trágica y el arresto de miembros de la familia en los últimos dos meses.

En un mensaje de texto e Instagram a la comunidad, la superintendente de Alpine ISD, Michelle Rinehart, dijo que el distrito cerró las escuelas durante unos seis minutos antes de que una llamada de la policía le diera "todo claro" para retirarlas.

El Departamento de Policía de Alpine emitió una orden de arresto contra Juan José Tafoya, de 30 años, de Alpine, después de que supuestamente disparó al menos dos tiros contra una camioneta propiedad de Justin Vega Lara, de 37 años, de Alpine, cerca de la cuadra 1100 de North 9th Street, justo después de la 1. pm. martes, según el jefe de policía Darrell Losoya. Lara y otros ocupantes estaban en la camioneta cuando le dispararon, pero nadie resultó herido. Los nombres de los otros ocupantes no fueron revelados debido a que hay una investigación en curso sobre el incidente, dijo Losoya.

Justin Lara es hermano de Ismael Javier "I.J." Vega, de 23 años, de Alpine, quien murió de una presunta sobredosis de fentanilo el 15 de febrero. Las autoridades de Sierra Blanca arrestaron luego al otro hermano de Vega, Willie "Sapo" Lara III, y a otras dos personas el 4 de marzo por posesión de narcóticos (incluido fentanilo) con intención de distribuir. Según una denuncia presentada ante un tribunal federal, los arrestados dijeron que el plan era vender el fentanilo en Alpine.

Justin Lara, el objetivo de la agresión del martes, fue arrestado el 7 de marzo después de que los agentes encontraron metanfetamina y marihuana en su vehículo, y fue encarcelado brevemente en el condado de Brewster antes de ser liberado bajo fianza. Según funcionarios policiales, el arresto no estuvo directamente relacionado con la muerte de su hermano ni con el arresto del otro hermano, sino que fue el resultado de una orden del Departamento de Seguridad Pública contra Justin Lara luego de que no se presentó como prometió para dar información a las autoridades sobre ambos. de esos casos.

Justin Lara fue detenido después del tiroteo pero no arrestado, según la policía. La cuenta de Facebook de su madre, Marta Vega de Alpine, publicó el martes culpando a Tafoya por el tiroteo. "Solo quiero decirle [a] Juan Tafoya que tienes mucha suerte de que la bala impactara en la camioneta de mi hijo y no en mi hijo", decía la publicación. "Eres un cobarde." Marta Vega también sufrió una presunta sobredosis de fentanilo al mismo tiempo que su hijo I.J. Murió, pero sobrevivió

(Continúa en la página 3)



ENGLISH NEWS

CPS Mental Health

(Continued from page 1)

the political bell curve.

CBP families, agents and whistleblowers agree: the job is not easy. A study tracking deaths of law enforcement officers more generally found that life expectancy for those in the line of duty is age 66, 12 years lower than the general population. “Working long hours and responding to high-stress situations, our men and women in green and blue are being pushed to their breaking point every single day,” Congressman Tony Gonzales wrote in a press release.

In 2022, Gonzales — who represents the Big Bend — introduced the Taking Action to Prevent Suicide (TAPS) Act alongside fellow Texas Rep. Henry Cuellar, calling for an anti-suicide task force to identify strengths and weaknesses in the agency’s response to the crisis. (The bill never made it out of committee.)

The two representatives wanted to boost what they perceived were positive first steps. “Recent appropriations have led to the hiring of additional mental health clinicians at CBP. However, there is still a shortage of mental health support, education, and destigmatization at the agency,” he wrote.

In May of 2023, the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG) published a report, presented to the heads of CBP and ICE, that pinned the blame on overwork — as well as “poor public image” and “violence or threats of violence.”

While the number of agents has remained relatively stable, migrant encounters along the border have ballooned 143% since 2019. 2022 saw a record 800 recorded migrant deaths; the agency also estimates a 303% increase in “gotaways,” or migrants that were detected but never caught.

The result is demoralizing. Half the respondents to the report’s survey said they had been asked to take on extra duties and nearly a quarter struggled with “work-life balance.” Twenty percent said they felt that they were unable to perform their “primary law enforcement duties” as a result of the extra work.

Thirteen percent confessed they were struggling with their mental health. “Officers are getting burned out,” one agent commented. “We need more staff and better shifts that allow for more time off with families. Divorce rates and suicides are rampant in the agency. We want to feel like we are respected and not a cog in the machine that can be easily replaced.”

The department pushed back on some of the report’s findings, stressing, above all, that only about 16% of total CBP and ICE employees had actually submitted responses. They also outlined in more detail the resources available to employees, including peer-to-peer counseling, chaplaincy programs, and a suite of “mindfulness” and anti-suicide apps. “Leadership is concerned that the OIG’s draft report does not fulsomely recognize the extent of initiatives DHS has implemented to support its personnel,” the response reads.

The Big Bend Sentinel spoke with Border Patrol agents past and present for more insight into how the agency is succeeding — and falling short — in its efforts to support its employees’ mental health.

Battle buddies

As part of its “Shine a Light” initiative, CBP hired renowned “suicidologist” Kent Corso — an Iraq War-veteran turned psychologist turned world-renowned mental health consultant — to help illuminate the path. One of Corso’s initiatives included recording a podcast that collects stories from within the agency that humanizes the internal struggles many agents face.

Corso’s work highlights an important truth: there have been exponentially more than 149 people impacted by suicides at CBP since 2007. “I find myself waking up to a reality I never asked for, that my kids never asked for,” the anonymous widow of a Rio Grande Valley agent told Corso in a podcast interview. “He’s in peace, but we were left in pieces.”

The widow — referred to only as “Jane Doe” — said that confusion was a part of her complicated grieving process. Why hadn’t her husband of more than two decades confided in her about his internal struggle?

Landon Hutchens, spokesperson for Big Bend Sector Border Patrol, explained that the stressors of the job are inconceivable to civilians, even those closest to the agency. “There’s a higher threat for danger — your average civilian doesn’t worry about getting shot at by cartels,” he said. “Agents have to keep their heads on a swivel at all times.”

Migration to the United States is constantly shifting, too, perhaps making it even more difficult for agents to relate to others, even those who have hung up their green uniforms. In the popular imagination, migrants moving across the border are solo young men undertaking epic journeys through the desert — but the reality has changed so much in the past few years that this narrative is due for a rewrite.

Both agency data and data collected by advocacy groups suggest that migrants are dying at unprecedented rates in urban areas like downtown El Paso or suburban Sunland Park, New Mexico. Agents who might previously have spent most of their time in an office are now faced with the same reality as their grizzled colleagues in the field. “Sometimes you encounter deceased individuals and some pretty gruesome situations,” Hutchens said.

As a media liaison, Hutchens was also astutely aware of how outsiders’ perceptions could have on agents’ well being and self-esteem. “I think something that’s underreported on is the compassion of your average agent,” he said. “They’re enforcing our immigration laws, which is critical. But I see a tremendous amount of humanitarian compassion ... every agent I know carries a lunchbox with extra food and water they end up giving out to migrants.”

Women and unaccompanied children have also been crossing the border in higher numbers, tugging on the heartstrings of people in the agency with

families of their own. “We spend a lot of time away from our families,” explained Assistant Chief Patrol Agent Jaime Castillo. “We’re passionate about our jobs. It can be consuming — you spend a lot of time thinking about work, even when you’re gone.”

