

BURN BAN IN EFFECT, NO GROUND FIRES
by order of Presidio County

Chisos Basin construction delayed until July

By SAM KARAS
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BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK — On Friday, Big Bend National Park leadership announced that major construction planned for the Chisos Basin would be delayed until July. Originally slated to start May 1, the project includes a complete revamp of the beloved lodge and an overhaul of the system that provides safe drinking water to a rapidly-growing visitor population. Both the lodge project and the water system project are being funded through the Great American Outdoors Act, which supports infrastructure projects in the national parks.

The road to a brand new Basin has already had plenty of twists and turns. Back in 2022, when the project was first announced, officials had explored the prospect of closing the lodge temporarily for renovations, but further investigation revealed that the structure had been built on unstable ground and would need to be completely torn down.

Park leadership had also initially explored the possibility of keeping the Basin open to a limited number of guests via a permitting and shuttle system but opted for a total shut down to allow crews to work as swiftly as possible.

Tom VandenBerg, the park’s chief of interpretation, said that the Basin Visitor Center and campground will be open through the end of June. The store and restaurant are operated by Aramark, but the concessionaire indicated that they were going to see if they had adequate staffing to keep some services open past the original May 1 date.

The schedule could still shift around — the project has not gone out for contractor bids yet, but the park plans to stick to the original agenda and select one in March.

Amid the uncertainty, park administration has been collaborating with Brewster County officials to get out an important message: while the Basin will be closed for two years, the rest of the 800,000 acre park will remain open for business. Figuring out how to market alternate park destinations remains a top priority.

Park Superintendent Anjna O’Connor was the guest of honor at last month’s Brewster County Tourism Council meeting. Apart from coordinating “consistent messaging” between the park, the county and local outfitters, she thought it was important to promote some of Big Bend’s other highlights — for example, promoting Castolon as a prime location to learn more about local human history. “We’re going to be open, the park’s not closed!” she said.

Council President Bill Ivey said that he and others in the local tourism industry were cautiously optimistic about how the project would unfold. “We’re all going into this a little bit nervous,” he said. “All of our communities depend on Big Bend National Park.”



Staff photo by Sam Karas

Big Bend Conservation Alliance leadership breaks ground on “Everything’s Connected in Presidio,” an EPA-funded grant program to bring green infrastructure to Presidio. From left to right: Lisa Kettle, Elvira Hermosillo, Christina Hernandez and Ramon Rodriguez.

Big Bend Conservation Alliance breaks ground in Presidio despite federal funding freeze

By SAM KARAS
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PRESIDIO — On Thursday, about two dozen people gathered to cheer on the Big Bend Conservation Alliance (BBCA) as it broke ground on its latest long-term initiative, “Everything’s Connected in Presidio.” The project, one of just five in Texas funded through the EPA Change Grant program, aims to create sustainable green infrastructure in Presidio.

“Everything’s Connected in Presidio” threads together a few goals. One of the more visible

aspects of the grant program will be the creation of a “green belt” through town, adding shade cover to an existing walk and bike corridor to give Presidians options to ditch their cars even in the heat of summer. Thousands more trees will be planted for residents by request and throughout city-owned spaces, and a native garden will be planted and used for community education and enrichment.

Conversations around grid power have intensified in Texas over the past few years, and Presidio is no exception. To prepare for hot-weather emergencies, the grant

will also provide funding for a solar-power set up to keep the air conditioning running at the Presidio Activities Center, which will be used as a cooling center during power outages. The city will also develop an emergency plan to help get vulnerable community members to the center.

The grant program is designed to grow with the town. While expanded traffic on the Presidio International Bridge would be good for business, the long-term environmental effects of large numbers of cars idling in line could prove to have extremely negative effects on the health of

humans and animals. The BBBCA will create a bi-national air quality monitoring program run by high school students, which includes a reverse-911 feature to notify residents in case of poor air quality.

The \$12.7 million “Everything’s Connected” program represents the largest grant ever awarded to a nonprofit in the tri-county area and is just one of four grants awarded by the EPA along the U.S.-Mexico border. So far, the grant has generated a lot of buzz, including a write-up by the Texas Tribune profiling young climate activist

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Impact on Big Bend schools unclear as voucher adoption looms

By MARY CANTRELL
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TRI-COUNTY — As the much-anticipated creation of a Texas school voucher program makes its way through the chambers of the Legislature, Big Bend area schools are considering how the governor-backed initiative that funnels public tax dollars into private schools may impact their classrooms.

The voucher bill, SB 2, passed the Senate earlier this month and now heads to the House for consideration. The bill, which is subject to change and lacks a House companion, establishes Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) for Texas students in the amount of \$10,000

per student per year which families can use towards private school tuition.

The program, which would begin in the 2026-27 school year, will cost \$1 billion over the next two years and up to \$4.5 billion annually by 2030, according to a legislative fiscal analysis. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) estimates there are currently 350,000 students in Texas enrolled in private schools, half of which will apply for the program in the first year. The agency also estimates that 24,500 of Texas’ current 5.5 million public school students will leave public schools for private schools by 2027.

Sen. César Blanco voted against school vouchers, and in a statement

to The Big Bend Sentinel Rep. Eddie Morales indicated that he plans to do the same. Morales said he takes issue with \$1 billion being spent on vouchers, which are expected to serve just 100,000 students, while the same amount is proposed for public schools, which serve over 5 million students.

“This legislation is not only fiscally irresponsible to Texas taxpayers, it’s a wasteful neglect of crucial funds that the vast majority of our students and schools need, especially in rural and West Texas,” Morales said in a statement. “I strongly encourage our constituents to make your voices heard on this issue by writing to the governor, lieutenant governor, and the Texas

Republican Party.”

In the Big Bend region, where public ISDs are facing declining enrollment and budgetary shortfalls, the legislative intent on school vouchers is frustrating to some school leaders who would prefer the focus be on helping their districts solve existing issues.

“The fact that there’s \$14 billion a year in current funding gaps within public ed, and instead the state leaders are pushing through this \$1 billion — projected to potentially rise to \$4.5 billion a year — new entitlement program, it just shows where the state’s priorities really are,” Alpine ISD Superintendent

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Former firefighter charged with Alpine arson released on bond

By ROB D’AMICO
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ALPINE — David Mathew Neet, 45, entered a plea of not guilty to felony arson at a Friday morning arraignment in Brewster County District Court and was released from custody after a change in his bond.

Neet was arrested on July 5 on 20 counts of arson, second-degree felonies, in connection with a series of brush fires that took place

throughout the Alpine area over the course of months and possibly up to two years, according to an arrest warrant affidavit from the Brewster County Sheriff’s Department. Investigative work by the sheriff’s department — including security camera footage, a tracking device pinpointing Neet near a fire, and physical evidence (fireworks) — allegedly linked Neet to the fires, according to the affidavit.

Neet previously served as an

Alpine volunteer firefighter and a crew member of the 1st Response EMS team, which provides nonemergency medical transport. He was held on a \$300,000 bond in the Brewster County Jail until his release on Friday, after his public defender — Far West Texas Regional Public Defender — secured a personal recognizance (PR) bond from a district court judge. A PR bond allows the defendant to avoid paying any money for the bond with a promise

to appear in court.

Neet entered a plea of not guilty and told the court he would be living in El Paso while legal proceedings continue. He was indicted in September on one count of arson, but the remaining 19 counts can still be considered by prosecutors and the courts for convictions or in the penalty phase of court proceedings. If convicted, Neet could face two to 20 years in prison and/or fines up to \$10,000.

May 3 General Election candidates finalized

Marfa election to be canceled due to lack of candidates

TRI-COUNTY — The deadline to file to run for available local city council and school board positions in the May 3 General Election has now passed. The City of Marfa and Marfa ISD School Board saw only incumbents file for reelection, meaning there are no contested races and they will cancel their joint election. Elections will take place in Presidio and Alpine.

Early voting runs from April 22 to April 29, 2025. The last day to register to vote in the May 3 election is April 3. To check your voter eligibility, visit the secretary of state’s website.

Presidio County

Marfa City Council

Mayor Manny Baeza, Mayor Pro Tem Raul Lara and City Councilmember Travis Acreman all filed to keep their seats, which are up for election this coming May. The city council plans to declare the unopposed candidates elected and cancel the election at their next regular meeting on February 27.

