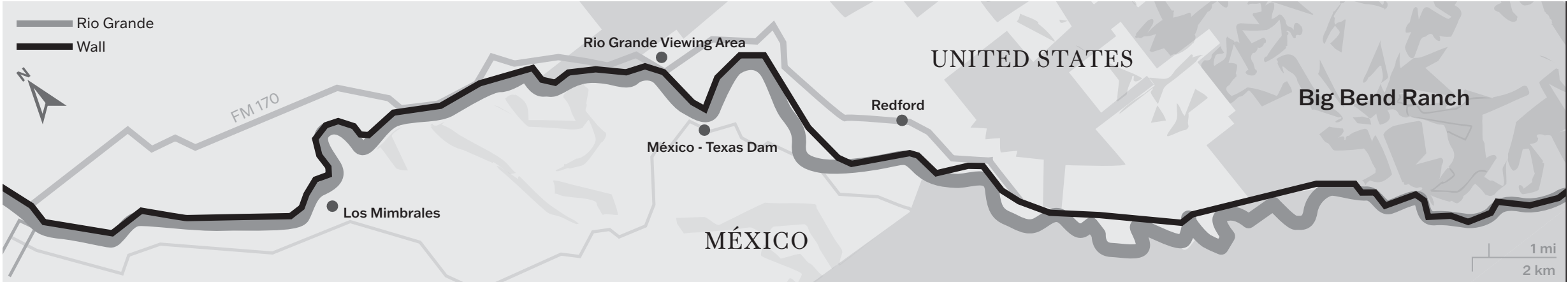


BORDER WALL TO START CONSTRUCTION



While the Department of Homeland Security gave many signals that “smart walls,” combinations of physical and technological barriers, would be coming to the Big Bend, recent conversations on the border indicate the time has come. While much of the plans remain shrouded in secrecy—for now—indications are that federal officials are actively talking to landowners to secure sites to get construction rolling. *Big Bend Sentinel* will be covering the progress from every different angle, since the impacts to the region will be profound.

Substation rezoning application submitted

AEP, the electric utility providing power to Marfa and Presidio, has submitted a new application for the city to rezone a plot of land for a new electric substation—after its original application spurred controversy among Marfa residents last year.

On January 19, AEP submitted an application for a special use permit rezoning, which required much more detail on the proposal and the ability for officials to impose “conditions” for approving a rezoning.

AEP’s proposal involves purchasing an approximately four-acre lot at the corner of Oak and Apache streets and erecting a new substation—eight times larger than the existing Oak Street station near Sal Si Puedes and triple the capacity, increasing from 5 MVA to 15 MVA (megavolt-amperes)—an estimated \$7 million to \$10 million endeavor. Since the land is zoned residential, AEP needs the rezoning to industrial to proceed with the purchase of the property to build the substation.

Some residents who live across the street from the land, as well as a majority of Marfans speaking at public hearings, objected to the possible impacts of substation—sound and appearance, for example—and setting a precedent for rezoning that didn’t fit the city’s comprehensive plan. They also questioned why AEP didn’t do a more thorough study of alternative sites. Others supported the plan citing the need for additional electric capacity and AEP’s history of being a good neighbor.

Continued on page 3

INSIDE



Art: **Cody Barber**. p 10

Sentinel News Project



A hiker relaxes at the Hoodoos, a popular trail, river run and swimming hole in the path of the wall.

Native sons vie for county seat

Presidio posts up for grabs

By **KATE BUBACZ**

Presidio

In the March 3 Democratic primary, Presidio has a three-way race among native sons for its only open seat on the county commissioners court. The incumbent, Margarito Hernandez, is being challenged by City Council member Fernando Juarez, and by businessman and third-generation Presidio resident Junie Herrera.

Hernandez has been county commissioner for Precinct 2 since 2024. Previously, he had served as Presidio chief of police before abruptly resigning in 2023 after a formal reprimand was issued for not completing required paperwork for Operation Lone Star.

The county commissioner is tasked with approving budgets, managing infrastructure projects such as roads and emergency services, and setting policy at the county level.

During his time as county commissioner, Hernandez has been a cautious lawmaker, working in support of others’ motions, especially in regards to financial matters. He voted in support of a small increase in property taxes and additional state grants for law enforcement and EMS services, and opposed certain salary increases for county staff. From his voting record and limited discussions in court, it is hard to tell his commitments or goals as a commissioner. Hernandez did not file a campaign finance report and did not respond to multiple requests for comment. “Presidio

is in total control of its destiny,” said Fernando Juarez, one of Hernandez’s challengers. Juarez has ambitious goals as county commissioner. He sees the potential in Presidio, pointing to increased tourism, school enrollment and the proposed geothermal and railroad projects. He wants to continue to facilitate economic cooperation with Mexico so that the county can further benefit from the port of entry.

“I intend to ensure our longstanding partnerships with federal agencies remain intact and that residents of Presidio County do not lose their civil liberties or constitutional rights,” he said.

Juarez was born and raised in Presidio before relocating to El Paso to serve in law enforcement. He served throughout the Texas border region and retired from the Border Patrol in 2025, and joined the City Council by appointment in 2024. Juarez said he is a strong advocate for political participation among citizens, and sees apathy to the political process as a serious issue within the county.

When asked about his frustrations about serving on the council, Juarez’s response was quick. “Hearing the words, ‘We can’t do that.’ We settle for unacceptable results for fear of trying novel approaches or solutions.” One of his primary goals is to engage the public more actively in the political process.

During his time on the council, Juarez has made efforts to improve the appearance of Presidio, advocating for the cleanup of the city via code enforcement

Continued on page 4

Feds seek staging areas for construction

By **ROB D’AMICO** and **SAM KARAS**

After months of talk about “smart” barriers along the Rio Grande, a traditional steel wall is nearing construction.

Recent reports from landowners, park staff, and Border Patrol agents confirm the federal government is actively seeking leases for construction staging areas, signaling an immediate, irreversible change.

While it’s been known widely reported since September that the Department of Homeland Security intends to build a “smart” border wall—border barriers—of various types—in the Big Bend, recent reports from landowners, state park staff and Border Patrol agents indicate a traditional steel-bollard wall project is beginning, with the federal government seeking leases for “staging areas” for crews and equipment.

The scenic landscape along the river Rio Grande could be transformed into hundreds of miles of new patrol roads, steel walls, lights, sensors and cameras that could radically change the way Big Bend residents experience the rugged landscape that drew many to call it home.

“Is it worth billions of dollars and destroying the environment

and our access to the river?” asked Charlie Angell, who runs a river guide and expeditions business out of Polvo, a historic community on the river outside of Redford, Texas. “And our president is supposed to be this hot, top-notch real estate guy. How wise is it to ruin all this riverfront property with a damn wall?”

The border in the Big Bend could soon be abuzz with activity. Not with migrants, of course—the Trump administration’s aggressive approach has led to record-low apprehensions—but with construction crews, kicked-up dust and the ceaseless beeping of heavy equipment bringing the president’s dream of a coast-to-coast wall along the Mexican border to fruition.

In October, the Big Bend Sentinel reported on a 20-plus mile concertina wire fence under construction near the Presidio International Bridge downstream to Alamito Creek. The project was the first border barrier of any kind erected by DHS in the region, whose notoriously rugged terrain has shielded the region from serious attempts to build a wall since the first bollards were erected over a century ago in Arizona. “For us, we’re not pressing the actual brick-and-mortar-style wall here. That’s not our objective,” Lee Smith, a former Border Patrol union president, told NPR in 2017. “We’ve told everyone from the [Trump] transition team to the current administration, for us here locally in Big Bend, what we need is [more] manpower.”

Between October and November of last year, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem published a series of rapid-fire postings in the Federal Register authorizing the construction of “border barriers” across the state of Texas. In December, more detailed notices were published authorizing the construction of border walls in the Del Rio and Laredo sector with corresponding buoy barriers in the channel of the river itself. (Contracts to build 63 miles of wall cost the government a cool \$3.3 billion.)

These postings corresponded with a DHS media blitz touting the agency’s Smart Wall program. “In areas in U.S. Border Patrol’s Big Bend Sector where terrain acts as a natural barrier, CBP is planning to deploy alien detection technology,” a spokesperson wrote in a statement to the Big Bend Sentinel.

Those “natural barriers” may

Continued on page 5

The impact

In coming weeks, *Sentinel* will try to answer more questions about the wall

- How are government contracts being handled out of public site?
- The environmental impacts—including problems addressing flooding.
- Will wildlife be endangered?
- Where is there wall construction elsewhere in Texas?



U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION AGENCY

Crews work on installing 30-foot wall panels in Arizona last March

PRESIDIO INTERNATIONAL

EL ‘MURO FRONTERIZO’ DEL BIG BEND CERCA DE LA REALIDAD

El gobierno federal busca “zonas de maniobra” para la construcción

Por Rob D’Amico y Sam Karas

Tras meses de conversaciones sobre barreras fronterizas “inteligentes” a lo largo del Río Grande, los muros de acero tradicionales están cerca de su construcción en el Bend. Informes recientes de propietarios de tierras, personal del parque y agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza confirman que el gobierno federal busca activamente arrendamientos para zonas de maniobra de construcción, cambiando radicalmente la forma en que los residentes de Big Bend experimentan el paisaje agreste que llevó a muchos a llamarlo su hogar.