While they don’t see the same volume of apprehensions as their colleagues up and downriver, Border Patrol agents in the Big Bend Sector perhaps understand isolation better than anyone else.

Agents clock in for at least 50 hours a week, often in remote areas where cell phone service is limited. Many live in agency housing, cut off from the convenience and comforts of home that transplants to the region sorely miss. To counteract the bad press, CBP has been experimenting with recruitment bonuses in its most remote locations — Presidio has been flagged as particularly “hard-to-fill” and now advertises a \$30,000 bonus for new agents.

Richard Barragan, acting special operations supervisor for Big Bend Sector Strategic Communications, said that he had been personally impacted by the agency’s mental health crisis.

During his time at the remote port town of Santa Teresa, New Mexico, the station was devastated by three deaths in the space of a year. One day, he came to the grisly realization that he had been routinely parking next to a patrol vehicle that had been the site of a colleague’s death by suicide.

Barragan said that he lived by a simple motto: “Be the One.” The term was popularized within the agency by a social media campaign including YouTube and Instagram posts that encourage agents to reach out to each other.

In one video, former agent Vincent Vargas asks agents to think back to their academy training in the “battle buddy” system, used to keep tabs on their colleagues in physically dangerous situations. “Look to the left and right of you,” he said. “If any of your brothers and sisters are struggling, please reach out to them — be a battle buddy for them.”

Barragan said that he’d taken the message to heart. “It was a call to action — basically to bring suicidal ideation to the forefront and to remove the stigma of talking about it,” he said. “We do internalize a lot of these feelings, and it does help to talk to someone.”

Both Barragan and Castillo said that they had both taken part in — and benefited from — the agency’s resiliency training which teaches agents the skills they need to perform in an intensely stressful job. “The training came at a critical point in my personal and professional career,” Castillo said. “It turned me around and flipped the switch.”

In the Big Bend Sector, support programs take a number of forms: peer-to-peer counseling, chaplain support, resources for the families of those who pass away in the line of duty. Local agents also have access to canine support animals, meditation and even yoga classes.

Numbers show that the programs are taking off. DHS reports that there are 12,278 supervisors trained in suicide prevention and awareness, with plans to grow these stats and the scope of their education. In 2022, CBP chaplains sat for 66,000 sessions — 6,000 more sessions than the agency has employees.

Castillo says that every effort — whether it’s counseling for grieving family members or a few minutes with a furry friend — can make all the difference. “CBP has done a great job of letting us know that they truly care about us,” he said.

“I felt like I had been on the wrong side of history”

Despite the insistence by top brass that the agency’s suicide crisis is the result of external factors, former Senior Patrol Agent Jenn Budd says the organization itself shares the blame.

Budd — an outspoken critic of the agency and author of Against the Wall, which discusses her own suicide attempt — says that a culture of internal intimidation, corruption and fear has been causing rampant mental health issues for decades, long before the Border Patrol started tracking data or talking openly about these problems.

“The culture of the Border Patrol is that if you can't handle it, then you're not tough enough. You're not BP material. You don't bleed green,” she said. “In order to admit that they have a suicide problem, they have to admit that they have a cultural problem.”

She calls herself a part of the “old patrol,” referring to those who served as Border Patrol agents before 9/11, when the Department of Homeland Security was created and the agency was tucked under its umbrella.

For Budd, the difference between the “old patrol” and “new patrol” is cultural as much as it is financial — the “old patrol” embodied macho Western cowboy stereotypes and lack of funding, with agents sometimes having to walk their patrols after they ran out of gas.

The “new patrol,” on the other hand, has been deeply influenced by the Iraq War, both in mindset and billions of dollars in Homeland Security funding. “They see it as a combat zone — they see migrants as possible military threats,” she said, pointing to the popular use of the word “invasion” by conservative politicians and commentators.

Budd said that she felt all that money pumped into combat technology came at a moral cost. A great deal of her work was physical, hiking up to 16 hours a day. Outside of specially-trained details, she says that most of the “new patrol” does their work from behind a screen, steering drones and monitoring sensors. “They don’t develop any kind of sympathy from walking behind these people,” she said. “We sat with their bodies. We went through their pockets. We saw their tattoos.”

Despite the generation gap, she was there for what she thinks is the first fallen domino in today’s border crisis: the building of the wall.

As a new recruit, she worked out of Campo Station in the remote

mountains of Southern California. The wall reached her sector in 1996, not long after she joined, transforming from a simple barbed wire fence to a massive barrier funneling people through treacherous terrain. Slowly, she started to realize how shifting government policy was making her daily working reality more difficult to stomach.

It was having an impact on her fellow agents, too. “As you spend time with the bodies you start to understand what’s really going on,” she said. “I would see guys falling apart, hardened guys falling apart. What they don’t realize is that the federal government is making them do the dirty work.”

Budd uses the wall as a metaphor for both the state of immigration and the state of her heart. She says that she’s been building internal walls of her own since she was a child trying to survive an abusive family life. Once she donned her Border Patrol uniform, she began taking on other people’s pain — male coworkers seemed more comfortable expressing their anguish to a female agent, fantasizing about suicide, confiding addictions to alcohol, sex, gambling. “What I’d do is just eat it all up and throw it over my wall,” she said.

One day, Budd was cruising alongside the wall in a patrol vehicle when someone from the other side launched a human head into the sky, landing on her windshield. She took it as the first of many signs that it might be time to leave.

She had long been suspicious of corruption in the agency — she was raped by a fellow agent during her time in the academy. He faced no consequences; leadership simply sent him to another station. Budd chuckled that shame and trauma over her wall too, not even confiding what had happened to her wife until years later.

Budd finally left after she started investigating a higher-up she suspected of smuggling drugs and was harassed and threatened to the point that she hung up her uniform for good.

What she had seen and experienced in the agency stuck with her, particularly an encounter with a migrant with whom she shared water and cigarettes while they waited for transport. “You’re a good person,” the man said. “I want you to think about what you’re doing.”

She responded with anger at the time — anger that took years to unpack.

In 2015, Budd attempted suicide, having felt tortured by the experience for well over a decade. “I felt like I had been on the wrong side of history, and I didn’t know that I could overcome that,” she said. “I felt like I just needed to end my life and be done with it.”

After an extended hospital stay and years of therapy and medication, Budd has channeled her traumatic experiences in Border Patrol into advocacy work, challenging the agency and its union’s official narratives.

She says that — like her younger self — most people who join Border Patrol do so because they want to serve their country. More often than not, they aren’t aware of the reality of the border and its political history before they join.

With time, she’s come to fear that a percentage of agents join because the barriers to entry are low and predators face few consequences. Budd was featured in the Project on Government Oversight’s report on sexual misconduct and abuse, which revealed that just under half of people who reported sexual abuse in agencies within DHS say they faced professional retaliation as a result.

Crimes committed by CBP employees against migrants have made headlines in recent years, from an investigation into whether mounted agents whipped Haitian migrants to a serial killer who claimed the lives of four sex workers. Whether or not agents who commit crimes on a national stage are guilty as charged, Budd says it’s mentally devastating to try to enforce the law among people very publicly breaking it. “It’s a mindf—k,” she said.

