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

Presidio City Council appoints temporary PMDD members amidst board turnover

By Sam Karas
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PRESIDIO — On Monday afternoon, the Presidio City Council appointed two members from within its ranks to serve 60-day temporary terms on the Presidio Municipal Development District (PMDD). Mayor Pro Tempore Christian Montoya and Councilmember Bianca Martinez Bailon will help the taxing entity fulfill a quorum for the next two months after former Board President Patricia Runyan and Treasurer Juanita Bishop were abruptly removed from the board at last week's meeting without discussion or explanation.

Last Wednesday morning, PMDD Executive Director John Kennedy addressed county officials during the public comment section of last week's commissioners court meeting. The week prior, he alleged that Bishop, her husband and a Presidio County Sheriff's Office deputy entered the PMDD office without board authorization and he would be pursuing legal action. (Bishop, reached by phone that morning, said she had entered the office with a key to grab materials she needed to meet a looming budget deadline.)

In a formal letter shared with the *The Big Bend Sentinel*, Kennedy said that Bishop's conduct "raise[d] serious legal and ethical concerns including but not limited to abuse of authority under color of official capacity, potential civil rights violations, breach of fiduciary duty and violation of PMDD governance norms [and] unlawful entry and/or trespass by third parties under the direction of an elected official." (Bishop declined to comment further for this week's issue because she was in the process of retaining legal counsel.)

PMDD is a taxing entity that skims a small percentage of sales tax off purchases made in Presidio with the goal of boosting local economic development. The laws governing its structure is laid out in the Texas Local Government Code. The PMDD board has seen a lot of shakeups over the past few years. It was almost completely reorganized after controversy over board leadership at the beginning of 2023 and has suffered numerous abrupt resignations since then.

Kennedy got involved with the board in an advisory role in 2024 before taking the reins as executive director, a paid position. In addition to proposing green infrastructure goals for the city, he's helped to spearhead a project that could bring a geothermal power plant to Presidio — "the most significant economic

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Shorthorn trio

Photo by Marfa HS Yearbook Club

The Marfa Shorthorns kicked off their season with football scrimmages Friday. From left, senior Gary Webb, senior Manny Dominguez and sophomore Austin McGary. Photo by Marfa yearbook students.

Marfa ISD educator jailed on charges of improper relationship with a student

Rangers investigate as woman is placed on paid administrative leave

By Mary Cantrell and Rob D'Amico
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MARFA — A Marfa ISD educator — Rebecca Ontiveros, 25, of Marfa — was arrested last Thursday and charged with improper relationship between an educator and student, a second-degree felony punishable by 2 to 20 years in prison. Ontiveros was booked into the Presidio County Jail. She was released on a $75,000 bond on Friday.

A source knowledgeable of the investigation — who did not want to be named because they were not directly involved in the case — said Ontiveros had developed a relationship with a high school student. That source said that the district received an anonymous complaint about the relationship that included the initials of the alleged offender, which only matched Ontiveros. Subsequently, the Texas Rangers conducted interviews with the victim and Ontiveros to get enough information for the arrest, the source said, although they did not know what details were given and who gave what information.

The Big Bend Sentinel has put in a public records request with the Texas Rangers for probable cause affidavits on any arrest or search warrants for the case.

Ontiveros was arrested last Thursday at Marfa ISD at 1 p.m., according to a Presidio County Sheriff's Department report. The source with knowledge of the investigation said that the Texas Rangers also impounded her car at the school and sealed it to preserve evidence — something that many people around the school witnessed. The Texas Ranger in charge of the investigation, Malcolm White, declined to comment on the open investigation.

The district sent out an official statement to parents on Thursday night at 8:21 p.m. stating that a Marfa ISD employee was taken into custody earlier that day as part of an ongoing investigation conducted by law enforcement officials.

"Marfa ISD is fully cooperating with law enforcement authorities and will continue to provide any necessary assistance throughout the investigation," the statement read. "The safety and well-being of our students remain the district's highest priority. As this is an active investigation, the district will not be providing additional comments at this time."

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Local rancher's human smuggling conviction upheld by appeals court

By Sam Karas
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NEW ORLEANS — On August 14, the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the district court's ruling USA v. Larremore, a human smuggling case involving an Alpine-area rancher. "We find no Fourth Amendment violation and accordingly affirm," the majority opinion reads.

James Larremore was arrested on Highway 385 north of Marathon on the afternoon of July 9, 2023, after he was stopped by Brewster County Sheriff's Office Deputy Christopher Colona. Colona testified before the lower court that he was on high alert during a Border Patrol shift change — a small early-afternoon window of time used by savvy smugglers. The deputy never activated his emergency lights, but dashcam footage revealed that he reached speeds of up to 93 miles an hour to catch up with Larremore.

Deputy Colona noticed an open container of alcohol in the cab but didn't acknowledge it right away. Instead, he asked Larremore to "hang on a sec" while he took a look around the trailer. Colona eventually discovered three undocumented immigrants in the trailer's locked tack compartment after a long back-and-forth with Larremore about his rights to due process — during which he hesitated and was unable to answer basic questions about himself and the trailer.

Larremore's lawyer, Shane O'Neal of Alpine, built his appeal around the moment Colona asked his client to "hang on a sec," which he believed constituted a detention under the law. "Neither the government nor the district court seriously attempts to explain why a reasonable person would think they could drive off while an officer holds onto their truck, sticks his head in the window, and questions them," he wrote in his opening brief to the appeals court. "Every action that Deputy Colona took after approaching Larremore's vehicle confirmed, to a reasonable person in Larremore's position, that he was not free to leave."

The Fifth Circuit's majority opinion disagreed with O'Neal, arguing that Colona gave Larremore no concrete reason to believe that he was detained. "A consensual encounter with police

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Marfa golf community mobilizes to preserve course

By Mary Cantrell
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PRESIDIO COUNTY — Locals passionate about the Marfa Golf Course showed up to Presidio County Commissioners Court this week to oppose the idea of defunding the county-owned and operated facility, a historic green space that plays a vital role in the community.

The golf course, which was established on donated land in the 1960s, was targeted for potential defunding, along with adjacent Vizcaino Park, due to the fact that the county is in dire financial straits, with Presidio County Judge Joe Portillo emphasizing the need to focus on looking at things in one of two ways: "Do I want it? Or do I need it?" he said, emphasizing that state mandated requirements have to become the priority.

But for generations of Marfa golfers who spoke in the public meeting and beforehand with *The Big Bend Sentinel*, the proposal seemed "premature" and abrupt. They argued that the course is integral to the town's youth, its families and neighboring counties, offering a positive physical activity in an area with limited public parks. Fundraising tournaments are also held several times a year and result in scholarship payouts and assistance with individuals' medical bills.

"We have very few recreational outlets in Marfa," Felipe Cordero, president of the Marfa Golf Association, told *The Sentinel*. "It has been important in terms of the development of a lot of youth, in terms of running tournaments and giving back to the community. It reciprocates back into the community as much as the community gives to it."

The Marfa Golf Course — recognized as the highest golf course in Texas at 4,882-foot elevation — is a nine-hole course distinguishable by its scenic mountain views, turtleback greens and mature pine and cottonwood trees. This year a new tree will be planted to honor Gilbert Lujan as part of an initiative to honor golfers of the past. Every Wednesday the course plays host to a "hully gully" event for local golfers complete with a shared community meal. In addition to golf, the course hosts casual walkers, birders and cross-country events. There's also a clubhouse on site. Many argue the place is more than just a golf course and represents, in part, the identity of Marfa.

Cordero started playing golf at the age of 15, and his senior year was a part of the Marfa High School golf team that placed second in state under Coach Jay Foster. He went on to play

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Man missing for 2 days in Davis Mountains relied on raw bacon, an iPad to keep going

Police found his red Jeep Sunday morning, but several hours went on with no word on his whereabouts

By Rob D'Amico
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FORT DAVIS — A Pecos, Texas, area man — Jonathan Miller, 27 — went missing near Fort Davis late Friday night, prompting an extensive search by authorities on Sunday morning. Miller had been heading to the Davis Mountain Preserve in his red jeep to camp with friends, according to family and friends.

The Jeff Davis Sheriff's Office reported on its Facebook Page at 8 p.m. Sunday that he had been found "safe." "We are relieved to report that the missing individual has been found safe," stated a post from Jeff Davis County Sheriff Victor Lopez. "He is currently being escorted back into town and will undergo a medical evaluation." The sheriff later posted that Miller had hiked 11.5 miles through Madera Canyon before emerging. "Jonathan is in good spirits and grateful to everyone who helped find him," he said. Lopez praised his department and a multitude of agencies — DPS, Border Patrol, Reeve's County Sheriff's Office and local EMTs and firefighters — for their search efforts.

On Sunday morning, Facebook posts from Miller's family had quickly spread alerting the public to be on the lookout for Miller, as well as an official post from authorities around 10 a.m. noting: "Jeff Davis County Sheriff's Office has launched air support from local residents as well as a DPS helicopter to aid in the search."

Miller's nephew, Tristan Miller, told *The Big Bend Sentinel* at 12:40 p.m. Sunday that authorities had found Miller's jeep, although he hadn't heard exactly where.

Greg Unruh — of Saragosa, near Balmorhea — who employs Miller, said Miller was heading to the preserve to camp with a group that included his son. A text came in to his son from Miller Friday night saying he was about 40 miles out from arriving. "I'm suspecting he got lost," Unruh said. "He relies quite heavily on GPS. Once you leave Fort Davis heading to the preserve, you get a little service at [McDonald] Observatory, then that's it."

Unruh said Sunday a Department of Public Safety officer told him the jeep was stuck in the mud in Madera Creek. "It sounds like John abandoned it there and started walking," he said. Unruh said a DPS helicopter had been scouring the area all day.

Miller's niece, Leah Miller, gave a fuller account of the incident in a Monday Facebook post. After the jeep got stuck in Madera Creek, "Jon," as she calls him, camped with the vehicle Friday night. On Saturday, he struck out on foot to get his bearings. Before leaving his Jeep, he stuffed his backpack with supplies: water jug, towel, clothes, iPad and 2.5 lbs of raw bacon. He schlepped the heavy pack up to higher elevation, seeking cell service and any sign that search crews were looking for him. When he ran out of water, he hiked back down toward the creek. "He got so hungry that he ate some of the raw

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The West Texan Media Group, LLC

Man missing

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bacon," Leah Miller recounted.

Jonathan attempted to start a fire, but couldn't find all the supplies he needed. He used the creek bed to navigate — and hydrate. That night he spent by the creek, with rocks for a bed and a towel for a pillow. "He said it was really beautiful and he saw and heard quite a bit of wildlife, including elk," Leah said. "At one point on the hike, he had seen a bull elk and hoped it wouldn't charge him, but fortunately, it wandered away."

When morning came, Jonathan filled his water jug and scrambled through dense brush and rocky terrain to try to find the highway again. At one point, he thought he heard a plane, but couldn't be sure. He decided to chance powering up his iPad — before leaving home, he'd downloaded some maps for offline use, and wanted to save battery life on his phone in case he was able to catch a flicker of service.

The iPad had some discouraging news: he was hours away from the highway. "If it wasn't for his iPad telling him the remaining miles when he would look at it, he said he may have given up," Leah wrote.

As the miles slowly dwindled, he heard a voice: his mother, who passed away in October 2023, cheering him on. Finally, the countdown reached 0.1 miles — and then the highway appeared.

From that point a passing motorist called the authorities for help, and they took Jonathan to the Big Bend Regional Medical Center for evaluation and intravenous fluids, Leah wrote, before he was released around 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

The Davis Mountain Preserve is about 33,000 mountainous acres owned by The Nature Conservancy, with mountain peaks topping 8,000 feet. The preserve is about 24 miles northwest of Fort Davis off of Highway 118, and it opens on select weekends to the public — including this weekend.

Educator arrested

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Courtesy of the Presidio County Sheriff's Office

Photo right: Rebecca Ontiveros



Interim Superintendent Arturo Alferez told *The Sentinel* this week that Ontiveros is on paid administrative leave as of the day of her arrest. Alferez said the district is following standard procedure by placing Ontiveros on paid leave and the move was not a decision the school board voted on.

The Marfa ISD School Board extended a non-certified teacher contract to Ontiveros last Monday so that she could teach two pre-kindergarten classes. Before that she served as a special education aide at the elementary school. Her mother is Teresa Nuñez, the Marfa ISD School Board president.

Ontiveros' defense attorney Shane O'Neal said he has not yet received any specifics on the allegations from the state, but the high school student in question is someone Ontiveros knew well but never held a supervisory role over in the context of the school system.

"We're going to wait to see what the state's evidence is before we comment on the truth or falsity of these allegations," O'Neal said. "From our understanding, this involves her relationship with someone who's been a long-term family friend that she's known socially for a long time, and that she's never had an educator-student relationship with."

Golf course

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in professional events throughout the country including U.S. Open Qualifiers. Cordero said playing golf was his outlet, and helped him gain independence.

