

Candidates file for March primaries

The deadline for filing as a candidate for the March 3 Republican and Democratic primaries was Monday at 6 p.m., which now gives a clear picture of who will be running for local races.

For Presidio County, a Democratic stronghold, the primary winner has traditionally moved on to win the November election. For Jeff Davis County, it's just the opposite, with Republicans usually winning the final race. Brewster County, which has increasingly become more Republican, still is close to "purple," so primaries might not be the deciding factor there.

The biggest area matchup likely will be Presidio County Judge Joe Portillo trying to hold his seat against a challenge from former Precinct 4 County Commissioner David Beebe. Beebe had mistakenly made his campaign announcement too early under state law and was forced to automatically resign. Portillo then appointed Frank "Buddy" Knight to the seat.

El plazo para presentar candidaturas para las primarias republicanas y demócratas del 3 de marzo venció el lunes a las 6 p.m., lo que ahora permite tener una idea clara de quiénes se postularán para los cargos locales.

En el condado de Presidio, un bastión demócrata, el ganador de las primarias tradicionalmente ha ganado las elecciones de noviembre. En el condado de Jeff Davis, ocurre lo contrario, ya que los



Judge Joe Portillo is running again.



ANDREW SIEGFRIED

Angel and Daniel Silva hope to keep their prices affordable for locals.

Authority's purchase strains businesses

Housing nonprofit invests in retail properties

By ROB D'AMICO

Marfa

The private financing corporation arm of the Marfa Housing Authority (MHA) recently purchased commercial land in Marfa and raised the rents for the tenants—Angel's Restaurant, and J&J Auto, a mechanic shop—which led to the auto shop's closure and the restaurant owner uncertain about her future.

Marfa Property Management (MPM)—the private financing corporation—was created for more flexibility for the MHA in investments and property development for affordable housing,

and it is governed by the same appointed board: Isabel Cash (chair), Anna Catano (vice chair), David Walstrom, Patrick Chavira and Jennifer Hebert. The board voted recently to purchase the property at 205 N. Spring Street, adjacent to the Dollar General store. After the purchase, MPM raised the rents on both tenants from \$1,400 to \$1,800.

"There are rumors, and people keep coming to me and they're saying, I heard a rumor that you're leaving or you're moving out," said Angel Silva, who runs the restaurant, which serves Mexican and Tex-Mex fare, with her husband, Daniel. "I'm not moving out. I don't have anywhere else to go." The couple opened the restaurant in January 2023.

Silva said the only thing she can think of to do to keep the business afloat is increase prices.

"The rent is going up, which could possibly push me to have to raise my prices because I don't have a choice," she said. "We try to keep our prices the lowest we can for our locals because we like to see the locals every day."

The tenant who ran the auto shop, Jose with J&J Auto, did not respond to requests for comment. However, the previous property owner who leased to him, Jose Martin Gutierrez, said the higher rent was a key reason for the tenant leaving the space and the business. Chavira, who did not want to comment publicly on the matter, did confirm he was the only board member voting against the purchase. It's unclear who voted for it or who may have been absent, since the minutes for the meeting have not been approved and were not released by MPM.

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New chief plans to hold the course

Caughman plans to expand the investigative unit

By GINA VERA

Alpine

Kirk Caughman, age 50 of Alpine, will start his new position as police chief on January 1 after growing up in Alpine and growing into the job in the department.

Alpine city officials feel they are following a successful formula with the promotion of Caughman from lieutenant to chief of police. Caughman has a similar background as retiring Chief Darrell Losoya, said Interim City Manager Geo Calderon. Both worked their way up through years of experience with the Alpine Police Department.

"I think that he was definitely the clear choice," Calderon said.

"We've received several letters of recommendation from community leaders for his appointment." Both also have strong ties with the community, he added.

Alpine is his home, said Caughman, who has lived in the city since he was in the second grade; his family is here and he intends to stay here. His experience with the Alpine Police Department goes back to his high school years when he was a law enforcement Explorer Scout and March 2001 when he began his career as a dispatcher there.

Since then, he has been working on gaining experience, said Caughman, who had hoped to head a department but hadn't dreamed of being chief.

Particularly important to his growth and experience, said Caughman, was the case of ZuZu Verk. He managed the collection,

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Longtime Alpine officer Kirk Caughman will start as the new chief on January 1.

INSIDE

'Ghost Keepers' brings ancient ice and pillars to Rule



Shoshannah White, *Permafrost Ice Wedge Formation #42*, Page 8



Chinati staff art in show

The staff at the Chinati Foundation will present *Un Titled: Chinati Staff Art Show*, opening at the Locker Plant this Friday, December 12, from 6 to 9 p.m. Light refreshments will be served.

Un Titled presents work by 19 artists across a variety of mediums, from metalwork to paintings, drawings to A/V installations. A selection of pieces will be available for purchase, with proceeds going to the artists.

Exhibiting artists include Chinati staff and docents Prepney, Maritza Bautista, Shea Carley, Michael Carnes, Rowdy Dugan, Micah Francis, J.D. Garcia, Hannah Goldfarb, Christine Jackson, Alex Kamelhair, Haley Levin, Rhonda Manley, Suzanne McLeod, Caitlin Murray, Dillon Orr, Chelsea Quinlan, Veronica Salinas, Bogna Skwara, and Zade Williamson. The show emerged from internal interest in creating an opportunity for the many artists working at Chinati to show art.

Un Titled will remain on view from December 18 - 28, open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (closed December 24-25).

Member votes against firing Marfa teacher

By ARIELE GENTILES

Marfa ISD School Board Member Jay Foster was the lone vote against the final termination of teacher Juan Martinez Monday night at a special meeting. Martinez was arrested in September on second degree felony charges for indecency with a child and improper relationship with a student, an arrest that came mere weeks following a fellow teacher's arrest for improper relationship with a student.

When asked to explain his vote not to terminate Martinez, Foster refused to comment. Interim Superintendent Arturo Alferez could not be reached for comment.

Martinez had taught welding and the school's popular conjunto

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Chinati park opens to raffle winners

New Year’s Day offers sneak peak

By **SAM KARAS**

Presidio County

The region’s newest state park isn’t set to open until 2032, but a handful of folks will be allowed to enter the Chinati Mountains State Natural Area on a guided hike this upcoming New Year’s Day. The excursion is being hosted by the Friends of Big Bend Ranch State Park, with all proceeds going to benefit the Friends’ mission of supporting public lands in Far West Texas.

The Chinati Mountains SNA is nearly three decades in the making, opening up a window into a mountain range historically tucked away on privately-owned ranches. The property encompasses 39,000 acres of rugged landscapes that range from desert wetlands to high-elevation juniper groves, and will someday feature dozens of miles of hiking trails to showcase these unique ecosystems.

The land’s former owners, Heiner and Philippa Friedrich, also built a series of rustic cabins to serve as backcountry shelters—structures that will be repurposed by the future park to be enjoyed by generations to come.

The Friedrichs—two-thirds of the visionary Dia Art Foundation—donated the former Mesquite Ranch to the state via the R.K. Mellon Foundation in 1996. The land was donated with a corresponding endowment to help



THE PORTAL TO TEXAS HISTORY

A hiker rests in the Chinati Mountains. This photograph by Wyman Meinzer originally ran in Texas Parks & Wildlife Magazine in December 1997, around two years after the Mesquite Ranch’s donation to the state was announced.

make up for the loss to the county through property taxes.

“This novel approach to conserving the Mesquite Ranch land protects the taxpayers of Presidio County and the 40,000 acres in the Chinati Mountains at the same time,” the office of then Governor George Bush told Big Bend Sentinel. “This is a unique way to support conservation while generating revenue for the local community.”

The Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine confidently reported in 1997 that the park would be open “probably sometime in the next year or so,” but securing easements for the public to be able to actually access the land turned out to be a more frustrating process than the Friedrichs and the state of Texas anticipated. For decades, agency funding and land deals never seemed to line up at the same time.

Fast forward to 2024, and an access road into the Chinati Mountains SNA was added to a

list of TxDOT projects to roll out over the next few years. An open park is becoming a tangible reality—but nature lovers still have a few years to wait before they can add hiking in the Chinatis to their regular Big Bend regional rotation.

The Friends of Big Bend Ranch, a nonprofit organization that supports the park beyond what the state budget can provide, worked with Texas Parks and Wildlife staff to open up the Chinati Mountains State Natural Area for a guided hike to a select group of raffle winners on New Year’s Day 2026. Raffle tickets are \$10 a piece and can be purchased through Saturday, December 13.

From Sunday, December 14, through Christmas Day, the Friends will announce one raffle winner per day through their social media.

For more information, visit the friendsofbigbendranch.com or visit them on Instagram or Facebook.

Acosta attorneys: Guns at his house were for ‘safekeeping’

Phone evidence not what prosecutors portray

By **ROB D’AMICO**

Pecos

Attorneys for Presidio resident Tiburcio “Butch” Acosta, facing three felony counts of smuggling guns to the La Linea cartel in Mexico, laid out likely elements of his defense in a Friday motion arguing that the court should allow an initial bail for him to remain intact and that evidence found of him in possession of guns were merely favors for friends trying not to break Mexican law.

“[Acosta] told the agents that he had allowed persons known to him to store firearms at his property or in his parked vehicles if they were traveling into Mexico so that they would not cross the border with firearms, but he denied being involved in any trafficking of firearms across the border,” Acosta’s attorneys wrote in their motion. He is being represented by federal public defenders.