“¿Vale miles de millones de dólares destruir el medio ambiente y nuestro acceso al río?”, preguntó Charlie Angell, quien dirige un negocio de guías fluviales y expediciones desde Polvo, una comunidad histórica en el río a las afueras de Redford, Texas. “Y se supone que nuestro presidente es este tipo de bienes raíces de alto nivel. ¿Qué tan sabio es arruinar toda esta propiedad frente al río con un maldito muro?”.

La frontera en el Big Bend pronto podría estar llena de actividad. No de migrantes, por supuesto—el enfoque agresivo de la administración Trump ha llevado a detenciones en niveles bajos récord—sino con cuadrillas de construcción, polvo levantado y el pitido incesante de equipo pesado haciendo realidad el sueño del presidente de un muro de costa a costa a lo largo de la frontera mexicana.

En octubre, el Big Bend Sentinel informó sobre una cerca de alambre de concertina de más de 20 millas en construcción cerca del Puente Internacional de Presidio aguas abajo hasta Alamito Creek. El proyecto fue la primera barrera fronteriza de cualquier tipo erigida por el DHS en la región, cuyo terreno notoriamente accidentado ha protegido a la zona de intentos serios de construir un muro desde que se erigieron los primeros bolardos hace más de un siglo en Arizona. “Para nosotros, no estamos presionando por el muro real de

estilo ladrillo y mortero aquí. Ese no es nuestro objetivo”, dijo Lee Smith, ex presidente del sindicato de la Patrulla Fronteriza, a NPR en 2017. “Le hemos dicho a todos, desde el equipo de transición [de Trump] hasta la administración actual, que para nosotros aquí localmente en Big Bend, lo que necesitamos es [más] personal”.

Estas publicaciones correspondieron con una campaña mediática del DHS promocionando el programa de Muro Inteligente de la agencia. “En áreas del Sector Big Bend de la Patrulla Fronteriza de EE. UU. donde el terreno actúa como una barrera natural, el CBP planea desplegar tecnología de detección de extranjeros”, escribió un portavoz en un comunicado al Big Bend Sentinel.

Esas “barreras naturales” pueden ya no ser suficientes para satisfacer el apetito de la administración Trump por un muro. Un mapa actualizado en el sitio web de la agencia describe tres proyectos de muros contiguos en el Sector Big Bend, que se extienden desde Fort Quitman a las afueras de Sierra Blanca y terminan en el Colorado Canyon River Put-In en el Parque Estatal Big Bend Ranch, con un kilometraje total de alrededor de 175 millas de muro.

El muro viene por todos nosotros

Varias fuentes con conocimiento del proyecto verificaron que funcionarios federales se acercaron a propietarios de tierras —uno cerca de Redford, el otro al sureste de Ruidosa— para iniciar discusiones sobre el arrendamiento de sus tierras para zonas de maniobra. Según la fuente, uno les dijo a los funcionarios que “se fueran al infierno”, mientras que el otro les dijo que hablaran con su abogado. (Estas fuentes no quisieron ser nombradas porque temían que si las carreteras, los muros y otra infraestructura afectaban su propiedad, querían una buena relación con los trabajadores del gobierno).

Una de las fuentes habló con funcionarios a lo largo del río que creen que un muro de acero definitivamente estará en la mezcla en las áreas pobladas alrededor de Presidio y Redford.

La casa y el negocio a orillas del río de Angell en Polvo están a menos de 100 pies del río y podrían perderse si se construye



Un cartel de protesta resiste en las afueras de Terlingua.

un muro real. Angell dijo que no vendería ni arrendaría al gobierno federal, pero eso podría no significar mucho si el gobierno utiliza el poder de dominio eminente para confiscarlo. “Me mudé aquí planeando pasar el resto de mi vida aquí”, dijo Angell. “Así que, sí, estoy aterrizado”.

Se enfrenta a una situación complicada y relativamente única entre las tierras fronterizas del suroeste, gracias a la forma en que Texas fue anexionada por la Unión. La gran mayoría de las tierras a lo largo de la frontera en California, Nuevo México y Arizona son propiedad del gobierno federal, protegidas en muchos lugares por algo llamado la “Reserva Roosevelt”, que otorga poderes federales de aplicación de la ley sobre una delgada franja de tierra que abarca varios estados.

La frontera en Texas, por otro lado, es mayoritariamente de propiedad privada, y cualquier entidad que desee construir un muro fronterizo cohesivo tiene que solicitarlo a cada propietario individualmente. El impulso de Trump para construir un muro durante su primer mandato se desvaneció principalmente en los tribunales, pero el primer gran intento de erigir un muro en Texas bajo George W. Bush resultó en cientos de demandas individuales caracterizadas por el Texas Tribune como “la incautación más agresiva de tierras privadas por parte del gobierno federal en décadas”.

Informes adicionales de ProPublica y el Tribune encontraron que las agencias gubernamentales encargadas de cerrar los tratos de tierras ofrecieron sumas muy bajas a

los propietarios y mantuvieron registros descuidados, lo que significó que estos casos obstruyeron los tribunales federales durante décadas. Los propietarios sin conocimientos legales o sin los medios para pagar una representación agresiva a menudo se encontraron en el lado equivocado de un mal trato.

Si bien el Big Bend no es un lugar físicamente práctico para construir un muro, sí representa una concentración inusualmente grande de tierras públicas en Texas y, por extensión, un potencial código de trucos para los negociadores que esperan concretar acuerdos rápidamente. Una fuente del Departamento de Parques y Vida Silvestre de Texas (TPWD), que no quiso usar su nombre porque no tiene permiso de sus superiores para hablar, confirmó que los funcionarios del gobierno también habían hablado sobre zonas de maniobra en el Parque Estatal Big Bend Ranch, que abarca virtualmente toda la tierra a lo largo del Río Grande desde Tapado Canyon hasta Lajitas. Las vistas desde la serpenteante y montañosa Carretera 170 (River Road) son impresionantes y sirven como vías de entrada a muchos de los campamentos y senderos del parque, incluido el popular sendero Hoodoos y el correspondiente tramo de aguas bravas, que quedarían aislados del acceso público por un muro si los planes se ejecutan como están escritos.

Cualquier tipo de infraestructura visible podría ser devastadora para los visitantes del parque que vienen de todo el mundo para experimentar ese tramo del río. (Si bien muchas fuentes también

habían oído hablar de posible infraestructura en el Parque Nacional Big Bend, tal proyecto no ha sido confirmado por el Big Bend Sentinel más allá de las discusiones preliminares de barreras fluviales presentadas por el Ejército de los EE. UU. en febrero del año pasado).

Funcionarios del condado se sienten impotentes

El Big Bend Sentinel habló con cuatro funcionarios del condado que se opusieron a cualquier cosa parecida a un muro o a un aumento masivo de la infraestructura tecnológica o las carreteras de patrulla, pero se sienten impotentes para detener los planes.

Citando el discurso oficial de la administración sobre “terroristas” en la frontera sur, las publicaciones de la Secretaria del DHS, Noem, en el Registro Federal reclaman docenas de exenciones a las leyes de protección de recursos naturales y culturales y omiten los procedimientos típicos destinados a la máxima transparencia en la licitación de contratos gubernamentales. La publicación de Noem para el Sector Big Bend mantiene específicamente muchas de estas protecciones ambientales, pero omite los requisitos de publicación de contratos, lo que significa que gran parte de la discusión sobre el potencial muro de Big Bend está ocurriendo a puerta cerrada.

Lo que hace que las cosas se sientan diferentes esta vez, a diferencia del primer mandato de Trump —o incluso de 2022, cuando el gobernador Greg Abbott lanzó un proyecto para construir el primer muro fronterizo financiado por el estado— es el dinero en efectivo. La llamada Ley “Big Beautiful Bill”, aprobada durante el verano, proporcionó un récord de 165 mil millones de dólares para el DHS. La invocación de poderes de emergencia por parte de Noem significa que hay poco que el sistema judicial o el público puedan hacer para frenar al gobierno.

Es probable que todo ese dinero salga del estado, ofreciendo pocos beneficios económicos locales más allá del impuesto sobre las ventas de los burritos de desayuno y las bebidas energéticas de las gasolineras para las hambrientas cuadrillas. La adjudicación del contrato del muro fronterizo —para un proyecto en el Valle del

Río Grande— fue por la asombrosa cifra de 369.5 millones de dólares a una firma de Montana con un historial de realizar donaciones al Comité Nacional Republicano y a la campaña personal de la secretaria Noem para gobernadora de Dakota del Sur.

“Simplemente, honestamente, no pensé que iban a llegar a nosotros, ¿sabes a qué me refiero?”, dijo David Beebe, ex comisionado del condado y contrincante del juez del condado Joe Portillo en las primarias demócratas de marzo. “Estamos tan fuera del camino trillado. Y realmente, si de verdad estás tratando de asegurar la frontera, este es el último lugar que necesitas cubrir”.

“Es como si estuvieras jugando al ‘whack-a-mole’ y finalmente llegas a nosotros al final”, agregó Beebe. “Y por eso mi sospecha es que podría ser más fácil meterse con nosotros porque hay menos resistencia”.

El juez del condado, Joe Portillo, tampoco se mostró optimista. “Este es un asunto federal, un proyecto federal”, dijo. “Nuestro ámbito de control es el condado. Lo singular para nosotros es que estamos en la frontera con México. Así que está justo en nuestro patio trasero. Esperaríamos que se investigara cada vía... radar, la tecnología más nueva disponible para nosotros ahora, sistemas de cámaras que dejarían una huella mucho menor”.