Marfa ISD School Board

The Marfa ISD School Board saw only incumbents — Teresa Nuñez, Ruben Martinez, Phil Boyd and Jay Foster — file to keep their seats, meaning they will cancel the election due to no opposed races. This marks the fourth year in a row that the school board election has been canceled due to too few candidates.

Presidio City Council

Presidio Mayor John Ferguson’s post and three seats on the city council will be on the May 3 ballot. An unfilled position when Nancy Arevalo became Presidio County tax assessor-collector was filled recently with the city council appointment of Bianca Martinez Bailon, but that term ends in May — thus Bailon needed to file to run for the seat for a full term.

Ferguson filed for reelection as mayor. Bailon, Abel “Billy” Hernandez, Arian Velazquez-Ornelas, Jose “Pepe” Acosta and Silverio Escontrias have filed for full-term city council seats. Juan Saenz and Alondra Flores have filed for the unexpired term.

Presidio ISD School Board

Three seats are up for election for the Presidio ISD School Board — positions currently held by Board President Iris Galindo, Juventino Martinez and Jusby Vazquez. The top three vote getters for the at-large board will be elected.

Galindo and Martinez are the only incumbents who filed for reelection. Four new candidates — Josefina Burrola, Maria Lucero Montoya, Jose Antonio Padilla and Jeremy Thomas Velasquez — are also vying for a spot on the board.

Brewster County

Alpine City Council

Council seats for wards 1 and 3 will be on the ballot. Both council members currently in those roles, Reagan Stone and Darin Nance, respectively, did not file for reelection. Andres “Andy” Ramos, Richard Portillo and Austin Smith have all filed to run for the Ward 1 seat. Robert Rückes, who previously served as the city’s building official, has filed to run for the Ward 3 seat unopposed.

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BBCA breaks ground

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Ramon Rodriguez, who provided the vision for the successful application. Despite the positive press, the program has been subject to the same setbacks over the past month as thousands of other federally-funded programs around the country. At Thursday’s gathering, BBCA Executive Director Christina Hernandez explained that “Everything’s Connected” had been affected by the federal Office of Management and Budget’s freeze on

grant spending, triggered by the Trump administration’s audit of the federal government. “The funds promised to invest in our region remain tangled in bureaucracy and just out of reach,” she said. As of Wednesday morning, the portal used to access grant funds was back open, and the organization’s leadership will do everything it can to attempt to transfer and protect the funding obligated by the Biden administration.

“BBCA is committed to this work, regardless how long it takes or how many obstacles are thrown in our way,” Hernandez continued. “This project is not just about infrastructure, it's about investing in our people. It's about ensuring that when this money does come through, it stays here, hiring local businesses, employing our neighbors and strengthening our tri-county community.

Voucher adoption

(Continued from page 1)

Michelle Rinehart said. Fort Davis ISD Superintendent Graydon Hicks said at this point, with little known about the House version of the bill, it’s hard to speculate on how a school voucher program may impact the area other than “reducing the amount of money available to public schools in general.” “Do I think there's going to be vouchers? Yeah, I do, but I really don't know what they're going to put in it,” Hicks said. “I don't know if they're going to have accountability measures or not. I don't know if they're going to have [income] limits or not. I don't know if they're going to have targeted populations or not.” Unlike an urban setting, the tri-county area is home to few private schools — Wonder School Marfa, Alpine Montessori and Alpine Christian School — and students already have access to school choice for public schools. Parents can enroll their children in any public school as a transfer at no cost, no matter their zipcode. Wonder School Marfa and Alpine Christian School representatives that responded to The Big Bend Sentinel’s request for comment are also awaiting the final ESA program details but said they believe vouchers will help the families they serve pay tuition rates. Wonder School Marfa’s tuition is \$400 a month, while Alpine Montessori’s is \$625. Representatives from the Alpine Christian School declined to provide current tuition rates and said they are in the process of evaluating next year’s tuition. Wonder School Marfa, a Montessori-style kindergarten through fifth-grade microschool established in 2022 after the abrupt shuttering of the Montessori program at Marfa ISD, currently has seven students enrolled. Board member Lauren Meader Fowlkes, whose daughter attends the school, said while it would be ideal for Wonder School to be tuition free, as the previous public Marfa ISD program was, school vouchers would help interested families afford their tuition. “We receive feedback from families requesting information about scholarships. So, if there are families here that would like to have their children in another program but can't afford it, then that would benefit those families,” Fowlkes said. “Of course, it would have been wonderful if this program were still at no cost the way it was when it was part of Marfa ISD.” Fowlkes said despite the freedom to choose from the local public schools, educational choices for families in the region are still limited, prompting those with means to leave for better options elsewhere. Marfa ISD’s enrollment is down from 341 kids in 2019 to 194 at the start of this school year, a 43% decline in five years. “The goal of the program is to keep a Montessori option available for families that live in Marfa and Presidio County,” Fowlkes said. “To the extent that the vouchers help parents that are interested in that, I think it's beneficial to keep families here.” Fowlkes said, if needed, there is room for Wonder School Marfa to expand while remaining at their current site at the First United Methodist Church. The Alpine Christian School, a Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools accredited K-12 institution, currently has 49 students enrolled, 32% of which are on some form of tuition assistance, according to board member Rudi Wallace. Wallace said while “a lot of people are under the impression that private schools are where wealthy families send their kids,” that is not the case for Alpine Christian School. “We have families that are middle income, low income, families that are working people, just like everybody else, and pay their taxes,” Wallace said. “They're not what I would consider well off. So that would certainly help a lot of our folks that are on tuition assistance be able to pay the tuition that we charge.” Wallace said the school will likely still solicit donations, which currently go towards tuition assistance, if school vouchers pass, but that additional revenue from vouchers would go towards operating expenses, curriculum and consumables. He said school leaders anticipate that the voucher program will primarily help existing students — whose families are drawn to the program for its emphasis on Christian values and community — rather than bring a significant number of new students through the doors. Some opponents of the voucher program have raised concerns about

public tax dollars flowing into religious schools, which constitute 60-70% of private schools across the state, according to the Texas Private Schools Association. While SB 2’s proponents have said it will not take away from public education dollars and will focus on “low-income” families, Rinehart said the bill is “disingenuous” in that it defines low income at a much higher rate than public schools. SB 2 and the fiscal analysis outline that the voucher program can potentially fund 100,000 students, and if more than that show interest, the bill prioritizes allocating “up to 80%” of the spots to children who are “members of a low-income household,” and children with disabilities who attended a public school the year prior, with the remaining positions being “filled by lottery to eligible applicants.” SB 2 defines “low income” at 500% of the federal poverty level, or roughly \$156,000 for a family of four. Public school low-income eligibility ranges from 130 to 185% of the federal poverty level, roughly \$40,000 to \$57,000 for a family of four. “Why would low income be defined differently for private education than public education, especially when we're talking about state education dollars?” Rinehart said. “The bill isn't actually about prioritizing funding for families that need it most. This will actually help many families who are already in private school receive this new taxpayer-funded voucher to pay for their private school fees that they were already paying.” Rinehart said the fact that the baseline allotment for school vouchers, \$10,000 per pupil, is less than the baseline allotment for public schools, \$6,160 per pupil, is also inequitable. While public schools receive additional funds for special education, emergent bilingual (EB), Career Technical Education (CTE) and low socioeconomic background students that raise student allotments — last year Alpine ISD’s was \$10,400 per student — the district then shoulders the responsibility of providing those programs and services, unlike a private school who is not beholden to state requirements. “A big chunk of our funding that we received, that \$10,400, is tied to providing state-regulated specific programs, which private schools will not be required to offer,” Rinehart said. There are also several subtractive elements to the school funding formula that impact districts, including average daily attendance (ADA), where schools lose money when students are out sick, for example, that do not appear anywhere in the voucher bill. The potential lack of accountability among private institutions, regarding admission decisions, special education services and financial stewardship — things that public schools are required to be transparent about — concerns Rinehart as well, she said. “What I'm calling out here is this lack of symmetry in terms of how these bills are being written, that private schools can have public funds, but in essence, with no strings, no requirements, no accountability, no transparency to the public,” Rinehart said. “That just feels 100% at odds with what we in Texas believe about the stewardship of public funds.” Wallace with the Alpine Christian School said one of their concerns about school vouchers is that they might come with more reporting requirements that currently only public schools are subject to. “If there's a lot of bureaucracy and a lot of reporting going on, a lot of additional paperwork that we have to do, doing a lot of testing, that's maybe detrimental to us accepting it,” Wallace said. Rinehart, who has traveled with other area education leaders to the Capitol to meet with Sen. Blanco and Rep. Morales and testified to the Senate Finance Committee earlier this month, said Alpine ISD is trying to shift the focus away from vouchers and onto “good education policy.” This district’s legislative priorities involve teacher pay increases, more funding for special education, enrollment rather than attendance-based funding, and a solution to ongoing property value disputes between the local county appraisal district and the state comptroller, which this year resulted in a \$700,000 loss for the district. While both school vouchers and teacher pay raises were declared emergency legislative items by Gov. Abbott, vouchers were fast-tracked while a teacher pay raise bill was only filed on Wednesday. “What we're seeing is kind of similar to last legislative session, no meaningful movement from state leaders to move forward good public ed policy until vouchers are approved into law,” Rinehart said.