U.S. Assistant Attorney Steven Spitzer wrote in a motion to deny his release that investigators had mobile phone records from Acosta, Adalberto Jaquez-Hinojosa, and another source with discussions about smuggling weapons to the La Linea cartel. “These conversations indicated that trafficked firearms were dropped off with Defendant in Presidio prior to being taken across the border,” the prosecution’s appeal motion stated.

“The firearms discussed included a SCAR which is a high-powered military grade assault rifle as well as other semi-automatic firearms highly sought after by cartels.”

Acosta, arrested on November 13, was under investigation since 2022, according to court docu-

ments. U.S. District Judge David Counts initially granted him a bond of \$30,000 (with \$3,000 due to the court for release) on December 1. The prosecution appealed that ruling and filed a motion to deny his release and cited that Acosta was a flight risk and danger to the community. The defense, in a response motion, noted that as manager of the UETA tax-free shop in Presidio—and just being a Presidio resident would show that it’s quite normal to have crossed the border 400 times in the last few years, something the prosecution had touted as a flight risk.

The defense also stated that because of publicity from Big Bend Sentinel and Ojinaga Noticias, there would be a substantial risk of Acosta entering Mexico. “Mr. Acosta was publicly identified as a potential La Linea-linked individual, even if incorrectly or mistakenly, Mr. Acosta’s life could be in mortal danger if he was seen or recognized in Mexico because any person linked to La Linea can be killed by members of competing cartel factions,” the motion stated.

“The evidence before the Court, based on the government agent’s testimony, is that Mr. Acosta’s life would be in danger if he were to enter Mexico. This only supports that Mr. Acosta is not a flight risk.” The motion also includes testimony from Homeland Security Investigations Agent Garth Werner.

The defense contends that the cell phone evidence of texts cited by the prosecution show nothing more than Acosta “safekeeping” guns on his property. “Mr. Acosta voluntarily met with ATF and HSI agents in November of 2024 for an interview in Presidio in relation to HIS’s investigation,” the motion recounted. “He told the agents that he had allowed persons known to him to store

firearms at his property or in his parked vehicles if they were traveling into Mexico so that they would not cross the border with firearms, but he denied being involved in any trafficking of firearms across the border. Upon being arrested in November of this year, Mr. Acosta was again questioned and when asked how he got involved, he replied that others had ‘battered him up,’ which the government characterizes as a ‘confession.’ Agent Werner testified that the government had no information outside of the 2022 time-frame that implicated Mr. Acosta in any wrongdoing.”

Acosta and another man arrested for allegedly smuggling with him—Adalberto Jaquez-Hinojosa of Presidio—face three felony counts related to smuggling, the most serious of which, trafficking in firearms, is punishable by 15 years in prison. Judge Counts denied a defense motion to set bond for Jaquez-Hinojosa, who is a Mexican citizen.

The motion also blasted prosecutors for initially listing Acosta as a noncitizen on their first request to detain him without bond. “Initially, the government sought to detain Mr. Acosta without bond by representing to the Court that Mr. Acosta was not a citizen of the United States or alternatively was not lawfully admitted for permanent residence ... this representation was wrong. The detention hearing demonstrated that the case agents were fully aware throughout the pendency of this investigation (and indeed for many years prior to this investigation) that Mr. Acosta is a U.S. Citizen who, apart from his years attending university, has resided his entire life in Presidio, Texas.”

A hearing on the motions for conditions of release on a bond was held Wednesday after Big Bend Sentinel’s press time.

Jingle all the way (Part II)

Caroling in Davis Mountains State Park

Fort Davis

On Thursday, December 11, Davis Mountains State Park presents a free event, “Caroling in the Park,” an opportunity to stroll through the campground and sing holiday carols to guests from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Carolers are asked to meet at the park’s Interpretive Center a little before 6:30 p.m. Bring your singing voice and a percussive instrument if you have one, songbooks will be provided. You may also bring a red flashlight or headlamp; please wear comfortable walking shoes. For more info, contact: 432-426-3337 or charles.ewing@tpwd.texas.gov.

Sing-a-long features traditional music

Fort Davis

Join in the festivities at the Jeff Davis County Library in Fort Davis with traditional music and literary readings this Saturday, December 13, starting at 4 p.m. Excerpts from “A Christmas Carol,” “Yes, Virginia There is a Santa,” and “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” will be sprinkled between musical sing-a-longs led by pianist Lana Potts. Light refreshments will be available at this free program sponsored by Friends of the Library; phone 432-426-3802 for details.

Annual Posada returns to Presidio

Presidio

Experience the holiday traditions of the borderlands at the annual Posada at Fort Leaton on Saturday, December 13, from 6 to 8 p.m. Posada means “inn” or “shelter” in Spanish.

This traditional Mexican Christmas tradition tells the story of Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem through skits and songs.

What to expect: Over 1,000 candle luminarias light the way for you to walk and sing with Mary and Joseph as they search for shelter. Following the procession, there will be traditional holiday drinks, snacks, piñatas and mariachi. You can wander the

halls of the candle-lit fort on your own or take a guided tour. The guided tours will occur once every 30 minutes starting at 6:30 p.m. Admission is free.

Merry ‘Wranch’ Christmas features petting zoo

Alpine

The Wasserman Ranch will hold “A Very Merry Wranch Christmas” with a petting zoo, games, a penguin slide, caroling and food from the Bread Garden Bakery on Saturday, December 13, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the ranch, 10 Rim Road in Alpine. Santa will be on hand from 1 to 3 p.m. The cost is \$15 and includes a bag of cookies.

Farewell to police chief with parade

Alpine

The City of Alpine will honor Police Chief Darrell Losoya, who is leaving the position at the end of the year, and his wife, Belen, on Saturday, December 13, with a parade from 6 to 8 p.m. starting at the Civic Center, 801 W Holland. No need to register, and lineup for the parade starts at 5:30 p.m.

Presidio County Sheriff’s Office hosts ‘Community Holiday Celebration’

Marfa

The Presidio County Sheriff’s Office invites everyone to their annual holiday celebration with food, amazing giveaways, holiday cheer for all ages, and a special appearance by Santa on Saturday, December 13, from 5 to 7 p.m. in front of the sheriff’s office in Marfa.

A chance to get on the radio with Santa

Alpine

Kids have a chance to contact Santa Claus at the North Pole by shortwave radio Wednesday, December 17, from 5 to 7p.m. in front of the True Value Hardware store in Alpine. A shortwave radio is like a walkie talkie that can contact people around the world. The Big Bend Amateur Radio Club communication van will be

staffed with “elves” to help children talk to Santa. Dress warmly and come to True Value to have your chance to contact the North Pole in person!

Start the new year lucky with the Black-Eyed Pea Off

Terlingua

The 35th Annual Black-Eyed Pea Off (cook-off) will be held in the Terlingua Ghost Town on Thursday, January 1, 2026. Participants need to bring their best Black-eyed Peas for judging and to share with spectators.

Award and prizes will be given for first, second and third place. Turn-in time is 2 p.m. sharp with a \$10 entry fee. Peas may be cooked onsite or off. Spectators can start the year off with a bowl of “good luck” peas for a \$10 (or more) donation—includes bowl, spoon and cornbread until it runs out.

There will be local music and a raffle for several “Hot Dates” (room and dinner). All proceeds will benefit continuing education scholarships for Terlingua School graduates.



Adam Bork and Valerie Arber celebrate the ornament sale at Do Right Hall last week.

Dean at Sul Ross files discrimination lawsuit

By **SAM KARAS**

Alpine

Last Tuesday, Barbara Tucker—a dean in the College of Education and Professional Studies at Sul Ross State University in Alpine—filed suit against the university for gender discrimination. Tucker seeks reimbursement of her court and legal expenses as well as “any and all amounts recoverable and/or recognizable as damages” and has demanded a jury trial.

Tucker has been on faculty at Sul Ross since 2009, when she was hired as an adjunct professor while she worked on her Ph.D. in educational psychology. She began a tenure-track position as a full professor in 2012 and served a number of leadership roles within her department until 2019, when she was appointed dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies.

According to Tucker’s complaint, the trouble began in early 2024, when the university’s four academic deans—all women—got together to discuss their employment.

They discovered that two of the four women were paid \$119,000 annually, and the other two were paid \$125,000.

Both figures felt like a significant lowball, so the four women decided to investigate with the help of Provost Bernie Cantens.

The team discovered that the lowest-paid deans at a comparable small state university—in this case, Angelo State—were paid around \$145,000, and approached university leadership to ask for a three-year salary adjustment plan to bring the four female Sul Ross deans up to that

standard. It seemed like a reasonable ask. “Even with a raise to \$145,000, which the deans requested be implemented over the course of three years, the deans at Sul Ross (all female) would still be among the lowest-paid, if not the very lowest-paid, deans anywhere in Texas,” Tucker’s complaint reads.

University leadership rejected the deans’ three year catch-up plan and instead offered Tucker a small raise of around \$7,000 annually, with no promise of an increase in the future.

Tucker was frustrated by the university falling short, especially given her track record—she had never received a negative performance review, and more than half of Sul Ross students were enrolled in courses that fell somewhere under her purview, which included the departments of Education, Business, Kinesiology, Criminal Justice, Homeland Security and the Law Enforcement Academy.