With time, she’s been able to dismantle her own walls. “I mean, there’s a lot of things I loved about the Border Patrol, and I’m really proud of a lot of things I did — I’ve saved a lot of lives, but at the same time I’m ashamed of that organization,” she said. “Both things can be true at the same time.”

For a handful of local Border Patrol agents, Father Mike Wallens of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Marfa serves the function of a chaplain but is not a part of the official CBP chaplaincy program. He asked to take part in the agency’s resiliency training himself to better understand the resources — and potential gaps — that are offered to the rank and file.

Wallens did not share Budd’s overall pessimism about the agency, but did agree that CBP’s protocol and culture might prevent some in crisis from reaching out for fear that they might be ostracized or pushed out of their jobs.

He treats his sessions with agents like religious confessions, a sort of spiritual HIPAA agreement that ensures he is not required to disclose what agents share with him to their supervisors.

Wallens is a Dallas transplant but has made a niche for himself in the borderlands by fostering connections between the Border Patrol, the local faithful, and the migrants and asylum seekers passing through the Big Bend. He echoed sector leadership in saying that the extreme remoteness of the area carries a psychological weight and encourages agents to throw themselves into community volunteer work to combat feelings of isolation.

He says that the agents who come to him wrestle with the same moral dilemmas that pushed Budd to attempt to end her life: a gap between policy and morality. “The agents out here, I will say, are filled with compassion. They’re put in a position where they have to wrestle with what their heart says versus what the policy says,” he explained. “Because of those compassionate hearts, it’s easier to get wounded.”

This story is part of a series on mental health in the Big Bend funded by the Presidio Community Fund.

New border lighting initiatives prompt concern over dark skies, environment

By MARY CANTRELL
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TRI-COUNTY — New Customs and Border Protection high-intensity lighting initiatives along the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso and Starr counties are prompting local concerns over potential impacts to dark skies and the environment.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) announced on March 7 it is seeking public input on “potential impacts and project alternatives for the proposed construction, operation, and maintenance of border barrier lighting in El Paso and Starr counties.” Comments — which CBP will accept until April 22 — will help inform an environmental assessment.

In total, CBP is proposing a 44.75-mile non-continuous stretch of lights, light poles and associated infrastructure in areas along the border outside of ports of entry, some of which are remote and agricultural. A 19.6-mile portion of the lighting has already been installed but is not yet illuminated, with another 25.15 miles being proposed by CBP.

Other states along the U.S.-Mexico border, including New Mexico and Arizona, have also seen the installation and proposed additional installation of border lighting. “These are extremely high-powered lights, the types you would normally find in a football stadium, on high poles, relatively close together,” said Ruskin Hartley, CEO of Dark Sky International. “If they are energized their impact would be seen for miles and miles in some

of the darkest and most remote parts of North America, some of our last great dark sky locations.”

The tri-county area and parts of Mexico make up the Greater Big Bend International Dark Sky Reserve — the first and largest international dark sky reserve designated in 2022. The reserve is made possible due to grassroots efforts by the McDonald Observatory, Big Bend Conservation Alliance and more to encourage local residents, municipalities and counties to adopt better lighting techniques.

While none of the “border barrier lighting” is currently proposed for the tri-county area, it is located as close as the El Paso-Hudspeth county line, and will likely contribute to light pollution in the Big Bend region, according to McDonald Observatory Dark Skies Outreach Program Coordinator Stephen Hummel, who addressed Alpine City Council members on Tuesday.

Council members discussed whether or not to adopt a letter — written by city staffers — opposing CBP’s plans to install 25.15 miles of new lighting along the international border. The draft letter, read aloud by Mayor Catherine Eaves, stated one of the main concerns is that CBP would consider installing similar infrastructure in Presidio or other local border communities.

“If large sections of the Big Bend border were to be lit as they are elsewhere the impact would be immense,” the letter stated. “It could effectively end the Greater Big Big International Dark Sky Reserve and the binational

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NOTICIAS EN ESPAÑOL

CPS Salud Mental

(Continuación de la página 1)

Las familias, los agentes y los denunciantes de CBP están de acuerdo: el trabajo no es fácil. Un estudio que rastrea las muertes de agentes del orden en general encontró que la esperanza de vida de quienes están en el cumplimiento de su deber es de 66 años, 12 años menos que la de la población general. “Trabajando muchas horas y respondiendo a situaciones de alto estrés, nuestros hombres y mujeres vestidos de verde y azul son llevados al límite todos los días”, escribió el congresista Tony Gonzales en un comunicado de prensa.

En 2022, Gonzales, que representa el Big Bend, presentó la Ley de Toma de Medidas para Prevenir el Suicidio (TAPS) junto con su colega representante de Texas Henry Cuellar, y pidió un grupo de trabajo contra el suicidio para identificar las fortalezas y debilidades en la respuesta de la agencia a la crisis. . (El proyecto de ley nunca salió del comité).

Los dos representantes querían impulsar lo que consideraban primeros pasos positivos. “Las asignaciones recientes han llevado a la contratación de médicos de salud mental adicionales en CBP. Sin embargo, todavía hay escasez de apoyo, educación y desestigmatización de la salud mental en la agencia”, escribió.

En mayo de 2023, la Oficina del Inspector General (OIG) del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional publicó un informe, presentado a los jefes de CBP e ICE, que culpaba al exceso de trabajo, así como a la “mala imagen pública” y la “violencia o violencia”, amenazas de violencia”.

Si bien el número de agentes se ha mantenido relativamente estable, los encuentros de migrantes a lo largo de la frontera se han disparado un 143% desde 2019. En 2022 se registró un récord de 800 muertes de migrantes; La agencia también estima un aumento del 303% en “fugas”, o migrantes que fueron detectados pero nunca capturados.

El resultado es desmoralizador. La mitad de los que respondieron a la encuesta del informe dijeron que se les había pedido que asumieran tareas adicionales y casi una cuarta parte tuvo problemas con el "equilibrio entre el trabajo y la vida privada". El veinte por ciento dijo que sentía que no podía realizar sus “deberes principales de hacer cumplir la ley” como resultado del trabajo adicional.

El trece por ciento confesó que estaba luchando con su salud mental. “Los oficiales se están agotando”, comentó un agente. “Necesitamos más personal y mejores turnos que permitan más tiempo libre con las familias. Las tasas de divorcio y suicidios son rampantes en la agencia. Queremos sentirnos respetados y no un engranaje de la máquina que puede ser reemplazado fácilmente”.

El departamento rechazó algunas de las conclusiones del informe, destacando, sobre todo, que sólo alrededor del 16% del total de empleados de CBP e ICE habían presentado respuestas. También describieron con más detalle los recursos disponibles para los empleados, incluido el asesoramiento entre pares, programas de capellanía y un conjunto de aplicaciones de “atención plena” y antisuicidio. “A los líderes les preocupa que el borrador del informe de la OIG no reconozca plenamente el alcance de las iniciativas que el DHS ha implementado para apoyar a su personal”, se lee en la respuesta.

El Big Bend Sentinel habló con agentes pasados y presentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza para obtener más información sobre cómo la agencia está teniendo éxito (y fallando) en sus esfuerzos por apoyar la salud mental de sus empleados.