Will vouchers impact existing public private school partnerships? In the Big Bend, there is already a flow of public school dollars into private schools across the state due to an early childhood education partnership program launched by Fort Davis ISD in the 2023-24 school year. By dual enrolling K-2 children from early childhood programs in private schools across the state, Fort Davis ISD raised its enrollment from 170 to 486 students and dramatically increased its state aid from \$70,000 to \$1.5 million. The unorthodox use of a preexisting TEA program gained Fort Davis ISD attention, and other districts in the area, and across the state, adopted similar programs this school year; Marfa ISD even hired Fort Davis ISD as a consultant on the matter. Hicks said they get calls “daily” about partnership opportunities and are acting as consultants for around 20 districts. Both Fort Davis and Alpine ISDs have staff members dedicated to cultivating the partnership program. The one-year legal agreements vary but involve the exchange of paperwork and attendance numbers rather than physical transfer of students or staff. Private school partners may receive half of the additional state aid the public schools receive from the dual enrollment, lease payments, payroll assistance, access to public school programs and more. Fort Davis ISD currently partners with Alpine Christian School — who dual enrolled 24 children this year, and whose payout is estimated to be \$95,000, according to Hicks — and Wonder School Marfa, who uses the money to help offset its primary educator's salary. Alpine ISD is partnering with four sites, including Alpine Montessori, for an additional 50 students enrolled and is working on bringing on another 50 students. Fort Davis ISD is working on additional partnership deals with Midland Christian, a large private academy that plans to dual enroll around 350 students, and Lake Country Christian in Fort Worth, another large private religious school. Hicks said Fort Davis ISD’s current enrollment is 815 students. Hicks said one of the reasons why Fort Davis ISD has so many religiously-affiliated school partners is because they are easier to find. “It's far easier to locate and find a religious private school than it is, say, a daycare or a Montessori or another private school,” Hicks said. “They're out there, but they're not ... as organized as a group.” He said he is not concerned about school vouchers potentially impacting the early childhood partnership program. “From what I have heard and read about the conversations in Austin on this, I don't see an impact on what we're doing with our early education partnerships,” Hicks said. Rinehart expressed greater concern that vouchers could jeopardize the existing public-private school partnerships. She said it is likely that language will be written into the final bill that doesn’t allow students to be simultaneously enrolled in a private and public school, otherwise all active public school students could receive \$10,000 for their public school. The \$10,000 per student vouchers are more advantageous for private schools compared to the public-private partnerships, she argued, because there are no strings attached, and private schools don’t have to split the money with any other partners. “It could absolutely impact public private partnerships, because it would set up a different taxpayer-funded funding stream at a level that is maybe two to three times what those partner sites are currently receiving as their half of the funding generated through the public school funding formula,” Rinehart said. Hicks said the public-private school partnerships involve more than just money, and that private school access to grants, fieldtrips, and more through the public schools is valuable. Both Rinehart and Hicks pointed out that their districts’ extra curricular activities, like sports, are a huge part of school identity and why people send their children, especially older kids, to public schools rather than to the smaller private institutions in the region. “Hundreds of families choose Alpine ISD every year for their kids, and I fully anticipate that continuing,” Rinehart said. “They choose us because we have incredible teachers, we have incredible culture, we have an incredible identity. It means something to be an Alpine Fighting Buck, whether that's in the classroom, on the court, in FFA, and any of the many different extracurricular programs that we provide.”

Regional US attorney steps aside as Trump fires Biden-appointed prosecutors nationwide

By ROB D’AMICO
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TEXAS — It’s standard practice for incoming presidents to replace most U.S. attorneys — which are appointed by presidents and confirmed by the Senate — but President Donald Trump made a sweeping move to rapidly remove all Biden-appointed posts this week, including Jaime Esparza, who served the Western District of Texas that includes the Big Bend region. Most U.S. attorneys — who are political appointees and not civil servants — expect they may be asked to leave and prepare for their departure, but it has been widely reported that Trump didn’t have Department of Justice (DOJ) staff coordinate with many of the fired attorneys to allow for a smooth transition to new posts. Alexander Uballez, U.S. attorney for the District of New Mexico, told KOAT News that he knew something was about to happen when all of his “devices” were turned off Friday, then he got an email requesting his resignation on Monday afternoon. In contrast, former President Joe Biden retained a handful of U.S. attorneys appointed by Trump, and at the time, the DOJ held a conference call with all exiting attorneys to discuss transitions. Trump posted yesterday on his Truth Social platform: “Over the past four

years, the Department of Justice has been politicized like never before. Therefore, I have instructed the termination of ALL remaining 'Biden Era' U.S. Attorneys. We must 'clean house' IMMEDIATELY, and restore confidence," Trump wrote. "America's Golden Age must have a fair Justice System - THAT BEGINS TODAY!" It’s unclear how many of the 93 U.S. attorneys are affected by the move; Biden appointed at least 68. But the action comes after a wave of terminations of DOJ attorneys who were involved in January 6 insurrection case prosecutions.. At least nine department attorneys have resigned in protest over the DOJ’s attempt to dismiss corruption charges against Democratic New York City Mayor Eric Adams. “I think the war on the federal work force is meant to inspire fear,” Uballez told KOAT. “It's meant to scare people out.” Esparza was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in December 2022. He came to the Western District of Texas after serving as the district attorney for the 34th Judicial District of Texas, in El Paso, from 1993 to 2020. The Western District of Texas comprises 93,000 square miles, 68 counties, and covers 660 miles of U.S.-Mexico border. It has divisional offices in El Paso, Del Rio, Waco, San Antonio, Austin, Pecos, Alpine and Midland-Odessa.

Esparza could not immediately be reached for comment, and a spokesman for Western District said he was unfamiliar with the requests made of Esparza. The district put out a statement announcing Esparza’s departure and highlighting his accomplishments. “Esparza led the handling of more than 41,000 federal criminal prosecutions — including immigration, drugs, firearms, white collar, and violent crime — and more than 10,000 civil cases in this southern border district,” the statement said. “He made it a priority to disrupt and dismantle criminal organizations, including gangs, cartels and smuggling organizations. He also led and elevated outreach programs to educate the public on the dangers of fentanyl and machinegun conversion devices, and to bring awareness to domestic violence issues, among others.” “Additionally, his team of asset recovery lawyers obtained millions of dollars in restitution for victims and forfeited millions of dollars in property that were used to commit crimes or were obtained with proceeds of crime,” the statement said. First Assistant U.S. Attorney Margaret Leachman will serve as the Acting U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas until Trump appointments a permanent replacement.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Alpine City Council questions the need for board and commission quorums

By GINA VERA
For The Big Bend Sentinel

ALPINE — Changes could be coming to the way Alpine city boards and commissions work after City Councilmember Rick Stephens suggested quorum requirements be dropped for most and reductions in the number of members for those where quorums are required by state law.

Stephens suggested the changes during the February 18 City Council meeting. “We are not getting business done due to a lack of quorums,” said Stephens, pointing out that these boards and commissions make recommendations to council, not decisions for the city.

Stephens’ recommendations were supported by Mayor Catherine Eaves and other council members, who agreed that most boards and commissions should still be able to meet without a quorum to discuss issues

City Attorney Cynthia Trevino advised council that while they can remove majority requirements for most boards and commissions, two — Building & Standards and Planning & Zoning — are regulated by state law requiring quorums.

Replying to a question from Stephens, Trevino advised that the number of commission members for Planning & Zoning and Building & Standards could be lowered to five (down from seven) with multiple alternate members to facilitate business by making it easier to achieve a quorum. She added that other cities that have made similar changes have held public hearings in efforts to be transparent.

Discussion ended with the council agreeing that Stephens would work with Trevino and City Secretary Geo Calderon to develop recommendations regarding possible changes.