The situation soured over the fall of 2024, when Sul Ross “created two new dean positions, hired male deans, and paid them each more than Tucker’s new salary, for overseeing a fraction of what she had previously overseen single-handed,” her complaint emphasized.

Those new staff members were Sumatra Sengupta, dean of the Rio Grande College of Business, and Dean Culpepper, dean of the College of Health Sciences. Sengupta and Culpepper were hired with salaries of \$150,000 and \$135,000, respectively, both to do jobs that had previously fallen under Tucker’s purview.

During this time, Tucker also

alleges sexist conduct on behalf of the university president, Carlos Hernandez. The complaint outlines an incident that took place at a professional development retreat for deans at Cibolo Creek Ranch. Tucker claims that she walked by Hernandez and Provost Cantens smoking cigars outside on her way to the pool with three other female staff members, of whom Hernandez asked, “Will there be any skinny dipping?”

In December 2024, Provost Cantens informed Tucker that she was being removed as dean, “effective immediately,” and would be returned to faculty. “He provided her with no reason for this move, other than the university was going in a different direction,” her complaint alleges. She eventually discovered that this meant her salary would drop from \$126,467 to \$80,000 in the fall of 2025, while a male professor in the same department with less experience was making \$113,000. (The university would eventually short her contract by three months.)

While this was going on in the background, the university hired a third male dean to take on responsibilities Tucker said she had previously overseen—Kevin Badgett, who would make \$135,000 to take on the Department of Education. “Thus, Dr. Tucker had literally been doing the work of three men, each of whom are more highly compensated than she had been when covering all their duties,” she argued. At press time, Sul Ross had not yet filed a response to Tucker’s complaint, and the university declined to comment on pending litigation.

PRESIDIO INTERNATIONAL

La compra de terrenos por parte de la autoridad de vivienda perjudica a los negocios locales

Corporatcio invierte en propiedades comerciales

Por Rob D'Amico

Marfa

La corporación financiera privada de la Autoridad de Vivienda de Marfa (MHA) compró recientemente un terreno comercial en Marfa y aumentó los alquileres a los inquilinos —el restaurante Angel's Restaurant y el taller mecánico J&J Auto— lo que provocó el cierre del taller y la incertidumbre sobre el futuro de la dueña del restaurante.

Marfa Property Management (MPM), la corporación financiera privada, se creó para brindar mayor flexibilidad a la MHA en inversiones y desarrollo inmobiliario para viviendas asequibles, y está gobernada por la misma junta directiva: Isabel Cash (presidenta), Anna Catano (vicepresidenta), David Walstrom, Patrick Chavira y Jennifer Hebert.

La junta votó recientemente a favor de la compra de la propiedad en 205 N. Spring Street, junto a la tienda Dollar General. Tras la compra, MPM aumentó los alquileres a ambos inquilinos de \$1,400 a \$1,800.

“Hay rumores, y la gente no deja de venir a preguntarme si me

voy a ir o a mudarme”, dijo Angel Silva, quien dirige el restaurante, que sirve comida mexicana y tex-mex, con su esposo, Daniel. “No me voy a mudar. No tengo a dónde ir”. La pareja abrió el restaurante en enero de 2023 Silva dijo que lo único que se le ocurre para mantener el negocio a flote es aumentar los precios.

“El alquiler está subiendo, lo que podría obligarme a subir los precios porque no tengo otra opción”, dijo. “Intentamos mantener nuestros precios lo más bajos posible para nuestros clientes locales porque nos gusta verlos todos los días”.

El inquilino que dirigía el taller mecánico, José de J&J Auto, no respondió a las solicitudes de comentarios. Sin embargo, el anterior propietario del inmueble, José Martín Gutiérrez, dijo que el aumento del alquiler fue una de las principales razones por las que el inquilino abandonó el local y el negocio.

Chavira, quien no quiso comentar públicamente sobre el asunto, confirmó que fue el único miembro de la junta que votó en contra de la compra. Se desconoce quién votó a favor o quién pudo haber estado ausente, ya que las actas de la reunión no han sido aprobadas ni publicadas por MPM. Jesse Williams, director ejecutivo de MHA

y MPM, afirmó que no existen planes actuales para construir viviendas asequibles en el terreno, y que la compra fue una inversión para generar ingresos para la autoridad.

“Cada paso que damos tiene como objetivo no solo proporcionar viviendas asequibles, sino también aumentarlas”, dijo Williams. “Dependemos completamente de nosotros mismos para conseguir el dinero suficiente para lograr estos objetivos en Marfa. Nunca hemos recibido una sola donación ni se nos ha ofrecido ninguna.

El dinero nunca nos ha llegado ni nos llegará fácilmente. Por lo tanto, depende de nosotros tomar las decisiones correctas para generar más dinero y así lograr estos objetivos y ofrecer más unidades de vivienda asequible a los residentes de Marfa”.

¿Cuánto costó?

Williams indicó que MPM pagó en efectivo por la propiedad, aunque se negó a revelar el precio de compra. Fuentes cercanas a la venta, que prefirieron permanecer en el anonimato, afirmaron que el precio osciló entre \$375,000 y \$400,000.

Williams explicó que MPM podrá generar nuevos ingresos con esta operación, que se utilizarán para fortalecer sus iniciativas de

vivienda asequible y mantener sus apartamentos actuales. MHA ofrece viviendas asequibles subsidiadas por vales de la Sección 8 del HUD, que cubren una parte del alquiler según la situación financiera del inquilino, además de apartamentos regulares sin subsidio en la manzana que rodea el edificio de MHA en 510 S. Kelly. Las entidades cuentan con 74 apartamentos, tres cabañas destinadas a policías y maestros, y una cabaña que se alquilará a corto plazo para generar ingresos.

Williams afirmó que considera que los alquileres de las propiedades comerciales siguen siendo “asequibles” y que la inversión fue sólida. Añadió que la junta directiva dis

cutirá los planes para el espacio del taller mecánico, pero que no existen planes concretos para el uso del espacio, que incluye un gran edificio metálico.

Williams también desmintió otro detalle incorrecto sobre la venta: que el agente inmobiliario que gestionó la transacción estuviera relacionado con un miembro de la junta directiva de MPM, lo cual, según él, no es cierto.

Los miembros de la junta directiva Cash y Catano no respondieron a las solicitudes de comentarios. Chavira, Walstrom y Hebert no quisieron hacer comentarios.



Papá Noel espera con impaciencia las galletas mientras les lee cuentos

‘Galletas con Santa’ en la biblioteca

Por Diana Aguirre Armendariz

Presidio

Como cada año Santa Claus se da cita en las instalaciones de la biblioteca para compartir con aquellos pequeños un cuento, decorando galletas, y de igual forma escuchar sus deseos para esta Navidad.

El programa de cuentacuentos titulado “Galletas con Santa” comenzó a las 5 de la tarde el miércoles 3 de diciembre, en donde los niños disfrutaron de una fantástica historia narrada por Santa. “Siempre es un honor y un privilegio ver la cara de los niños

de asombro al ver a Santa entrar por la puerta y compartir con ellos”, dijo Carmen Elguezabal, directora de la Biblioteca Pública de Presidio.

Todos los niños al término de la lectura se acercaron a Santa para recibir un presente y a su vez compartir sus deseos para esta Navidad. Asimismo, Elguezabal agradeció a cada uno de los padres por su presencia.

“Agradezco a los padres que hacen siempre el esfuerzo de traer a sus niños, y agradezco también a mi equipo por estar al pendiente de cada detalle”, destacó Elguezabal.



Una presa en un estanque de retención cerca de una casa en Redford permanece sin reparar después de que una inundación rompiera sus muros.

Se desestima la apelación en la demanda por inundación de una residente de Redford

Condado de Presidio

La demanda de una exresidente de Redford contra el condado de Presidio, que alegaba que los 15 años de trabajo del condado en el drenaje de agua en su terreno provocaron que una pared de agua arrasara un estanque de retención e inundara su propiedad, perdió la apelación de un fallo que dictaminó que el condado era inmune a ser demandado por este asunto.

Barbara Baskin, una exarqueóloga propietaria de una casa histórica en las afueras de Redford, demandó al condado alegando que sus acciones provocaron la ruptura de la presa de un estanque de retención durante una fuerte lluvia en marzo de 2023, lo que provocó una inundación que la obligó a huir con su perro a un terreno más elevado. Aunque el condado había pasado años realizando lo que Baskin calificó de trabajo deliberadamente “negligente” en el sistema de drenaje, normalmente gozaría de inmunidad contra demandas como la presentada por Baskin

por daños y perjuicios, ya que la ley estatal ha protegido durante mucho tiempo a las entidades gubernamentales de este tipo de demandas.

Pero en marzo de 2024, el abogado de Baskin, John Sopuch, argumentó durante una audiencia que se aplicaba una excepción a la inmunidad del condado: los daños causados por empleados que conducían maquinaria motorizada, dado el uso de retroexcavadoras, topadoras y camiones por parte del condado en los trabajos que provocaron la ruptura de la presa.

El juez de distrito Roy Ferguson estuvo de acuerdo con el argumento del condado y dijo que carecía de jurisdicción para conocer el caso porque el condado era inmune.

El condado, representado por su abogado de la Asociación de Condados de Texas, Denis Dennis, argumentó que era necesario un “nexo” directo entre la maquinaria y el daño real. Dijo que había transcurrido demasiado tiempo entre las acusaciones de

mantenimiento defectuoso del estanque y la inundación.