"Once I picked it up, I had great friends, and we'd be there from sunup to sundown," Cordero said. "We'd hit balls in the morning, and then we'd walk 36 holes every day. Then we'd go home and repeat, seven days a week."

Another prominent local golfer that spoke out this week to preserve the course was Yvonne Lujan, a 1987 state qualifier who went on to pursue golf at the collegiate level at the University of Texas El Paso. She said she's been out on the Marfa Golf Course since she was 4 years old, and both her father and her son find special meaning in the place.

"It's kept the kids busy. It's kept everybody busy," Lujan said. "Our family always kept memberships. To this day that's something that we have."

Volunteer efforts to improve the course are ongoing. Randy Sanchez has helped make a shade structure for Hole 6 and improved the interior of a bathroom, work he said he's happy to continue to keep the golf course accessible and affordable for locals.

"It's important for us as Marfa people, I believe," Sanchez said. "Because it's not only me playing golf, but it's been generations of people, their families, father-and-son memories, daughter-and-mother memories, so many people that have used that course. To see it disappear or give it to somebody else. It's really, really heartbreaking."

Cody Lee, a member of the Marfa Golf Association along with Cordero, Lujan and Sanchez, whose involvement is a little more recent, said the course is punching above its weight considering its resources, with the two county employees at the facility — Ernest Villarreal and Mario Ontiveroz — seeing to a well-maintained site both locals and visitors are impressed by.

He noted that, similar to the community of Del Rio whose 1957 San Felipe High School golf team were the first Mexican Americans to win a state championship, Marfa's rich golfing history challenges the mainstream narrative that golf is exclusively a wealthy, white sport.

"The fact that the golf club in Marfa is very Latino-centric, very Mexican-centric, it's an antithesis to some of those ideas of what golf is commonly thought of," Lee said.

Caleb Taylor, a Fort Davis resident who maintains a membership to the golf course, stated that Marfa, more than any other course, is populated by players in Wranglers and boots who have been out on the green for decades. "Its about the only thing the locals have left in a time of gentrification and economics changing," Taylor said.

Still, everyone recognized the need for the Marfa Golf Course to modernize and improve. Common issues that were brought up include the lack of a point of sale system, credit card machine, website, social media, branded merchandise, ability to reserve tee times and schedule tournaments in advance and more. Currently, revenue is limited to green fees, memberships and cart storage fees. The course also closes at 5 p.m., and could potentially explore staying open later until 8 p.m. Several of the modifications relate to making the course more accessible for out-of-towners, who often do not carry cash and are turned away to never return.

Judge Portillo noted that the county's auditors had recently expressed some concerns about how memberships were tracked, and County Commissioner Deirdre Hisler — whose precinct includes the course — noted that membership fees hadn't been updated in 12 years and a concessionaire contract was not currently in place.

In order to prevent the defunding of the golf course, Hisler asked the court to give her one year to work with the golf club and other stakeholders to help turn the operation into one that turns a profit. The county is long overdue in assessing the site from a business perspective, she told *The Sentinel*.

"We need to shift the way we are managing the golf course to make it more viable, so that the county can afford to keep operations going," Hisler said. "What's beautiful about this being brought up now is the community is coming to me and stepping up to the plate and giving me ideas."

There is pressure from Presidio — which is devoid of county-funded parks — for the county to stop funneling resources into the Marfa parks, and Portillo was clear that he does not think that the county should be in the business of managing the golf course long-term. The possibility of establishing a lease with a private company to run the golf course has been brought up in the past and is being considered once again. It was noted that in comparison to other golf courses, like Lajitas, the Marfa Golf Course's offerings are sparse in terms of food, beverage, stay-and-play packages, and more.

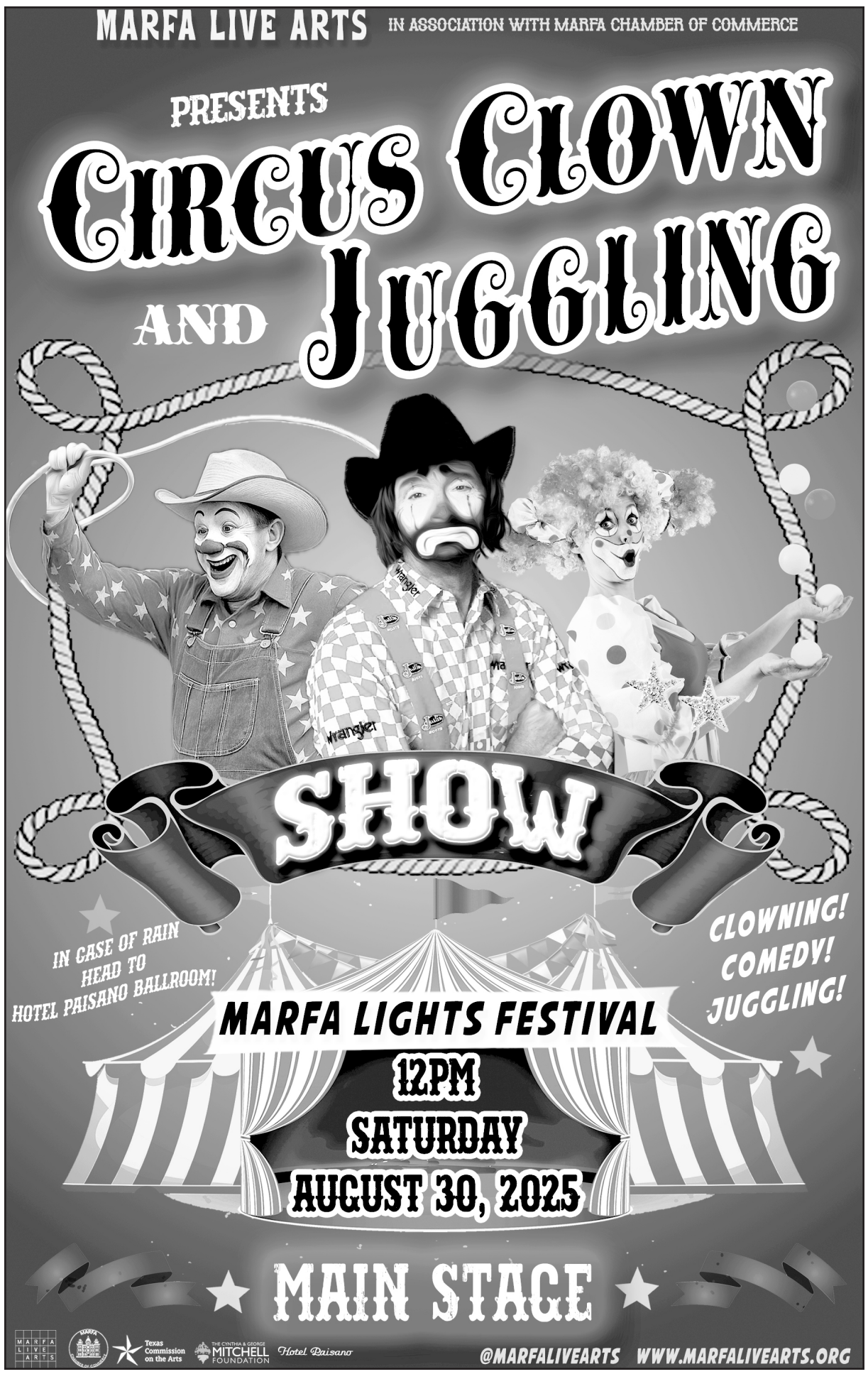
Previous County Attorney John Fowlkes and current County Attorney Blair Park noted that in the event the county does eventually pursue a lease with a private company, it would be best to preserve the golf course as an asset, keeping it maintained and showing it is financially solvent, in order to make it more attractive to potential lessees.

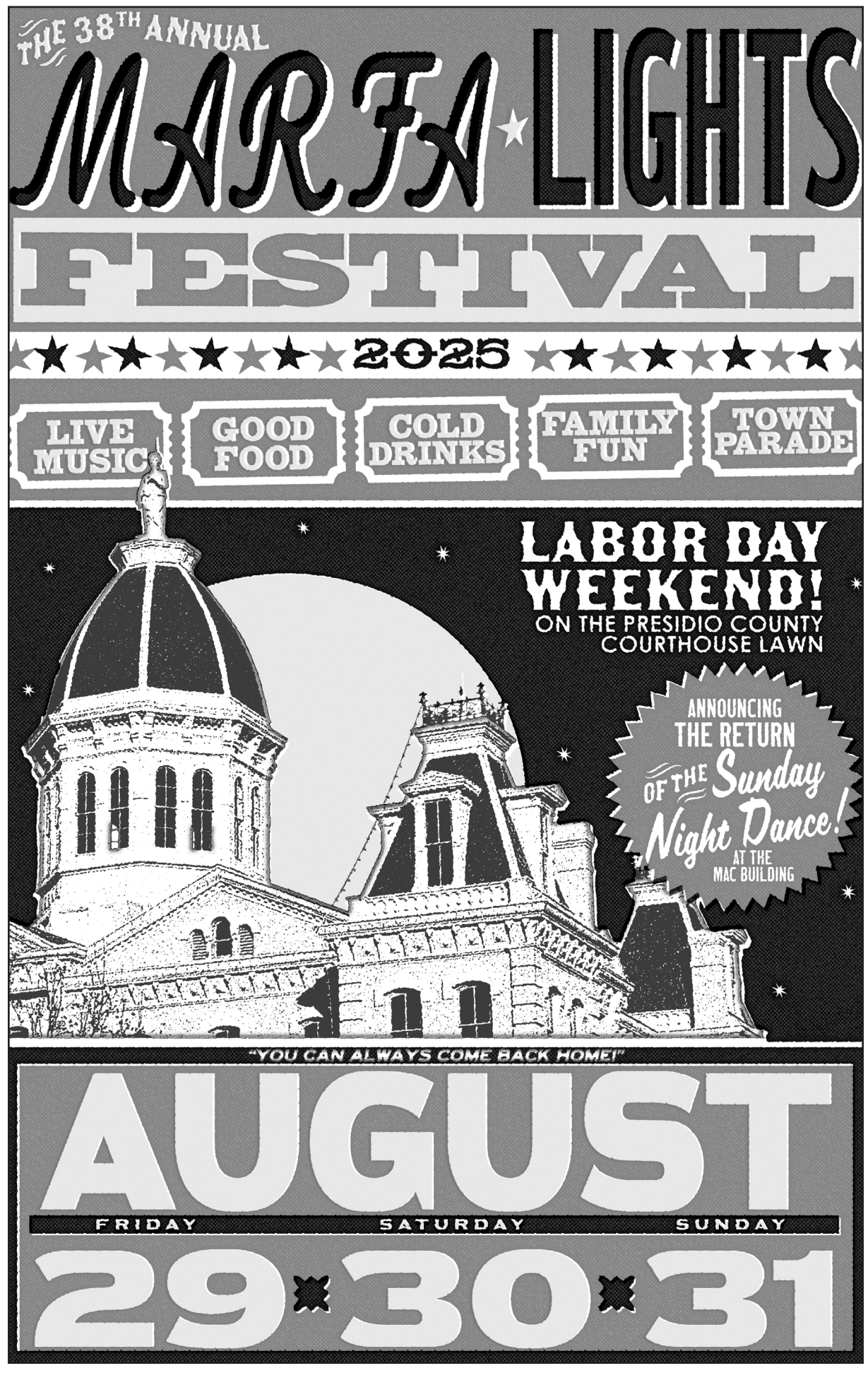
While Portillo asked Cordero — who generated a loose business plan to improve golf course operations — if he could have it in better shape by October 1, several warned that was far too hasty a timeline, including Park who said any request for proposals (RFPs) put out by the county would be at least a five- to six-month process.

Help may eventually come from the City of Marfa, according to Marfa City Council Member and golf association member Eddie Pallarez, who told commissioners that Mayor Manny Baeza was willing to offer financial support as of the 2026-27 fiscal year. Hisler said she would be going to the city to request relief on the county's roughly $1,400 annual water bill for the Marfa Golf Course and Vizcaino Park.

The current budget that the county is considering adopting does not include cuts to the Marfa parks. It was unclear by press time if county commissioners took any action on defunding the Marfa Golf Course or Vizcaino Park or if the court agreed to give Hisler a year to turn operations around.

"We do have to do a lot of things. None of it has to happen today," Commissioner David Beebe said of long-term budget slashing discussions. "All of it needs to be happening with some judicious and smart decisions and people who actually care about the issues taking charge."





Area budget, tax rate hearings continue

Editor's note: Budget and tax rate information is not final until the governing bodies officially adopt the final figures. For additional information on how tax-rates are calculated and defined, see comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/truth-in-taxation/

Presidio County

The Presidio County Commissioners Court has been working through a proposed budget and tax rate and will hold a public hearing on August 27, 2025, at 10 a.m. at the Annex Building, 300 E O'Reilly Street in Presidio.