Compañeros de batalla

Como parte de su iniciativa “Shine a Light”, la CBP contrató al renombrado “suicidólogo” Kent Corso (un veterano de la guerra de Irak convertido en psicólogo y consultor de salud mental de renombre mundial) para ayudar a iluminar el camino. Una de las iniciativas de Corso incluyó la grabación de un podcast que recopila historias dentro de la agencia que humaniza las luchas internas que enfrentran muchos agentes.

El trabajo de Corso destaca una verdad importante: ha habido exponencialmente más de 149 personas afectadas por suicidios en CBP desde 2007. “Me encuentro despertando a una realidad que nunca pedí, que mis hijos nunca pidieron”, dijo la viuda anónima de un le dijo a Corso un agente del Valle del Río Grande en una entrevista en podcast. “Él está en paz, pero nosotros quedamos destrozados”.

La viuda, a la que se hace referencia únicamente como “Jane Doe”, dijo que la confusión era parte de su complicado proceso de duelo. ¿Por qué su marido durante más de dos décadas no le había confiado su lucha interna?

Landon Hutchens, portavoz de la Patrulla Fronteriza del Sector Big Bend, explicó que los factores estresantes del trabajo son inconcebibles para los civiles, incluso para los más cercanos a la agencia. "Existe una mayor amenaza de peligro: el civil promedio no se preocupa de que los cárteles le disparen", dijo. "Los agentes tienen que mantener la cabeza alerta en todo momento".

La migración a Estados Unidos también cambia constantemente, lo que tal vez hace aún más difícil para los agentes relacionarse con otros, incluso con aquellos que han colgado sus uniformes verdes. En la imaginación popular, los migrantes que cruzan la frontera son jóvenes solitarios que emprenden viajes épicos a través del desierto, pero la realidad ha cambiado tanto en los últimos años que es necesario reescribir esta narrativa.

Tanto los datos de las agencias como los recopilados por grupos de defensa sugieren que los migrantes están muriendo a un ritmo sin precedentes en áreas urbanas como el centro de El Paso o los suburbios de Sunland Park, Nuevo México. Los agentes que antes pasaban la mayor parte de su tiempo en una oficina ahora se enfrentan a la misma realidad que sus canosos colegas en el campo. "A veces te encuentras con personas fallecidas y situaciones bastante espantosas", dijo Hutchens.

Como director de comunicaciones, Hutchens también era muy consciente de cómo las percepciones externas podían afectar el bienestar y la autoestima de los agentes. "Creo que algo que no se informa es la compasión del agente promedio", dijo. “Están haciendo cumplir nuestras leyes de inmigración, lo cual es fundamental. Pero veo una tremenda compasión humanitaria... cada agente que conozco lleva una lonchera con comida y agua extra que terminan repartiendo a los migrantes”.

Las mujeres y los niños no acompañados también han estado cruzando la frontera en mayor número, tocando la fibra sensible de las personas de la

agencia con sus propias familias. “Pasamos mucho tiempo lejos de nuestras familias”, explicó el subjefe de patrulla Jaime Castillo. “Nos apasiona nuestro trabajo. Puede ser agotador: pasas mucho tiempo pensando en el trabajo, incluso cuando no estás”.

Si bien no ven el mismo volumen de detenciones que sus colegas río arriba y río abajo, los agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza en el Sector Big Bend quizás comprendan el aislamiento mejor que nadie.

Los agentes trabajan al menos 50 horas a la semana, a menudo en áreas remotas donde el servicio de telefonía celular es limitado. Muchos viven en viviendas de agencias, privados de las comodidades y comodidades del hogar que los inmigrantes a la región tanto extrañan. Para contrarrestar la mala prensa, CBP ha estado experimentando con bonos de reclutamiento en sus ubicaciones más remotas; Presidio ha sido señalado como particularmente “difícil de cubrir” y ahora anuncia un bono de \$30,000 para nuevos agentes.

Richard Barragán, supervisor interino de operaciones especiales de Comunicaciones Estratégicas del Sector Big Bend, dijo que la crisis de salud mental de la agencia lo había afectado personalmente.

Durante su estancia en la remota ciudad portuaria de Santa Teresa, Nuevo México, la estación quedó devastada por tres muertes en el espacio de un año. Un día, se dio cuenta de que había estado estacionando rutinariamente junto a una patrulla que había sido el lugar de la muerte por suicidio de un colega.

Barragán dijo que vivía bajo un lema simple: “Sé el indicado”. El término se popularizó dentro de la agencia gracias a una campaña en las redes sociales que incluía publicaciones en YouTube e Instagram que animaban a los agentes a comunicarse entre sí.

En un video, el ex agente Vincent Vargas pide a los agentes que recuerden su entrenamiento en la academia en el sistema de “compañeros de batalla”, utilizado para controlar a sus colegas en situaciones físicamente peligrosas. “Mire a su izquierda y a su derecha”, dijo. “Si alguno de sus hermanos y hermanas está pasando apuros, comuníquese con él y sea un compañero de batalla para él”.

Barragán dijo que se había tomado el mensaje en serio. “Fue un llamado a la acción, básicamente para poner en primer plano las ideas suicidas y eliminar el estigma de hablar de ello”, dijo. "Internalizamos muchos de estos sentimientos y ayuda hablar con alguien".

Tanto Barragán como Castillo dijeron que ambos participaron (y se beneficiaron) de la capacitación en resiliencia de la agencia, que enseña a los agentes las habilidades que necesitan para desempeñarse en un trabajo intensamente estresante. “La capacitación llegó en un punto crítico de mi carrera personal y profesional”, dijo Castillo. “Me dio la vuelta y activó el interruptor”.

En el sector de Big Bend, los programas de apoyo adoptan diversas formas: asesoramiento entre pares, apoyo de capellanes, recursos para las familias de quienes fallecen en el cumplimiento del deber. Los agentes locales también tienen acceso a animales caninos de apoyo, meditación e incluso clases de yoga.

Los números muestran que los programas están despegando. El DHS informa que hay 12,278 supervisores capacitados en prevención y concientización sobre el suicidio, con planes para aumentar estos números y el alcance de su educación. En 2022, los capellanes de la CBP asistieron a 66.000 sesiones, 9.000 sesiones más que los empleados de la agencia.

Castillo dice que cada esfuerzo, ya sea asesoramiento para familiares en duelo o unos minutos con un amigo peludo, puede marcar la diferencia. "CBP ha hecho un gran trabajo al hacernos saber que realmente se preocupan por nosotros", dijo.

“Sentí que había estado en el lado equivocado de la historia”

A pesar de la insistencia de los altos mandos de que la crisis de suicidios de la agencia es el resultado de factores externos, la ex agente senior de patrulla Jenn Budd dice que la propia organización comparte la culpa.

Budd, una crítica abierta de la agencia y autora de Against the Wall, que analiza su propio intento de suicidio, dice que una cultura de intimidación interna, corrupción y miedo ha estado causando problemas de salud mental desenfrenados durante décadas, mucho antes de que la Patrulla Fronteriza comenzara a rastrear datos o hablar abiertamente sobre estos problemas.

“La cultura de la Patrulla Fronteriza es que si no puedes manejarlo, entonces no eres lo suficientemente duro. No eres material de BP. No se sangra verde”, dijo. "Para admitir que tienen un problema de suicidio, tienen que admitir que tienen un problema cultural".

Ella se autodenomina parte de la “vieja patrulla”, en referencia a aquellos que sirvieron como agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza antes del 11 de septiembre, cuando se creó el Departamento de Seguridad Nacional y la agencia quedó bajo su paraguas.