Baskin apeló ante el Octavo Tribunal de Apelaciones en El Paso en noviembre de 2024.

El tribunal de apelaciones estuvo de acuerdo con el condado. Si bien declaró en su fallo que el trabajo del condado causó la inundación, sus acciones aún no proporcionaron un “nexo” directo que demostrara una conexión relativamente inmediata entre el trabajo y la inundación.

No se consideraron en absoluto en el caso las alegaciones de Baskin de que el director de Carreteras y Puentes, Ruben Carrasco, comprometió deliberadamente el estanque y las características de drenaje circundantes debido a una rencilla personal. Tampoco se consideró la falta de respuesta de Carrasco a las numerosas instrucciones de la entonces jueza del condado, Cinderela Guevara, para reparar el estanque y el drenaje adyacente. Los argumentos se limitaron a la excepción de inmunidad aplicable a los vehículos de motor.

Abogados de Acosta: Las armas eran para “guardarlas en un lugar seguro”

Evidencia por teléfono no lo que dicen los fiscales

Por Rob D'Amico

Pecos

Los abogados de Tiburcio “Butch” Acosta, residente de Presidio, quien enfrenta tres cargos de delito grave por contrabando de armas al cártel La Línea en México, expusieron los posibles elementos de su defensa en una moción presentada el viernes, argumentando que el tribunal debería permitir que la fianza inicial se mantuviera intacta y que las pruebas de que poseía armas eran simplemente favores a amigos que intentaban no infringir la ley mexicana.

“[Acosta] les dijo a los agentes que había permitido que personas conocidas almacenaran armas de fuego en su propiedad o en sus vehículos estacionados si viajaban a México para que no cruzaran la frontera con armas de fuego, pero negó estar involucrado en cualquier tráfico de armas a través de la frontera”, escribieron los abogados de Acosta en su moción. Está siendo representado por defensores públicos federales.

El fiscal adjunto de Estados Unidos, Steven Spitzer, escribió en una moción para denegar su liberación que los investigadores tenían registros de teléfonos móviles de Acosta, Adalberto Jaquez-Hinojosa y otra fuente con conversaciones sobre el contrabando de armas al cártel La Línea. “Estas conversaciones indicaban que las armas de fuego traficadas se entregaban al acusado en Presidio antes de ser llevadas a través de la frontera”, decía la moción de apelación de la fiscalía. “Las armas de fuego mencionadas incluían un SCAR, que es un rifle de asalto de alta potencia de grado militar, así como otras armas de fuego semiautomáticas muy buscadas por los cárteles”.

Acosta, arrestado el 13 de noviembre, estaba bajo investigación desde 2022, según documentos judiciales. El juez de

distrito estadounidense Davide Counts le concedió inicialmente una fianza de 30.000 dólares (de los cuales 3.000 dólares debían pagarse al tribunal para su liberación) el 1 de diciembre. La fiscalía apeló esa decisión y presentó una moción para denegar su liberación, argumentando que Acosta representaba un riesgo de fuga y un peligro para la comunidad. La defensa, en una moción de respuesta, señaló que, como gerente de la tienda libre de impuestos UETA en Presidio, y simplemente por ser residente de Presidio, era normal haber cruzado la frontera 400 veces en los últimos años, algo que la fiscalía había presentado como un riesgo de fuga.

La cobertura mediática genera preocupación por la seguridad.

La defensa también afirmó que, debido a la publicidad del Big Bend Sentinel y Ojinaga Noticias, existiría un riesgo sustancial de que Acosta entrara a México. “El Sr. Acosta fue identificado públicamente como una persona potencialmente vinculada a La Línea, e incluso si la identificación fue incorrecta o errónea, la vida del Sr. Acosta podría correr peligro mortal si fuera visto o reconocido en México, ya que cualquier persona vinculada a La Línea puede ser asesinada por miembros de facciones rivales del cártel”, afirma la moción. “La evidencia presentada ante el Tribunal, basada en el testimonio del agente del gobierno, indica que la vida del Sr. Acosta estaría en peligro si ingresara a México. Esto solo confirma que el Sr. Acosta no representa un riesgo de fuga”.

La moción también incluye el testimonio del agente de Investigaciones de Seguridad Nacional, Garth Werner. La defensa sostiene que la evidencia de mensajes de texto en el teléfono celular citada por la fiscalía solo demuestra que Acosta “guardaba” armas en su propiedad. “El Sr. Acosta se reunió voluntariamente con agentes de la ATF y de HSI en noviembre de 2024 para una entrevista en Presidio en relación con la investigación de HSI”, relata la moción. “Les dijo

a los agentes que había permitido que personas conocidas por él almacenaran armas de fuego en su propiedad o en sus vehículos estacionados si viajaban a México para que no cruzaran la frontera con armas de fuego, pero negó estar involucrado en el tráfico de armas de fuego a través de la frontera. Tras ser arrestado en noviembre de este año, el Sr. Acosta fue interrogado nuevamente y, cuando se le preguntó cómo se involucró, respondió que otros lo habían “engañado”, lo que el gobierno caracteriza como una “confesión”. El agente Werner testificó que el gobierno no tenía información, fuera del período de 2022, que implicara al Sr. Acosta en ningún delito”.

Acosta y otro hombre arrestado por presunto contrabando con él, Adalberto Jaquez-Hinojosa de Presidio, enfrentan tres cargos por delitos graves relacionados con el contrabando, el más grave de los cuales, el tráfico de armas de fuego, es punible con 15 años de prisión. El juez Counts denegó una moción de la defensa para fijar fianza para Jaquez-Hinojosa, quien es ciudadano mexicano.

La moción también criticó a los fiscales por haber incluido inicialmente a Acosta como no ciudadano en su primera solicitud para detenerlo sin fianza. Inicialmente, el gobierno intentó detener al Sr. Acosta sin fianza, alegando ante el tribunal que no era ciudadano de los Estados Unidos o, alternativamente, que no había sido admitido legalmente para la residencia permanente... esta afirmación era falsa. La audiencia de detención demostró que los agentes encargados del caso estaban plenamente conscientes durante toda la investigación (e incluso durante muchos años antes de la misma) de que el Sr. Acosta es ciudadano estadounidense y que, salvo los años que pasó en la universidad, ha residido toda su vida en Presidio, Texas.

La audiencia sobre las mociones para establecer condiciones de libertad bajo fianza se celebró el miércoles, después del cierre de edición del *Big Bend Sentinel*.

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AROUND THE BIG BEND

Thursday December 11

Hike with Homeless Dogs
10 am-11 am
Davis Mountains State Park
Fort Davis

Social Dance Class
6 pm-7 pm
Studio, 207 E Holland Ave
Alpine

Friday December 12

Cowboy Christmas Ball
8 pm-11 pm
207 E Holland Ave
Alpine

Big Bend Saddlery Christmas Party
5 pm-7 pm
2701 Hwy 90 East
Alpine

Amy LaVere & Will Sexton
7 pm-9 pm
The Ritchey
102 E Murphy Ave
Alpine

Saturday December 13

Elf Playhouse & Movie
4 pm-10 pm
Granada Theatre
207 E Holland Ave
Alpine

Sunday December 14

Open Mic Night: Music
4 pm-7 pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine

Weekly events

Free Zumba Classes
Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:30 pm
Marfa Public Library

Free Meditation Classes
Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6 pm
Marfa Public Library

AA (online)
Saturdays at 12 pm
<https://tinyurl.com/y686nnw2>
Sometimes in-person, Marfa Public Library

NOTICES

RFP #26-01: GRANT ADMINISTRATION SERVICES

PUBLIC NOTICE

Presidio County plans to apply for the upcoming 2026 Texas Community Development Block Grant (TxCDBG) Program of the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). Accordingly, the County is soliciting proposals from Administrative Consultants for application preparation and project administration to provide services associated with the application preparation and project implementation of a TxCDBG contract. Firms and/or individuals should have past experiences with federally funded programs. Please email your proposal to countyauditor@co.presidio.tx.us or submit 5 copies of your proposal of services and a statement of qualifications for the proposed services to the address below:

Presidio County Auditor
Alicia V Sanchez
PO Box 423
Marfa, TX 79843

Proposals shall be received by the County no later than 3:00 pm CST on Friday, January 2, 2026. The County reserves the right to negotiate with any and all individuals or firms that submit proposals, as per the Texas Professional Services Procurement Act and the Uniform Grant and Contract Management Standards. Section 3 Residents and Business Concerns, Minority Business Enterprises, Small Business Enterprises and Women Business Enterprises are encouraged to submit proposals. All respondents must be registered with SAM.gov. The County is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

RFQ #26-01 ENGINEERING/ ARCHITECTURE/ SURVEYING

PUBLIC NOTICE

Presidio County plans to apply for the upcoming 2026 Texas Community Development Block Grant (TxCDBG) Program of the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). Accordingly, the County is seeking to contract with a qualified Engineering/Architectural/Surveying Firm to prepare all preliminary and final design plans and specifications, and to conduct all necessary interim and final inspections. These services are being solicited to assist the County in its application preparation and project implementation of a TxCDBG contract, if awarded, to carry out public infrastructure improvements within the County. Please email your proposal to countyauditorco.presidio.tx.us.

tx.us or submit 5 copies of your proposal of services and a statement of qualifications for the proposed services to the address below:

Presidio County Auditor
Alicia V Sanchez
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CITY OF MARFA REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) FOR AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) SYSTEM

The City of Marfa, Texas is seeking proposals for the procurement of a full Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) System for its water services, including water meters, AMI communications equipment, AMI software and implementation services, and the turnkey installation of the metering and network infrastructure. The project will be accomplished through current funds. Interested individual(s) or firms should submit written proposals to Mayor Manuel Baeza via regular USPS mail, delivery service, or hand delivery to City Hall during business hours. More specific project and submittal requirements are contained in the full RFP, which can be found on the City of Marfa website at cityofmarfa.com. Proposals must be received at the following address no later than 4:00 pm CST on December 29, 2025: City of Marfa Full AMI System for Water Services Attn: Mayor Manuel Baeza 113 S. Highland Avenue P.O. Box 787 (USPS address) Marfa, TX 79843 Proposals were originally requested on this project in February of 2024, but no action was taken by City Council to select a vendor due to a lack of funds. This is a rebid of the same project. Proposals will be opened on December 29, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. CST at Marfa City Hall. City Council plans to select a proposal at a public meeting on December 30, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Casner Room at Marfa City Hall (address above).The City of Marfa will not be responsible in the event that the U.S. Postal Service or any other carrier system fails to deliver the proposal to the City by the given deadline above, or for any delays in email delivery.