City commissions and boards include the Animal Advisory Board, Building & Standards Commission, Hotel Occupancy Tax Commission, Music Advisory Board, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Presidio law enforcement prepare for active shooters at schools

PRESIDIO — The Presidio County Sheriff’s Office posted on its Facebook page that area officers will be conducting active shooter drills on February 26, although no students will be in school as it is a staff in-service day.

“As per Texas House Bill 3, the State of Texas has mandated that the Sheriff of County shall conduct school safety meetings in the interest of preparation for an active shooter event,” the post stated. “In addition to providing ALERRT [Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training] training to all local law enforcement, the group has been preparing for an Active Shooter Exercise to establish protocols and practice a response effort.”

Area law enforcement held a planning meeting for the exercise last Thursday, which included: Presidio County Sheriff’s Office deputies and communications, Presidio ISD police, Presidio police, Texas state troopers, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. CBP, Presidio city administration, Presidio EMS, the Presidio Volunteer Fire Department, the Presidio ISD superintendent, and Presidio ISD transportation.

“The event on February 26 will test law enforcement response times, communication, protocols, incident command, medical response, evacuation, reunification process, and school preparedness,” the post stated.

Over the past decade, the state has tightened up training requirements for school districts designed to help them respond to active shooter threats. Since 2023, ALERRT training has been mandatory for all peace officers in Texas.

Presidio ISD Chief of Police Joel Nuñez said that more information about the district’s safety protocols — and this week’s round of drills — is available to parents by request.

Nuñez emphasized that it takes a village to help keep the community safe. “The best thing anyone can do to help is report any suspicious activity to law enforcement and follow the safety guidelines of the emergency response plan,” he said.

Folks can submit tips anonymously to district law enforcement using their confidential online portal: webapps.presidio-isd.net/anonymous_report/create.

Regional ministry sponsoring free US citizenship classes

TRI-COUNTY — United States citizenship classes will begin throughout the area within the coming weeks, sponsored by the Rio Grande Borderland Ministries.



Photo from Presidio County Sheriff’s Office Facebook page

Law enforcement officers, and city and school officials meet on February 13 to plan an emergency response training for school shooters.

Free in-person classes will be organized in Fort Davis, Alpine, Marfa and Presidio. These group classes will be offered at each site in Spanish on Thursdays at 5:30 p.m., followed by instruction in English at 6:30 p.m. A home study program is also available.

The program in Fort Davis is set to launch March 6 with host Mobile Comunidad at Mountain View Lodge, 501 SH-118. Financial assistance with the cost of the citizenship exam is available.

Additional information is available in English from the Reverend Michael Wallens, vicar of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Marfa, at 214-862-7292. Details in Spanish are available from the Reverend Katie Hudak at 720-401-8195. Those interested may also obtain details from the public libraries in their communities.

There is no charge for these classes. Rio Grande Borderland Ministries (RGBM) is a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande serving in the borderlands of New Mexico and Far West Texas. RGBM has been engaging with long-term systemic needs on the border for decades by working collaboratively to provide humanitarian support to vulnerable people in our border communities. The organization’s website is riograndeborderland.org.

Big Bend Conservation Alliance to host happy hour at Planet Marfa

MARFA — The Big Bend Conservation Alliance will be hosting a happy hour at Planet Marfa on Thursday, February 20, from 6 to 8 p.m. Meet the team and learn about the organization’s work.

Food, drinks, and “The River is Home” bandanas will be available for purchase. Live music will be provided by Primo y Beebe.

Proceeds from the happy hour will benefit Big Bend Conservation Alliance. The event is open to the public. Learn more at www.bigbendconservationalliance.org.

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Jake Hooker & The Outsiders DECATUR

Big Bend Trailers FORT DAVIS

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If you are interested in volunteering at the museum, the thrift store, or as a board member, please email us at info@marfamuseum.org. It truly takes a village to keep us going!

The logo for Cactus Liquors is set against a background of diagonal black and white stripes. On the left, a stylized black and white illustration of a cactus with two arms and two flowers is positioned. To the left of the cactus, the text 'FINE SPIRITS BEER & WINE' is stacked vertically. Below that, 'NATIVE TREES & PLANTS' is stacked. Further down, 'LOCAL PRODUCE & WARES' is stacked. To the right of the cactus, the words 'CACTUS LIQUORS' are written in a large, bold, stylized font. At the bottom right, the address '405 S Highland' and phone number '(432)729-7070' are listed, followed by the email address 'cactusliquors@gmail.com'.

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The Adventures of Dick Decent ©²⁵ Jim Bridges Big Bad Serial

Panel 1: Dick Decent: WE'VE HAD TO OPEN A NEW GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT!

Panel 2: Big Bad Serial: IT'S PURPOSE IS TO LOCATE RECENTLY FIRED EMPLOYEES THAT NEED TO BE REHIRED!

Panel 3: Dick Decent: IT CAN BE DIFFIKULT TO TRACK THEM DOWN BECAUSE WE EXPUNGE THEIR INFORMATION IMMEDIATELY!

Panel 4: Big Bad Serial: YOUR TEAM DOESN'T SEEM TO BE PUTTING MUCH THOUGHT INTO THEIR ACTIONS!

Panel 5: Dick Decent: WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT THE NUCLEAR SAFETY ADMINISTRATION WAS IMPORTANT?

Panel 6: Big Bad Serial: I WONDER HOW MANY MISTAKES ARE WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED?

Editor's note: Sen. Blanco voted against SB 2, which passed the Texas Senate on February 5. It now moves on for consideration by the Texas House.

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‘I rebelled against English’: Author Alda P. Dobbs visits Presidio Elementary School

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

PRESIDIO — Last Saturday, award-winning author Alda P. Dobbs visited Presidio Elementary School to talk about The Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna, a chapter book for middle-grade readers about a girl growing up during the Mexican Revolution. A small crowd of captivated fans listened and added their thoughts as she talked about history, immigration, and the process of bringing her family’s story to life.

Dobbs’ titular character, Petra Luna, braves the desert with her grandmother and younger siblings in an epic journey to the United States after her mother dies and her father is carted off to war by the Federales. Dobbs began her presentation by talking about the realities of life for kids in Mexico during the 1910s, culled together from years of research.

Throughout, Dobbs stressed that history shouldn’t feel unapproachable to young people — after all, they’re living in it. A major issue at the time were massive disparities between the rich and poor. The United States was also dealing with a massive influx of refugees from the war, settling 30,000 in the city of San Antonio alone. Folks were anxious about the economy, disease and the outbreak of World War I — all topics that sound familiar to audiences today.

Dobbs sat down with the The Big Bend Sentinel to talk about the obstacles she faced on the way to becoming a published author and about the importance of collecting family stories.

What was your first experience with fiction?

I was born in Mexico and started learning English when I began school. The teacher I had for kindergarten was Mexican American, but he would get really upset with me and another little boy who didn’t speak English; he would shake us and spank us. I was afraid of him.

By fourth grade, I knew enough English that he wasn’t frustrated with me anymore, but I thought, “I can’t stand him, I can’t stand the language.” I kind of rebelled against English. I didn’t want to read in it or write in it, I just didn’t care for it, and I gravitated to math because that came easy for me.

But I’ve always loved stories and storytelling. When I was 16, I was working at the North Star Mall in San Antonio, and I would take the bus to travel back to the south side every night after work. I remember one time I was exhausted and I had done my homework, so I was going to put my backpack down on the seat next to me, and I noticed there was a book there.

It said Catcher in the Rye. I wondered what it was about, so I sat there and started reading, and I didn’t put the book down. That whole night I stayed up reading the book, I was so enthralled by the whole story. Even though the main character of the book was a rich white kid from the Northeast, I felt like I was him. I really identified with the character.

I thought, “This is magical. How do I do this?”

How did you get started writing?

I had such a fear of English, but I kept thinking about it. I would write little poems here and there and then toss them. When I got to my college entrance exam, I thought this would be the test that would tell me if I should pursue



Staff photo by Sam Karas

Award-winning children’s author Alda P. Dobbs presented her book, The Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna, this weekend, which follows a young girl’s journey during the Mexican Revolution.

writing or not. So I took the placement test for English and math, and I bombed English. I said, “You know what? That’s a sign that God or the universe is telling me not to pursue it.”

I studied physics. I had a passion for it, and I still do. It wasn’t until later on, when my husband and I were in Italy, and I couldn’t find a job in engineering. That’s when my husband said, “Well, you’ve always wanted to write. You have all these stories in your head.”