El personal de Aduanas y Protección Fronteriza en el Sector Big Bend ha mantenido que no se construiría un “muro real” en la región. Pero una fuente que habló recientemente con dos personas con estrechas conexiones con agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza dijo que ese no es el caso; justo lo contrario, que se planean muros reales. Una fuente sabía de un viaje en avión realizado por un contratista potencial para ver el río desde arriba, y ese contratista dijo que podían construir muros y que tenían proyectos similares en Arizona.

Aún envuelto en secreto está quién construirá realmente esta infraestructura, ya que no se pudo encontrar ninguna solicitud de propuestas en los documentos gubernamentales. Una fuente que no quiso ser nombrada dijo que un contratista llamó a su lugar de trabajo por error, lo que sugiere una prisa por poner las cosas en marcha.



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School board turns down prayer periods

Enrollment continues to drop

By ARIELE GENTILES

The Marfa ISD School Board met on January 26 to discuss student withdrawals, the consideration of prayer periods, the recent resignation of Board Member Stela Fuentez, and the hiring of a new music teacher for the district. Board President Philip Boyd, Fuentez, Teresa Nunez and Jay Foster were present for the meeting.

Before any business was discussed, Boyd called a short recess and invited the board members and audience to partake in coffee, doughnuts and menudo provided by administrators and the Alferez family in honor of School Board Recognition Month.

Beginning with a report on attendance and recognizing students and teachers of the month, Elementary Principal Rosie Martinez informed the board that four students have withdrawn

since December. This brings the total student loss at the district since August to 18 students.

While Martinez acknowledged that two of those students were seniors who graduated a semester early, the remaining students have primarily been enrolled in other area public schools (nine students) or are currently being home-schooled (five students). Notably, the sixth grade class has lost a third of its students since the start of the school year—five students.

Next, Senate Bill 11, contentious legislation enacted this summer by Gov. Greg Abbott, was subject to discussion and potential action. This bill grants school districts the authority to incorporate a designated period of prayer and reading of the Bible or other religious texts during school hours. As a voluntary measure, school districts possess the discretion to implement this provision or refrain from doing so, contingent upon a mandatory vote by the school board. U.S. Senate hopeful and state Rep. James Talarico (D-Austin) expressed his ap-

prehension regarding the bill's consideration within the Texas House. "When we allow teachers and principals, those in positions of power, to impose their religion on other people, especially children, we are undermining the freedom of religion that made this state and this country great, and it is a threat to religious and nonreligious people alike," Talarico said.

In thoughtful discussion, members of the board echoed Talarico's concern, and Fuentez made a motion to decline the policy at Marfa ISD. The subsequent vote was unanimous.

As reported on January 29 in Big Bend Sentinel, the board also accepted the letter of resignation from Place 1 Trustee Stela Fuentez.

Interim Superintendent Alferez said those interested in being a candidate for the school board must hand deliver a letter of interest to the school administration office by February 13. Candidates will be discussed at the regular board meeting on February 16. Fuentez will continue to serve on



GAGE SKIDMORE

State Sen. Mayes Middleton spearheaded the prayer law.

the board until another trustee can be appointed; her term was set to expire May 2027.

Place 2, currently held by Lori Flores, is up for election in May. In a special session Monday night, the school board voted to order an election for Place 1 and Place 2 on May 2, 2026. Interested candidates can pick up an election packet at the district office. The deadline to file an application for a place on the ballot is February 13.

Massive AI data center coming to Pecos County

Facility to be powered by natural gas

Fort Stockton

Pacifico Energy is moving forward with its GW Ranch, a massive AI data center on Highway 18 north of Fort Stockton.

According to a company news release, "GW Ranch has received its Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) air permit for 7.65 GW of gas-fired power generation, the largest permit granted in the United States of America. Securing the TCEQ air permit authorizes construction and operation under state and federal air-quality requirements."

"We're really excited to reach this precedent-setting milestone at GW Ranch," said Nate Franklin, CEO of Pacifico Energy Group, in the release. "As electricity prices rise nationwide and large data center loads place growing pressure on regional grids, Pacifico's development philosophy is intentionally designed to protect ratepayers. Utilizing a private-grid that combines natural gas turbines, solar, and battery storage, GW Ranch enables rapid AI and digital infrastructure growth without impacting the electricity grid or increasing energy costs for Texans."

Data centers are groupings of huge supercomputers intended to handle the bandwidth and demands of artificial intelligence. A

data center proposal has surfaced for ranch land southeast of Marfa, but the project has not moved forward past initial discussions with local officials.

Data centers often use immense amounts of water to cool the facilities and enormous amounts of power—although power is often generated by solar panel fields or natural gas facilities.

The Midland Reporter-Telegram also reported that the company is striving for sustainability. "We know in Texas, and especially in West Texas, water is worth fighting for," said Constantyn Gieskes, vice president of project development at Pacifico Energy. "We've designed this project with that in mind. The power generation system is self-sufficient and will produce water that can be used by the data center."

Gieskes told the newspaper that data centers are moving toward closed-loop systems so that, once the centers are built and supplied with water, they won't need as much water to operate. However, closed-systems still require a large amount of water on initial fill and with periodic refills.

"We wanted a place where natural gas was abundant, but we also wanted a large site to build," Gieskes told the Telegram. "We needed to find thousands of acres in one spot and relatively unscathed from previous development." Pecos County officials have been great to work with and welcoming, he added.

Presidio posts under contest

Continued from page 1

and community cooperation with dump drives and tire roundups. He wrote an ordinance that allows off-highway vehicles to access public roadways for organized events, including fundraisers.

Junie Herrera also sees the need for greater public involvement. He wants to be more available to community members, and to lessen what he sees as an inequality between Marfa and Presidio.

"I believe that county commissioners should make every effort to balance the attention into one single entity, one county," he said "We should end the north and south mentality and work in unison with the intention of distributing funding and services appropriately," Herrera said.

He points to how emergency services are stretched thin, and the stark divide in property values between Marfa and Presidio.

The average income according to the 2024 census between the two cities is similar, at \$38,000 for Marfa and \$29,000 for Presidio.

Herrera's father was a county commissioner in the 1970s, and Junie seeks the opportunity to carry on his legacy. The Herrera family operated a grocery store in town for years, which is now The Dreamers Gallery. Herrera himself has operated a carwash in Presidio for 40 years.

In 2001, Herrera was arrested and accused of murdering a journalist in Ojinaga, which prompted outcry and large protests in the community. The warrant was issued with someone else's name,

and the government's sole witness was found to have been in prison herself the evening of the killing and could not have possibly seen Herrera at the scene as she claimed.

"I've been actively involved in working for different businesses in the community, which has given me a lot of opportunity to meet a lot of people and see their needs," Herrera said. He embraces a collaborative, community-oriented approach to governance, and is working to talk with as many people as possible during his campaign.

"I appreciate everybody's help and everybody's input. I will use my best judgment and experience to make the best decision for the county as a whole," he said.

The primary on March 3 will decide the race, as all three men are running as Democrats with no Republican candidates.

County judge plans reelection event

On Tuesday, County Judge Joe Portillo held a meet and greet for the candidate's reelection campaign for the March 3 Democratic primary. The event was held at the St. George Hall in Marfa. Portillo faces challenger and former county commissioner David Beebe.

Portillo will do a repeat event in Presidio on February 11 at Casa Agave, 101 O'Reilly St., in Presidio from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Rezoning plan includes more detail

Continued from page 1

The Marfa Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) eventually recommended that the City Council not to approve the rezoning last June. In October, council members—not all on the same page regarding the rezoning—unanimously voiced the need for more details and thus, requested that AEP come back with a more detailed application.

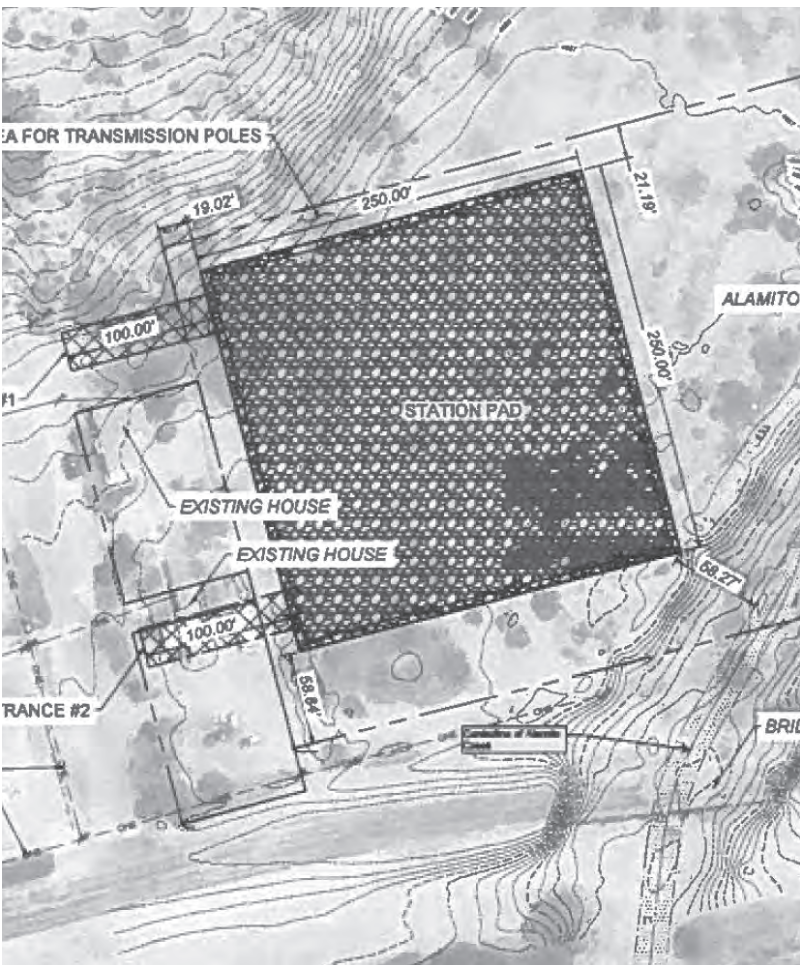
The process will begin anew with a P&Z public hearing on February 17 at 6 p.m. in the Casner Room, City Hall, 113 S. Highland Avenue.