CROSSWORD

Edited by David Steinberg December 4, 2025

ACROSS

1 Person who's on the trail

6 "See you later!"

9 2025 Best Picture winner

14 Savory flavor

15 Kendrick Lamar's music style

16 Iraqi currency

17 Silent Marx brother

18 Boxer Muhammad

19 T-shirt style

20 "Curd-filled dairy product

23 Drag queen's approval

24 Not online, to a texter

25 "Creamy condiment

32 Put back to zero

33 "You've got mail" co.

34 French water brand

36 Snakelike fish

37 Doom and ____

39 "Frozen" queen

40 "Dark green herb

43 Identity thief's target, for short

44 Japanese demon of folklore

45 NFL great Manning

46 Stubborn beast

47 Raptors, on scoreboards

48 "Maya and the Robot" author ____ L. Ewing

50 Food made in one's own kitchen ... or what the ingredients in the starred clues' answers could be used for, fittingly?

55 Mushroom in much Asian cuisine

57 Place to wear safety goggles and a white coat

58 Put into law

61 Ambulance alarm

62 ____ and left no crumbs (did amazing)

63 Indian currency

64 Trolley bell sound

65 "How come?"

66 Airplane walkway

DOWN

1 "Uhh ... wha?"

2 Apple on a desk?

3 Corn syrup brand

4 What's left when kids go to college

5 It's "read" to a rowdy crowd

6 Boast

7 Connecticut college

8 ____ Games ("Fortnite" developer)

9 Unfavorable

10 What cats are said to be gifted with

11 White Monopoly bills

12 The Tour de France or Kentucky Derby

13 Noah's ship

21 Shade of blond or gray

22 He/him/____

25 Instagram vids

26 "The Chronicles of Narnia" lion

27 ____ Lama

28 Santa's landing spot

29 Get married like Romeo and Juliet

30 Wafer brand

31 Argon and krypton, for two

32 Sports officials

35 Opposing votes

37 Romantasy or new adult

38 "No Time To Die" actor Rami

41 Imminent

42 French region with beach resorts

47 Monopoly piece

49 Purple "Inside Out 2" emotion

50 Jewish wedding dance

51 Toy grabber in a machine

52 Promise

53 Heed

54 Holes in knowledge

55 "Exit full screen" key

56 Zero

59 Animation frame

60 Tie-dyed shirt

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

12/4 © 2025 Andrews McMeel Universal
www.upuzzles.com

12/11 **House Salad by Zachary Edward-Brown**

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

SUDUKO


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

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★☆

SOLUTION:

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



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Ruling ends lawsuit over gate access

Presidio County

A lawsuit filed by Mary Baxter and Neil Chavigny trying to keep a gated road to their property in Western Presidio County closed has ended after a federal court ruled that the two did not timely file a notice for appeal, according to court records.

District Judge Genie Wright had ruled against them in November 2024, agreeing with the plaintiff—Maria Maurial, a land

speculator and investor—that Naegele Springs Road was a county road and that it was illegal to close it off from the public with a gate. Baxter and Chavigny added Presidio County as a co-defendant to put the burden on the local government to prove whether or not the road was open to all. After learning that Maurial had gone through the gate without their permission, Baxter and Chavigny decided

not to continue the practice of giving neighbors the code. Maurial sued to open up the gate.

The county, in its arguments, relied on one part of state law that said a road declared public by a vote of the commissioners court, as did a 1975 vote, could only be made non-public with another vote. Big Bend Sentinel's attempts to clarify the issue and access documents was stifled by rulings that road records were

not public due to “pending litigation.” Wright's ruling in a summary judgement also awarded \$30,157 to the county for attorney fees. Baxter and Chavigny planned to appeal the ruling at the 8th Court of Appeals in El Paso, but the plaintiffs objected to the filing, saying it didn't meet a deadline after the summary judgement. The court agreed in an October 3 ruling and dismissed the case.

Homegrown chief aims to build

Continued from page 1

maintenance and transporting of the evidence for the high-profile case.

“Basically, I was the go-between, between the Attorney General's Office and the Texas Rangers,” who handled most of the investigation for the case, Caughman said. “If it was a major piece of evidence that was in regard to the actual case, it all came to me.”

Verk was a 21-year-old Sul Ross State University student when she went missing in October 2016. Her body was discovered in a shallow grave in the desert four months later. In May 2019, Alpine resident Robert

Fabian was found guilty of murder in the case and sentenced to life in prison. He was Verk's boyfriend at the time of her disappearance.

The job of managing the evidence was made more difficult by the large number of items, 300, listed as evidence, and a change of venue which moved the trial to Lockhart, Caughman said.

“So, I had to get those 300-plus pieces of evidence and be in charge of its custody and safety from Alpine all the way over there too,” he said.

Regarding the future of the department, Caughman said he would like to continue the improvements and growth started by Chief Losoya.

“Here recently, under Chief

Losoya's leadership, we've grown ... in the services that the department provides.” Caughman included a bike unit and canine unit among the new services that he would like to expand. Caughman added that he hopes to expand the department's investigative unit and increase training for patrol staff in evidence collection and crime scene investigations.

Caughman also hopes to maintain the connection between the department and the community, which he said Losoya maintained.

Playing the part of Blue Santa when he was younger gave him an understanding of the needs of the community, Caughman said.

The character of Blue Santa

hands out gifts to children whose families may not have the means to buy them. He has also worked behind the scenes to raise money for the department's Blue Santa project.

“You know our Blue Santa doesn't just give kids gifts and stuff like that. It helps people that have problems with finances. Like when they can't pay their utilities.”

Caughman's educational background includes graduating from Alpine High School in 1995, graduating from the Sul Ross State University Law Enforcement Academy in 2000 and completing the FBI National Academy Associates of Texas 2024 Command College at the University of Texas at El Paso.

OBITUARY

School district worker enjoyed conversations with everyone

Joe Salcido was born on September 16, 1962, in Carlsbad, New Mexico, to his parents, the late Esau and Herminia Salcido. He spent his early childhood there before the family moved to Fort Davis Texas, where he graduated from high school.

In 1986, he married the love of his life, Lety, and together they built a beautiful life over 39 years of marriage. They married in Odessa and later moved to Marfa. Joe had lots of work experience but lastly worked as a maintenance worker for the Marfa Independent School District. His favorite part of the job wasn't the work itself, but the opportunity it gave him to connect with and talk to everyone. Joe had a profound love for people that extended far beyond his workplace; everywhere he went, he sought out conversation and connection.

He will be remembered for his exceptionally kind, generous, and happy nature. Joe was always looking for ways to make people smile and laugh with his sense of humor and quick wit. He truly had a big heart and his greatest source of pride was his family.

Joe is lovingly survived by his wife, Lety Salcido; his son, Brian Salcido; and his daughter, Ruby Salcido.

He is also survived by his siblings and their spouses: Dorthy Lopez (Mingo Lopez), Mary Chavez (Eugene Chavez), Carlos Salcido, Velma Salcido (Joe Prieto), Silvestra Salcido, and Hooper Salcido (Rosie Salcido)

Joe was preceded in death by his parents, Esau and Herminia Salcido, and his brothers, Isaac Salcido and Rudy Salcido (Hilda Valerio).



Joe Salcido

Accused teacher remains in county jail

Continued from page 1

program at the district; he remains in jail on a \$170,000 bond.

Under Texas law, the state must be ready to prosecute a defendant—usually with an indictment—within 90 days, or the judge must then release the defendant or substantially reduce

their bond. In some cases, delays by the defense will extend this timeline. Martinez was arrested on September 16, so that deadline would be December 15.

The 83th Assistant District Attorney, Bill Parham, said Monday that there are no grand juries scheduled for the remainder of this year. When reached, Mar-

tinez's attorney said he could not comment on the case.

The attorney for another Marfa ISD teacher accused of improper relationship with a student and arrested in August, Rebecca Ontiveros, said Sunday that nothing has proceeded in her case. She was released on a \$75,000 bond.

CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

Supreme Court upholds state's redrawn congressional map

The U.S. Supreme Court's 6-3 decision to reverse a lower court's ruling and uphold the mid-decade redrawn congressional map for Texas sent candidates scrambling to file or opt to retire with the filing deadline on Monday, December 8. The map is likely to give Republican candidates wins in up to five congressional districts previously held by Democrats.

The majority on the court agreed that the redistricting was done for partisan purposes, calling it “indisputable,” The Dallas Morning News reported. Those opposing it claim it was redrawn to dilute the voting power of the state's minorities in Houston, Dallas and South Texas.

Six Texas GOP members of Congress are leaving

At least six Texas Republican members of Congress are retiring or seeking a higher office, the Houston Chronicle reported. The latest to announce his retirement is U.S. Rep. Troy Nehls, R-Richmond, one of President Trump's most ardent backers in that chamber. His brother, Trevor, has announced he plans to run for that seat.

Others planning to leave when their term ends in 2027 include U.S. Reps. Jody Arrington, R-Plainview; Morgan Luttrell, R-Magnolia; Michael McCaul, R-Austin; Wesley Hunt, R-Houston, who is running for the U.S. Senate spot now held by John Cornyn; and Chip Roy, R-Hays County, who is running for Texas attorney general.

Republicans currently hold a 219-seat majority in the House,

with Democrats holding 213 seats. There are three vacancies.

'Bounty hunter' law targets abortion pills

A new Texas law targeting women accessing abortion pills shipped from out of state allows private citizens to sue out-of-state abortion pill prescribers, manufacturers and distributors, the Houston Chronicle reported. Each violation could bring with it \$100,000 in damages, similar to the enforcement mechanism used in 2021 to ban abortions in the state after six weeks of pregnancy.

The law targets groups that operate outside of Texas and ship abortion pills to people in the state as well as doctors in states where abortion is still legal who write prescriptions to Texas women. They will now be open to civil liability claims if they “knowingly fail” to prevent their abortion drugs from reaching Texas.

The bill's author, state Rep. Jeff Leach, R-Plano, said the goal of his bill was to protect mothers from the potential side effects of the pills. However, research shows that complications from abortion pills are rare. Their use is supported by major medical associations.

State's 'bathroom bill' now in effect

Transgender people in Texas will no longer legally be allowed to use multi-stall restrooms that do not match their gender identity at birth, as a new law took effect December 4, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

The law applies to all public buildings as well as public schools and universities.

The bathroom bill passed last September after a decade of failed attempts. When similar legislation was introduced previously, some members of the business community argued its passage would harm Texas' ability to attract new business and jobs.

Rather than punishing individuals who use a bathroom not conforming to their birth gender, the law requires public agencies to take “every reasonable step” to ensure the law is being followed. Violations can be reported to the attorney general, who could file lawsuits and seek fines.

“The actual legislation doesn't really tell folks what they should be doing as far as enforcement is concerned,” Brad Pritchett, CEO of Equality Texas, an LGBTQ advocacy nonprofit, said.

“What it does is it kind of creates a kind of threat to any municipality. At any time, someone could accuse them of being noncompliant with the law.”

The law does not apply to non-public spaces, including private universities or colleges.

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: gbborders@texaspress.com.



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The Marfa Housing Authority has a corporation with the same board.

Housing authority increases rent

Continued from page 1

Jesse Williams, MHA and MPM executive director, said there are no current plans for affordable housing at the site, and the purchase was an investment to generate revenue for the authority.

“Every move we make is to further our goals of not only providing affordable housing, but to ultimately increase it,” Williams said. “We are completely on our own when it comes to getting enough money to accomplish these goals for Marfa. We have never received a single donation nor was one ever offered. Money has never and will never simply fall into our laps. So it is up to us to make the right moves in order to generate more money in order to accomplish these goals and to bring more affordable housing units to the residents of Marfa.”

Williams said that the MPM paid cash for the property, although he refused to disclose the purchase price. Sources close to the sale, who did not want to be named publicly, said the price was between \$375,000 and \$400,000.

Williams said MPM will be able to generate new revenue off the deal, which will be used to bolster

their affordable housing initiatives and maintain their current apartments. The MHA provides affordable housing subsidized by Section 8 HUD vouchers that pay a portion of rents depending on the financial situation of the tenant, along with regular unsubsidized apartments in the block surrounding the MHA building at 510 S. Kelly. The entities have 74 apartment units, three cabins intended for police officers and teachers, and one cabin intended to be a short-term rental to generate income.

Williams said he still considers the rents on the commercial properties to be “affordable” and that the investment was solid.

Plans for the auto shop space will be discussed by the board, he added, but there are no concrete plans for the use of the space, which includes a large metal building. Williams also dispelled another incorrect detail of the sale—that the realtor handling the transaction was related to a MPM board member, which is not the case, he said.

Board Members Cash and Catano did not respond to requests for comment. Chavira, Walstrom and Hebert did not want to comment.

Appeal denied in Redford flooding suit

Presidio County

A former Redford resident’s lawsuit against Presidio County, alleging its 15 years of work on water drainage on her land resulted in a wall of water crashing through a detention pond and flooding her homestead, lost her appeal of a ruling that said the county was immune from being sued over the matter.

Barbara Baskin, a former archaeologist who owned a historic home outside of Redford, sued the county saying its actions led to the failure of a retention pond dam wall that burst in a heavy rain in March 2023 and came roaring to her home, forcing her to flee with her dog to higher ground.

Even though the county had

spent years performing what Baskin called purposely “negligent” work on the drainage system, normally it would have immunity against lawsuits like Baskin filed for damages, since state law has long protected government entities from lawsuits. But In March 2024, Baskin’s attorney John Sopuch argued during a hearing that an exception under law to county immunity applied here—damages caused by employees driving motor-driven equipment—with the county’s use of backhoes, bulldozers and trucks in work that led to the dam break.

District Judge Roy Ferguson agreed with the county’s argument and said it lacked the jurisdiction to hear the case be-

Candidates file for March primaries

Continued from page 1

republicanos suelen ganar la contienda final. El condado de Brewster, que se ha vuelto cada vez más republicano, aún se considera un condado indeciso, por lo que las primarias podrían no ser el factor decisivo allí.

El enfrentamiento más importante probablemente será el del juez del condado de Presidio, Joe Portillo, quien intentará conservar su puesto frente al desafío del excomisionado del Precinto 4, David Beebe. Beebe había anunciado su candidatura prematuramente, contraviniendo la ley estatal, y se vio obligado a renunciar automáticamente. Posteriormente, Portillo nombró a Frank “Buddy” Knight para ocupar el cargo.

The following are local candidates:

Presidio County Democrats
County Judge: José “Joe” Portillo Jr. (incumbent)
County Judge: David Beebe
County Commissioner Precinct 4 Susan Hays
County Commissioner Precinct 2: Margarito Hernández (incumbent)
County Commissioner Precinct 2: Fernando Juárez
County Commissioner Precinct 2: Jesús “Junie” Herrera
County Clerk/District Clerk: Carolina Catano (incumbent, appointed)
County Clerk/District Clerk: Brenda Pando Covos
County Treasurer: Florcita Zubia (incumbent, appointed)
County Treasurer: Jusby Vasquez
Justice of the Peace Precinct 1: Dina Jo Marquez
Justice of the Peace Precinct 2: Bianca Martinez Bailon
Justice of the Peace Precinct 2: Jessica Murillo
Justice of the Peace Precinct 2: Angel Miguel Campos
Democratic County Chair: Irma Juárez

Presidio County Republican Party
Justice of the Peace Precinct 2:

Amabilia “Amy” Galindo for Justice of the Peace
Precinct 1 Party Chair: William Kim Thornsburg (unopposed, not on ballot)
Republican County Chair: Daniel “Dan” Dunlap

Brewster County Republicans
County Commissioner Precinct 4: William K. “Mo” Morrow (incumbent)
County Judge: Greg Henington (incumbent)

Brewster County Democrats
County Commissioner Precinct 2: Sara Allen Colando
County Clerk: Sarah Lujan
County Treasurer: Julie Morton (incumbent)
Justice of Peace Pct 1: Felipe Fierro
Justice of Peace Pct 3: Susana Gonzales
Democratic Party County Chair: Mary Bell Lockhart (incumbent)
Democratic Party County Chair: Holly Blankenship
Precinct 6 Party Chair: Barbara Hines

Jeff Davis County Republicans
County Commissioner Precinct 2: Roy Hurley (incumbent)
County Commissioner Precinct 4: Tommy Vick (appointed)
County Clerk: Jennifer Wright (incumbent)
Justice of the Peace: Mary Ann Luedecke (incumbent)
County Treasurer: Dawn Kitts (incumbent)
County Treasurer: Brittany Escobedo
County Judge: Curtis Evans (incumbent)
County Judge: Buster Mills
Republican Party Chair: Jake Knobloch

Jeff Davis County Democrats
County Commissioner Precinct 4: Albert Miller
Democratic County Chair: Andrea Goss

Big Bend Sentinel will report on state candidates that cover the tri-county area in upcoming issues.

cause the county was immune. The county, represented by its Texas Association of Counties attorney Denis Dennis, argued that there needed to be a direct “nexus” between the equipment and the actual damage. He said that too much time had passed between the allegations of faulty pond maintenance work and the flooding.

Baskin appealed to the 8th Court of Appeals in El Paso in November 2024.