That fear of English came back to me, but I thought that I’d always been writing — grant proposals, school essays, for scholarships and stuff like that. Little by little, I started doing it, taking workshops and reading. I had a lot of reading catching up to do.

Petra Luna is pretty frank about war and class and race and what we might call “adult” topics. Did you feel like you had to tone it down for kids?

I grew up thinking about Pancho Villa being a hero and the Federales were evil, but over time I realized that there’s no black and white in a world like that. You can’t say these are the good guys, these are the bad guys. It was a mix and there were so many innocent people who were forced to fight. I cried a lot writing the novel, researching all the stuff that kids went through, because it’s bad enough for grown-ups to go through war, but a child — it’s just devastating.

Originally I didn’t have anybody die in the book, and my editor came back and she told me that she wanted someone to die. Originally it was this secondary character, but I needed her to be in the second book. So I sat back, and I went to my research and thought of common deaths that happened during that time and came up with the whole side story [of Petra’s mom dying in childbirth]. I went back and read all these children’s books that deal with death and saw how they did it, and I realized that so much can be said with very few words — you just have to choose the right words.

Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg February 10, 2025

ACROSS
1 Short club
7 Move on from
14 Tropical lizard
15 Greediness
16 Take retail therapy to an extreme
18 LA’s region
19 Resting on
21 News agcy.
24 Do a cannonball, say
28 Defensible
30 Aussie hopper
31 Crossed (out)
32 2000s-’10s Yankees slugger, to fans
33 Black or navy morsel
34 What Jamaica’s Asafa Powell ran in a record 9.09 seconds
42 “Understood”
43 Honolulu’s island
44 Order _____ carte
47 Org. that monitors flights
48 Falcon type
51 Pro tip
54 Making out while out, e.g.: Abbr.
55 Wine region near Sonoma

DOWN
56 Spy’s “name”
58 Garnish, perhaps
... or a hint to 16-, 24-, 34- or 51-Across
65 App downloader
66 Troublemaker
67 Numbs, as pain
68 Judge
1 Opposite of trans
2 “Yuck!”
3 Pair
4 Openings
5 Bury in a crypt
6 Secular
7 “ABC (Nicer)” singer
8 Former Bolivian president
Morales whose first name is hidden in “the vote”
9 Letter after sigma
10 Chicago airport code
11 How a meme might go
12 Pollution penalty, essentially
13 Rest
17 Michigan is a Great one
20 Advanced deg.

21 Where part of the Four Corners Monument is
22 Lima’s country
23 A party to
25 Realm
26 Fly high
27 Small
29 _____ fuel to the fire
33 “So long!”
35 Distinct variation
36 Jacob’s twin in the Bible
37 Agreement
38 Part of an email address
39 Organization for seniors
40 Lose fur
41 Dance you might see on 43-Across
44 Actor Philip of “Kung Fu”

45 Paged (through)
46 Mountainous
48 Clay oven?
49 Inscrutable sort
50 Mississippi and Missouri
52 Bear with eye patches
53 Nitpickers split them
57 Some heirs
59 Birth control option: Abbr.
60 Orlando-to-Miami dir.
61 Rooster’s mate
62 Where Dubai is, briefly
63 Sends a duplicate email to
64 “_____ making a list ...”

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

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www.upuzzles.com

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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
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Marfa 432-729-4534

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recycle
this
paper

DRAWING OF THE WEEK

Natasha Labrado
9th grade - stencil & spray paint

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.

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

SOLUTION:

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

☺ MARFA SCHOOL LUNCH MENU ☺

MAY	Thu, Feb 20	Fri, Feb 21	Mon, Feb 24	Tue, Feb 25	Wed, Feb 26
BREAKFAST	POWER BREAKFAST, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK	CEREAL, TOAST, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK	NO SCHOOL	BREAKFAST STRUDEL, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK	BREAKFAST PIZZA, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK
LUNCH	PIZZA, BROCCOLI, CARROTS, FRUIT	TEXAS BASKET (CHICKEN TENDERS, FRIES, ROLL, GRAVY) CARROTS, FRUIT, DESSERT	NO SCHOOL	CHICKEN FAJITAS, BEANS, CARROTS, SALSA, FRUIT, FROZEN YOGURT	MEATBALL SUB SANDWICH, SALAD, GREEN BEANS, PEACHES, DESSERT

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MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

20th: Softball HS Tournament in Monahans
21st - 23rd: Boys Basketball Playoffs
3rd: Softball HS Tournament in Monahans

2/10 Bit Part by Matt Revis

1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14							15							
16						17								
			18							19				20
21	22	23		24				25	26	27				
28			29					30				31		
32							33							
34				35	36	37					38	39	40	41
			42								43			
44	45	46		47				48	49	50				
51			52					53				54		
55							56				57			
	58			59	60	61					62	63	64	
	65							66						
67								68						

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Judd Foundation

Experience Donald Judd's art as installed within his former living and working spaces in downtown Marfa. These spaces, including his libraries and studios, consider his ideas for the permanent installation of art within historic buildings.

Free for residents of Presidio, Brewster, and Jeff Davis counties.

Judd Foundation is open Tuesday through Sunday and offers two distinct guided visits. Please visit our office, 104 South Highland Avenue, or website for the current schedule.

For more information and to book reservations please visit juddfoundation.org or call 432 729 4406.

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Marfa High School science fair teams advance to state



Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Donaldson

Marfa High School students traveled to Odessa this past weekend to participate in the regional science fair. Five out of six teams advanced to state competitions in College Station. From left, Ayven Phippen, Giselle Torres, Itzel Urrutia, Dariela Munoz-Martinez, Ava Flores, Raven Martinez, Amaya Gomez, Chris Huerta, Messiah Licon, Isaiah Ramos, Kassandra Garcia, Mia Dominguez, Annaka Salcido, Piper Donaldson, Joangel Davila.

ODESSA — Marfa High School students competed in the Permian Basin Regional Science Fair Competition this past weekend, a Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) affiliation.

Out of six projects, five advanced to the state competition which will be held in College Station at Texas A&M University. If students progress past state they will travel to Columbus, Ohio, this year to compete internationally.

Student projects explored a variety of topics, from “Clouds and Colonies: The Impact of Vaping on Bacteria,” to “Exploring Martian Agriculture: The Effect of Additives on Substrate Composition for Enhanced Plant Growth on Mars,” and “Predicting Water Quality using AI.”

“Our project explored the possibility to predict water quality along the Rio Grande using AI. This project could be applied to any water source with in-depth current data about water quality,” Piper Donaldson said. “We traveled several times to the Rio Grande to gather information ourselves and also used the data collected by various organizations such as USGS and U.S. Parks and Wildlife as a foundation for our project.”

“I am thankful I had the opportunity to compete in this year's science fair

competition. This experience has taught me a lot about plants that I have never really looked into and even helped me talk to people I never really talked to before,” said Kassandra Garcia. “I learned a lot of different things this year, and I am so grateful that my project partner and I made it to state!”

Here are the following projects and their ranking at the regional competition:

1st Place - Microbiology: Raven Martinez, Ava Flores, Amaya Gomez
1st Place - Earth and Environmental Science: Piper Donaldson, Annaka Salcido, Joangel Davila
2nd Place - Earth and Environmental Science: Ayven Phippen, Giselle Torres
2nd Place - Plant Science: Kassandra Garcia, Mia Dominguez
2nd Place - Physics and Astronomy: Isaiah Ramos, Messiah Licon, Christopher Huerta

Winners of Green Energy Initiative Scholarship valued at \$6,000: Ayven Phippen and Giselle Torres

May 3 General Election

(Continued from page 1)

Alpine ISD School Board

Alpine ISD School Board posts currently held by Haley Babb in District 5 and Mary McCallister in District 7 are up for election this May. Babb filed to run for reelection unopposed, while Josh Cross filed for the District 7 seat unopposed.

McCallister said while she has enjoyed her time on the board, she decided not to run again due to personal reasons. The school board will cancel the election and its next meeting due to no opposed races.

Jeff Davis County

Valentine ISD

Four seats on the Valentine ISD School Board held by George Watters, Jackie Means and Laci Bevans and one vacant seat are up for election. Watters and Means filed for reelection and new candidate Leticia Navarette filed to be on the board, meaning there will still be one vacant seat. The school board will not need to hold an election due to no contested races.