The new application includes details (some of which were shared originally) like: "The substation pad will be constructed with permeable materials designed to allow stormwater to pass through the foundation, minimizing runoff and supporting natural drainage on the site. Exact stormwater drainage will be provided once an in-depth

study is completed during the final design process. Mitigation measures will include, but are not limited to, downward-directed lighting that does not trespass onto neighboring properties, upgraded fencing for security and visual screening, and landscaping around the perimeter of the site to reduce visual impacts. ... We are willing to coordinate with the Planning and Zoning Committee ahead of the meeting to resolve details prior to the in-person session."

Previous critics of the project had not seen the new documents as of Monday and were unable to comment without reviewing the 35-page submission.

The application also offers new maps and site details as well as photos as examples of how parts of the project might look. You can see past coverage of the issue and download the special use permit application at bigbendsentinel.aep-rezone.



The new AEP zoning application includes more site plan detail, such as this overhead look at the proposed substation at the corner of Oak and Aparejo streets.

The wall is coming

Continued from page 1
no longer be enough to satisfy the Trump administration's appetite for a wall. An updated map on the agency's website describes three contiguous wall projects in the Big Bend Sector, stretching from Fort Quitman outside of Sierra Blanca and ending at the Colorado Canyon River Put-In in Big Bend Ranch State Park, with a total mileage of around 175 miles of wall.

The wall comes for us all

Several sources with knowledge of the project verified that federal officials approached landowners—one near Redford, the other southeast of Ruidosa—to initiate discussions on leasing their land for staging areas. According to the source, one told the officials to “go to hell” while the other told them to talk to their attorney. (These sources did not want to be named, because they feared that if roads, walls, and other infrastructure impacted their property, they wanted a good relationship with government workers.)

One of the sources talked with officials along the river who believe that a steel wall definitely will be in the mix in the populated areas around Presidio and Redford.

Angell's Polvo riverside home and business is within 100 feet of the river and could be lost if an actual wall is built. Angell said he would not sell or lease to the federal government—but that may not mean much if the feds use the power of eminent domain to seize it. “I moved here planning to spend the rest of my life here,” Angell said. “So, yes, I'm terrified.”

He faces a tricky situation relatively unique among the Southwest borderlands, thanks to the way that Texas was annexed by the Union. The vast majority of land along the border in California, New Mexico and Arizona is owned by the federal government, protected in many places by something called the “Roosevelt Reservation,” granting federal law enforcement powers over a skinny strip of land that spans multiple states.

The border in Texas, on the other hand, is mostly privately owned, and any entity hoping to build a cohesive border wall has to petition each landowner individually. Trump's push to build a wall during his first term mostly fizzled out in the courts, but the first major attempt to erect a wall in Texas under George W. Bush resulted in hundreds of individual lawsuits characterized by the Texas Tribune as “the most aggressive seizure of private land by the federal government in decades.”

Further reporting by Pro-Publica and the Tribune found that government agencies tasked with sealing land deals severely lowballed property owners and kept sloppy records, meaning that



CHELSEY BORRIS

Charlie Angell fears his home will be walled off from the Rio Grande.

these cases clogged up the federal courts for decades. Landowners without legal savvy or the means to pay for aggressive representation often found themselves on the wrong end of a raw deal.

While the Big Bend isn't a physically practical place to build a wall, it does represent an unusually large concentration of public land in Texas—and by extension, a potential cheat code for negotiators hoping to iron out agreements quickly. A Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) source, not wanting to use their name because they don't have permission from superiors to speak, confirmed that government officials also had talked about staging areas in Big Bend Ranch State Park, which encompasses virtually all of the land along the Rio Grande from Tapado Canyon to Lajitas. The views from the twisting, mountainous Highway 170 (River Road) are stunning, and it serves as entry ways to many of the park campgrounds and trails—including the popular Hoodoos Trail and corresponding whitewater run, which would be cut off from public access by a wall if plans are executed as written.

Any kind of visible infrastructure could be devastating for park visitors who come from around the world to experience that stretch of the river. (While many sources had also heard of possible infrastructure in Big Bend National Park, such a project has not been confirmed by Big Bend Sentinel beyond preliminary discussions of river barriers presented by the U.S. Army in February of last year.)

County officials feel powerless

Big Bend Sentinel spoke to four county officials who all opposed anything akin to a wall or a massive increase in technology infrastructure or patrol roads, but they feel powerless to stop the plans.

Citing administration boil-

erplate about “terrorists” at the southern border, DHS Secretary Noem's Federal Register postings claim dozens of exemptions to natural and cultural resource protection laws and waive typical procedures aimed at maximum transparency in bidding on government contracts. Noem's posting for the Big Bend Sector specifically keeps many of these environmental protections in place, but it waives contract posting requirements, meaning that much of the discussion about the potential Big Bend wall is happening behind closed doors.

What makes things feel different this time, as opposed to Trump's first term—or even 2022, when Gov. Greg Abbott launched a project to build the country's first state-funded border wall—is cash. The so-called Big Beautiful Bill Act, passed over the summer, provided a record-smashing \$165 billion for DHS. Noem's invocation of emergency powers means that there's little the court system or the public can do to slow the government down.

All of that money is likely to go out of state, offering little local economic benefit beyond sales tax from gas station breakfast burritos and energy drinks for hungry crews. The most recent border wall contract award posted online—for a project in the Rio Grande Valley—went for an eye-popping \$369.5 million to a Montana firm with a history of making donations to the Republican National Committee and to Secretary Noem's personal campaign for governor of South Dakota.

“I just honestly didn't think they were gonna get to us, you know what I mean?” said David Beebe, former county commissioner and County Judge Joe Portillo's challenger in the March Democratic primary. “We're so far off the beaten path. And really, if you're really trying to secure the border, this is the last place you need to cover.”

“It's like you're playing whack-a-mole and then you finally get to us last,” Beebe added. “And that's why my suspicion is it might just be easier to fool with us because there's less resistance. No one can provide actual resistance to this. We're so backwater and we're so weak because of our lack of population and our lack of industry that would be affected by it.”

County Judge Joe Portillo was also not optimistic. “This is a federal issue, a federal project,” he said. “Our span of control is the county. The uniqueness for us is that we are on the border with Mexico. So it's right in our backyard. We would hope that every avenue would be investigated ... radar, the newest tech available to us now, camera systems that would leave much less of a footprint.”

Portillo said that actual steel wall infrastructure could be located nearer the port of entry

and the city of Presidio but that it would still be nonsensical and unwanted. “I don't want it,” he said.

Presidio County Precinct 1 Commissioner Deirdre Hisler, whose precinct includes part of Presidio, said the project is not needed and opposes it, as did Susan Hays, running unopposed for the Precinct 4 spot in the Democratic primary.

Customs and Border Protection staff in the Big Bend Sector have long maintained that an “actual wall” would not be built in the region. But a source who recently spoke to two people with close connections to Border Patrol agents said that's not the case—just the opposite, that actual walls are planned. One source knew of an airplane trip taken by a potential contractor to view the river from above, and that contractor said they could build walls and had similar projects in Arizona.

Still shrouded in secrecy is who actually will be building this infrastructure, since no request for proposals could be found in government documents. A source who did not want to be named said a contractor called their workplace by mistake, suggesting a hurry to get things moving.

Déjà vu

Locals who lived in the area during Trump's first term might be suffering a bit of déjà vu. In February 2017, an internal DHS memo was leaked to Reuters with detailed plans for a coast-to-coast wall, projected to cost upwards of \$21 billion. Phase two of that project would have torn through the Big Bend Sector by 2020, if legal challenges and ballooning costs didn't derail the president's plans.

In the national press, Big Bend residents were united across party lines in expressing their distaste for the idea. “It seems, frankly, ludicrous that anyone would even attempt it,” Betse Esparza, then a Brewster County commissioner and a Republican, told Buzzfeed in 2017. “I don't see how it's physically possible to build a wall. We have canyons. We have what people are referring to as a natural wall. I think we're pretty good.”

Folks took to street corners and the Presidio International Bridge with picket signs in English and Spanish. A big banner screaming, “Resist! No Wall!” went up along a busy stretch of road near the Terlingua Ghost Town. (The sign originally endorsed Beto O'Rourke, a Democrat running for Senate that year, and Will Hurd, a Republican member of Congress.)

Local artists on both sides of the border offered their spin on protest art. Yellow bumper stickers pleading folks to say “No al Muro” (“No to the Wall”) started popping up on tailgates and in bar bathrooms. In Boquillas, tourists browsing for handcrafted souvenirs could choose friendship bracelets with intertwined American and Mexican flags or beer koozies inviting the president to chinga tu muro (“f---k your wall”).

All the controversy spurred filmmaker Ben Masters to make *The River and the Wall*, chronicling the journey of a group of friends from El Paso to the Gulf of Mexico by bike, boat and horseback. Along the way, they explore the wall's devastating potential impacts to local wildlife, landscapes and the folks who call the region home. (By the time the film was released, Trump was near the end of his presidency and had only walled off around 20% of the border—but it struck a chord with voters on a successful festival circuit just the same.)