The appeals court agreed with the county. Although it stated in its ruling that the county’s work caused the flooding, its actions still didn’t provide a direct “nexus” showing that there was a fairly immediate connection

between the work and the flooding. Not considered at all in the case were allegations by Baskin that Road and Bridge Director Ruben Carrasco purposely compromised the pond and the surrounding drainage features because of a personal grudge.

Also not considered were Carrasco’s failure to respond to numerous directions from then County Judge Cinderela Guevara to fix the pond and adjoining drainage. Arguments were confined to the motor-driven-vehicle exception to immunity.

Baskin said she has since abandoned the home and moved to Alpine after spending thousands of dollars trying to shore up the flow of rainwater away from her home.

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OPINION



Regarding ‘County eyes AI phone tracking’ by Sam Karas

I do not really know what Placer.ai promised you, but after about 15 minutes of research, I’m positive it’s garbage tech, complete AI snake-oil, designed to collect speculative venture capital investments, then grift money out localities and commercial real estate developers. Real GIS people, who rely on actual data and science, seem to hate it a lot.

For example, this quote from Visit Big Bend’s Robert Alvarez makes no sense: “Then it does that whole Big Brother thing,” he explained. “It finds out where they’re from, what their income is, etc.—the kind of stuff [that’s generated] when you allow apps to track you.” First off, people rarely describe “Big Brother” style surveillance as a positive. Weird choice there. Secondly, there are countless reports of Placer.ai simply making up demographic and geographic data. Of course, this is to be expected from any company that describes itself as “AI.”

Third, the only way Placer.ai is able to collect any data at all is by integrating with in-app advertising, and only then, among people who didn’t know to turn off location services (as Alvarez alluded to in his quote).

And, it’s not like people go to national parks with an expectation that their smart phones will remain particularly smart. Cell service is spotty and data service is nearly nonexistent, and that is, in fact, a good thing when going on a nature vacation.

At any rate, I hope you’re not burning too many of my tax dollars on this scam (why yes, I am a Brewster County tax payer!), and I urge you to do a little more research on other people’s experiences with Placer.ai. For example, you might want to check in with the Madison, Wisconsin, urban development folks, now that it’s been a couple years since they started experimenting with it:

TOD BEARDSLEY
Alpine

Marfa Book Co. features Terry’s ‘watercolors’

Join Marfa Book Co. on Friday, December 12, from 5 to 7 p.m., for an opening of watercolors, an exhibition of new work by Nick Terry. The event also features “Sonic Selections” by Jean Goehring.

This is the fourth exhibition presented with Terry, in addition to several Dersu Collective fundraising exhibitions and occasional temporary presentations of his work over a period of almost 20 years.

The show runs through the end of December for the gallery, Fridays and Saturdays from noon to 6 p.m. at 300 S Kelly St. Owner Tim Johnson will be taking a break from running the bookstore as a regular commercial venue starting at the end of December, so he said he hopes to see a big crowd attend.



Marfa Book Co. will be temporarily closing at the end of the year.

The accountability Texas ignores

By MICHELLE RINEHART

TEXAS public schools are relentlessly accountable to the state and their communities, but the state is rarely accountable back to its schools. This power imbalance curtails schools’ ability to actualize their community’s vision for their children, particularly in rural Texas.

It’s time the state of Texas took reciprocal accountability seriously. Reciprocal accountability means that, yes, Texas schools are, and should be, accountable to their local communities and the state for the outcomes they produce. From annual financial audits to locally-elected school boards to publicly available data to living and serving alongside our stakeholders, public schools are accountable to their communities every day.

However, the state must also be accountable for the conditions they create and the inputs they provide—funding, resources, policies, and, too often, unfunded mandates—that either accelerate educational outcomes or stymy them.

Current state leaders have overseen Texas public schools for more than two decades. Yet the mark of their leadership is decreased funding and teacher pay on an inflation-adjusted basis, ballooning unfunded mandates, and a crisis-level teacher shortage; collectively, these conditions result in relatively stagnant academic outcomes for Texas kids. These impacts are felt most acutely in rural Texas, where the most chronically underfunded schools and underpaid teachers are concentrated.

Frankly, Texas cannot further underfund, undermine, and undercut its public schools to their next level of excellence. State leaders often willfully ignore the accountability they must

have to our schools and their communities.

Unfortunately, this accountability gap continues to widen between state-level expectations and state-level leadership for public schools. Despite record-setting surpluses in the last two Texas legislative sessions, persistently underfunded needs went unaddressed by state leaders. The special education funding gap remains around \$2 billion statewide. The transportation funding gap, which disproportionately underfunds rural districts, remains around \$1 billion.

Nuances within the state funding formulas, such as school underfunding due to property value disputes between local county appraisal districts and the Comptroller’s Office, were not rectified, continuing to cut hundreds of millions of dollars in funding from rural schools across the state. While increases for teacher pay were finally provided this year, they were not funded for all teachers, only partially closed the inflation-adjusted pay gap created over the last decade, and were funded so indiscriminately that they did not meaningfully close the rural-urban pay gap statewide, let alone move Texas into a nationally-competitive teacher pay range.

What did this Legislature produce for Texas public schools, though? Countless new mandates, many of which are not aligned with the drivers of academic improvement. Since June, school districts have received more than 100 new “to the administrator addressed” correspondences from the Texas Education Agency, outlining new state requirements with tight timelines, confounding guidance, and no consideration for local capacity. These requirements are particularly burdensome to rural schools, which are not staffed with compliance departments to

review and act upon these ever-increasing list of state mandates.

To be clear, rural communities bear the cost of the state’s inaction on behalf of Texas public schools. The absence of reciprocal accountability harms rural students and communities by creating conditions where programs are in danger of being cut every year, student supports are limited, and teacher recruitment and retention is a persistent challenge. Undermining rural schools undermines the economic stability of small town Texas. This is a perplexing juxtaposition to Texas’ stated commitment to economic growth and fostering a future-ready workforce.

Accountability without support is not accountability; it’s an abdication of responsibility.

It’s time for the state to fulfill its commitment to the promise of public education. This would include sustained, predictable school funding indexed to inflation and competitive on the national level. State accountability would also include targeted rural support strategies, such as addressing rural funding gaps in transportation, special education, and staff compensation, while reducing, not increasing, stifling compliance mandates. State leaders would also redesign the school accountability system to include not just outcomes, but also state-controlled inputs, like state investment (or underinvestment) and resource equity. This would serve to illustrate the reciprocal accountability, or lack thereof, between local school districts and the state agencies which create the conditions for their success.

Rural Texas is keeping its promise, operationalizing our communities’ vision for our children through our public schools. It’s time for the state to do the same. It’s time for state leaders to own their historic underinvestment in rural Texas and then operationalize policies and resources that undo these decades of neglect.

Texas, the state with the largest number of rural schools and the largest number of rural districts, must be accountable to these schools and communities. Strong rural schools mean a strong Texas. We need both, now more than ever.

Rinehart is the Alpine ISD superintendent.



Alpine ISD Superintendent Michelle Rinehart

BIG BEND
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ART
Sentinel

‘Ghost Keepers’ brings ancient ice and pillars to Rule

RULE GALLERY is pleased to present Ghost Keepers, a duo exhibition featuring works by Andrea Caretto and Shoshannah White. Together, their practices consider the material world as a site of memory and a witness to change—from global climate histories locked in ice and minerals to the intimate traces of a life carried through objects and touch. An opening reception, with the artists in attendance, will be held on Saturday, December 13, from 5 to 8 p.m. at the gallery, 204 E. San Antonio Street in Marfa.

Shoshannah White’s work looks to the planet as an archive. Her Mass Balance series includes cameraless photograms

made in direct contact with ancient ice core samples from Greenland, North America and Antarctica, created inside the National Science Foundation Ice Core Facility freezer. These prints are paired with images documenting permafrost melt and methane-emitting lakes in Alaska—images that place the climate record held in ice against the climate in rapid flux. Additional works extend White’s interest in matter as recorder: photograms made through analog processes that blend melted glacier ice with coal collected on-site from synthetic landscapes where past and present collapse into one surface. Throughout, White explores deep time through visual narratives rooted in materiality

and our connection to, and disconnection from the natural world.

Andrea Caretto approaches memory through the scale of the body and the domestic. Her pillars are vertical structures of plaster, concrete, and resin that embed worn clothing, family letters, linens, nests, pollen, and earth.