The proposed tax rate is $0.49037 per $100 valuation with the additional information of:

- No-New-Revenue tax rate of $0.45855 per $100
- Voter-Approval tax rate of $0.49037 per $100

Over the past few weeks, the commissioners have deliberated the budget in long sessions stretching late into the afternoon.

They discussed the question of whether the county should continue funding a $48,000 per year contract with Lone Star Strategy Group, a grant-writing service. Precinct 1 Commissioner Deirdre Hisler has been vocal about not being impressed with the service's return on investment, but County Judge Joe Portillo was adamant that the service be extended to position the county strategically for a potential windfall from a massive immigration enforcement package that passed through Congress in July.

Portillo also advocated for larger raises for low-earning county employees than Commissioners Beebe and Hisler, advocating for a salary floor of around $45,000 a year. His own salary fluctuates between $60,000 and $70,000, which he said put him in an elite tax bracket in Presidio County, where many people live below the poverty line. "My wife and I are probably in the top 2% of wage earners in the county — it doesn't affect me the way it does affect somebody that's single or maybe a young family," he said.

As the paper went to press, the county was facing a budget shortfall of $2.6 million, subject to change as the county continues to make its final cuts. The commissioners continued to argue the finer points of hot topics like courthouse renovations and a costly new software the tax office is required to adopt. County Attorney Blair Park advocated for what she called "a conservative approach", given that there are numerous legal and logistical hurdles required if the commissioners needed to go back and revise the budget down the line. "It's better to over budget and use less than to under budget and need more," she said.

City of Marfa

Marfa City Council is set to present — and likely give preliminary approval — to a tax rate this Thursday at their 6 p.m. meeting at City Hall. The tax rate is not yet publicly available. The council will also set dates for two public hearings on the proposed tax rate and schedule a special meeting to hear the Mayor's proposed 2025-26 budget.

Marfa ISD

The Marfa ISD school board voted to approve tax rates and its 2025-26 budget on Monday. There were no public comments. The district adopted a budget with a $391,000 deficit that it is hoping to decrease throughout the year by entering into more early childhood partnerships which drives down its recapture payment. The district is also paying off its current bonds and is hoping to be debt-free in two to three years.

The passed rates include:

- Maintenance Tax $ 0.6692 per $100 (approved rate for maintenance and operations)
- School Debt Service Tax Approved by Local Voters $ 0.15465 per $100 (approved rate to pay bonded indebtedness)

Last year vs. this year

- Average Market Value of Residences $329,151 vs. $333,247 this year
- Average Taxable Value of Residences $129,914 vs. $120,106 this year
- Last Year's Rate Versus Proposed Rate per $100 valuation $ .82648 vs. $ .82385 this year
- Taxes Due on Average Residence $1,074 vs. $989.49 this year
- Decrease in Taxes: $84.51

City of Presidio

The City of Presidio held a hearing on its proposed tax rate to field constituent concerns on Monday, August 25 at 4 p.m. at the Presidio Activity Center. Council members sought a rate of $0.53906 per $100 of valuation, which is equal to the calculated "no-new-revenue" rate. This represents a decrease of 7.3% from last year's rate of $0.58126 per $100 of valuation.

In its formal notices published in the International, the city calculated that this tax rate will reduce the overall city budget by $3,095 from last year. No revenue will be generated from new properties on the rolls. The average homestead — valued at $96,927 — will see an increase in their taxable value of $10,790 and a $22 increase in their actual tax bill.

At Monday afternoon's hearing, city officials discussed a few ways to save money — for years, the city has subsidized a portion of the credit card fees charged to customers, but they plan to include the full credit card surcharge when people pay their bills electronically. (City Hall will still accept bank drafts and cash payments free of charge.) The EMS department has been working hard to minimize its overtime.

City Administrator Pablo Rodriguez said the city's property tax income has gone down, but other revenues have gone up. "We have a slightly smaller budget than last year, but we're still OK," he said.

Presidio ISD

Presidio ISD held a public meeting to discuss its budget and proposed tax rate for next year on Wednesday evening after *The Big Bend Sentinel* went to press. This year, the board plans to seek a tax rate of $0.77050 per $100 of valuation, a decrease from last year's rates.

The decrease in this year's rates is because the district is set to finish paying off a bond in place since 1998. Tax rates are divided up into a "maintenance and operations" rate and an "interest and sinking rate," the latter of which will be 0% in this year's PISD budget. This spring, Presidio ISD announced that it would be seeking a new bond of $9.9 million, timed so that taxpayers wouldn't feel much of a pinch as a new interest and sinking rate replaced the debt they'd been paying off for decades. (Voters rejected this proposal in a special election held in May.)

The Presidio ISD website holds a wealth of information for folks interested in the finer details of the school district's budget. This year, taxpayers will be treated to just over 20% reduction in tax rates. The average residence, valued at $90,811, will see a reduction in their overall tax bill by $46.39.

Brewster County

Brewster County commissioners approved a budget and tax rate at a public hearing on August 26. Approved was a combined tax rate of 0.370007 per $100 valuation — an increase of 5.89% from last year's rate. The Maintenance and Operations rate is 0.352263 — an increase of 23.03% with an increase of $65.94 on $100,000 in valuation. The Interest and Sinking rate is 0.017744 per $100 in valueation — a decrease of 1.38%. There were no public comments in the hearings on the budget and tax rate.

City of Alpine

The City of Alpine kicked off its budget workshops on August 23, to be followed by public hearings on September 2, 4, 11 with a budget, tax rate hearing and scheduled adoption by September 16.

Alpine ISD

Alpine ISD passed a balanced budget on June 26, but the tax rate has not yet been finalized because the district is waiting to have reported tax revenue after appraisal district protests are reconciled sometime later this month. The district will hold a public hearing on a tax rate on September 17.

Marathon ISD

Marathon ISD held a public hearing on the budget and tax rate on August 27 at 6 p.m. (after *The Big Bend Sentinel* went to press) in the High School Library Board Meeting Room. The proposed tax rate is 0.7552 per $100 — the same rate as last year.

Jeff Davis County

The Jeff Davis County commissioners held a public hearing on August 26 and adopted the county budget and tax rate. County Judge Curtis Evans said this year's tax rate is below the Voter-Approval tax rate and is a tax increase of six one hundredths of a penny above last year's rate.

With a rise in average property values from $164,482 to $184,842 property owners may still see tax increases, with the county estimating up to a 12% increase on homesteads. The approved rate is $0.64950 per $100 valuation.

Fort Davis ISD

A public hearing on the budget and tax will be held today, August 28, at . The proposed Maintenance and Operations rate is .6822 per $100 valuation down from .7220 last year.

The average market value of residences went from $163,045 to $179,861, and with taxable property, the estimated tax on an average homestead will decrease by $163.17.

From West Texas roots to Marfa's future: Officer Joe Lugo's journey of service

From The Marfa Police Department

MARFA — The courtroom was quiet as Joe Lugo raised his right hand, the weight of his future resting on a single oath. In that moment, the young West Texan wasn't just becoming a police officer — he was stepping into a lifelong commitment to serve, protect and inspire. At just 22, Lugo is among the youngest officers to join the ranks of West Texas law enforcement, recently sworn in as a school resource officer with the Marfa Police Department.

Lugo's path to the badge has been shaped by resilience, determination and a deep sense of purpose. Growing up in West Texas, he developed a strong sense of responsibility early on, inspired by the values of hard work, family, and service. Those values carried into his time working for the Socorro Independent School District, where he served students and staff in times of need.

While with the district, Lugo was trained through the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI), giving him the tools to assist students and staff experiencing moments of crisis. The experience showed him the importance of patience, compassion and calm leadership. "Helping people through crisis made me realize this was the right path for me," Lugo said. "It confirmed that I wanted to dedicate my life to service."

That realization drove him to pursue law enforcement. He enrolled in the police academy and graduated as part of Class 99, earning respect for his discipline and perseverance. The road was not without challenges — long commutes, early mornings, and grueling training sessions tested his resolve — but for Lugo, the goal was never in doubt. "Becoming a police officer isn't just about enforcing the law — it's about building trust and being there for people when they need you most," he said.

Today, as Marfa's school resource officer, Lugo is committed to ensuring students feel safe, supported, and heard. His role goes beyond security; it's about mentorship and being a steady, positive presence in the lives of young people. "Kids need role models they can count on," Lugo said. "If I can be that for even one student, then I've done my job."

Even while serving his community, Lugo is continuing his education, working toward completing his bachelor's degree. His goals reflect both ambition and heart: he hopes to one day advance his law enforcement career with the Texas Department of Public Safety, and, after retiring from law enforcement, begin a second career in education as a teacher.

"Marfa has welcomed me with open arms," he reflected. "I want to give back by being the kind of officer people can trust, depend on, and see as part of the community family."

Officer Joe Lugo's story is one of dedication, growth and heart. From his early experiences with Socorro ISD and crisis prevention work to his service in Marfa's schools, he embodies the idea that true leadership is not only about protecting a community but also about investing in its future.

Comptroller of Public Accounts FORM 50-196 (10-11/4)

Notice of Public Hearing on PRESIDIO COUNTY APPRAISAL DIST. Budget

The PRESIDIO COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT will hold a public hearing on a proposed budget for the 2026 fiscal year.

The public hearing will be held on SEPT. 11, 2025 at 1:30 p.m. at PRESIDIO CAD OFFICE, located at 107 E TEXAS ST., MARFA, TEXAS 79843. A summary of the appraisal district budget follows:

The total amount of the proposed budget.	$ 688,655.00
The total amount of increase over the current year's budget.	$ 32,532.00
The number of employees compensated under the proposed budget.	5
The number of employees compensated under the current budget.	6

The appraisal district is supported solely by payments from the local taxing units served by the appraisal district.

If approved by the appraisal district board of directors at the public hearing, this proposed budget will take effect automatically unless disapproved by the governing bodies of the county, school districts, cities and towns served by the appraisal district.

A copy of the proposed budget is available for public inspection in the office of each of those governing bodies. A copy is also available for public inspection at the appraisal district office located at 107 E. TEXAS ST., MARFA, TEXAS 79843.

The phone number of the PRESIDIO COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT is: 432-729-3431.
The address is: 107 E TEXAS ST., MARFA, TEXAS 79843.

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CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

Redistricting bill heads to Abbott's desk

Both the Texas House and Senate have passed a mid-decade redistricting bill that positions the GOP to pick up five additional congressional seats next year. Passage came after House Democrats ended their quorum-breaking walkout while still vowing to pursue a legal challenge.

The bill dismantles Democratic strongholds around Houston, Austin and Dallas and increases Republican challenges of also picking up seats in South Texas, *The Texas Tribune* reported.

In response, California lawmakers seeking to counter Texas' redistricting move have approved a special election for their voters to consider a new congressional map that would likely add five Democratic seats in California.

"This fight is far from over," Rep. Gene Wu of Houston, chair of the House Democratic Caucus, said after the map's passage in that chamber. "Our best shot is in the courts. This part of the fight is over, but it is merely the first chapter."

Roy joins crowded race to replace Paxton

U.S. Rep. Chip Roy, a fiscal conservative often critical of President Trump and his fellow Republicans, has entered the race to replace Ken Paxton as Texas attorney general, *The Dallas Morning News* reported.

"Texas is under assault – from open-border, radical leftists, and faceless foreign corporations that threaten our sovereignty, safety, and our way of life," Roy wrote. "It's time to draw a line in the sand."

Roy, R-Austin, is in his fourth term in Congress. He joins several other Republican candidates, including state sens. Joan Huffman of Houston and Mayes Middleton of Galveston, as well as Aaron Reitz, a former deputy attorney general under Paxton. Democrats who have announced plans to run include state Sen. Nathan Johnson of Dallas and former Galveston Mayor Joe Jaworski, who ran unsuccessfully for the post in 2022.

Paxton has announced plans to challenge incumbent U.S. Sen. John Cornyn in the March 2026 GOP primary.

House passes six bills providing flood disaster relief

The Texas House passed six bills last week aimed at addressing disaster relief, emergency communications systems and preparedness. The bills are in response to the catastrophic Hill Country floods over the July 4th weekend. At least 137 people were killed, primarily in Kerr County, including 27 children and staffers from Camp Mystic on the banks of the Guadalupe River.

The Dallas Morning News reported the measures include a requirement that youth camps develop emergency management plans and submit them to the state. Legislation also calls for establishing the Texas Interoperability Council, which would create structure and grant programs for multiple agencies to communicate and coordinate on single disasters. That would include hurricanes and mass shootings.

One of the bill's sponsors, state Rep. Drew Darby, R-San Angelo, spoke surrounded by a bipartisan group of lawmakers.

"When I speak on this bill, for this bill, I hope I'm not just speaking for myself, but for the lost children, the grieving families who have called us, met with us and shared their heartbreak and grief with us," Darby said.

Former speaker Dade Phelan won't seek reelection

Former Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan, R-Beaumont, announced he would not seek reelection following a failed intra-party attempt to defeat him in the 2024 election and his subsequent stepping down as speaker. The *Houston Chronicle* reported Phelan served his district since 2015 and assumed the speakership in 2021.