Longtime lovers and defenders of the Big Bend parks didn't need a feature-length film to convince them, however. “Many, many people have put their whole careers working out here, preserving and protecting this area,” Marcos Paredes, a retired river ranger, told USA Today in 2017. “In one fell swoop, we stand to undo all of that with a border wall.”



BIG BEND
HEALTH

Help decide what comes next for our healthcare.

COMMUNITY TOWN HALL

We want to hear from you.

Wednesday, February 11
5:30 PM – 6:30 PM
Presidio Activity Center

New healthcare funding is coming to rural communities.
This is a chance to improve local services based on what people here actually need.

Join us to:

- Learn about upcoming healthcare funding
- Talk about local health needs
- Share ideas on how resources should be prioritized

Your voice belongs in the plan for new healthcare funding.

All are welcome. No RSVP required.
Presented by Big Bend Regional Hospital District

Funding made possible through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, a federal initiative supporting rural healthcare.



BEEBE

para JUEZ

ESTAS INVITADO

¡CONOCE AL CANDIDATO!
¡PARTICIPA!
¡COMIDA Y BEBIDAS GRATIS!
¡MÚSICA DE PREPNEY!

Domingo, 8 de Febrero, de 16:00 a 18:00

The Sentinel Marfa
209 West El Paso
Marfa, Texas 79843

NUESTRO AGRADECIMIENTO A MAISIE CROW Y MAX KABAT POR ORGANIZAR ESTE EVENTO TAN GENEROSAMENTE.

Pol Ad Paid for by David Beebe for Presidio Co PO Box 70 Marfa, TX

PRESCRIPTION SHOP MARFA

A full-service pharmacy. Now accepting many insurance plans for service while you wait.

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rxshopmarfa@gmail.com

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BIG BEND
Sentinel
Published by Sentinel News Project, a Texas non-profit organization



THE LINCOLN HOTEL



Chose one of our 14 Marfa-style courtyard homes in the heart of town. Full kitchens. The Lincoln Hotel. 105 West Lincoln Street. Marfa, Texas 79843. Book on our site thelincolnmarfa.com for the best rate.





SAM KARAS

Concertina wire already lines the banks of the Rio Grande surrounding Presidio.

AROUND THE BIG BEND

Thursday February 5

Boxing at Maintenant
7:30am-9:00am
Maintenant, 1825 Rabbits Rd.
Marfa, TX

Hike with Homeless Dogs
10:00am-11:00am
Davis Mountains State Park
Fort Davis, TX



Paint & Sip - Couples Edition
6:00pm-9:00pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

Friday February 6



HS Basketball VS Terlingua in MARFA
6:00pm
Marfa, TX

Saturday February 7

Live Music: Justin Upshaw
7:00pm-10:00pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

Sunday February 8

Boxing at Maintenant
9:00am-11:00am
Maintenant, 1825 Rabbits Rd.
Marfa, TX

Sunday Slow Stretch with Bailey
4:00pm-5:00pm
Studio, 207 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX



Open Mic Night: Music
5:00pm-7:00pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

Monday February 9



HS Softball @ Presidio, Texas
Marfa, TX

Tuesday February 3

Commissioners Court Regular Meeting
9:30am
Alpine, TX

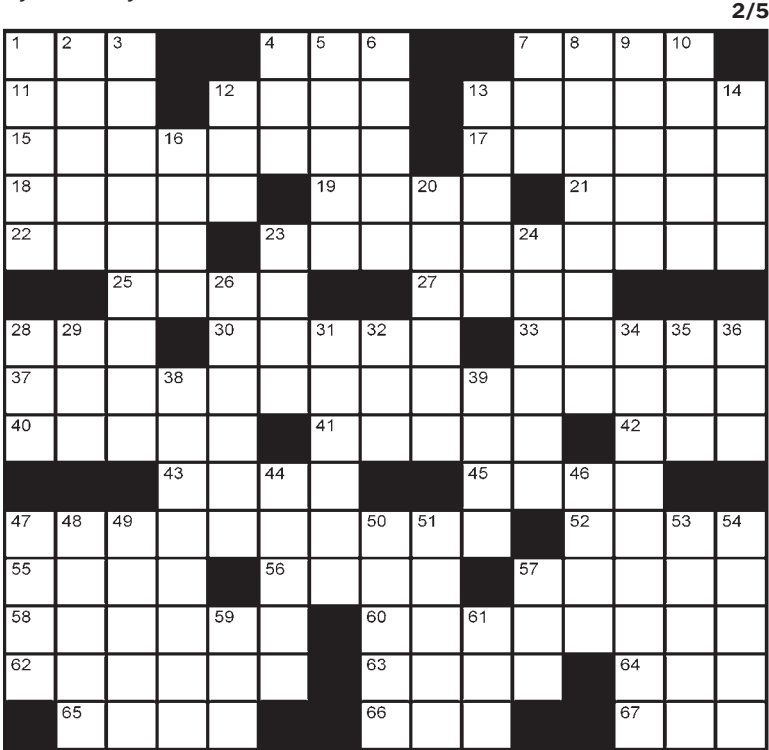
Regular Commissioners Court Meeting
10:00am-11:00am
Fort Davis, TX



Nature's Classroom - Home School Program
10:00am-3:00pm
Davis Mountains State Park
Fort Davis, TX

CROSSWORD

New Music
By Daniel Hryn timer



Edited by David Steinberg

- ACROSS**

1 -AFTRA (labor union)
4 Up to, for short
7 Leaning Tower's locale
11 Leave in oak barrels, e.g.
12 Rational
13 Line that intersects a curve at multiple points
15 "Alright" by Kendrick Lamar?
17 Size up from Venti
18 Dodge
19 Singer Fitzgerald
21 Abel's brother
22 Strap for Blitzen
23 "Chattanooga Choo Choo" by Glenn Miller?
25 Org. that Sweden joined in 2024
27 ___Ball (coin-op game)
28 Eisenhower's nickname
30 Formal tie
33 Actress Watts
37 "867-5309/Jenny" by Tommy Tutone?
40 Reject something
41 Present with an award, perhaps
42 Utah Mammoth's org.

43 Sand mound
45 Home update, informally
47 "Zombie" by the Cranberries?
52 It can be a "triple" jump
55 Russian range or river
56 Andy who coaches
57 Travis Kelce Cathedral topper
58 Hockey legend Serge known for his "spin-o-rama"
60 Cheaply ... or how 15-, 23-, 37- or 47-Across is churled?
62 Thrills
63 Toga party house
64 Where to find MA and PA
65 It goes downhill fast
66 Japanese dough
67 The Cards, on MLB tickers

DOWN

1 Less risky
2 Nimble
3 For real
4 Greek T
5 ___tube (water park float)
6 "Futurama" mutant voiced by Katey Sagal
7 Each
8 Blizzards, for the most part
9 Yemen's capital

10 Caper
12 Sault
13 Marie, Ontario
14 Reeked to high heaven
15 Warm weather top
16 Krabappel who teaches Bart Simpson
20 "Pay attention!"
23 Reggae musician Peter
24 Academic employment guarantee
26 Surrender, in wrestling
28 "___ on like Donkey Kong!"
29 Mauna
31 Stick together
32 Singer Yoko
34 Extremely unpleasant
35 Blah
36 Not virtually, for short

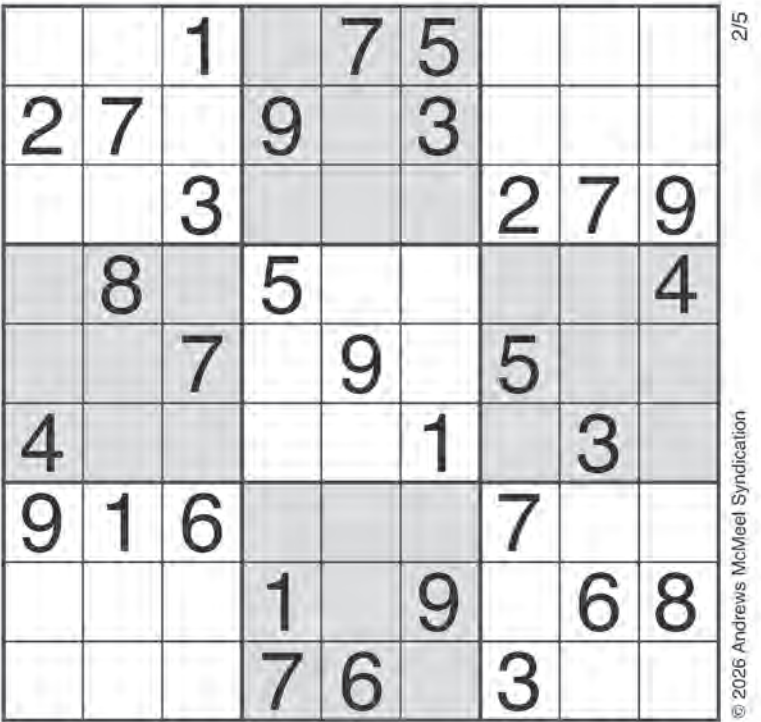
38 Goes long, like a meeting
39 Social standard
44 Candy that looks like aquarium gravel
46 Sleeps briefly
47 Artist's inspiration
48 Tests requiring no pencil
49 Maritme
50 Two shakes of a lamb's tail
51 Love very much
53 Stavro Blofeld (Bond villain)
54 Permitted
57 Parked it
59 Roses' color, in a classic poem
61 Campaigned
- PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER**