While the pillar historically symbolizes strength and permanence, Caretto instead reveals the fragility of the human experience to show the power and potency of life, even in its dissolution. Cracks, edges, and worn surfaces betray the pressure of holding—the weight of the personal history sealed within. Borrowing from a language of construction and

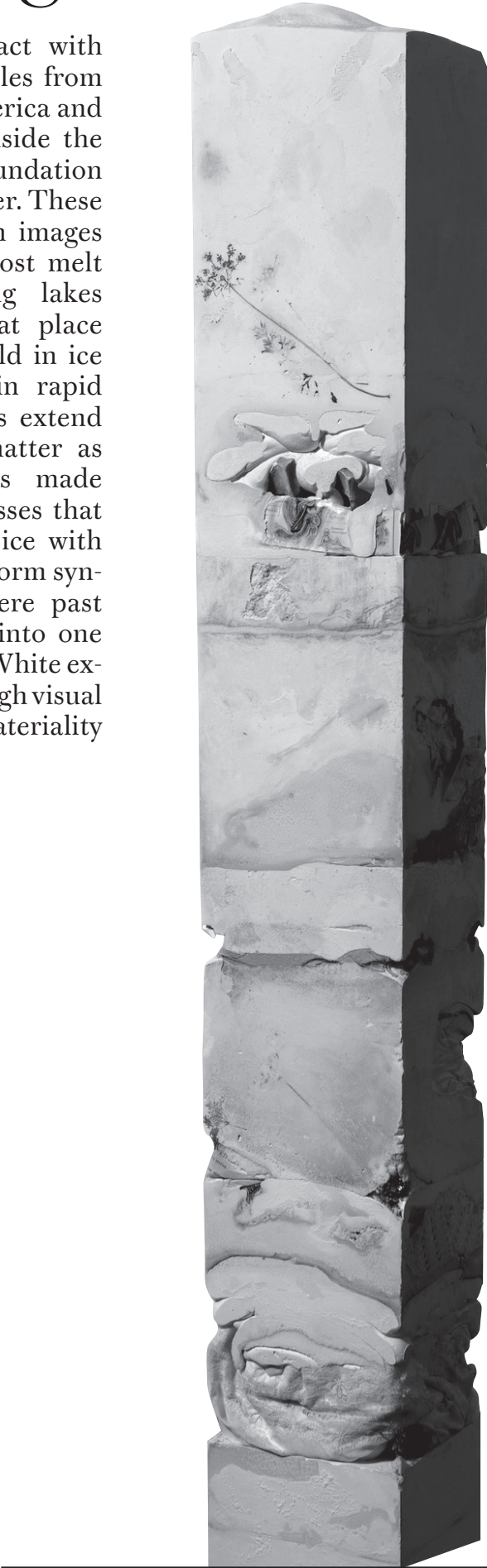
erosion, her sculptures oscillate between monument and archive. Each pillar becomes a time capsule, where the small artifacts of daily life operate as fossils of touch, care, commemoration, and loss.

Placed in dialogue, White and Caretto shape a macro-micro field of memory. White traces deep time and planetary records; Caretto houses the remnants of individual experience. Both turn to matter as a keeper of what would otherwise slip away, yet both point to the fragility of preservation—whether ice melts or letters crumble.

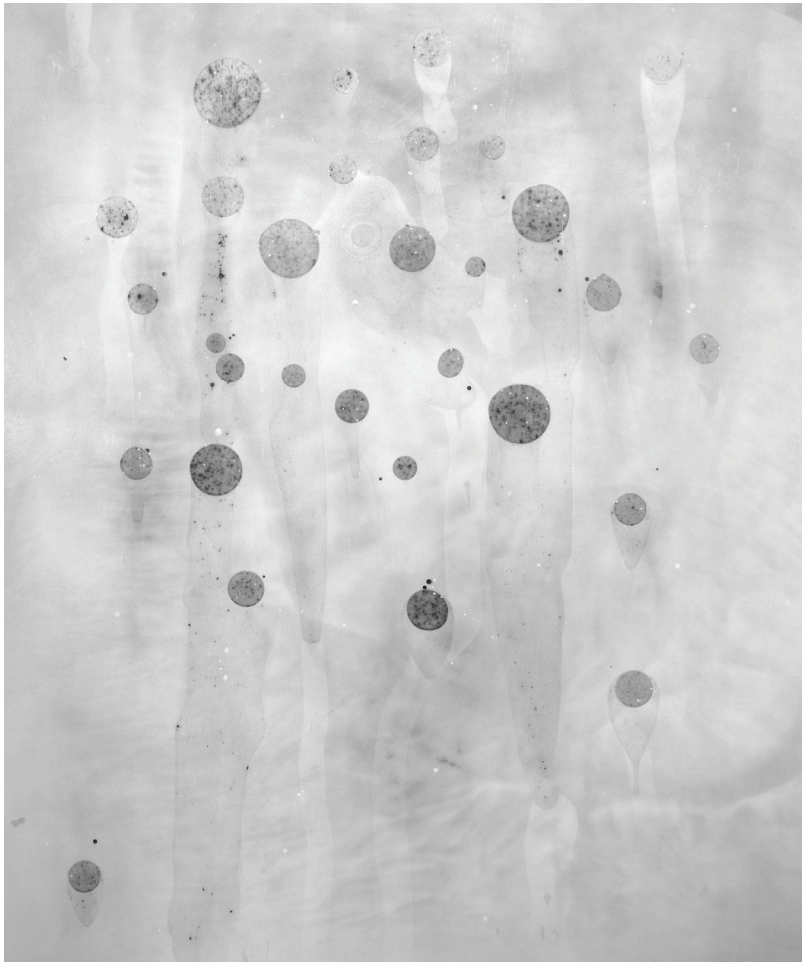
Ghost Keepers reflects on what the world holds, what we hold, and how time presses against both. The works will be on view through February 7, 2026, at



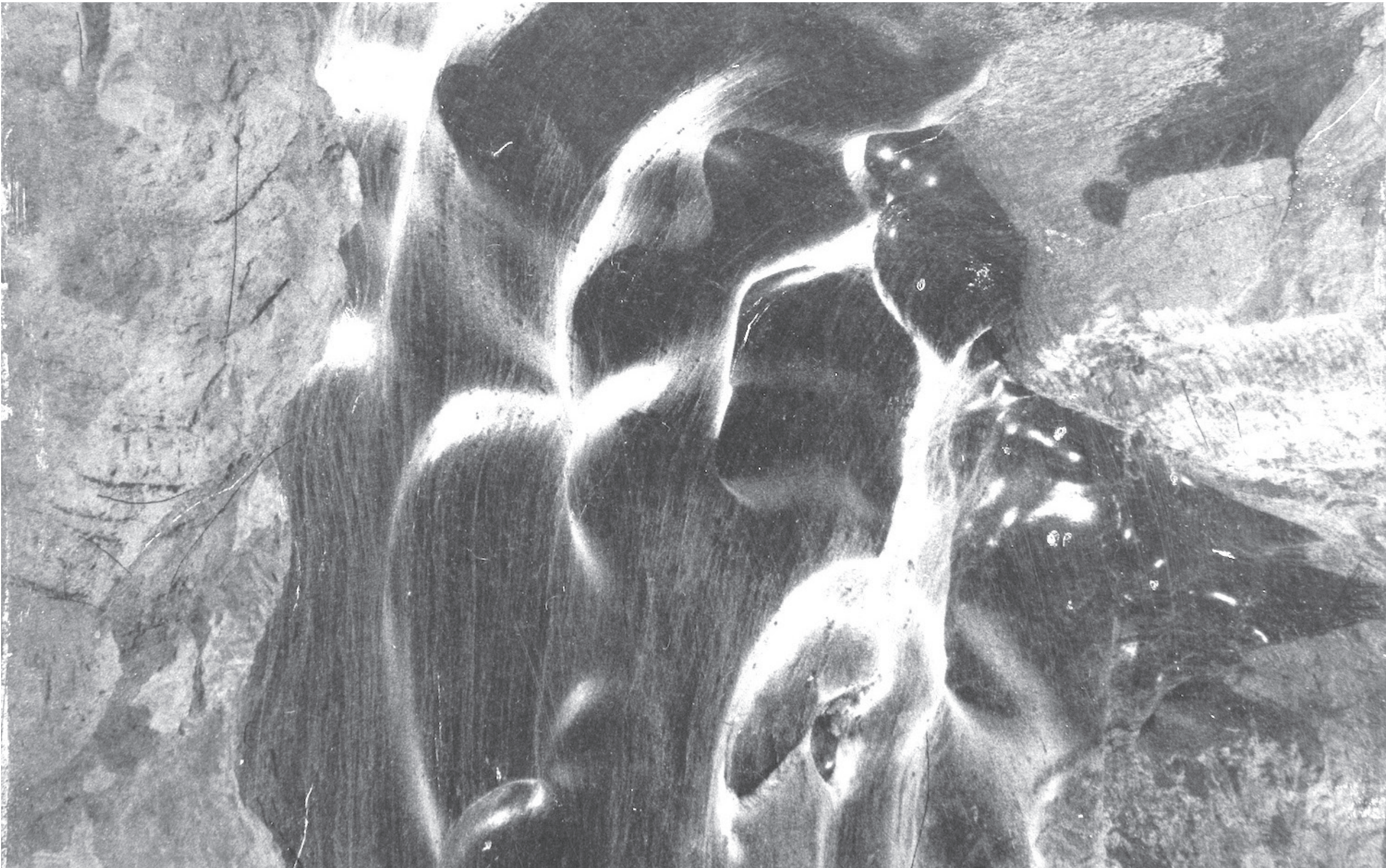
Andrea Caretto, *Elizabeth*, 2025, pearls, buttons, campaign sign, ballot, glass, in concrete, 36 x 5 x 23 1/2 inches



Andrea Caretto, *Disobedient (Pillar of Salt)*, 2025, salt, *Queen Anne’s Lace*, Planned Parenthood manual-1950, pearls, wrapping paper, eggshells, Krylon house paint in plaster, 80 x 6 x 7 1/2 inches



Shoshannah White, *Big Trail Lake Water #5, Invert (ed. 2/5)*, 2024/2025, pigment print on panel with cold wax, mica dust, gold and silver leaf, 48 x 36 x 2 inches



Shoshannah White, *Permafrost Ice Wedge Formation #42 (ed. 1/5)*, 2025, pigment print on panel with cold wax, mica dust, gold and silver leaf, 15 x 15 inches (framed)