In a statement, Phelan wrote on Facebook that "leading the House required tough choices, but I sought to chart a course inspired by the values we share in Southeast Texas. Looking ahead I will seek God's path in mapping out my next chapter."

Both Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and Paxton backed Phelan's primary opponent in 2024, following Paxton's impeachment in the House while Phelan was speaker. Paxton was acquitted in the Senate. His successor as speaker, state Rep. Dustin Burrows, R-Lubbock, praised him.

"Dade is more than a colleague — He is a treasure to Southeast Texas, to the Texas House, and to the great Lone Star State," Burrows said on social media.

Judge blocks law requiring Ten Commandments in classrooms

A San Antonio federal judge has temporarily blocked a Texas law that would require public schools to post the Ten Commandments in every classroom, the *Chronicle* reported. The suit was filed by a group of families who claimed the posting would potentially harm their children's religious development.

"Ultimately, in matters of conscience, faith, beliefs and the soul, most people are Garbo-esque," U.S. District Judge Fred Biery wrote, referencing a line from actress Greta Garbo in a 1932 movie. "They just want to be left alone, neither proselytized nor ostracized, including what occurs to their children in government-run schools."

Paxton, whose office represented most of the school districts named in the suit, said he planned to appeal the ruling.

"The Ten Commandments are a cornerstone of our moral and legal heritage, and their presence in classrooms serves as a reminder of the values that guide responsible citizenship," Paxton said in a statement.



Audit finds problems with winterizing energy grid

A new report from the State Auditor's Office concludes that state oil and gas inspectors are not doing their job to adequately verify that Texas natural gas producers and their delivery systems can hold up under severe winter storms, according to the *Texas Standard*.

Since Winter Storm Uri in 2021 left much of the state's power grid paralyzed, the Railroad Commission has been tasked by law with ensuring all parts of the gas supply chain to power plants can operate adequately in severe winter weather. However, the audit concluded that current rules allow gas companies to decide for themselves what is considered adequate winterization. Of 8,732 inspections conducted by the RRC in the 2024 and 2025 winter seasons, only two violations were issued.

"The Commission stated that it relies on facility operators to determine which weatherization measures are needed and whether those measures are sufficient for that facility," auditors found. "It did not compare facilities' actual weatherization methods to the Commission's best practices."

The commission contends the low number of violations reflects the "successful implementation" of the legislation passed after Uri.

Gary Borders is a veteran award-winning Texas journalist. He published a number of community newspapers in Texas during a 30-year span, including in Longview, Fort Stockton, Nacogdoches, Lufkin and Cedar Park. Email: gborders@texaspress.com.

PMDD

(Continued from page 1)

development opportunity in the region's modern history," he wrote in a press release for *The Sentinel* in May.

In this week's editorial section, former PMDD President Patricia Runyan outlines a number of her concerns, including serious allegations of nepotism, corruption and improper use of taxpayer funds. (Kennedy's response is also included on page 5. "This past week [Juanita] Bishop and I were simply trying to do the necessary work of oversight and proper financial management," Runyan wrote. "In no manner did we ever challenge Mr. Kennedy about his actions in such a way as to justify his subsequent behavior towards Judge Bishop and myself."

At Monday's meeting, Kennedy explained that rebuilding the board to fulfill quorum requirements couldn't wait — the board was in the middle of finalizing agreements for the geothermal project. "I think we all agree that it's very important that we get the right people on this board," he said.

Montoya and Bailon will serve for 60 days to keep board business moving along, at which point they can choose to apply to fill one of the three seats with unexpired terms. The city will be seeking applicants from the greater community. Interested applicants must be a resident of the City of Presidio for at least six months and must be eligible to vote.

Human smuggling

(Continued from page 1)

is not a seizure," they wrote. "No pertinent case holds that simply following a car on a freely accessible highway is a show of force."

Chief Judge Jennifer Walker Elrod wrote a separate opinion "concurring in part and dissenting in part" that agreed with O'Neal's assertion that "hang on a sec" signalled that Larremore was not free to leave. "Deputy Colona may not have explicitly ordered Larremore to a certain location, but he did direct Larremore to not leave a particular location — no matter how friendly his tone," she wrote. "Under our precedent, that is enough."

Elrod's partial dissent wasn't enough to tip the scales, so Larremore's original conviction — one count of transporting undocumented migrants — stands. Per inmate records from the Department of Justice, he is currently serving out the rest of his sentence in a "residential re-entry" program in San Antonio and is set to be released at the end of October.

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 2:59 p.m. on October 10th, 2025, and any bid received after that time will not be considered.

City staff will publicly open, read and tabulate the bids at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, October 10th, 2025, at City Hall, City of Presidio, 507 W. O'Reilly Street, Presidio, Texas 79845. Those bids will then be considered at the October 22nd, 2025, meeting of the City of Presidio City Council.

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

NEWS IN BRIEF

Valentine man dies from injuries in bar conflict

VALENTINE — Gary Morton, 61, of Valentine died on Monday after a long hospitalization from a head injury sustained in an August 2 altercation at the Valentine Bar on E Highway 90.

The Texas Rangers are investigating the case to see what if any charges may be filed against the other party in the altercation, Maxie Slover, 62, of Valentine. *The Big Bend Sentinel* has filed an open records request to get basic information on the incident from the Texas Rangers.

One source who saw security video of the incident said Morton was knocked out after a scuffle resulted in him falling and hitting his head on the floor of the bar, while another said he was also struck by Slover while on the ground. Slover could not be reached for comment.

ICE facility set to reopen near Pecos in October

On August 15, the *Washington Post* took a deep dive into Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) plans to double immigrant detention space after lawmakers approved an unprecedented budget boost for the agency in July as part of President Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill" — "the largest investment in detention in deportation in U.S. history," according to the American Immigration Council.

$45 billion was set aside specifically for detention centers. The Reeves County Detention Facility outside Pecos is the largest detention center on the *Post*'s list, with a capacity of 3,700 single adults and 2,000 in the Reeves Family Facility.

The Reeves County Detention Center lost its federal contract in 2021, after its operator Geo Group "struggled to maintain adequate staff, leading to substandard medical care and inmate riots," the *Post* reported.

That year, CBS 7 in Midland-Odessa reported on the closing of the facility and included remarks from former Reeves County Judge Leo Hung, who opposed the closure and faced numerous headaches in figuring out where to transfer remaining detainees and staff. "We do not believe that Reeves County has failed to provide adequate care to inmates under its contractual obligations," he said in a statement. "Naturally, we are disappointed that despite our best efforts, the BOP has seen fit to close this facility."

The Reeves County facility has a checkered past and has made national headlines for inmate riots and deaths. In 2013, progressive watchdog Mother Jones ranked the facility in its list of "America's 10 Worst Prisons". They highlighted the case of Jesus Manuel Galindo, a 32-year-old detainee with epilepsy who was repeatedly denied seizure medication in favor of Tylenol and whose corpse was allegedly carried out of the facility in a garbage bag, sparking "the first of several riots in which detainees took hostages and set fire to parts of the mammoth detention complex," Mother Jones reported.

First human case of New World screwworm in US confirmed

Earlier this month, the United States confirmed its first human case of the New World screwworm in this year's outbreak, a parasite that burrows into wounds on infected livestock. News agencies around the country officially broke the story on Monday, but the case had been internally confirmed by the Center for Disease Control on August 4. "The risk to public health in the United States from this introduction is very low," federal Health and Human Services spokesperson Andrew G. Nixon assured in a statement.

This month's case is United States' first confirmed detection of the parasite in decades — and the country's first-ever travel-associated case, affecting a patient who had recently traveled to El Salvador.

Ports along the southern border have been closed to cattle importation because of the spread of the parasite, which has been detected within a few hundred miles of the border. On August 15, Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins announced that the department would spend up to $750 million to build a facility in Texas that produces sterile flies to slow the spread of the disease. The USDA "estimated that 500 million flies must be released weekly to push screwworm back south in Latin America," per Reuters.

Jeff Davis Democrats to hold Labor Day rally

TRI-COUNTY — The Jeff Davis Democrats will hold a Labor Day rally to support American workers and "protest Trumpocracy" on Monday, September 1, from 10 a.m. to noon in front of the party's headquarters at 103 State Street in Fort Davis.

Everyone is asked to bring their own homemade signs. Labor Day music will be provided by Stephen Bright.

The High Frontier hosts comeback of Moon & Tunes Festival

FORT DAVIS — After a 30-year hiatus, Moon & Tunes Festival is making its return to Fort Davis on October 3 and 4. This celebration of music under the stunning Far West Texas night sky will feature an unforgettable lineup, including acclaimed artist and Del Rio native William Beckmann and country favorite Jason Boland.

The event is coordinated by the Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce and hosted at The High Frontier resort, in the heart of the largest International Dark Sky Reserve in the world, this event offers an intimate live music experience framed by breathtaking celestial views. For ticket information, see fortdavis.com/moonandtunes.

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

Opinion

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed closure of the Marfa Golf Course. I urge you to reconsider this decision and explore alternative solutions that preserve this important recreational and green space. This golf course has been part of my life for over 45 years, from playing with my dad and now my son, to the great stories with my friends and sitting in the pro shop during a rain delay and watching lightning strike the big oak tree behind 9 green and splitting it in half and thinking this is a blessed location.

God is telling us, "This place is special, and I protect everyone here." This is why I am hoping something can be done to save this course. I have been chatting with a good friend, Felipe Cordero, we have already started to look for grants to help. There are many grants available, we just need the time and support from Marfa. We need to make this place available to ALL residents. Give us the opportunity to make this location special. Thank you for your service and for considering the voices of all golf and non-golf residents who care deeply about preserving the Marfa Golf Course for current and future generations.

Sincerely,
Ronnie Martinez
Marfa High School 1982

• • •

Dear Editor,

For the sake of the students, educators and families who rely on honest leadership, I respectfully urge the Marfa ISD Board of Trustees to take immediate action to restore confidence in its governance by formally calling for the immediate resignation of Board President Teresa Nuñez.

The recent allegations of felony misconduct by her daughter and MISD educator, Rebecca Ontiveros, is not the reason I say this, but it is the catalyst for speaking up.

The role of a school board member demands integrity, transparency, and a commitment to the public interest. However, in light of recent news about her daughter and past trespasses of good faith service to the taxpayers of Marfa in the form of appointing her brother Ernie Villareal to the school board (who was not asked to resign his position even when under active FBI investigation for wire fraud and theft from neighboring Valentine ISD), Nuñez has engaged in behavior that not only undermines public trust but also puts the integrity of the board and the future of our district at risk.

Secrets, outbursts and blatant prevarications do not make for good leadership and actively hurt the whole community.

Whether by pride, incompetence or neglect, the school will ultimately fail if not shepherded by better folks. Families will continue to drive to neighboring districts every morning and afternoon, disenroll their children in favor of home school, and ultimately move away for better educational opportunities, as so many have already.

I know there are great teachers and coaches and aides and staff who work incredibly hard to make a positive difference in Marfa kids' lives: Linda Ojeda's dedication, Mayra Torres' cheer, Janet Enriquez's empathy, Annette Mendoza's curiosity, and many many more enrich the lives of not just the students, but parents, guardians and neighbors too.

We need leaders who lift up our school and not someone who keeps us mired in rumors, drama, politics and shame. We need better. I encourage all community members to speak out and show up to board meetings, write letters to board members, and advocate for our students and community as a whole.

Sincerely,
Ariele Gentiles
Marfa

Editors note: Ariele Gentiles is the copy editor for The Big Bend Sentinel. Her opinions are her own, not those of The Sentinel.



Dear Commissioner Hisler,

I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed closure of the Marfa Golf Course. Closing this historic and treasured facility would be a serious mistake that disregards its cultural significance, its potential as a community asset, and its role in Marfa's identity as both a hometown and a tourism destination.

The Marfa Golf Course has been an integral part of our community for decades. Generations of Marfa residents and alumni share cherished memories of time spent on its fairways. It is often the first place alumni visit when they return home — a gathering place where community and tradition come together. Its distinction as the highest golf course in Texas is itself a draw for visitors and tourists, a group Marfa depends on as one of its most vital economic drivers.

The challenges facing the course today do not stem from a lack of value or potential, but from decades of stagnation in leadership. The current golf superintendent, in place since the early 1980s, deserves credit for his dedication during the course's early years. Many golfers from the 1980s and 1990s fondly recall his mentorship, encouragement, and commitment to youth learning the game. Those contributions left a lasting mark on generations of Marfa golfers. Unfortunately, the past two decades have revealed a lack of adaptation and planning, leaving the course neglected. Specifically:

- No upgrades to the landscape, fairways, or greens in over 40 years.
- No investment in updated equipment or golf carts.
- No debit/credit card machine for visiting players, limiting accessibility and revenue.
- No promotion of tournaments or fundraisers that could generate both community support and financial sustainability.
- No merchandise sales to promote the course and provide revenue.
- Poor communication with the public, often making players feel unwelcome.
- Dismissal or lack of support for initiatives brought forth by the Marfa Golf Committee.