Para Budd, la diferencia entre la “vieja patrulla” y la “nueva patrulla” es tanto cultural como financiera: la “vieja patrulla” encarnaba los estereotipos machistas de los vaqueros occidentales y la falta de financiación, y a veces los agentes tenían que caminar con sus patrullas después de quedarse sin gasolina.

La “nueva patrulla”, por otro lado, ha estado profundamente influenciada por la guerra de Irak, tanto en su mentalidad como en los miles de millones de dólares en fondos para la Seguridad Nacional. "Lo ven como una zona de combate; ven a los inmigrantes como posibles amenazas militares", dijo, señalando el uso popular de la palabra "invasión" por parte de políticos y comentaristas conservadores.

Budd dijo que sentía que todo ese dinero invertido en tecnología de combate tuvo un costo moral. Gran parte de su trabajo era físico: caminaba hasta 16 horas al día. Aparte de los detalles especialmente capacitados, dice que la mayor parte de la “nueva patrulla” hace su trabajo detrás de una pantalla, dirigiendo drones y monitoreando sensores. "No desarrollan ningún tipo de simpatía al caminar detrás de estas personas", dijo. “Nos sentamos con sus cuerpos. Revisamos sus bolsillos. Vimos sus tatuajes”.

A pesar de la brecha generacional, ella estuvo presente en lo que cree que es la primera pieza de dominó caída en la crisis fronteriza actual: la construcción del muro.

Como nueva recluta, trabajó en Campo Station en las remotas montañas del sur de California. El muro llegó a su sector en 1996, poco después de

que ella se uniera, transformándose de una simple cerca de alambre de púas a una enorme barrera que canaliza a las personas a través de un terreno traicionero. Poco a poco, empezó a darse cuenta de cómo las cambiantes políticas gubernamentales estaban haciendo que su realidad laboral diaria fuera más difícil de digerir.

También estaba teniendo un impacto en sus compañeros agentes. "A medida que pasas tiempo con los cuerpos, empiezas a comprender lo que realmente está pasando", dijo. “Veía a muchachos desmoronarse, a muchachos endurecidos desmoronarse. Lo que no se dan cuenta es que el gobierno federal les está obligando a hacer el trabajo sucio”.

Budd usa el muro como metáfora tanto del estado de la inmigración como del estado de su corazón. Ella dice que ha estado construyendo sus propios muros internos desde que era una niña tratando de sobrevivir a una vida familiar abusiva. Una vez que se puso el uniforme de la Patrulla Fronteriza, comenzó a asumir el dolor de otras personas: sus compañeros de trabajo masculinos parecían más cómodos expresando su angustia a una agente femenina, fantaseando con el suicidio, confiando adicciones al alcohol, el sexo y el juego. “Lo que haría es simplemente comérmelo todo y tirarlo por encima de mi pared”, dijo.

Un día, Budd estaba cruzando el muro en una patrulla cuando alguien desde el otro lado lanzó una cabeza humana al cielo y aterrizó en su parabrisas. Lo tomó como la primera de muchas señales de que podría ser hora de irse.

Durante mucho tiempo había sospechado de corrupción en la agencia: fue violada por un compañero agente durante su estancia en la academia. No enfrentó consecuencias; El liderazgo simplemente lo envió a otra estación. Budd también arrojó esa vergüenza y trauma por encima de su pared, y ni siquiera le confesó lo que le había sucedido a su esposa hasta años después.

Budd finalmente se fue después de que ella comenzó a investigar a un superior del que sospechaba que traficaba con drogas y fue acosada y amenazada hasta el punto de que colgó su uniforme para siempre.

Lo que había visto y experimentado en la agencia se le quedó grabado, en particular un encuentro con un migrante con quien compartió agua y cigarrillos mientras esperaban el transporte. "Eres una buena persona", dijo el hombre. "Quiero que pienses en lo que estás haciendo".

Ella respondió con ira en ese momento, una ira que tardó años en descomprimir.

En 2015, Budd intentó suicidarse, tras haberse sentido torturado por la experiencia durante más de una década. "Sentí que había estado en el lado equivocado de la historia y no sabía que podía superarlo", dijo. "Sentí que simplemente necesitaba terminar con mi vida y terminar de una vez”.

Después de una estadía prolongada en el hospital y años de terapia y medicación, Budd ha canalizado sus experiencias traumáticas en la Patrulla Fronteriza en trabajo de defensa, desafiando a la agencia y las narrativas oficiales de su sindicato.

Ella dice que, al igual que ella más joven, la mayoría de las personas que se unen a la Patrulla Fronteriza lo hacen porque quieren servir a su país. La mayoría de las veces, no son conscientes de la realidad de la frontera y su historia política antes de unirse.

Con el tiempo, ha llegado a temer que un porcentaje de agentes se unan porque las barreras de entrada son bajas y los depredadores enfrentran pocas consecuencias. Budd apareció en el informe del Proyecto de Supervisión Gubernamental sobre conducta sexual inapropiada y abuso, que reveló que poco menos de la mitad de las personas que denunciaron abuso sexual en agencias dentro del DHS dicen que, como resultado, enfrentaron represalias profesionales.

Los crímenes cometidos por empleados de CBP contra inmigrantes han aparecido en los titulares en los últimos años, desde una investigación sobre si agentes montados azotaron a inmigrantes haitianos hasta un asesino en serie que se cobró la vida de cuatro trabajadoras sexuales. Independientemente de que los agentes que cometen crímenes a nivel nacional sean culpables o no de los cargos, Budd dice que es mentalmente devastador tratar de hacer cumplir la ley entre personas que la infringen públicamente. “Es una locura”, dijo.

Con el tiempo, ha podido desmantelar sus propios muros. “Quiero decir, hay muchas cosas que me encantan de la Patrulla Fronteriza y estoy muy orgulloso de muchas de las cosas que hice; he salvado muchas vidas, pero al mismo tiempo me avergüenzo de eso. organización”, dijo. "Ambas cosas pueden ser ciertas al mismo tiempo".

Para un puñado de agentes locales de la Patrulla Fronteriza, el padre Mike Wallens de la Iglesia Episcopal de St. Paul en Marfa cumple la función de capellán, pero no es parte del programa oficial de capellanía de la CBP. Pidió participar él mismo en la capacitación sobre resiliencia de la agencia para comprender mejor los recursos (y las posibles brechas) que se ofrecen a las bases.

Wallens no compartió el pesimismo general de Budd sobre la agencia, pero estuvo de acuerdo en que el protocolo y la cultura de la CBP podrían impedir que algunas personas en crisis se acerquen por temor a ser condenadas al ostracismo o expulsadas de sus trabajos.

Trata sus sesiones con agentes como confesiones religiosas, una especie de acuerdo espiritual HIPAA que garantiza que no esté obligado a revelar a sus supervisores lo que los agentes comparten con él.

Wallens se trasladó desde Dallas, pero se ha hecho un hueco en las zonas fronterizas fomentando conexiones entre la Patrulla Fronteriza, los fieles locales y los inmigrantes y solicitantes de asilo que pasan por el Big Bend. Se hizo eco del liderazgo del sector al decir que la extrema lejanía del área tiene un peso psicológico y alienta a los agentes a dedicarse al trabajo voluntario comunitario para combatir los sentimientos de aislamiento.