M	A	P	L	E	I	O	W	A	L	I	D	S
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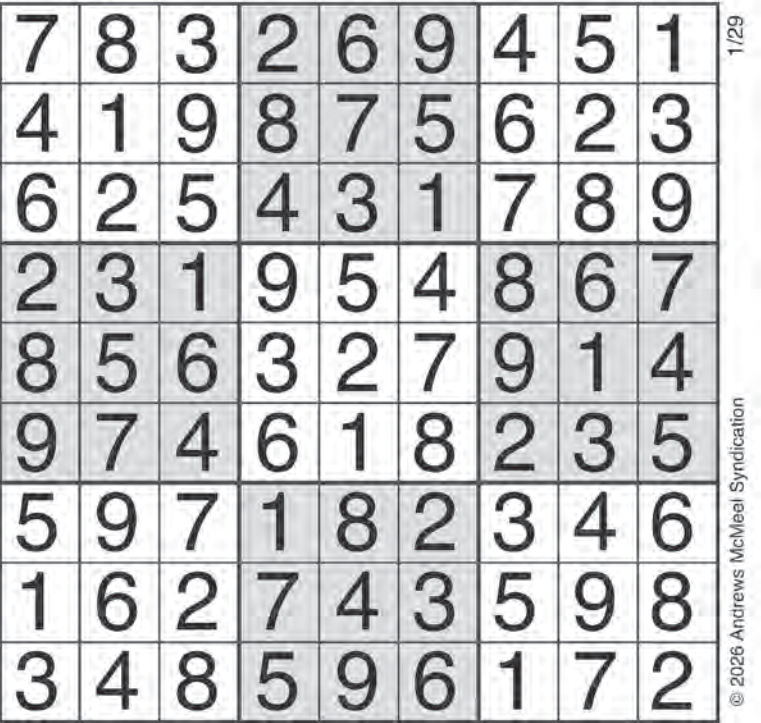
SUDUKO

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



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

SOLUTION:



UPDATED PROPERTY TAX INFORMATION

NEW AVAILABLE FOR TEXAS TAXPAYERS

Property owners have certain rights that may reduce their property taxes.

New and updated property tax information has just been compiled and is available to assist taxpayers. This property tax information is current and covers a wide range of topics, such as taxpayer remedies, exemptions and appraisals, and has information for select groups, such as disabled veterans and persons age 65 or older.

Whether you are a homeowner, business owner, disabled veteran or taxpayer, it's important you know your rights concerning property tax laws. You can contact us about any property tax issues with full confidence that we will provide the most complete, accurate and up-to-date information available to assist you.

This includes information about the following programs.

HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION
Persons who own and occupy their residence during 2026, may claim their home as a residential homestead. A homestead is generally defined as the home and land used as the owner's principal residence on Jan. 1 of the tax year. A person who acquires property after Jan. 1 may receive the residence homestead exemption for the applicable portion of that tax year immediately on qualification for the exemption if the preceding owner did not receive the same exemption for that tax year. A homestead exemption reduces the home's appraised value and, as a result, lowers property taxes. Applications are submitted to the appropriate local appraisal district.

RESIDENCE HOMESTEAD TAX DEFERRAL
Texas homeowners may postpone paying the currently delinquent property taxes due on the appreciating value of their homes by filing a tax deferral affidavit at their local appraisal district. This tax relief allows homeowners to pay the property taxes on 105 percent of the preceding year's appraised value of their homestead, plus the taxes on any new improvements to the homestead. The deferral postpones the remaining taxes, with interest accruing at 8 percent per year but does not cancel them.

DISABLED PERSONS
Persons who are disabled under Social Security law are entitled to additional exemptions on their residential homestead. Disabled applicants must apply with the appraisal district and furnish a determination letter from Social Security. Disabled persons now receive all benefits on their home that are available to persons who are over 65 years of age (see next paragraph).

PROPERTY TAX DEFERRAL FOR PERSONS OVER 65 YEARS OR OLDER OR DISABLED OR DISABLED VETERAN HOMEOWNERS
Texans who are age 65 or older or disabled, as defined by law, or who qualify for a disabled veteran exemption may postpone paying current and delinquent property taxes on their homes by signing a tax deferral affidavit. Once the affidavit is on file, taxes are deferred, but not cancelled, as long as the owner continues to own and live in the home. Interest continues to accrue at 5 percent per year on the unpaid taxes. You may obtain a deferral affidavit at the appraisal district.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL: HUMAN RESOURCES CONSULTING SERVICES

The City of Presidio is seeking proposals from qualified and experienced Human Resources Consultant or firms to develop a Performance Management System, HR Policies and Processes, Learning and Development, Employee Relations and Communication.

Open Until February 13, 2026 at 5pm

Please submit your Proposal (RFP) and Resume to the address below:

City of Presidio
City Secretary
P.O. Box 1899
Presidio, TX 79845

Physical Address: 507 W. O'Reilly St., Presidio, Texas
or email to: bornelas@presidiotx.us



Jeff Davis County seeks a full-time **Library Director** to develop the library's collection, programs, and services.

Bachelor's degree required; Master's and/or library experience preferred. Administrative/Management experience required. Strong knowledge of computers. MS Office, and standard office equipment essential.

Competitive salary and benefits, including health insurance. vacation/sick leave, and retirement benefits.

To learn more and apply, visit:

www.jeffdaviscounty.texas.gov/page/jeffdavis.Jobs.Openings

CLASSIFIEDS AND PUBLIC NOTICES

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR DISABLED VETERANS

The law provides partial exemptions for any property owned by disabled veterans or surviving spouses and surviving children of deceased disabled veterans. Another partial exemption is for homesteads donated to disabled veterans by charitable organizations at no cost or not more than 50 percent of the good faith estimate of the homestead's market value to disabled veterans and their surviving spouses. The exemption amount is determined according to percentage of service-connected disability. The law also provides a 100 percent homestead exemption for 100 percent disabled veterans and their surviving spouses and surviving spouses of U.S. armed service members killed or fatally injured in the line of duty.

PRODUCTIVITY APPRAISAL
Property owners who use land for timberland production, agricultural purposes or wildlife management can be granted property tax relief on their land. They may apply to their local appraisal district for an agricultural special appraisal which may result in a lower appraisal of the land based on production, versus market value. Productivity value appraisal provides tax relief on their land and is available to farms and ranches commercially raising crops or livestock or used as a wildlife habitat granted under State guidelines. An application for agricultural use value and additional information is available from your appraisal district. Refiling an application is only necessary if requested to do so by the Chief Appraiser.

RENDERING TAXABLE PROPERTY (BUSINESS PERSONAL PROPERTY OWNERS)
If a business owns tangible personal property that is used to produce income, the business must file a rendition with its local appraisal district by a specified date. Personal property includes inventory and equipment used by a business. Owners do not have to render exempt property such as church property or an agriculture producer's equipment used for farming. Personal property includes inventory and equipment used by a business. Failure to file the rendition by the specified date will result in a 10% penalty. If a fraudulent rendition is filed, a 50% penalty is mandated. A rendition can be obtained from the appraisal district office where the property is located. A 30-day filing extension is available by written request. Owners do not render exempt property such as church property or farming equipment. A new law on January 1, 2026, exempts up to \$125,000 of business personal property. A rendition is required in 2026 but will not be required in future years if the total personal property value does not exceed \$125,000.

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS
Non-profit organizations that meet statutory requirements may seek property tax exemptions and must apply to their local county appraisal district by a specific date. Child-care facilities; medical or biomedical property; businesses that receive tax abatements granted by taxing units; ship inventory out of Texas that may be eligible for the freeport exemption; store certain goods in transit in warehouses that are moved within 175 days; construct, install or acquire pollution control property; own and operate energy storage systems; convert landfill-generated gas; or store offshore drilling equipment while not in use may also be eligible for statutory exemptions.

APPRAISAL NOTICES
Normally, taxpayers receive a notice of appraised value from the

appropriate local appraisal district. The city, county, school districts and other local taxing units use the appraisal district's value to set property taxes for the coming year.

TAXPAYER ASSISTANCE PAMPHLET
This Comptroller publication explains in detail the functions of a taxpayer liaison officer, how to protest a property appraisal, what issues the county appraisal review board (ARB) can consider and what to expect during a protest hearing.

The publication also discusses the option to request limited binding arbitration to compel the ARB or chief appraiser to comply with a procedural requirement and the options of taking a taxpayer's case to district court, the State Office of Administrative Hearings or regular binding arbitration if the taxpayer is dissatisfied with the outcome of the ARB hearing.

PROTESTING PROPERTY APPRAISAL VALUES
Property owners who disagree with the appraisal district's appraisal of their property for local taxes or for any other action that adversely affects them may protest their property value to their local appraisal district's ARB.

INFORMAL MEETINGS
Property owners can request an informal meeting with appraisal district staff to try and resolve their disputes prior to attending ARB hearings.

For more information you may contact:

PRESIDIO COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT
P. O. Box 879/107 E Texas St. Marfa, Texas 79843
(432) 729-3431 / (432) 229-3963
info@presidiocad.org

Or
PROPERTY TAX ASSISTANCE DIVISION INFORMATION SERVICES TEXAS COMPTROLLER OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/

PUBLIC AWARENESS

THE CITY OF MARFA PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION HAS SCHEDULED A PUBLIC HEARING
for February 17, 2026, in the Casner Room, City Hall, 113 S. Highland Ave., Marfa, Texas, regarding Special Use Permit Application No. 2026-01 submitted by AEP Texas, Inc. for the construction of an electrical substation located on a property of 4.0388 acres of land situated at 102 and 104 N. Aparejo Street and at the corner of N. Aparejo Street and E. Oak Street, also described as Parcel 1: S ½ of Block 103, Original Townsite of Marfa; Parcel 2: N ½ of Block 103, Original Townsite of Marfa; Parcel 3: a 3.57-acre tract in Section 244, Block 8, G.H. & S.A. Ry. Co. Survey, City of Marfa, Presidio County, State of Texas. For additional information, contact City of Marfa, 432-729-4315.