One of the clearest examples of outdated management is the lack of a debit or credit card machine. In today's economy, cash-only operations are almost unheard of. Tourists — who make up a significant portion of Marfa's visitors — rarely carry cash, and when they cannot pay conveniently, they simply walk away. This results in lost green fees, cart rentals, and concession sales. It also reinforces an image of the course as outdated, unwelcoming, and out of step with the tourism-driven economy that sustains our town. Even local players are discouraged by the inconvenience. What should have been a simple modernization has instead cost the course years of lost revenue and credibility.

What is especially troubling is the report that County Judge Joe Portillo is advocating permanently closing the Marfa Golf Course in order to reallocate its funding to other projects — specifically to benefit Presidio, not Marfa. This is not only short-sighted, but also unfair to the taxpayers of Marfa and northern Presidio County who have supported this course for generations. Decisions about taxpayer-supported facilities must include taxpayer input, and to sacrifice a historic community asset for projects that do not directly serve Marfa makes little sense. Quite frankly, it is not a very smart decision on Judge Portillo's part, as it risks dividing the county rather than uniting it.

Judge Portillo should also recognize that most golf courses in Texas — especially those in smaller communities like Marfa — struggle to generate positive income. Yet these towns remain committed to keeping their courses open because so many residents play the game. Golf provides recreation, community bonding, and a springboard for our youth, passing the tradition from generation to generation. Communities such as Alpine, Van Horn, Fort Stockton, Monahans, Pecos, Iraan, Rankin, Odessa/Midland, and El Paso maintain their courses despite challenges. In fact, when Marfa hosts tournaments, we regularly draw players from these very towns, further proving the regional impact and reach of our course.

"With proper vision, the course can be revitalized through upgrades, new programming, and stronger community engagement — ultimately increasing revenue and preserving a historic cultural landmark"

The impact on youth cannot be overstated. Marfa's high school golf program, along with other local schools, depends on this course for practice and competition. To shut it down would rob young athletes of an opportunity to learn, compete, and carry forward a tradition that has shaped so many of us. Golf teaches discipline, patience, and sportsmanship — values that extend well beyond the game itself. Closing the course would close the door on these opportunities for the next generation.

At the very least, the Marfa Golf Course deserves the chance to thrive under new leadership. With proper vision, the course can be revitalized through upgrades, new programming, and stronger community engagement — ultimately increasing revenue and preserving a historic cultural landmark. Generations of families have enjoyed this course, and with thoughtful investment, future generations can too.

To close it now would not only erase a piece of Marfa's history but also squander a unique opportunity for growth, tourism, youth development, and community pride.

I urge you to reject any proposal to close the Marfa Golf Course and instead support a plan for revitalization and new leadership. Many alumni and residents, myself included, are ready to stand behind efforts to preserve this important community asset.

Respectfully,
Ronnie Ontiveroz
Marfa High School, Class of 1987

Before my appointment as executive director of the Presidio Municipal Development District, I began as a surveyor and researcher for the Presidio Industrial Park and was later competitively selected by the city to lead our economic development and community resiliency strategy. I came to the Big Bend as a recovering bureaucrat after a career of service at all levels of government— from advising President Barack Obama on infrastructure policy to federal executive roles at the U.S. Department of Transportation to work with local governments in Texas and across the country. That breadth of experience, paired with surveying and city planning here in Presidio, equips me to help navigate the very real barriers to development our community faces.

What emerged on the PMDD Board, with some turnover of appointments, was a pattern of abuse of power in addition to toxic and self-serving behavior. The truth is that when it comes to these important volunteer leadership roles in our community, there are not many answering the call. By having two city council members step in for two months, the council has acted prudently to stabilize the district while we put out a competitive call for anyone interested and qualified to serve without a personal agenda. Respect must go both ways, and this work has to be done in the spirit of collaboration.

Evidence of misconduct was presented to city leadership, which acted decisively to preserve the important work underway. That includes projects like the geothermal initiative now moving toward fruition— work too important to be jeopardized by ego and greed.

The PMDD has nothing to hide. Our community deserves an institution that puts Presidio first; building trust, transparency and tangible progress. That is the standard we are holding ourselves to, and the work we remain committed to delivering.

John T. Kennedy V (Kennedy-Rohana)
info@presidiotxmdd.org
Presidio

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We want to hear from YOU!
Letters to the editor should be sent to editor@bigbendsentinel.com, and must provide the writer's full name, city of residence and an email or phone number, so that we may follow up and verify information as needed.

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Marfa Live Arts brings the circus to Marfa Lights Festival

By JD Garcia

MARFA — Marfa Live Arts is bringing the circus to the 38th Annual Marfa Lights Festival.

Though elephants and high-flying acrobatics will not be on display, festival goers from Marfa and beyond will be treated to a performance by juggler/comedian Bruce Manners, a clown show featuring Las Vegas-based performer Paul Matthew Lopez with a live music score played by Michael Edwards and Erin Schneider.

"Continuing on the trend of hosting a magician last year, we are upping the ante and bringing the circus to Marfa with clowns and a juggler for a double-trouble situation!" said Marfa Live Arts Assistant Production Director Fatima Anaza. "There will be fun and hijinks, and we're excited to bring some big top live performances to town."

For award-winning juggler Manners, whose unlikely career arc started with a stint as an engineer at NASA, the show will delight spectators. "It's sort of a modern-day vaudeville show," Manners said of his act. "It's a combination of world-class juggling and stand-up comedy, with audience participation at certain points of the show where I get people to come up to help me." Manners, a Houston transplant, has been a festival-act mainstay for nearly three decades. He has shared the stage with magician duo Penn & Teller, and even opened for rock legend Alice Cooper. His passion for juggling began while in high school in Cleveland, Ohio, after his mother gifted him the book Juggling for the Complete Klutz as a joke.

"I didn't realize it could become a career option," Manners said. "When I graduated college with an electrical engineering degree, I got a job with NASA, but I still wanted to continue performing. Ultimately, the juggling seemed a perfect fit for me. I saw jugglers on The Tonight Show who did comedy acts, and I thought, 'Okay, that's the kind of thing I could do.' So, I started going to comedy clubs and entering juggling programs, and it took off from there."

According to Anaza, the call for the clown element of the show was met with high enthusiasm around Marfa. "It's been exciting, clowns have been coming out of the woodwork. Whether it's finding a person falling in love with making balloon animals or discovering town acquaintances who are ready to take a leap, proving they're fearless performers," she said. "Clowning is one of the most challenging things an actor can do. Seriously, it's hard to avoid the pun, but there is no safety net, and folks don't realize how difficult it is to be present and open-hearted with a crowd of friends and strangers. And juggling is such a feat of skill."



Marfa native and professional clown Paul Matthew Lopez performs at noon on Saturday as part of Marfa Live Arts' Circus Clown and Juggling Show during the annual Marfa Lights Festival immediately following the parade.

Leading the clown troupe will be Paul Matthew Lopez, whose latest stage credit was a lead role in the "Best-show-on-the-Strip," ABSINTHE, at Caesars Palace. Lopez is a Marfa native with strong multigenerational ties to town. "It's going to be a homecoming for him," Ananza said. "And I have to give a big thanks to Kaki [Auftengarten-Scott] for putting me in contact with him." Lopez's film credits include roles in Margarita Man, Velocity Girl, and Teenage Vampire as well as work as a stunt rigger and tightrope walker. Along with his film credits, Lopez has performed in variety shows as a clown, juggler and acrobat.

Marfa Live Arts' Circus Clown and Juggling Show takes place on Saturday, August 30, at noon in front of the main stage at the Marfa Lights Festival. In case of rain, the show will move to the Hotel Paisano Ballroom. For more information on Marfa Live Arts programs, please visit www.marfalivearts.org.

Lisa Matta's 'Memories Past and Present' opens at Greasewood

MARFA — *Memories Past and Present*, a solo exhibition by artist Lisa Matta, an El Paso local artist, will open at Greasewood Gallery on Friday, August 29, with a reception from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The gallery is located inside the Hotel Paisano, 207 Highland Ave.

On view through September 27, the exhibition features a series of works inspired by the architectural landmarks of Marfa. Drawing on her deep personal connection to the town — where generations of her family lived and continue to live — Matta's paintings bridge memory and place honoring the rich character of Marfa's West Texas environment while reflecting on the stories they hold.

"My best work occurs when I allow myself to be in the painting," Matta says. "There is an energy that comes out of you that connects you to a deeper place."

Matta's collection beautifully captures the spirit and character of Marfa through vivid and thoughtfully composed scenes. The use of color is particularly striking, infusing each piece with warmth and life, which invites the viewers to feel connected to the locations. The balance between architectural precision and painterly texture works well to maintain interest and convey atmosphere without becoming overly detailed or static.

Each art piece is a vivid and affectionate tribute to Marfa and a generational family. Matta works full time out of her studio in El Paso and creates a painterly and loose style while achieving a realistic look in her paintings. She is known for her luminous and richly colored landscapes of the El Paso area, Arizona, New Mexico and various scenes of missions, adobes and cactuses that capture her imagination.

AROUND THE BIG BEND

Thur Aug 28

The Moonshiners & More...
3 - 10pm at Granada Theatre
Friday, August 29th at The Granada is a big show! The Moonshiners headline from 7-10pm. Special guest Nanibyrd from 5-7pm. Jerialice gets things started at 3pm.

Tom Griffith
7 - 9pm at The Ritchey
Tom Griffith playing live at The Ritchey on Thursday at 7pm.

Paint & Sip - Couples Edition
6pm at Alcove Social
Unleash your inner artist! Join us for a fun paint and sip night. No experience necessary.

Hike with Homeless Dogs
9 - 10am at Davis Mountains State Park
Help a homeless dog have a great time on the trail!

38th ANNUAL MARFA LIGHTS FESTIVAL
August 30, 2025
marfachamberofcommerce.org/marfa-lights-festival

Sat Aug 30

Circus Clown & Juggling Show
12pm at Marfa Live Arts
Marfa Live Arts is bringing the circus to the 38th Annual Marfa Lights Festival. Families from Marfa and beyond will be treated to a big-top live performance!
Visit marfalivearts.org for more information.

Fri Aug 29

Desert Snakes and other Creepy Crawlies
2 - 3pm at Davis Mountains State Park
Don't be scared...be curious!! Come learn about the "scary" critters inhabiting our park.

Spencer Thomas LIVE @ Burger Night w/ Schaefer Llana
5 - 10pm at French Co Grocer
Come see Spencer Thomas on his tour in support of his upcoming album, "The Joke of Life".

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

Sat Aug 30

Marfa Lights Festival Parade
10:30am starting at Marfa Elementary school

Spencer Thomas
7 - 9pm at The Ritchey
Spencer Thomas playing live at The Ritchey on Saturday at 7pm.

Patty Manning Pollinator Garden Planting Day
8:30am - 12pm at Alpine Public Library
Volunteers Needed for the Patty Manning Pollinator Garden Planting Day.

Brandon Espy Memorial Roping
11am - 6pm at S.A.L.E. Rodeo Arena
The Brandon Espy Memorial Roping is happening Labor Day Weekend in Alpine!

Ongoing Weekly Events & Classes

Xbox Monday
Mondays (all day) at Marfa Public Library

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

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

AA (in-person)
Monday & Wednesday at 6pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

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

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

OPINION

In the moment when I raised my right hand to be sworn in as a new Presidio Municipal Development District (PMDD) board member, I felt a wave of excitement. In the 10 years since moving to Presidio, this was the realization of a dream of giving to the community the benefits of experience that can come with 20 years of working in economic development and grant management.

As a fourth generation of the Daly and the Armendariz families, I live in the home built here in 1918 by my great-grandfather after he fled with the family from the El Toro ranch in Mexico to escape the wrath of Pancho Villa. I feel the sense of safety that this home provided my grandmother when she played on the porch with her doll. It is easy to imagine my mother, as a child, coming to visit her grandparents and hiding from the pinching fingers of her bisabuelo.

In our first formal PMDD meeting with me as president, I sought to emphasize the importance of creating local jobs by recruiting businesses to Presidio. Businesses that will compliment our long-term growth strategies, such as the international rail trade, at least one new hotel, senior living, affordable housing and the geothermal opportunities.

But then, abruptly, everything changed, I was threatened and slandered… and then removed from the board without a semblance of respect from Mayor Ferguson and the city council members.

Since last Tuesday I have been told that two of the city council members have others in mind they'd like to put on the board. Additionally, Dr. Laura Portillo, wife of Judge Joe Portillo, is already sworn in as a board member. Because there are only five seats, two of us had to go and that turned out to be Judge Juanita Bishop and myself.

PMDD controls a substantial amount of taxpayer money, and it is reasonable to believe that the city and the county want to dictate how that money is allocated. Especially when they are in need of additional funding.

Here is a copy of the statement I prepared for council, but was not allowed to read. It is my hope that others will feel motivated to learn more.