Dice que los agentes que acuden a él luchan con los mismos dilemas morales que empujaron a Budd a intentar acabar con su vida: una brecha entre política y moralidad. “Diré que los agentes aquí están llenos de compasión. Se encuentran en una posición en la que tienen que luchar entre lo que dice su corazón y lo que dice la política”, explicó. "Debido a esos corazones compasivos, es más fácil resultar herido”.

Esta historia es parte de una serie sobre salud mental en Big Bend financiada por Presidio Community Fund.

León de montaña de Presidio

(Continuación de la página 1)

que parece ser un gato tratando de saltar una cerca, junto con fotografías de huellas encontradas más tarde. Una publicación posterior pide a los residentes que “continúen informando sobre avistamientos de pumas en el área. Si ve un puma, mantenga la calma, levante a los niños pequeños y a las mascotas y retroceda lentamente mientras mantiene contacto visual con el león. No gires y corras. Cuando se le da espacio para huir, el león suele abandonar entornos dominados por humanos”.

Connally también instó a los residentes a informar primero sobre los pumas a las autoridades si se encuentran en un área con gente, pero también pidió que todos los avistamientos se informen a un biólogo de Parques y Vida Silvestre de Texas de su área. Busque en la web “TPWD find a Wildlife Biologist,”, lo que lo llevará a una página para buscar a la persona adecuada con quien contactar, dijo.

POR FAVOR RECICLE ESTE PERIÓDICO

NOTICE OF RATE CHANGE REQUEST

AEP Texas Inc. (AEP Texas) publishes this notice that on February 29, 2024, AEP Texas filed with the Public Utility Commission of Texas (Commission) its Petition and Statement of Intent to Change Rates (the Petition), a copy of which is kept at AEP Texas’ office at 400 W. 15th Street, Suite 1500, Austin, Texas, 78701. The Petition has been assigned Docket No. 56165. This notice is being published in accordance with 16 Tex. Admin. Code § 22.51(a)(1).

AEP Texas’ Petition is based on the system-wide financial results for a 12-month test year ending on September 30, 2023, adjusted for known and measurable changes. Related to its distribution cost of service, the Company requests a rate increase of approximately \$100.4 million over its adjusted test year revenues. This net change is a 13.1% increase over net present distribution revenues. When expected annualized Transmission Cost Recovery Factor revenues are included in the comparison to present revenues, the net increase to distribution cost-of-service is 8.4%. Related to its transmission cost of service, the Company requests a rate increase of \$63.1 million above its adjusted test year revenues, an increase of 9.29%.

In addition to new rates, AEP Texas requests a prudence determination on all capital investment made to its system for the period from January 1, 2019, through September 30, 2023.

AEP Texas’ Petition requests Commission approval to continue its offering of facilities rental services, as described in tariff schedules 6.1.2.3.6, 6.1.3.3.6, and 6.1.4.3.6, and a good-cause exception to the Commission’s rule requiring AEP Texas to obtain the Commission’s approval to provide these services every three years. If approved, the requested good-cause exception will allow the Company to extend the effective date of its existing tariff schedules through the effective date of the tariffs approved in its next comprehensive rate case.

Finally, AEP Texas requests recovery of its reasonable rate-case expenses associated with this proceeding and certain prior rate proceedings, including those expenses paid to reimburse municipalities for their participation.

If approved, the increased rates will be charged to AEP Texas’ direct customers, all retail electric providers (REPs) in AEP Texas’ service area, as well as the retail electric customers of those REPs. The extent to which the REPs pass along to their customers the increased retail rates is a function of the competitive market. In addition, AEP Texas’ petition affects customers taking service under the Company’s wholesale transmission rates.

AEP Texas has requested its proposed rate change become effective 35 days after the filing its Petition.

Persons who wish to intervene in or comment upon these proceedings, in Docket No. 56165, *Application of AEP Texas Inc. for Authority to Change Rates*, should notify the Commission as soon as possible, as an intervention deadline will be imposed. A request to intervene or for further information should be mailed to the Public Utility Commission of Texas, P. O. Box 13326, Austin, Texas 78711-3326. Further information may also be obtained by calling the Commission at (512) 936-7120 or (888) 782-8477. Hearing- and speech-impaired individuals with text telephones (TTY) may contact the Commission at (512) 936-7136. The deadline for intervention in the proceeding is 45 days after the date the Petition was filed with the Commission.

AVISO DE MODIFICACIÓN DE TARIFA

AEP Texas Inc. (AEP Texas) publica este aviso de que el 29 de febrero de 2024, AEP Texas presentó ante la Comisión de Servicios Públicos de Texas (Comisión) su Petición y Declaración de Intención de Cambiar las Tarifas (la Petición), una copia de la cual se encuentra en la oficina de AEP Texas en 400 W. 15th Street, Suite 1500, Austin, Texas, 78701. A la Petición se le ha asignado el Número de Expediente 56165. Este aviso se publica de conformidad con 16 Tex. Admin. Code § 22.51(a)(1).

La Petición de AEP Texas se basa en los resultados financieros de todo el sistema para un año de prueba de 12 meses que finaliza el 30 de septiembre de 2023, ajustados por cambios conocidos y medibles. En relación con su coste de servicio de distribución, la Compañía solicita un aumento de tarifas de aproximadamente \$100.4 millones de dólares sobre sus ingresos ajustados del año de prueba. Este cambio neto supone un incremento del 13.1% sobre los ingresos netos actuales de distribución. Si se incluyen los ingresos anualizados previstos del Factor de Recuperación de Costes de Transmisión en la comparación con los ingresos actuales, el aumento neto del coste del servicio de distribución es del 8,4%. En relación con el coste del servicio de transporte, la Compañía solicita una subida de tarifas de 63,1 millones de dólares por encima de los ingresos ajustados del año de referencia, lo que supone un incremento del 9,29%.

Además de las nuevas tarifas, AEP Texas solicita una determinación de prudencia sobre toda la inversión de capital realizada en su sistema para el período comprendido entre el 1 de enero de 2019 y el 30 de septiembre de 2023.

La Petición de AEP Texas solicita la aprobación de la Comisión para continuar con su oferta de servicios de alquiler de instalaciones, tal y como se describe en los programas de tarifas 6.1.2.3.6, 6.1.3.3.6 y 6.1.4.3.6, y una excepción de causa justificada a la norma de la Comisión que exige a AEP Texas obtener la aprobación de la Comisión para prestar estos servicios cada tres años. Si se aprueba, la excepción de causa justificada solicitada permitirá a la Compañía ampliar la fecha de entrada en vigor de sus programas de tarifas existentes hasta la fecha de entrada en vigor de las tarifas aprobadas en su próximo caso tarifario global.

Por último, AEP Texas solicita la recuperación de sus gastos razonables relacionados con este procedimiento y algunos procedimientos tarifarios anteriores, incluidos los gastos pagados para reembolsar a los municipios por su participación.

Si se aprueban, las tarifas incrementadas se cobrarán a los clientes directos de AEP Texas, a todos los proveedores minoristas de electricidad (REP) en el área de servicio de AEP Texas, así como a los clientes minoristas de electricidad de esos REP. La medida en que los REP repercutan a sus clientes el aumento de las tarifas minoristas depende del mercado competitivo. Además, la petición de AEP Texas afecta a los clientes que contratan el servicio según las tarifas de transmisión al por mayor de la empresa.