AROUND THE BIG BEND

Thur
Feb
20

Hike with Homeless Dogs
10am - 11am at Davis Mountains State Park
Help a homeless dog have a great time on the trail!

Monthly Distribution Day
4pm at Marfa Food Pantry

BBCA Happy Hour
6pm - 8pm at Planet Marfa
Planet Marfa will be donating proceeds of the bar sales to BBCA and will be selling The River is Home bandanas designed by Dana Falconberry. Primo y Beebe (Primo Carrasco and David Beebe) will perform at 6pm. Come out and support Big Bend Conservation Alliance!

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Sun
Feb
23

Rock Stars of the Davis Mountains
2pm - 3pm at Davis Mountains State Park
Come learn about the eruptive origin of our amazing geology.

Rick Ruiz
6pm - 8pm at The Ritchey
Come watch Rick Ruiz play at The Ritchey, no cover!

Looking to submit an event?
Scan our QR code here:



Fri
Feb
21

Rio Bravo Songs
4pm - 10pm at Rio Bravo Ranch
Featuring Songwriters: Walt Wilkins, John Baumann & Landon Lloyd Miller. Visit riobravoranchtx.com for more information.

Ross Fleming
7pm - 9pm at The Ritchey
Come watch Ross Fleming play at The Ritchey, no cover!

Tree and Shrub Pruning Workshop
9:30am - 11:30am at CDRI
The program kicks off with a with a short presentation, followed by a live demonstration of several different plant subjects in the CDRI Botanical Gardens. Complimentary breakfast snacks and coffee. Free admission.

Ongoing Weekly Events & Classes

Free Zumba Classes
Monday & Wednesday at 6:30pm at Marfa Public Library

Yin Yoga
Tuesdays at 12pm at Marfa Public Library

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

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

AA (in-person)
Monday & Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

The Alpine Farmers Market
Saturday at 9:00am - 12:00pm at Alpine Visitor Center

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

Sat
Feb
22

Rio Bravo Songs
4pm - 10pm at Rio Bravo Ranch
Featuring Songwriters: Walt Wilkins, John Baumann & Landon Lloyd Miller. Visit riobravoranchtx.com for more information.

Everything is Connected in Presidio
1pm - 3pm at Alpine Library AEP Room
Ramon Gonzalez, a local climate activist from Presidio, will be discussing Everything is Connected in Presidio.

Ranger Canyon
7pm - 9pm at The Ritchey
Come watch Ranger Canyon play at The Ritchey, no cover!

FROM THE ARCHIVES

September 20, 1956

Gold Smugglers Miss Marfa Airport Landing

Conspiracy to smuggle drugs from Mexico charged by U.S.

According to U.S. Customs Agent B. F. Gallagher of Marfa the original plan of officers was to go along with the conspirators to the extent that the gold would have been flown into the Marfa- Alpine Airport, where the men would have been arrested for smuggling — not just conspiracy to smuggle. But that plan fell through when the government was unable to put up the \$250,000 for the ruse.

Three men are being held in Reeves county jail and another is being held in the El Paso county jail today following raids made by U.S. Marshal Albert W. Saegert along with state, county and city officers in this area.

In arresting the men, the officers believe they have broken a conspiracy to smuggle a million dollars worth of gold out of Mexico. U.S. Customs agents Saturday filed complaints against numerous persons charging them with the offense of conspiring to smuggle gold from Mexico. Although four men are being held in the two jails in default of bonds, it is believed the Federal government is seeking other persons in the conspiracy ring. It is learned from one unconfirmed source that several men who are wanted by the customs officials are now in Mexico. This source refused to permit his name to be used for publication.

Charged with the offense are: Tom Anderson of Grand Junction, Colo., Robert V. Wilson of Crane, “Red” Jordan of Odessa and R.O. Cox of Odessa. The investigation was made by and the complaints were filed by the U.S. Customs agent.

Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District

Notice of Public Hearing on District’s Rules

Notice is hereby given that the Board of Directors of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation (District) will hold a public hearing on Friday, March 14, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. in the Jury Room on the 2 nd floor of the Presidio County Courthouse, 301 N. Highland, Marfa, Texas, to discuss, consider and receive public comment on proposed amendments to the District’s rules to modify its approach to allocating permitted groundwater withdrawals. All interested members of the public are invited to participate and comment in writing, orally, in person, or by Zoom at:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84774574110?pwd=1agFB6DzE2bigpSNojYWoEMwCOLm4o.1>
Meeting ID: 847 7457 4110
Passcode: 440493

A copy of the proposed amendments to the District’s rules may be reviewed or copied on the District’s website at www.pcuwcd.org or at the District’s office .



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Marfa Live Arts hosts Winter Showcase at Planet Marfa



Photo by Tina Rivera

Marfa Live Arts announces the winners of the annual Playwriting Preparatory Workshop (from left): Nathan Stevens, Raivon Hamilton, Juliet Hinojos, Olivia Esparza, Rachel Tate, Aidyn Gonzales, Liliana Zubia, Jerika Rodriguez, Adeline Marquez, and Alyssa Garcia. These students will have their words brought to life by local actors at the Winter Showcase Theater on Thursday, February 27, at Planet Marfa at 5 p.m.

By JD Garcia

MARFA — Monologues by Marfa Junior High seventh- and eighth-grade students will come to life at Marfa Lives Arts’ Winter Showcase Theater with local actors at Planet Marfa on Thursday, February 27, at 5 p.m., as the organization wraps up its Ninth Annual Playwriting Preparatory Workshop, led by MLA’s Lead Instructor Rachel Tate in partnership with Marfa ISD teacher Jaylia Foster.

The showcase will feature award-winning monologues written by eighth-grade students Aiden Gonzales (“Canelo Alvarez Boxing Gloves”), Lilliana Zubia (“Love”), Alyssa Garcia (“Hello, I am Ally”), Jerika Rodriguez (“General Ron”) and Adeline Marques (“My Mind Escape”), and seventh-grade students Nathan Stevens (“Did He Abandon Me?”), Francisco Muñoz (“To Be An Alien”), Ravion Hamilton (“The Hunted”), Juliet Hinojos (“Tiny Spider”) and Olivia Esparza (“My Name is Red”).

“As a team, we read through each submission and chose our top for each grade,” said Tate. “I really dislike having to choose winners. It’s my least favorite part, and I wish you could see all of the monologues written.” The monologues, Tate added, were written using “space” as a main prompt, allowing the students to reach into the word and see what it meant for them. “Whether that be outer space, or the need for personal space, or what it means to take up space,” she explained. “I found the pieces to be imaginative with many unique perspectives of those ideas and how they

fit in their brains.”

The workshop, Tate’s third with Marfa Live Arts, also led to reunions with some students with whom she had taught last year. “I always love being with the kids. Building rapport with last year’s seventh-graders made me really excited to reconnect with them a year later. They’re a lot of fun and make me laugh and feel welcomed,” Tate said of watching returning students’ self-development. “It’s neat to see how this process allows for growth each year they participate. There is a familiarity of their own voice that gets to be added on to and then carried into their one-acts later in high school.”

Along with seeing former students, Tate also enjoyed meeting the new ones, with excitement to see how they find their own voices and how they can relate their experiences to an audience. “It’s also great to meet the new students in the seventh-grade classes. Who is behind the voice, and what are they discovering about themselves, and how do they see the world?” Tate said. “There was a lot of sweetness this year. Also, lots of basketball and big emotions. I like to see where their thoughts are and how they align with the kind of age-old feelings that happen in our middle school years. Also, how is this generation different than mine or yours? What values are shared cross generationally and which new ones are forming?”

Along with leading the students in new and unfamiliar creative territories, Tate has also found herself learning with the children. “It inspires me to sit with them and do the same for myself. This process was specifically beneficial for me personally, to take on the same challenges I am

asking of them,” Tate explained. “We then become collaborators instead of just student/teacher. There are some really wonderful writers in this group, and I hope as mentors and community members we take the time to listen.” The success of the workshop, she added, could not have been possible without the guidance of Foster. “These workshops are facilitated through Ms. Jaylia Foster’s class, and I love the relationship I’ve been able to build over the years with her. I admire the daily dedication of these teachers in a variety of different learning scenarios. What a great blessing our teachers are. Really and truly,” she said.