Dear Mayor Ferguson and Members of the Presidio City Council:

The four current members of the PMDD Board were appointed by the Presidio City Council as directed by the authorizing legislation. Two of us have barely served one month. Because there are only four of us, we each accepted the responsibility of leadership by serving as executive officers of the PMDD board. Clear responsibilities come with such acceptance. While the authorizing legislation does allow for board members to be removed at any time without cause, one can easily determine that there is more to the story regarding our possible removal. Especially if our removal implies that we have failed in meeting the requirements of appointment to the PMDD board. I most certainly did not want my neighbors to look at me and wonder to themselves what I did wrong, especially if our removal is on the front page of *The Big Bend Sentinel*!

This past week Judge Bishop and I were simply trying to do the necessary work of oversight and proper financial management. In no manner did we ever challenge Mr. Kennedy about his actions in such a way as to justify his subsequent behavior towards Judge Bishop and myself.

In addition, as the days have passed, new and disturbing information has become evident. We have reason to believe that potentially serious fraudulent financial transactions may have been taking place within PMDD that indicate distribution of agency funds for personal use. We are obligated to investigate this information as PMDD board members. Our removal would send a message that a potential cover-up is being orchestrated.

With due respect for the awkward breakdown in communications that has occurred, I urge council to drop item one from tonight's proceedings and let's move forward with the mission of PMDD to create viable, sustainable jobs while building a local economy that allows Presidio families to live together in reasonable prosperity. I invite the community to observe our meetings in person or via ZOOM. I urge the council to meet with the board for the purpose of better understanding our financial infrastructure and our potential for growth.

Thank you.
Patricia Runyan
Former President, PMDD

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OBITUARIES



CHANDLER

Clarence "Allen" Chandler III, age 75, went home to be with the Lord on August 24, 2025, following a courageous battle with ALS.

Allen was born on April 28, 1950, in Sanderson, Texas, to Clarence Allen Chandler Jr. and Pattijean Sansom. The oldest of six children, he grew up alongside his sister, Mary Nell, and four brothers: Leslie Hal, Carl Ross, Billye Michael, and Terry Wayne. His childhood was spent crisscrossing Texas before the family eventually returned to Junction where Allen graduated from high school in 1968. A proud Junction Eagle, he passed down his school spirit to his daughters, always reminding them to end their cheers with "Beat Menard."

After starting college at Tarleton State University, Allen completed his degree at Sul Ross State University with a Bachelor of Science in agricultural business. It was at Sul Ross that he met a young barrel racer, Terry Gray. They married on January 29, 1972, marking the beginning of a lifelong partnership that spanned nearly five decades.

Early in their marriage, Allen and Terry made their home in various corners of Texas, with Allen working on ranches in Rocksprings, Blanco, Marfa, Alpine, Fort Davis and Presidio. Later in his career, he continued covering ground, this time supporting road and bridge departments in Brewster and Medina counties. Much of that time was spent in Alpine, where their daughters, Lee and Cameron, were born and raised. After the girls left home, Allen and Terry headed east on a new adventure, eventually settling in Castroville.

Allen loved the cowboy life, a life rooted in the values of a bygone era: grit, grace, and an enduring bond with the land and animals he cared for. From San Antonio to El Paso, he carved out a living in the rugged beauty of Texas, never far from the sky, the cattle or a good story (some truer than others). His friendships ran deep, often forged over difficult times and a cup of coffee or a cold beer.

Allen was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 46 years, Terry Gray, and by his parents, Clarence and Pattijean Chandler.

He is survived by his daughters, Lee (Scott) Brewster and Cameron (Andrew) Compton; his cherished grandchildren, Alexandria, Carson, Zachary, and Chandler; his sister, Mary Nell Burleson; his brothers, Leslie, Carl, Billye, and Wayne Chandler; and his "adopted daughter," Lizette Specht.

A private memorial service will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Sul Ross State University ANRS & Rodeo Exes Association: www.sulrossexes.org. Arrangements by Tondre-Guinn Funeral Home, www.tondre-guinn.com.

Applications underway for Leadership Big Bend Class of 2026

From Leadership Big Bend

TRI-COUNTY — Leadership Big Bend is now accepting applications for the class of 2026. The deadline for applications is September 1.

Leadership Big Bend is an annual program that combines interactive leadership training with sessions designed to provide each attendee with unique insight into the tri-county area. The class meets once a month from September through May in one of the tri-county communities, with speakers and activities planned for the entire day.

Each month has a theme and involves learning from county and local government leaders, area business professionals, the art community, Sul Ross, McDonald Observatory and the Park Services. A favorite session is an overnight trip "down south" to Big Bend National Park, Terlingua, and Presidio.

The dates for the 2025-2026 sessions are Sept. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 13, Dec. 4, Jan. 23-24, Feb. 12, March 26, April 16 and May 14. Class size is limited so please email your application soon if you are interested in being a part of this special program. Each LBB class takes responsibility for developing a group service project to benefit the tri-county area and gain experience in leadership skills. For example, the LBB class of 2024 raised funds and donated microscopes for the Casa Hogar Orphanage. The class also helped the Family Crisis Center conduct their annual fundraiser selling barbecue and hosting a silent auction.

Applications may be accessed from the www.leadershipbigbend.org website or by sending an email to info@leadershipbigbend.org and should be returned via email to application@leadershipbigbend.org no later than September 1. Tuition for the program is $250 per person and covers all expenses including the overnight trip down south. Many participants are sponsored by their employer or a club, so please feel free to explore that option. Scholarships will be considered in special circumstances.

Since it was founded in 1994, Leadership Big Bend has been carrying out its mission of training and promoting leaders for the tri-county area comprising Brewster, Jeff Davis, and Presidio counties. Leadership Big Bend is a 501(c)(3) organization, and all donations and tuition are tax-deductible. If you have questions, please email info@leadershipbigbend.org.

Come worship with us



First United Methodist Church

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

Sundays 9 am
Pastor Salvador Perales Jr.
110 W Washington Steet
Marfa 432-729-4534

Please recycle this paper

DRAWING OF THE WEEK



Piper
Marker

Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg August 28, 2025

ACROSS
1 "Yeah ... but not exactly"
6 Made some calls at home?
11 Native New Yorker
13 Confident and charming
14 Keep causing destruction
15 Source of American demographic info
19 Lyft ride guesses, for short
20 Former Yankee Jeter
22 Gillette razor since 1977
23 ___ exhibit
24 Capture through deceit
25 Aruba or Cuba
27 Getting a nicer breeze
29 Complete, as a tattoo
30 Currently being displayed
31 Garment for Caesar
32 Ranch dressing, e.g.
35 Earned a perfect score on
36 Add fuel to the tank
38 The middle part of TMI
39 "I'm Just ___" (Ryan Gosling song)
40 Guard dog's warning
41 Fled to wed
43 Car's security feature
45 They're easy to grasp
46 Lead-in to "the above" or "your beeswax"
48 Tough spot
49 Gives one's blessing to
51 Characters' trajectories
52 Longtime Japanese carmaker
54 Nation beside Saudi Arabia
55 Listens closely (to)
57 French Polynesian destination
59 ___ dressing
60 Like some rum and tea
61 In an unusual way
62 Sheriff's group

DOWN
1 Asian nation formally split in 1948
2 Under hypnosis, maybe
3 Alternative to Debbie Downer
4 Runs out of power
5 Hoopla
6 Seize, as power
7 Source of inspiration
8 Cushioning for fragile shipments
9 First woman in the Bible
10 Alaskan national park
12 "The Amazing Spider-Man" star
16 Funny performers ... or the ends of 3-, 8- and 12-Down?
17 Vase on a pedestal
18 Forlorn
21 Word before "drum" or "drop"
24 1-1, for one
26 Jamaican music genre
28 Get ___ of (shed)
29 Note promising repayment
30 Acorn producer
31 "Naughty!"
33 Footwear for some Winter Olympians
34 Degree for many profs
37 Site for a sleeve tattoo
38 Miss Piggy's "Me?!"
40 Bun in Chinese cuisine
42 '60s psychedelic
44 To a smaller degree
45 Industry, informally
46 Afternoon recharge
47 Pop singer Rita
48 Pal
50 Indirectly nasty
53 Mammal with flippers
54 Home of the Bengals and Browns
56 "I ___ a hunch!"
58 Spotify or Shazam

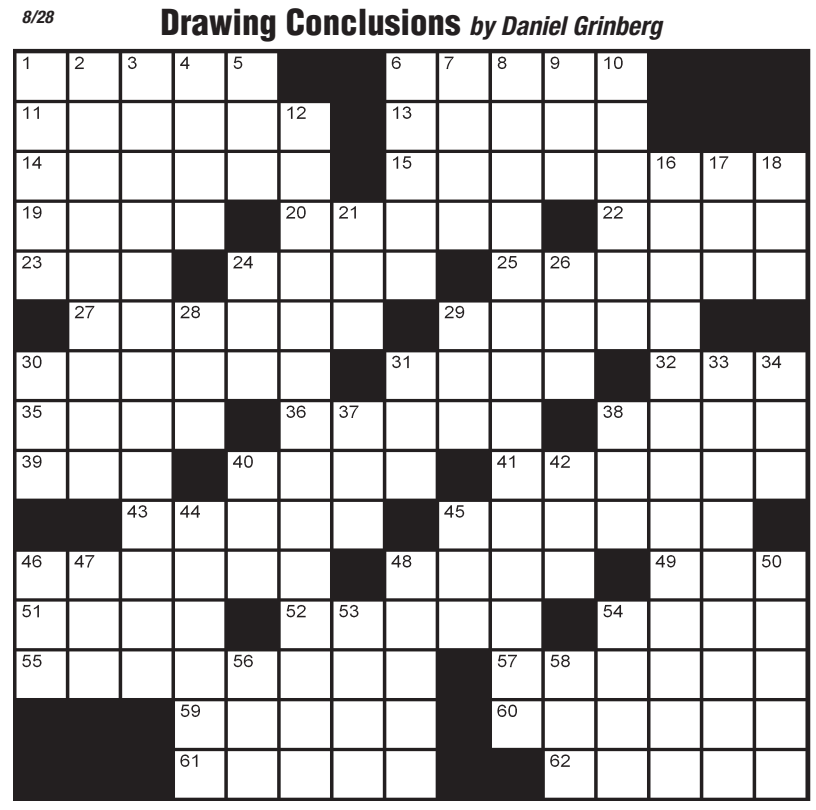
PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

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www.upuzzles.com

Drawing Conclusions *by Daniel Grinberg*

8/28



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.

8/28

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

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

SOLUTION:

8/21

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

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MARFA SCHOOL LUNCH MENU

MAY	Thu, Aug 28	Fri, Aug 29	Mon, Aug 25	Tue, Sept 2	Wed, Sept 3
BREAKFAST	BREAKFAST PARFAIT, JUICE,FRUIT, MILK	FRENCH TOAST, SAUSAGE, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK	No School	SANDWICH, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK	WAFFLES, SAUSAGE, JUICE, FRUIT, MILK
LUNCH	PIZZA, TOMATOES, BROCCOLI, PEARS	MEAT AND CHEESE CHALUPAS, SALSA, BEANS, SALAD, ORANGES	No School	STEAK FINGERS, ROLL, GRAVY, GREEN BEANS, CORN, PEACHES	FRITO PIE, BEANS, TOMATO CUP, APPLE SLICES, DESSERT

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5:00pm - 10:00pm
120 N Austin St.
instagram:
@altamarfa for updates

MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

28th: JH Volleyball in Presidio
29th: HS Volleyball vs Presidio in Marfa
29th: HS Football vs DaVinci in Marfa

Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District
Notice of Budget Hearing on September 11, 2025, and Taxpayer Impact Statement

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District is in the process of preparing an annual budget for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2025 and ending September 30, 2026. Notice is hereby given that a public hearing on said budget and a proposed *ad valorem* tax rate of $0.01 on each One Hundred Dollars ($100.00) of assessed value of taxable property will be held on September 11, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. in the Jury Room on the second floor of the Presidio County Courthouse, 300. N. Highland Ave., Marfa, Texas 79843.

Brenda Witty
Chair / Board of Directors

TAXPAYER IMPACT STATEMENT

House Bill 1522, passed by the Texas Legislature in 2025, amends section 551.043 of the Texas Government Code to require that the notice of a meeting required to be posted under section 551.043(a) of the Texas Open Meetings Act, at which a governmental body will discuss or adopt a budget for the governmental body, must include a taxpayer impact statement showing, for the median-valued homestead property, a comparison of the property tax bill in dollars pertaining to the property for the current fiscal year to an estimate of the property tax bill in dollars for the same property for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District (PCUWCD) has proposed a budget for the District's 2025-2026 fiscal year. The District intends to adopt its budget on or before September 30, 2025.