AEP Texas ha solicitado que el cambio de tarifa propuesta entre en vigor 35 días después de la presentación de su Petición.

Las personas que deseen intervenir o hacer comentarios sobre este procedimiento, en el expediente N° 56165, *Aplicación de AEP Texas Inc. de Autoridad para Cambiar las Tarifas*, deben notificarlo a la Comisión lo antes posible, ya que se impondrá un plazo de intervención. Las solicitudes de intervención o de información adicional deben enviarse por correo a Public Utility Commission of Texas, P. O. Box 13326, Austin, Texas 78711-3326. También puede obtenerse más información llamando a la Comisión al (512) 936-7120 o al (888) 782-8477. Las personas con discapacidad auditiva o del habla que dispongan de teléfonos de texto (TTY) pueden ponerse en contacto con la Comisión en el número (512) 936-7136. El plazo para intervenir en el procedimiento es de 45 días a partir de la fecha de presentación de la petición a la Comisión.

Alpine shooting

(Continued from page 1)

treatment at the Big Bend Regional Medical Center, according to police and family friends.

Police did detain Justin Lara to question him, but he still is considered a victim of the shooting, Losoya said. Tuesday’s shooting is believed to be part of a domestic dispute over a woman who has been involved with both Tafoya and Justin Lara, according to police and the Facebook post on Marta Lara’s account.

Tafoya shot at Justin Lara from a vehicle, then fled, the police chief said. Police do not want to describe that vehicle because they believe Tafoya has switched to another vehicle.

Superintendent Rinehart said the police called her quickly after the shots were reported, and because of a relative proximity of the shooting to the elementary school — about half a mile — they advised a lockdown. When Rinehart posted her message to the community on enacting then lifting the lockdown, she noted that

a suspect had been apprehended. Losoya said that initially police gave her that information because they had arrived at the scene of the shooting and thought that Justin Lara was the shooter; the 911 call from a neighbor noted his white pickup truck as the suspected vehicle used in the shooting. When they apprehended Justin Lara, they gave the “all clear” to Rinehart.

Rinehart said that while the incident was not an immediate danger to the elementary campus, it was clear that law enforcement needed to act on it as a precaution and advise the lockdown. “I’m proud of local law enforcement that were right on top of this and with the immediate notification to schools as a precautionary measure,” Rinehart said. “Our staff did a great job of immediately implementing our emergency procedures. I’m just glad that everyone was safe throughout the situation and afterward as well.”

wildlife biologist. Search the web for “TPWD find a Wildlife Biologist,” which will take you to a page to search for the appropriate person to contact, she said.

Presidio mountain lion

(Continued from page 1)

will most often leave human-dominated environments.” Connally urged residents to first report mountain lions to police if it is in an area with people, but also asked that all sightings be reported to a Texas Parks and

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF SEALED BID FOR SALE OF REAL PROPERTY

The City of Presidio, Texas (the “City”) is accepting sealed bids for the purchase of the following tract of real property (the “Property”), for commercial development as further described in this Notice of Bid Opening, including the City’s special desired considerations:

800 Block of O’Reilly Tract:

Property located at 800 West O’Reilly Street being vacant land consisting of 3.21 acres, more or less, being all of lots 11 and 12, Block 2, Russell Addition; and Tracts 4 and 15, Out Block No. 7, City of Presidio, Presidio County, Texas.

On behalf of the City the property was appraised by Ms. Janna Stubbs, P.O. Box 2091, Alpine, Texas 79831. On November 7, 2023, Ms. Stubbs issued an appraisal wherein she found that the market value of the “land only” is \$460,000.00. A copy of the full appraisal is available at the Presidio City Hall. For the purposes of this Notice the appraised value meets the statutory requirements of “Fair Market Value” as set forth in the Texas Local Government Code.

The sale of the Property shall be awarded, at the discretion of the City Council, to the bidder submitting a bid in accordance with the terms outlined below and providing the best value to the City.

It is the intention of the City to sell the Property based on the best value bid that is submitted. If, in the judgment of the City Council, the bids submitted do not represent the fair market value of the Property, the Council reserves the right to reject any and all bids. Should any bid be accepted, within two weeks of an award to a Buyer, the Buyer and the City shall execute a purchase and sale agreement and select a mutually agreed upon title company. Upon execution of the purchase and sale agreement and selection of the title company, Buyer shall deposit \$5,000 of earnest money in escrow with the title company within three (3) days of execution of the purchase and sale agreement.

Part of the consideration of “Best Value Bid” will include a description of the intended use of the property along with a timeline for the planned development. In making any award, the City will weigh the bid price along with development plans. Greater weight will be given to any Bidder who is willing to enter into a Development Agreement with the City of Presidio covering the development of the property, including a performance agreement with employment metrics.

Provisions of the sale of the Property shall include:

1. For the purchase of the real property in “as is” condition;
2. For the conveyance of the Property by special warranty deed;
3. For the Buyer to pay all fees, and costs associated with closing the sale of the Property;
4. For the Buyer to assume all responsibility or liability for any environmental condition affecting the Property, or any clean-up or remediation that may be required by law;
5. For the development of the Property for commercial, job producing development, or other project acceptable to the City;
6. Execute, if applicable, a Development Agreement with the City;
7. Execute Contract for Sale and Purchase of Real Property.

The Property will be sold “as is” with no warranties or representations as to suitability for any particular use. Conveyance of the Property will be by special warranty deed. By submitting a bid, each bidder agrees to waive and does hereby waive any claim the bidder has or may have against the City of Presidio, Texas, and the City’s respective employees and representatives for the award of damages or attorney fees, arising out of or in connection with the administration, evaluation, or recommendation of any bid, waiver, deletion or amendment of any requirements under this Notice of Bid Opening, acceptance or rejection of any bids, and award of the bid.

By submitting a bid, the bidder specifically waives any right to recover or be paid attorney fees from the City of Presidio, Texas, or any of the City’s employees and representatives under any of the provisions of the Texas Uniform Declaratory Judgments Act (Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code, Section 37.001, et. seq., as amended). The bidder acknowledges and agrees that this is the intentional relinquishment of a presently existing known right and that there is no disparity of bargaining power between the bidder and the City of Presidio, Texas.

By execution and submission of this bid, the bidder hereby represents and warrants to the City that the bidder has read and understands this Notice of Bid Opening and that the bid is made in accordance with the terms stated herein. Bidder acknowledges that it understands all terms herein, which include the waiver provisions, and that it had the right to consult with counsel regarding all applicable documents.

The City reserves the right to waive, delete or amend any of the requirements connected with this bid.

Bids shall be delivered in writing on the attached bid proposal form, signed by the bidder or an authorized representative, and enclosed in a sealed envelope to the City of Presidio, City Administrator, 507 W. O’Reilly Street, Presidio, Texas 79845, or can be delivered in person to City Hall, 507 W. O’Reilly Street, Presidio, Texas 79845. All bids shall be plainly marked “SEALED BID TO PURCHASE REAL PROPERTY.” Bids must be received before 1:59 p.m. on May 9th, 2024, and any bid received after that time will not be considered.