The Winter Showcase at Planet Marfa, she added, is a great chance to support the students and let them know their creative pursuits will not be for naught. “Even if you don’t know a student or a teacher, please attend. Come show a student that you want to hear what they think and that you value their voice in this community. We have to support them. We get to support them,” Tate said. “We’ve also lined up some really awesome actors across this region to participate. I love the opportunity to connect a student with an adult who maybe wouldn’t have gotten the chance to know them otherwise. It’s a reciprocal benefit. We feed one another with support and ideas which will then go directly into the fabric of our shared community. If we want to sustain true local ideas and values into this place, we get to call home, this symbiotic relationship is necessary.”

For more information on past and future Marfa Live Arts, please visit their website at www.marfalivearts.org

Marfa to host track meet this coming Wednesday

MARFA — Marfa ISD will host a track meet for area junior high and high schools this coming Wednesday, February 26, at the Martin Field track.

High school events will kick off at 10 a.m. while junior high events will take place at 3:30 p.m.

Participating high school teams include Terlingua, Marathon, Marfa, Dell City, Sierra Blanca and Valentine. Participating junior high teams include Marfa, Dell City, Sierra Blanca, Marathon, Terlingua, Alpine Christian School, Valentine and Van Horn Junior High.

The event is free to attend and includes all standard track meet events, including the 1600-meter race, the 3200-meter race, relays, hurdles, high jump, long jump and more. There will be 21 junior high and 16 high school athletes competing from Marfa on behalf of the Shorthorns.

Marfa ISD track coaches this season are head coach Arron Luna and assistant coaches Oswaldo Luna and Kevin Pippen. The track season kicks off this weekend with a meet in Fort Stockton.

Wednesday’s Marfa track meet marks the second the district has held — the first last year featured only junior high athletes — since they installed the new track. Athletic Director Linda Ojeda said students not participating in the track meet will be able to spectate during breakfast or lunch to avoid classroom interruption.

She said it is meaningful for the always-traveling team to have a chance to perform on their home turf for friends and loved ones.

“A lot of our kids are going to actually compete in front of their parents,” Ojeda said. “That’s a big thing because a lot of our meets are out of town, just really in a place where their parents can’t get off of work to attend.”

“That’s one of the high points for me is that they are going to get to do this in front of their community,” Ojeda said. “And get to really see that their hometown crowd is going to cheer them on.”

If you are interested in volunteering to help run the track meet in Marfa on Wednesday, please contact the Marfa ISD Admin Office at 432-729-5500.



Photo courtesy of Marfa ISD

Marfa ISD will host a track meet for area junior high and high schools this Wednesday, February 26, starting at 10 a.m.

OBITUARIES



Melgoza

It is with great sadness that the family of **Ruben D. Melgoza** announces his passing to be with our Lord and Savior on February 14, 2025. He was born on June 30, 1942, in Brownsville, Texas, to Victor and Catalina Melgoza. Ruben married the love of his life, Maria Elia Melgoza, on September 18, 1958, where they shared 67 beautiful years together.

He was preceded in death by his parents; four brothers; one sister; his late sons-in-law, Andres Reyes Jr. and Inez Rios; and one grandchild. He is survived by his wife; his three daughters, Nelda Reyes, Ruth Macias and husband Joe, and Pamela Melgoza; sister Rosalinda Flores; his adored nephew, Joel “Kenny” Melgoza and wife Carolina; along with eight grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren.

Ruben worked as a mechanic in Brewster and Terrell counties for eight years and then pursued his dream in law enforcement at Sul Ross State University as the first Hispanic chief. He also worked for the sheriff’s department and

then eventually migrated to Alpine Police Department, where he was also appointed as the first Hispanic chief of police and held that position serving a combined 21 years of service. In 1990, he relocated to San Antonio, where he served as an officer for Edgewood ISD for 20 years as a sergeant. Aside from his respected career path he was also a talented musician who played the saxophone and trumpet for the Rhythmaires. He had an ear for the keyboard or any instrument. Music was a big part of his passion, and even without an instrument in hand, his unique whistle would brighten up his surroundings along with his contagious laugh, smile and sense of humor.

His warm love and wisdom he shared will forever echo in our hearts. We will carry his legacy in our actions, his laughter in our smiles and his love as a compass on our life’s journey. Thank you, Lord, for this man that led and loved and believed in God and family. Thank you, Jesus Christ!

Visitation will take place on Wednesday, February 26, 2025, in the Alpine Memorial Funeral Home chapel, located at 209 W. Sul Ross Avenue from 5 – 7 p.m. The recitation of the Holy Rosary will take place at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church in Alpine at 9:30 a.m. on the morning of Thursday, February 27, 2025, with the funeral Mass to begin at 10 a.m.

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, and gifts and condolences may be left by visiting: www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com.



Ferguson

Marjorie Ferguson, age 83, formerly of Lockney, passed away with her family by her side, on February 12, 2025. Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m., Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at the First Baptist Church of Lockney. Interment will follow at Lockney Cemetery. Visitation will be held from 4 to 6 p.m., Monday, February 17, 2025, at the Moore-Rose Funeral Home in Lockney. Arrangements under the personal care of the Moore-Rose Funeral Home.

Marjorie Lacy was born on September 26, 1941, in McKinney, Texas, to M.D and Anise Lacy.

She was very proud to be a fifth-generation Texan. She was baptized at Flint Baptist Church in Lubbock at the age of 13. Marjorie was engaged to James Hall Ferguson during her junior year in high school (his senior year), and shortly after her graduation they married on June 10, 1960, at the Baptist Church in Aiken, Texas. They were married for 34 1/2 years before his passing in 1996.

Her whole life was full of music — she began playing on an old pump organ that her grandparents had, even before she started piano lessons in the first or second grade. She was happy to be the organist at First Baptist in Lockney for 27 years and then was the pianist/organist for the Fort Davis First Presbyterian Church. Her children all took piano lessons beginning in first grade and continuing for as long as they wanted. She enjoyed listening to

all genres of music, from Bach and Mozart, Rodgers and Hammerstein, musicals like “Paint your Wagon” and “South Pacific,” to Willie Nelson and George Strait, and of course the church hymns that she spent her life playing.

She was an accomplished seamstress and could often be found in her sewing room creating matching mommy and daughter dresses and even made a majorette uniform for her daughter’s first twirling competition.

Animals were always a part of her life — she always had dogs or cats, usually more than one of each and they were so important to her. She also loved plants and flowers, both indoor and out. We always had a big garden that she enjoyed tending to.

She was super involved in the community and activities of her kids, including being a Sunday School teacher, Cub Scout den mother, Brownie troop leader, band trip chaperone. She was proud to have been named Lockney Woman of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce in 1979.

She was a gracious hostess, always doing everything in her power to make sure meals and bedding and everything in between was perfect for her guests. She went out of her way to not offend anyone in any way.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her husband and is survived by her children, Mike Ferguson (Jane), Julie Booth (Ernie) and Donny Ferguson (Donna); her sister Mary Ruffin; grandchildren Brian Booth (Kimberly), Emily Wilde (Grant), Rebecca Palughi (Andrew), Stephanie Loyd, and Austin Ferguson; and seven great-grandchildren with one more on the way.

Memorials in Marjorie’s name may be made to Grand Companions Humane Society in Fort Davis at PO Box 1156, Fort Davis, TX 79734 or at www.grandcompanions.org

Online condolences may be made at www.moore-rose.com

To submit an obituary please email editor@bigbendsentinel.com

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Classifieds & public notices

NOTICE OF SALE

THE STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTY OF PRESIDIO

and issued pursuant to a judgment decree of the District Court, 394th Judicial District, of Presidio County, Texas, by the District Clerk on said date, and to me directed and delivered as Sheriff of said County, I have on the 15th of January, 2025, seized, levied upon, and will on the first Tuesday in March, 2025, the same being the 4th day of said month, at the Courthouse door, of said County in the City of Marfa, beginning at 10:00 o'clock a.m., on said day, proceed to sell for cash to the highest bidder all the right, title and interest of the defendants in such suit to the following described real estate levied upon as the property of said defendants, the same lying and being situated in the County of Presidio and the State of Texas, to-wit:

CAUSE NO. 5198-A; PRESIDIO COUNTY TAX OFFICE v. EDUARDO HERRERA, ET UX

TRACT 1: GEO: 1 10 02700000004003
Lot 30, Block 4, Broadway Addition to the Town of Presidio, Presidio County, Texas; being that property more particularly described in a Warranty Deed recorded in Volume 295, Page 243 in the Deed Records of Presidio County, Texas.