PRESIDIO ISD PUBLIC HEARING ON TEXAS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORT (TAPR)
A public hearing is scheduled for public discussion of the 2024-2025 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) for the Presidio Independent School District. The hearing will take place during the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees on February 18, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at the Presidio ISD Administration building, 701 E. Market St. Presidio TX 79845.

In compliance with Texas Education Code §39.053, the district will annually publish the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR), hold a hearing for public comment on the report, and disseminate the report within the district.

The 2024-2025 TAPR Report will be available for viewing at each campus or on our website: <https://www.presidio-isd.net/57993>

MARFA ISD HAS A VACANCY ON THE SCHOOL BOARD
This vacancy for the unexpired term will be filled at a Special/Regular meeting on February 16, 2026, at 6pm.

Interested in serving on the board? Please review the qualifications and submit a letter in writing to Mr. Boyd, board president, expressing your interest in serving on the board. This letter must be hand delivered to the Superintendent's office no later than 4:00 pm on Friday, February 13, 2026.

You may wish to attend the meeting on February 16, 2026, in case the board decides to interview you.

Qualifications to be a Board Member:
To be eligible to be a candidate for, or elected or appointed to, the office of Board member, a person must:

1. Be a United States citizen.
2. Be 18 years of age or older on the first day of the term to be filled in at the election or on the date of appointment, as applicable.
3. Have not been determined by a final judgment of a court exercising probate jurisdiction to be: Totally mental incapacitated and the person's mental capacity has not subsequently been completely

CLASSIFIEDS AND PUBLIC NOTICES

restored by a final judgment of a court exercising probate jurisdiction; or partially mentally incapacitated without the right to vote and person's guardianship has not been modified to include the right to vote or the person's mental capacity has not been completely restored by a subsequent final judgment of a court exercising probate jurisdiction.

4. Have not been finally convicted of a felony for which the person has not been pardoned or otherwise released from the resulting disabilities. Atty. Gen. Op. LO 96-114 (1996).

5. Be a resident of Texas and the District for the period of time described at CANDIDATE'S RESIDENCY TERM (This is a resident of the state of Texas for the past 12 months, a resident of the Marfa ISD six months).

6. A qualified voter

HAND DELIVER LETTER TO:
Marfa ISD Superintendent Office
c/o Mr. Boyd
Marfa ISD Board of Trustees
400 W Lincoln St.
Marfa, TX 79843

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 (8:00 am – 4:00 pm CST). 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. **Sealed proposals must be received at the following address no later than 4:00 pm CST on Tuesday, February 17, 2026 and should be clearly marked as follows:**

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 February 18, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. CST at Marfa City Hall. City Council is scheduled to take action on the proposed bids at a public meeting on February 26, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Casner Room at Marfa City Hall (address above).

The City of Marfa reserves the right to reject any and all bids, to waive any informalities or irregularities in the process, and to award a contract that is in the best interests of the City. The City 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 other delays in delivery. The City of Marfa is an equal opportunity employer.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality



NOTICE OF APPLICATION AND PRELIMINARY DECISION

FOR TPDES PERMIT FOR MUNICIPAL WASTEWATER RENEWAL

PERMIT NO. WQ0014679001

APPLICATION AND PRELIMINARY DECISION. City of Presidio, P.O. Box 1899, Presidio, Texas, 79845, has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for a renewal of Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES) Permit No. WQ0014679001 which authorizes the discharge of treated domestic wastewater at a daily average flow not to exceed 950,000 gallons per day. TCEQ received this application on September 24, 2025. The facility is located approximately 1.17 miles east of the intersection of Farm-to-Market Road 170 and Park Valley Road, in Presidio County, Texas 79845. The treated effluent is discharged via pipe directly to the Rio Grande River above Amistad Reservoir in Segment No. 2306 of the Rio Grande Basin. The designated uses for Segment No. 2306 are primary contact recreation, public water supply, and high aquatic life use. All determinations are preliminary and subject to additional review and/or revisions. This link to an electronic map of the site or facility's general location is provided as a public courtesy and is not part of the application or notice. For the exact

location, refer to the application. <https://gisweb.tceq.texas.gov/LocationMapper/?marker=104.3175,29.546388&level=18>

The TCEQ Executive Director has completed the technical review of the application and prepared a draft permit. The draft permit, if approved, would establish the conditions under which the facility must operate. The Executive Director has made a preliminary decision that this permit, if issued, meets all statutory and regulatory requirements. The permit application, Executive Director's preliminary decision, and draft permit are available for viewing and copying at Presidio City Office, 507 West O'Reilly Street, Presidio, in Presidio County, Texas. The application and associated notices are available electronically at the following webpage: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/wastewater/pending-permits/tpdes-applications>.

ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE NOTICE. Alternative language notice in Spanish is available at <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/wastewater/plain-language-summaries-and-public-notices>. El aviso de idioma alternativo en español está disponible en <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/wastewater/plain-language-summaries-and-public-notices>.

PUBLIC COMMENT / PUBLIC MEETING. You may submit public comments or request a public meeting about this application. The purpose of a public meeting is to provide the opportunity to submit comments or to ask questions about the application. TCEQ holds a public meeting if the Executive Director determines that there is a significant degree of public interest in the application or if requested by a local legislator. A public meeting is not a contested case hearing.

OPPORTUNITY FOR A CONTESTED CASE HEARING. After the deadline for submitting public comments, the Executive Director will consider all timely comments and prepare a response to all relevant and material, or significant public comments. **Unless the application is directly referred for a contested case hearing, the response to comments will be mailed to everyone who submitted public comments and to those persons who are on the mailing list for this application. If comments are received, the mailing will also provide instructions for requesting a contested case hearing or reconsideration of the Executive Director's decision.** A contested case hearing is a legal proceeding similar to a civil trial in a state district court.

TO REQUEST A CONTESTED CASE HEARING, YOU MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN YOUR REQUEST: your name, address, phone number; applicant's name and proposed permit number; the location and distance of your property/activities relative to the proposed facility; a specific description of how you would be adversely affected by the facility in a way not common to the general public; a list of all disputed issues of fact that you submit during the comment period; and the statement "I/[we] request a contested case hearing." If the request for contested case hearing is filed on behalf of a group or association, the request must designate the group's representative for receiving future correspondence; identify by name and physical address an individual member of the group who would be adversely affected by the proposed facility or activity; provide the information discussed above regarding the affected member's location and distance from the facility or activity; explain how and why the member would be affected; and explain how the interests the group seeks to protect are relevant to the group's purpose.

Following the close of all applicable comment and request periods, the Executive Director will forward the application and any requests for reconsideration or for a contested case hearing to the TCEQ Commissioners for their consideration at a scheduled Commission meeting.

The Commission may only grant a request for a contested case hearing on issues the requestor submitted in their timely comments that were not subsequently withdrawn. **If a hearing is granted, the subject of a hearing will be limited to disputed issues of fact or mixed questions of fact and law relating to relevant and material water quality concerns submitted during the comment period. TCEQ may act on an application to renew a permit for discharge of wastewater without providing an opportunity for a contested case hearing if certain criteria are met.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ACTION. The Executive Director may issue final approval of the application unless a timely contested case hearing request or request for reconsideration is filed. If a timely hearing request or request for reconsideration is filed, the Executive Director will not issue final approval of the permit and will

forward the application and request to the TCEQ Commissioners for their consideration at a scheduled Commission meeting.

MAILING LIST. If you submit public comments, a request for a contested case hearing or a reconsideration of the Executive Director's decision, you will be added to the mailing list for this specific application to receive future public notices mailed by the Office of the Chief Clerk. In addition, you may request to be placed on: (1) the permanent mailing list for a specific applicant name and permit number; and/or (2) the mailing list for a specific county. If you wish to be placed on the permanent and/or the county mailing list, clearly specify which list(s) and send your request to TCEQ Office of the Chief Clerk at the address below.

All written public comments and public meeting requests must be submitted to the Office of the Chief Clerk, MC 105, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, TX 78711-3087 or electronically at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/comment within 30 days from the date of newspaper publication of this notice.

INFORMATION AVAILABLE ONLINE. For details about the status of the application, visit the Commissioners' Integrated Database at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/cid. Search the database using the permit number for this application, which is provided at the top of this notice.

AGENCY CONTACTS AND INFORMATION. Public comments and requests must be submitted either electronically at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/comment, or in writing to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Office of the Chief Clerk, MC 105, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087. Any personal information you submit to the TCEQ will become part of the agency's record; this includes email addresses. For more information about this permit application or the permitting process, please call the TCEQ Public Education Program, Toll Free, at 1-800-687-4040 or visit their website at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/pep. Si desea información en Español, puede llamar al 1-800-687-4040.

Further information may also be obtained from City of Presidio at the address stated above or by calling Mr. Jimmy Avila, Water/Sewer Supervisor, at 432-229-3605.