- **Value of Median-Valued Homestead Property in the County:** $96,312
- **Property Tax Bill for the Current Fiscal Year ($0.01000):** $963.12
- **Estimated Property Tax Bill for the Upcoming Fiscal Year if the City Adopts the Proposed Budget and Tax Rate ($0.01000):** $963.12

The estimates in this Impact Statement are valid only for the proposed budget and proposed tax rate that the PCUWCD Board of Directors will discuss at its meeting on **September 11, 2025**. The proposed budget and the proposed tax rate may each be amended by the PCUWCD Board of Directors at any time before their final adoption. If the PCUWCD Board of Directors intends to discuss the proposed budget at a subsequent meeting, the District will include a Taxpayer Impact Statement in the notice for that meeting which will include updated estimates based on any amendments to the proposed budget and proposed tax rate.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Taxpayer Impact Statement was included in the public notice for the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District meeting to be held on **September 11, 2025**.

Trey Gerfers — August 28, 2025

Name: C. Arthur "Trey" Gerfers, III — Date

Title: PCUWCD General Manager

Marfa ISD Sports Report



Photo by Roxye Lara

Zoey Salgado makes the dig while Ava Flores stands ready to assist if needed.



Photo by Amber Serrano

Sophomore Alyssa Harden outpaces the competition, claiming 1st place at the West Of The Pecos cross-country meet.



Photo by Roxye Lara

Senior Ava Flores goes up for the kill as junior Zoey Salgado readies for an assist at last weekend's Van Horn tournament.

By Roxye Lara

MARFA — The last weekend in August means two things; the Marfa Lights Festival weekend is approaching and fall sports for the Shorthorns is already in full stride.

The Shorthorns cross country program returns all of its runners on the girls' side, with sophomore Alyssa Hardin leading the charge. Hardin has shown impressive growth, posting multiple personal bests since her strong rookie track season last spring. She opened the season by capturing first place at the Pecos meet. Her finish set the pace for teammates Adeline Marquez, Ora Webb, Mikayla Bentley, Giselle Torres, and Zoey Salgado to equally push to close in on several opponents as they approached the finish line. Both the girls and boys squads competed on Wednesday at the Van Horn Red Rock Run.

The Lady Horns volleyball team has built momentum and chemistry heading into week four of the early season. At the Van Horn Classic, Marfa went undefeated in pool play with victories over Balmorhea, Iraan, Pecos JV, and Crane JV. Senior leaders Raven Martinez and Ava Flores carried the team as a dynamic one-two punch — Martinez dominating in kills, while Flores paced the squad with assists and blocks. Hitters Itzel Urrutia, Zoey Salgado, and freshman Adeline Marquez added depth to the attack with numerous kills and blocks of their own and Dariela Muñoz and Amaya Gomez chipped in with timely aces, while Madison Cash and Giselle Torres controlled the back row on defense with a strong effort in digs and saves.

On Tuesday night, the Lady Horns battled hard in a five-set nail-biter against the McCamey Badgers. Despite falling just short, the team showed grit and determination, keeping fans on the edge of their seats until the very end. The JV team also put up a fight earlier in the evening, but ultimately fell to the Badgers as well.

The Lady Horns will host the Presidio Blue Devils this Friday. JV will hit the court at 4 p.m., followed by the Varsity matchup at 5 p.m

The Shorthorns football team gave fans a preview of what's to come during their Friday scrimmage against Fort Davis. Defensively, Marfa's front line worked with strong effort and aggressiveness, holding the Indians to just one first down in a 15-play series. Ayden Alvarez and Asael Zubia clogged the gaps and shut down the run game with tackle after tackle. On offense, Austin McGary made his debut as QB1, while Alejandro Rodriguez and Alvarez produced several big gains. Abelardo Marquez highlighted the scrimmage with a 50-yard breakaway run, supported by strong blocking from JoSaul Baeza, Garry Webb, and Darren Campos.

Head Coach Kevin Pippen praised his squad's progress, noting the leadership shown by the senior class and the promising impact of five incoming freshmen. "I am happy with what I saw Friday night as far as the team's understanding of the offense, but the scrimmages also gave us an opportunity to note what areas need fixing," Pippen said. "We'll work to patch those things up as we head into week one."

The Horns will officially kick off their season with a home opener against El Paso's Da Vinci this Friday at 7:30 p.m. at Martin Field in Marfa.

Hunter Gym nonprofit secures grants, matching funds needed





Photos by Carlos Morales

Marfa ISD staff attended a Hunter Gym open house during teacher in-service hosted by the friends group restoring the historic adobe gym.

From The Friends of Hunter Gym

MARFA — The Friends of Hunter Gym seeks to raise $20,000 in matching funds by December 2025 to help fund a professional restoration plan, a critical document needed before any real construction can begin, and an additional $20,000 for operating costs.

Hunter Gym, located on the southwest corner of the Marfa ISD campus, is perhaps the most significant unrestored building in Marfa. That significance is due not just to its rare art-moderne

architecture and unique adobe construction but also to its incredible history — the result of a student-led initiative in the 1930s, a product of the New Deal's Works Progress Administration, its role in ending segregation of Marfa's schools and perhaps most significantly in the everyday lives of scores of athletes, students, teachers, coaches, parents and visitors.

Over the years many well-meaning but ultimately destructive alterations were made to the building and surrounding grounds that led to its rapid deterioration and abandonment.

When the school district passed a bond initiative to build a new gym there was even talk of razing Hunter — an action that was not taken because of its cost. When news of its possible destruction made the rounds, two local residents met with then Superintendent Teloa Swinea to discuss alternatives. She agreed the building was worth saving and allowed the two to apply for a Texas Historic Commission (THC) grant to assess the building's condition and potential. The resulting Historic Structures Report affirmed the intact structural integrity of the building and, importantly, the feasibility of its rehabilitation and preservation. The THC was so excited to learn of the building and its significance that they designated it a Registered Texas Historical Landmark in 2008.

Building on this momentum, others joined the effort, and in 2022 formed Friends of Hunter Gym, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation. In close collaboration, the Friends and Marfa ISD Board of Trustees entered into a long-term lease agreement, and a prominent local artist generously donated seed money that allowed the Friends to begin the work on the gym's restoration.

A significant Texas Preservation Trust Fund grant is expected to be granted by the Texas Historical Commission, and a portion of the required matching funds have been secured from the Summerlee Foundation and the City of Marfa's hotel occupancy tax grant program.

An additional $20,000 in matching funds and $20,000 in operating funds are still needed to undertake the important architectural and engineering planning phase of the project. With a professional restoration plan in place, the project will qualify for the state Historic Preservation Tax Credit program which is estimated to cover 25% of rehabilitation costs and provide matching funds for a subsequent THC development grant.

Planet Marfa has generously agreed to donate a portion of their proceeds during Homecoming weekend — September 26, 27 and 28 — to the Friends of Hunter Gym. The organization is also seeking individual donations in order to raise the required matching and operating funds.

Once restored to its original configuration with upgraded electrical and plumbing infrastructure and all 35 windows back in place, the building can host community gatherings, proms, science fairs, art exhibits, before- and after-school programming, sporting events and resume its central role in the lives of Marfans for generations to come.

The Friends of Hunter Gym meet monthly to continue the work to restore and preserve this important piece of Marfa's history and welcomes the participation of all who share this vision.

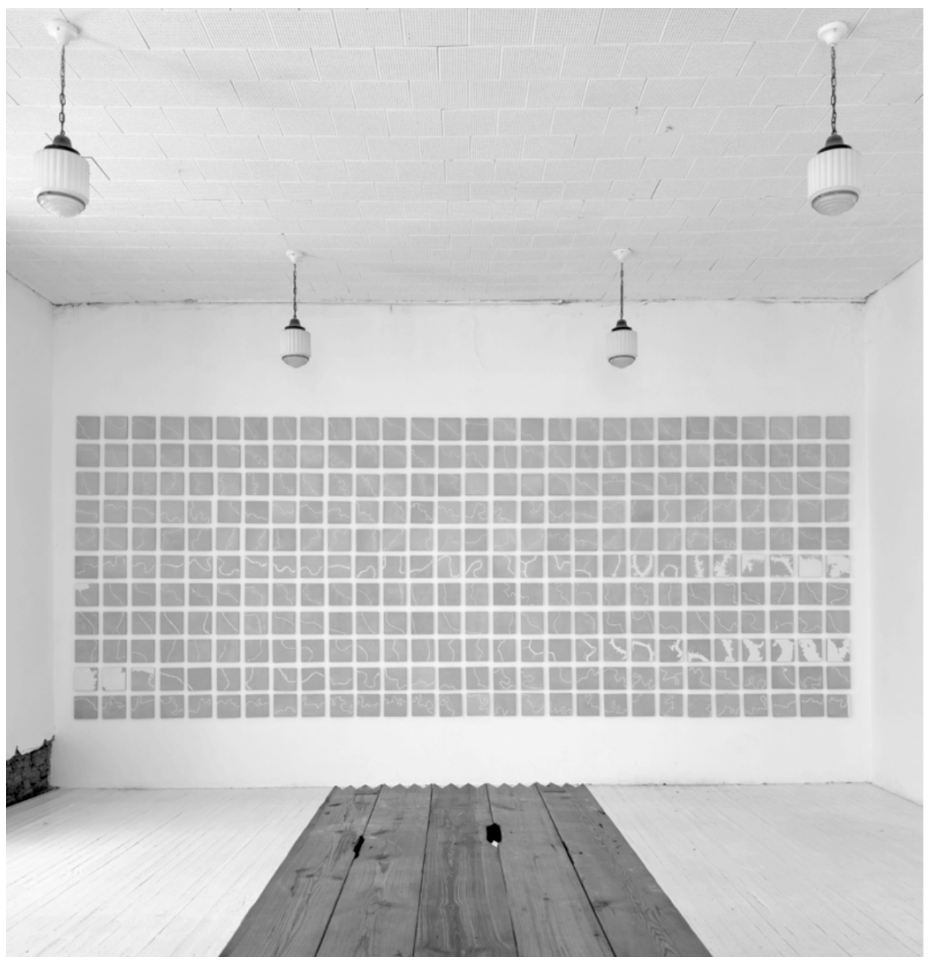
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Shaughnessy's border art exhibition now at The Do Right Hall





Photographs by Janell Strouse

Installation views of Katherine Shaughnessy's new works, "Broken" (left) and "Complementary" (right), at The Do Right Hall in Marfa, Texas.

MARFA — On August 1, an art exhibition of new, monumental works by Katherine Shaughnessy opened at The Do Right Hall in Marfa. The works in the exhibition study and reflect on the nearby border and the complexities associated with its geography, history and politics. Shaughnessy's Broken is a 23 x 9-foot wall installation which the artist made over the past five years out of 308 carved birch panels with plaster inlay. Each 8 x 8-inch panel, from top left to bottom right, shows approximately 9 square miles of land along a section of the Rio Grande, from El Paso to the Gulf of Mexico, that has served to delineate the U.S./Mexico border since 1848. In this quiet, monochromatic work, Shaughnessy methodically whittled out the river with wood tools, filled in the negative space with plaster and then sanded until smooth. Each wooden board is part U.S.A. and part Mexico in varying proportions. Across each board is an ever-changing, chalky white, vascular line representing the river. As the river undulates, sometimes Mexico is north of the United States, while at other times small islands of land appear caught in the middle of the flow.

There are two massive aneurysms — formed by dams at Amistad Reservoir and Falcon Lake — that take over the visual surface creating several, nearly solid, white panels. For Shaughnessy, this work is an attempt to celebrate this shared waterway and to blur, erase and discuss the imaginary line that runs down the middle, a boundary that has animated political discourse for decades.

Complementary is a 3 x 5-foot handwoven textile made of red, white, green and blue cotton threads. After deconstructing, thread by thread, a Mexican flag and an American flag, the artist wove those same threads back together using a loom. The result is an earthen-colored, loosely woven, hemmed banner with a single light blue stripe running vertically down the middle.

The overall proportion and presence of grommets are the only features suggesting a flag, since the resulting muted tones have made it lose all evident emblematic power. Through this subtle decomposing and recomposing gesture, the artist conceives of a blending of the two nations at their most symbolic level. The idea for this piece came to Shaughnessy during a lecture by Hervé Vanel at American University in Paris who was presenting his new book, Jasper Johns Le Chewing-Gum et La Colle, that discusses Jasper Johns' and Donald Judd's "Negative flags" from 1968. Their flags reimagined the American flag in which the colors were swapped out for their opposite, or complementary, colors — green for red, orange for blue, black for white, etc.

The resulting flags were both political statements of disapproval of the Vietnam War and, in Johns' case, the conjuring of an optical phenomenon. Viewers were encouraged to stare at the negative flag and then move their gaze to an adjacent gray field where the Stars and Stripes momentarily righted in their mind's eye back to red, white and blue.

Similarly, Shaughnessy is playing with complementary colors — weaving together green and red, in addition to white and blue, taken from the U.S.A and Mexican flags. From a distance, the viewer sees mostly brown and only upon close inspection do the colors reveal themselves.

The gallery is open Fridays and Saturdays from 1-5 p.m. and by appointment. (Call 432-386-0386.) A closing reception will be held on Saturday, August 30,, from 6 to 8 p.m. at The Do Right Hall at 110 W. Dallas, Marfa. All are welcome.