TRACT 2: GEO: 1 10 027000000040029
Lot 29, Block 4, Broadway Addition to the Town of Presidio, Presidio County, Texas; being that property more particularly described in a Warranty Deed recorded in Volume 277, Page 67 in the Deed Records of Presidio County, Texas.

CAUSE NO. 5223-A; PRESIDIO COUNTY v. MARIA MENESES, ALSO KNOWN AS MARIA M. MENESIS, INDIVIDUALLY AND DOING BUSINESS AS KARINA'S FURNITURE, ET AL

TRACT 2: GEO: 1 10 241000000331006
A Tract of land 3 acres, more or less in Abstract 3095, Survey 331, Jesus Vazquez Original Grantee, Presidio County, Texas; being that property more particularly described in a Warranty Deed with Vendor's Lien recorded in Document No. 2013-065 of the Official Public Records of Presidio County, Texas.

TRACT 3: GEO: 1 10 16400000012002
Lot 20, 21 and 22, Block 12, Plaza Addition to the Town of Presidio, Presidio County, Texas; being that property more particularly described in a Warranty Deed recorded in Volume 311, Page 656 of the Official Public Records of Presidio County, Texas.

CAUSE NO. 5290-A; PRESIDIO COUNTY TAX OFFICE v. DAVID GOMEZ, ET UX

TRACT 1: GEO: 1 20 23300000006001
Lot 10, Block 6, West Heights Addition, Presidio County, Texas; being that property more particularly described in a Warranty Deed recorded in Document #20150000639 in the deed records of Presidio County, Texas.
or upon the written request of said defendants or their attorney, a sufficient portion thereof to satisfy said judgment, interest, penalties, and costs; subject, however to the right of redemption by the defendants or any person having an interest therein, to redeem said property, or their interest therein, in the manner provided by law, and subject to any other and further rights to which the defendants or anyone interested therein may be entitled, under the provisions of law. Said sale to be made by me to satisfy the judgment rendered in the above styled and numbered cause, together with interest, penalties and costs of suit, and the proceeds of said sale to be applied to the satisfaction thereof, and the remainder, if any, to be applied as the law directs.

I have appointed the following as agent to conduct the sale, to-wit:

Perdue, Brandon, Fielder, Collins & Mott, L.L.P.
Attorneys at Law
2500 N. Big Spring St., Suite D
Midland, Texas 79705
(432) 522-2427

THIS SALE IS BEING CONDUCTED PURSUANT TO STATUTORY OR JUDICIAL REQUIREMENTS. BIDDERS WILL BID ON THE RIGHTS, TITLE, AND INTERESTS, IF ANY, IN THE REAL PROPERTY OFFERED.

THE PROPERTY IS SOLD AS IS, WHERE IS, AND WITHOUT ANY WARRANTY, EITHER EXPRESS OR IMPLIED. NEITHER THE COUNTY NOR THE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT WARRANTS OR MAKES ANY REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT THE PROPERTY'S TITLE, CONDITION, HABITABILITY, MERCHANTABILITY, OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. BUYERS ASSUME ALL RISKS.

IN SOME SITUATIONS, A LOT OF FIVE ACRES OR LESS IS PRESUMED TO BE INTENDED FOR RESIDENTIAL USE. HOWEVER, IF THE PROPERTY LACKS WATER OR WASTEWATER SERVICE, THE PROPERTY MAY NOT QUALIFY FOR RESIDENTIAL USE. A POTENTIAL BUYER WHO WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION SHOULD MAKE ADDITIONAL INQUIRIES OR CONSULT WITH PRIVATE COUNSEL.

ESTA VENTA SE LLEVARÁ A CABO DE CONFORMIDAD CON LOS REQUISITOS LEGALES O JUDICIALES. LOS POSTORES HARÁN UNA OFERTA POR EL TÍTULO, LOS DERECHOS E INTERESES, SI ALGUNO, EN LA PROPIEDAD OFRECIDA.

LA PROPIEDAD SE VENDE COMO ESTÁ, EN EL LUGAR DONDE SE ENCUENTRA, Y SIN NINGUNA GARANTÍA, YA SEA EXPRESA O IMPLÍCITA. NI EL CONDADO, NI LA OFICINA DEL ALGUACIL

Notice of Sale, page 2
GARANTIZAN O HACEN NINGUNA REPRESENTACIÓN SOBRE EL TÍTULO DE LA PROPIEDAD, CONDICIÓN, HABITABILIDAD, COMERCIABILIDAD, O IDONEIDAD PARA UN PROPÓSITO PARTICULAR. LOS COMPRADORES ASUMEN TODOS LOS RIESGOS.

EN ALGUNAS SITUACIONES, UN LOTE DE CINCO HECTÁREAS O MENOS SE PRESUME QUE ES APTO PARA USO RESIDENCIAL. SIN EMBARGO, SI LA PROPIEDAD NO TIENE SERVICIOS DE AGUA POTABLE O AGUAS RESIDUALES, LA PROPIEDAD NO PUEDE CALIFICAR PARA EL USO RESIDENCIAL. UN COMPRADOR POTENCIAL QUE DESEE MÁS INFORMACIÓN, DEBERÁ HACER ESTUDIOS ADICIONALES O CONSULTAR CON UN ABOGADO PRIVADO.

At the time the sale begins, all bidders at the sale must be registered with the above named agent conducting the sale and be eligible to bid according to the Property Tax Code.

Dated at Marfa, Presidio County, Texas, this the 15th day of January, 2025.

/s/Danny C. Dominguez
DANNY C. DOMINGUEZ
SHERIFF, PRESIDIO COUNTY

ADMINISTRATION / PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
PUBLIC NOTICE

The City of Presidio plans to apply for the upcoming *2025-2026 Texas Rural Economic Development (RED) fund* from the Texas Community Development Block Grant (TxCDBG) Program of the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). These services are being solicited to assist the City of Presidio in its application and administration of the TxCDBG Grant Agreement, if awarded, to support the following economic development in the City of Presidio. Accordingly, the City of Presidio is seeking to contract with a qualified Professional Administrator or Service Provider (individual or firm) to prepare the application and/or administer the awarded contract.

Please submit your proposal of services and a statement of qualifications for the proposed services to the address below:

Brenda Ornelas-Acuna, City Secretary
City of Presidio
507 W. O'Reilly Street
Presidio, Texas 79845

Digital Copy: bornelas@presidiotx.us

Proposals shall be received by the City of Presidio no later than 3 pm on the March 6, 2025. The City of Presidio reserves the right to negotiate with any and all individuals or firms that submit proposals, as per the Texas Professional Services Procurement Act and the Uniform Grant and Contract Management Standards. Section 3 Residents and Business Concerns, Minority Business Enterprises, Small Business Enterprises, Veteran Business Enterprises and Women Business Enterprises are encouraged to submit proposals.

The City of Presidio is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

LEGAL NOTICE

Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a Mixed Beverage Permit (MB) by Wrong, LLC dba Wrong to be located at 110 N Highland Ave, Marfa, TX
Buck Johnston Manager
Member
Brian C Bosworth Manager
Member

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.

Notice to Creditors

Notice is hereby given that original Letters of Testamentary for the Estate of Marilyn Jean Wilson, Deceased, were issued on February 5, 2025, under Docket No. 2040, pending in the County Court of Presidio County, Texas, to Candice A. Bagoy:

Claims may be presented as follows:

Representative
Estate of Marilyn Jean Wilson Deceased
c/o Julie Balovich, Attorney
P.O. Box 385
Alpine, Texas 79830

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: February 14, 2025

Law Office of Julie M. Balovich PLLC

By: Julie M. Balovich
Attorney for Candice D. Bagoy, Independent
Executor of the Estate of Marilyn Jean Wilson

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Judge Jose Portillo:
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(432) 295-0048
Raúl Lara, Mayor Pro Tem
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Mark Cash
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Mark Morrison
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Travis Acreman
councilmemberacreman@cityofmarfa.com
Presidio Mayor John Ferguson:
City Hall: (432) 229-3517
Email: jferguson@presidiotx.us

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

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

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HUDSPETH COUNTY, TX

PUBLIC NOTICE
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR
SOLID WASTE COLLECTION
AND LANDFILL OPERATIONS/
MANAGEMENT
RFP 2025-01

Hudspeth County, TX is soliciting Request for Proposals (RFP) for Solid Waste Collections and Landfill Operations/Management.

Specifications:

The Request for Proposals (RFP) and the submission requirements may be found online at www.co.hudspeth.tx.us

Sealed Proposals must be submitted by 4:00PM (MST) on February 28, 2025.



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