City staff will publicly open, read and tabulate the bids at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 9th, 2024, at City Hall, City of Presidio, 507 W. O’Reilly Street, Presidio, Texas 79845. Those bids will then be considered at the May 21st, 2024, meeting of the City of Presidio City Council.

Bidders may contact the City of Presidio at 432-229-2200 for clarifications and questions.

BID PROPOSAL FORM

I hereby submit my proposal for the purchase of 3.21 acres, more or less, being all of lots 11 and 12, Block 2, Russell Addition; and Tracts 4 and 15, Out Block No. 7, City of Presidio, Presidio County, Texas, more commonly known as the 800 Block of W. O’Reilly Street.

Bid Amount: \$_____

Summary of Development Plans, including willingness to enter into a development agreement (attached documents are accepted):

THE CITY OF PRESIDIO RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS AND/OR WAIVE ANY INFORMALITIES.

I understand that the property is purchased “as is, where is, with all faults, and of 3.21 acres, more or less, being all of lots 11 and 12, Block 2, Russell Addition; and Tracts 4 and 15, Out Block No. 7, City of Presidio, Presidio County, Texas, more commonly known as the 800 Block of W. O’Reilly Street.” I further understand that that if my bid is accepted by the Presidio City Council, that I will negotiate in good faith to execute a purchase and sale agreement, select a mutual agreement to title company, and deposit earnest money as specified above. I hereby certify that I have read and understand the terms of this agreement as specified in the notice of sealed bid for sale of real property. I hereby approve and accept all of the conditions of this agreement.

(Bidder’s Signature) (Date)

(Bidder’s Name)

(Address)

(Telephone Number)

Border lighting initiatives

(Continued from page 2)

effort. It would devastate wildlife, astrotourism and our local economy and it would significantly impact astronomical research.”

Hummel said CBP is not legally required to hold a public comment period for the project, and had not for previous lighting installations, making the current comment period notable. “You may not get another opportunity to speak up about it,” Hummel told council members.

He said the current review process will help inform whether or not already installed lights are illuminated. McDonald Observatory intends to submit a formal comment to CBP, he said.

Councilmember Rick Stephens said the letter would be more effective if, rather than outright opposing the new border lighting, it requested border lighting be dark-sky friendly and comply with existing city ordinances. Other council members agreed and they voted to pass the letter as amended.

Laura Gold, Alpine resident and board member of Dark Sky Texas, told The Big Bend Sentinel her concerns go beyond the ability to see the night sky, and include potential impacts to people living along the new lighting routes, as well as ecological concerns over bird migration, aquatic species and insects. “It’s the environmental impact on all the wildlife too, so it’s more than just an astrological concern,” Gold said.

Gold said she is glad CBP is now seeking public input about the border lighting initiatives, but she didn’t understand why that input was not solicited before the 19-mile stretch of lights was already installed. “My concern is they would attempt to bring the same thing out here, just start building it like they’ve done before,” Gold said. “They built this thing without telling anybody.”

CBP did not respond to a request for comment about why public input was delayed or if border lighting will be pursued in the tri-county area in the future.

CBP preliminary project plans, which are posted online, state that shielding to “control the possible spillage of light” may be considered. Its reasoning for

the installation of the lights is to further “safeguard America’s borders.” “Operational lighting is envisioned as a tool to augment CBP’s situational awareness, detection, and response capabilities,” plans state.

Hartley said Dark Sky International is not opposed to lighting on the border if CBP can show a demonstrable need, but in his opinion that has not yet been expressed. He said he understands why CBP needs lights at points of entry, but he was struggling to understand why lights are needed in remote stretches of the border where the cost to install and maintain them is high.

“We will not stand in the way of lighting that has a clear public benefit,” Harley said. “But we have yet to hear a clear articulation of what’s the public benefit that’s being served here?”

Hartley and Gold also expressed confusion over how existing surveillance technology employed by CBP would be impacted by border lighting. “We don’t understand why they even want to use lights when they have state-of-the-art technology for nighttime surveillance,” Gold said.

Gold is also concerned that the presence of new border lighting is going to make the job of local advocates, who work to explain to citizens and companies why dark skies deserve protection, even harder. “It makes it difficult to try to get big light polluters to get on board with preventing light pollution when you have a major source of light pollution just popping up willy-nilly along the border by the federal government,” Gold said.

The federal government, particularly the National Parks Service, is a key partner in ongoing dark skies efforts and has invested money in astronomical infrastructure. Hartley said border lighting initiatives lack a broader perspective among federal agencies. “There’s big public investments in dark sky infrastructure and protection and this is just one hand of government not talking to the other hand of government,” Hartley said.

To submit a comment about the CBP border lighting initiative, visit cbp.gov/document/environmental-assessments/border-lighting-el-paso-and-starr-counties-tx-march-2024

REQUEST FOR COMPETITIVE SEALED PROPOSALS

Presidio Independent School District requests competitive sealed proposals for construction of:

- “Elementary and Middle Schools HVAC Upgrades”
 - Elementary School
 - Lucy Rede Franco Middle School
- Presidio, TX

100% Performance and Payment Bonds required if the bid is over \$25,000.

BID DEADLINE : 2:00 p.m. CST, on April 30, 2024. All bids shall be electronically submitted to Steve Kanetzky @ skanetzky@skaneng.com

Bid Instructions, copies of drawings, specifications and contract documents, addenda (if any) and other documents related to this Request for Bids, are available in the office of the project engineer.

Steve L. Kanetzky, P.E.
skanetzky@skaneng.com
S. Kanetzky Engineering, LLC
14425 Falconhead Blvd.
Building B, Suite 100
Austin, TX 78738
512-657-6192
www.skaneng.com

PRE-BID CONFERENCE : 9:00 a.m., CST, on April 24, 2024 at the Administration Office, 701 East Market Street, Presidio TX. Attendance of the Pre-bid meeting is not mandatory but strongly encouraged. Presidio ISD may consider a Bidder’s attendance of the pre-bid conference in its determination of best value of each Bid submitted. Ruben Armendariz, Director of Facilities, will be the point of contact for the Pre-Bid Meeting.

PISD reserves the right to waive any minor irregularities or informalities and to accept or reject all proposals in whole or in part.

PLEASE
RECYCLE
THIS
PAPER

NO. 2024

IN RE: ESTATE OF THOMAS HUGHES RAPP, DECEASED \$ IN THE COUNTY COURT OF PRESIDIO COUNTY, TEXAS \$

NOTICE TO ALL PERSONS HAVING CLAIMS AGAINST THE ESTATE OF THOMAS HUGHES RAPP, DECEASED

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of THOMAS HUGHES RAPP , Deceased, were issued on March 19, 2024, in Cause No. 2024, pending in the County Court of Presidio County, Texas, to PAUL STARK .

Claims may be presented in care of the attorney for the estate, addressed as follows:

PAUL STARK , Independent Executor of the Estate of THOMAS HUGHES RAPP , Deceased
c/o Rebekah Steely Brooker
Scheef & Stone, LLP
500 N. Akard, Suite 2700
Dallas, Texas 75201
Rebekah.Brooker@solidcounsel.com

All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.

Dated the 15th day of April, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

SCHEEF & STONE, L.L.P.

By: Rebekah Steely Brooker
Texas State Bar No. 24045559
500 N. Akard, Suite 2700
Dallas, Texas 75201
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ATTORNEY FOR THE INDEPENDENT EXECUTOR PAUL STARK

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