Katherine Shaughnessy (b. 1970) is an artist living and working in Boise, Idaho. She is also the co-founder and curator of The Common Well, an artist workspace and contemporary gallery in Garden City, Idaho.

She received her MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1997. Shaughnessy has had solo exhibitions in Chicago, Marfa and Albuquerque, and her work has been in group shows at The Cleveland Museum of Art, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Port Angeles Fine Arts Center, Boise Art Museum and Sun Valley Museum of Art in Ketchum, Idaho. Shaughnessy makes paintings, drawings, sculpture, textiles, assemblage, installation and videos examining our natural and political worlds and their awkward and sometimes brutal intersection with human demands and desires. Having lived in and around Marfa from about 2002 until 2016, Shaughnessy says that coming home to unveil this work was always part of the plan. The Do Right Hall, located in an 1886 adobe building that was the first church in Marfa, has served as a contemporary art space for nearly 20 years. The Do Right Hall is owned and operated by artist Campbell Bosworth and Buck Johnston. Past exhibitions include works by Ethan Cook, Kate Shepherd, Elizabeth Hohimer and many local Marfa artists.

The Marfa Lights Festival shines a light on Labor Day weekend

MARFA — The Marfa Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce the return of the 38th Annual Marfa Lights Festival, a musical celebration of our beloved Far West Texas community. This year's festival will take place over Labor Day weekend, from Friday, August 29, through Sunday, August 31, at the Presidio County Courthouse.

The festivities begin Friday at 4 p.m., with the celebration continuing throughout the weekend. Attendees can look forward to a diverse lineup of musical talent, including performances by local favorites The Grand Tourists and Zona Mutante.

The party heats up on Saturday night with headlining performances from La Sombra and Asalto, who are sure to get the crowd dancing. Sunday will feature musical entertainment all day long, leading up to the highly anticipated Marfa Lights Festival Dance from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m. at the Marfa Activities Center (MAC) Building.

Entry to the festival is free for all ages, however, the dance is a ticketed event with prices ranging from $20 for a single bracelet, $35 for couples, and $100 for an 8-person table.



Photo by Sarah M. Vasquez. Courtesy of the Marfa Chamber of Commerce.

Asalto performs at last year's Marfa Lights Festival.

Full festival lineup

Friday, August 29:
4 p.m. Baby Steps
5:30 p.m. Sierra Skye and the Wild Cocks
7 p.m. The Grand Tourists
8:30 p.m. Prepney
10 p.m. Zona Mutante

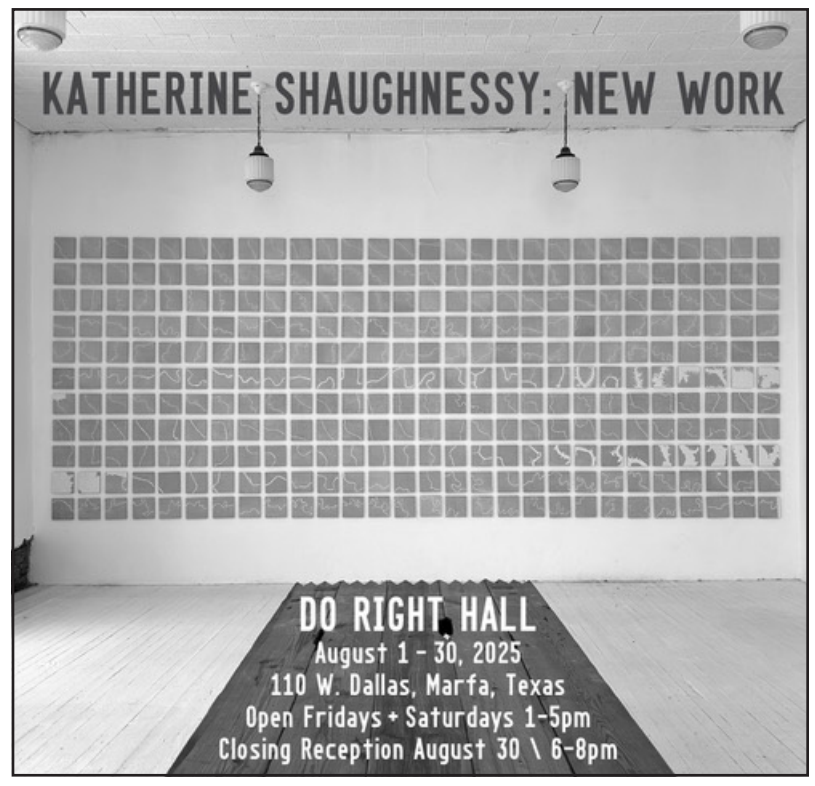
Saturday, August 30:
10 a.m. Opening and Welcome
10:30 a.m. Parade
12 p.m. Marfa Live Arts Circus Show
1:30 p.m. Mariachi Santa Cruz
2:30 p.m. Pecos River Band
3:30 p.m. Jerialice Arsenault
5 p.m. Billy Manhattan
7 p.m. TexMex Hippies
9 p.m. La Sombra
11 p.m. Asalto

Sunday, August 31:
10 a.m. Puppy Yoga with Grand Companions and Big Sky Yoga
12 p.m. Sweetheart of the Radio
1 p.m. Big Stripes Tapes
2 p.m. 3D Coyote
3 p.m. Primo Y Beebe
7 p.m. Sunday dance at the MAC Building

On the beat



Hi! I'm Roxye Lara, a proud Marfa High School alum and your new MISD sports reporter. Many of you may know me from The Marfa National Bank or around school events. I've been an active member of the Athletic Booster Club for the past 8 years, and with my daughter Adeline being my third student-athlete at MISD, I'm excited to help keep our community connected and informed about our amazing Shorthorn athletes.



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Classifieds & public notices

Border Patrol enlists military drones to track migrants

By Steve Fisher
Puente News Collaborative

FT HUACHUCA, Ariz. — Inside a windowless and dark shipping container turned into a high-tech surveillance command center, two analysts peered at their own set of six screens that showed data coming in from an MQ-9 Predator B drone. Both were looking for two adults and a child who had crossed the U.S.-Mexico border and had fled when a Border Patrol agent approached in a truck.

Inside the drone hangar on the other side of the Fort Huachuca base sat another former shipping container, this one occupied by a drone pilot and a camera operator, who pivoted the drone's camera to scan 9 square miles of shrubs and saguaros for the migrants. Like the command center, the onetime shipping container was dark, lit only by the glow of the computer screens.

The hunt for the three migrants embodied how advanced technology has become a vital part of the Trump administration's efforts to secure the border. This type of drone, previously used in warfare, was operated by the National Air Security Operations division of Customs and Border Protection at the Army base about 70 miles south of Tucson. A reporter was allowed to observe the operation in April on the condition that personnel not be named and that no photographs be taken.

The Department of Homeland Security allocated 12,000 hours of MQ-9 drone flight time this year at the Fort Huachuca base, and says the flights cost $3,800 per hour, though an inspector general report in 2015 said the amount is closer to $13,000 when factoring in personnel salaries and operational costs. Maintenance issues and bad weather often mean the drones fly around half the allotted hours, officials said.

With the precipitous drop in migrant crossings at the southern U.S. border, the drones are now tasked with fewer missions. That means they have the time to track small groups or even individual border jumpers trekking north through the desert, including a father and child.

The drone flying this day was mounted with radar, called Vehicle and Dismount Exploitation Radar, or VaDER, that could identify any moving object in the drone's sight, and pinpoint them with color-coded dots for the two analysts in the first container. The program had already located three Border Patrol agents, one on foot and two on motorcycles, searching for the migrants. The analysts had also identified three cows and two horses, headed towards Mexico.

Then, one of the analysts spotted something.

"We got them," he said to his colleague, who had been scanning the terrain. "Good work."

The analyst dropped a pin on the migrants and the VaDER program began tracking their movement in a blue trail. Now, he had to guide agents on the ground to them.

"We've got an adult male and a child, I think, tucked in this bush," the analyst radioed to his team, as he toggled between the live video to an infrared camera view that shows the heat signature of every living thing in range. The analyst saw his Border Patrol colleagues approaching on motorcycles.



Photo by Boevaya mashina / Wikimedia Commons

An MQ9 — similar to the drones used in Arizona — at a Berlin airshow in 2016. The drones are controlled remotely by military personnel to track migrants.

The roar of the oncoming machines scared up a bird, the tracking program showed. The migrants began running.

"OK, it looks like they're starting," the camera operator said into the radio to the Border Patrol agents. "They're hearing the bikes. They hear you guys." The camera operator and the other personnel spoke in the professional, matter-of-fact tone of 911 operators.

One adult and the child began scrambling up a hill. "They're moving north and west, mainly," the camera operator said. "Starting to pick up the pace going uphill."

The agents rushed in on the pair and detained them. It was a mother and her child. The drone team turned its attention to the third person, who was stumbling through the brush and making a beeline for the Mexican border.

"If you cut due south from your current location," the drone pilot said to the camera operator. "You should pick up some sign."

The camera operator, as directed, panned across the desert, scanning farther and farther south.

"I've got them," he said when he spotted someone running. He radioed the coordinates to the Border Patrol team. By now, the man, carrying a backpack, had scaled a hill.

"He's on the ridge line right now, working his way up due south, slowly," the camera operator radioed.

Then the man dropped something.

"Hey, mark that spot," the camera operator said. "He just threw a pack, right here where my cross-hairs are at."

Agents would go back later and see if the backpack contained drugs, an analyst said. "Usually, if it's food or water, they're not going to do that," he said.

On this spring morning, the drone wasn't the only airborne asset deployed. A helicopter had joined the chase to catch the southbound man, who stumbled, got up and kept running.

"He took a pretty good spill there," an analyst said into the radio.

"We have a help inbound, three point five minutes out," the camera operator said.

A helicopter came into the drone's view. It swooped in, circling the location of the man, who was by now hiding under a bush.

"You just passed over him," the camera operator radioed the helicopter pilot. "He's between you and that saguaro."

With a keystroke, he switched to infrared vision to find the man's heat profile through the brush to make sure he still had him.

Guided by the camera operator, the pilot landed the helicopter in a cloud of dust near the cowering target. The video feed showed agents jump out of the aircraft, detain the man and load him into the helicopter. The chopper lifted off and tilted back north towards a nearby Border Patrol post.

"Thanks, sir, appreciate all the help," the analyst said to the helicopter pilot.

Mission accomplished, the drone pilot turned the MQ-9 back along the U.S.-Mexico border, scanning the vast desert in search of more migrants. The military is planning to deliver a third MQ-9 drone to the base this fall after spending a year retrofitting it for civilian authority use.

Steve Fisher is a Puente News Collaborative writer and covers security in Mexico. He has written for The Los Angeles Times,The Wall Street Journal, New York Times and Washington Post.

This article was co-published with Los Angeles Times and Puente News Collaborative, a bilingual nonprofit newsroom, convener, and funder dedicated to high-quality, fact-based news and information from the U.S.-Mexico border.

Chisos Basin to remain open for Winter 2025 Season



Courtesy of the National Park Service

An artist's rendering of the planned Chisos Basin Lodge.

From the National Park Service

Construction projects to begin May 1, 2026

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK, TX – Park officials have announced that the Chisos Basin area of the park will remain open this year throughout the park's busy winter months. Construction projects in the Basin to replace the Chisos Mountains Lodge and the entire water distribution system will have a revised start date of May 1, 2026. The beginning of May generally marks the start of Big Bend's hot season, and visitation to the park traditionally begins to greatly decrease at that time.

Facilities that will remain open during the upcoming fall, winter, and early spring include the Chisos Basin visitor center, Chisos Basin campground, and the entire Chisos Mountains trail system. The park's concessioner, Casa Grande Hospitality, LLC, subsidiary of Aramark, will continue to offer visitor services in the Basin such as food services and the camper store. Lodging options will also reopen in the Basin and visitors should check directly with Casa Grande Hospitality, LLC, subsidiary of Aramark, for availability of these amenities by visiting their website at www.chisosmountainslodge.com. Reservations for campsites should be made at www.recreation.gov.

Next summer, thanks to funding from the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) Legacy Restoration Fund, construction work on significant improvements to the Chisos Basin area of the park is expected to begin on May 1, 2026, and continue for approximately two years. As work begins, the Chisos Basin area will be closed to visitor entry. This includes the Basin Road, lodging units, Basin Campground, restaurant, NPS visitor center, camper store, and trails within the Basin area. This work will ONLY affect the Chisos Basin area of Big Bend National Park. As major components are completed, park managers will assess which areas can be safely reopened to regular public access.

During the work in the Chisos Basin, Big Bend National Park will remain OPEN year-round with over 800,000 acres of canyons, desert, historic sites, diverse wildlife, scenic drives, backcountry roads, and over 150 miles of hiking trails for visitors from around the world to enjoy.

Information updates at: https://go.nps.gov/chisosbasinfuture

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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.

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