Issuance Date: January 22, 2026

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-2 CITY OF PRESIDIO

An ordinance amending ordinance no. 2025-8 providing for one regular council meeting for the City of Presidio; setting second Monday of each month and/or fourth Monday of each month (if needed) 5:30 p.m. As the day and/ or days of the regular council meeting for the City of Presidio.

Now, therefore, be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Presidio, Texas:

Whereas; that the City Council of the City of Presidio will hold one regular council meeting per month, and that the City Council will hold its regular council meeting on the second and/ or fourth, Monday of each month at 5:30 pm.

Whereas; that this ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

Now therefore, passed, approved and adopted on this the 26th day of January 2026, at the regular meeting of the City of Presidio. There being a quorum present, approved by the mayor and the City Council on the dates set above to begin as of February 1, 2026.

HELP WANTED

THE PRESIDIO COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE IS ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR AN ASSISTANT AUDITOR. This is a part-time position with flexible hours. Basic office and computer skills are required. Applications should be submitted to the Presidio County Auditor - by mail to PO Box 423, Marfa, TX 79843; by email to countyauditor@co.presidio.tx.us; or by hand-delivery to the County Auditor's Office, 3rd Floor, County Courthouse, Marfa Texas. Application forms are available at www.co.presidio.tx.us or by calling 432-729-1990.

LIVE-IN CAREGIVER
Live-in healthcare aide/caregiver needed for 81 year old gentleman in Valentine, Texas. Work to include cooking, cleaning, washing clothes and other household duties. The patient has limited mobility and is in a motorized chair so will need help getting from one chair to another or bed and showering routine and with medical treatments. Must be able to pass background checks and screening with references required. Monthly salary with benefits along with room and board. Serious inquiries only. For more information, call 512-914-7070

OBITUARY



Instructor cherished teaching rules of the road

ANASTACIO S. MILAN, a respected educator, beloved family man, and dedicated community member, passed away peacefully on January 16, 2026, at the age of 79 in San Antonio, Texas. Born on January 13, 1947, in Alpine, Texas, Mr. Milan was a man whose life was characterized by devotion, both to his family and to the countless students he mentored throughout his 36 years of teaching at Crystal City ISD in Crystal City, Texas.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in Spanish and a minor kinesiology in 1970, he embarked on a distinguished career that saw him teach physical education, health, Spanish, and drivers ed, leaving an indelible mark on the lives of many adolescents. His passion for education extended beyond the classroom as he spent a quarter-century instructing young minds on the nuances of driving, ensuring their safety and confidence on the road. In addition to his teaching role, Mr. Milan's voice echoed through the stands for 30 years as a football announcer, his enthusiasm igniting the spirits of both players and spectators alike.

A lifelong sports enthusiast, Mr. Milan's spirit soared when he was discussing the latest Kansas City Chiefs game, a tribute to his favorite football team. Green, the color of growth and life, was fittingly his chosen hue—a symbol of the nurturing nature he brought into every arena of his life. Beyond sports, his interests were diverse; he found joy in writing, singing, playing the guitar and relishing in the serenity of taking long walks, and occasionally basking in the excitement of playing at the casinos.

His departure has been felt profoundly by his loving wife of many years, Corina Milan, and his proud children Livia Grace Milan (Daniel), Monique M. Gonzalez (Angel), Marie M. Crandall (Joshua), Lori Milan (Jim), and son Jose Francisco “Frankie” Milan. His legacy will be further cherished by his 10 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren, who will carry on with his teachings. He leaves behind his siblings: Rosa Milan (Chuy), Richard Milan (Silvanna), Frances Martinez (Joe), and Johnny Milan (Eva). Mr. Milan was preceded in death by his parents, Francisco and Santos Milan, and brother Miguel Milan.

His love and warmth touched all who knew him, and his legacy of devotion to education and family will forever resonate. As a loving mentor, a devoted husband, a doting father, and an endearing friend, he imparted wisdom, laughter, and kindness to many. Mr. Milan lived a life full of purpose, and his memory will be lovingly preserved through the vast network of lives he influenced. He was respected and loved by his students and community.

A visitation for Anastacio was held on Friday, January 30, 2026, from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine. Funeral services took place the following day, Saturday, January 31, 2026, at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church. A Rosary began at 9:30 a.m., followed by Mass at 10 a.m. Interment followed at Holy Angel's Cemetery in Alpine.



14th Annual
Valentine's in Valentine

Valentine's Day 2026
Saturday, Feb. 14th: 1PM - 10PM

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PRESIDIO COUNTY DEMOCRATIC FORUM

★ ★ ★

The Presidio County Democratic Party and Big Bend Sentinel will host its second county Candidates Forum.

All are welcome to attend the event.
February 5, 6 - 8 p.m., Presidio Activity Center - Presidio

Candidate Participation
Countywide candidates (Judge, Clerk/District Clerk, Treasurer, County Chair) are encouraged to attend.

Presidio Precinct: County Commissioner Precinct 2 (Fernando Juárez, Jesús Herrera, Margarito Hernández), JP2 (Angel Miguel Campos, Bianca Martinez Bailon, Jesseca Murillo)

Unopposed candidates may give brief statements but do not participate in debates with other candidates. They can be asked questions. (Susan Hays will be attending the Presidio forum due to a conflict with the first event.)

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Courts deluged with challenges to immigration detention

EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD Heidy was stopped by immigration agents on January 14 as she drove to community college classes in a Minneapolis suburb. An immigrant who came from Ecuador when she was 11, Heidy tried to explain that she and her mother had been granted the right to live and work in the United States under a program that protects victims of violence.

The immigration officer refused to look at her documents, told her “it didn’t matter; you aren’t legal,” and had Heidy flown the same day to El Paso, her lawyers said in a January 20 court filing that sought her release through a process called habeas corpus. The lawyers said she was “abducted by ICE agents in Minnesota” and transferred to Camp East Montana on Fort Bliss, the largest Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facility in the country.

Within hours of the petition being filed, U.S. District Judge Kathleen Cardone of El Paso ordered the government to show cause why Heidy shouldn’t be freed. *El Paso Matters* is identifying Heidy only by her first name to protect her privacy.

The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Texas made no effort to defend the legality of Heidy’s detention, instead telling Cardone that she had been freed January 22. Heidy’s lawyers said her family had to pay for her return to Minnesota.

Since the Trump administration began its mass deportation efforts in early 2025, more than 1,300 immigrants detained by ICE have filed legal motions known as habeas corpus petitions in the federal court system’s Western District of Texas, an area stretching from El Paso to Austin that is home to numerous ICE detention facilities. The district received 759 federal habeas corpus petitions in 2025, more than any previous year. That record for a year was broken in the first month of 2026, an analysis of court records found.

Habeas corpus—Latin for “you have the body”—is a centuries-old legal doctrine enshrined in the U.S. Constitution that allows incarcerated people to challenge their detention before a judge. Many of the immigration detainees filing habeas corpus petitions in El Paso and elsewhere in the Western District of Texas have succeeded in being granted bond hearings, or their outright release, although the exact numbers are difficult to determine. The vast majority of the habeas petitions filed in the Western District of Texas since President Donald Trump’s second inauguration allege that an immigrant is being held illegally. Some of the cases have shown that people were held despite their lawful status in the United States. Some involved Trump’s efforts to invoke a 1798 wartime power to deport “enemy aliens.”

Most of the petitions say the detainee has been unlawfully denied his or her right to seek a bond to get released from immigration detention. The filings have increased at an unprecedented rate in recent weeks, including in El Paso. federal judges, prosecutors and detainee attorneys are swamped.

“I can tell you that the U.S. Attorney’s Office is just utterly underwater, to the point that I now have a case in which they blew a deadline. And, so, I had to file a motion to the court saying, ‘Well, you gave them a deadline to respond. They didn’t respond. Please release my client.’ That’s unheard of for the Department of Justice to just miss deadlines because they’re so underwater,” said Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg, a Virginia-based attorney who has handled a number of high-profile cases across the country, including that of Kilmar Ábrego García, the Maryland man unlawfully deported to El Salvador in 2025.

The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Texas didn’t respond to a request for comment from *El Paso Matters*.

From 2021 to 2024, judges in El Paso handled an average of 26 federal habeas petitions a year. In 2025, that jumped to nearly 300. In January 2026, federal habeas filings in El Paso came in at a pace that, if continued, would yield more than 2,800 such filings this year. All but a handful of the Western District of Texas filings in 2025 and 2026 are from people in immigration detention, while petitions in prior years came primarily from federal prison inmates.

Why habeas corpus filings are exploding

In his 2024 campaign, Trump promised to unleash a mass deportation effort if elected. He has



CORRIE BOUDREAUX/EL PASO MATTERS

The entrance to the El Paso’s Camp East Montana migrant detention facility, shown Jan. 25, 2026. Hundreds of people detained there have filed habeas corpus petitions.

following through with numerous policies to remove people unlawfully present in the United States. At times, those efforts have rounded up people who are legally in the country. As a result, a record 73,000 people were in immigrant detention nationwide as of mid-January, including thousands in El Paso.

Much of the surge in habeas corpus filings is due to the Trump administration declaring last year that undocumented immigrants apprehended in the country’s interior were not eligible for bond while in detention, a reversal of decades of legal precedent. The decision came as the Trump administration geared up its deportation efforts.

More than 300 district court judges have ruled that the Trump administration is violating federal law with its no-bond policy, while only 14 have supported the interpretation, according to a Politico report. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans will hear oral arguments on the issue Tuesday. The determination of who is eligible for an immigration detention bond could eventually be made by the Supreme Court, but likely not before next year.

A 2022 Supreme Court ruling also is a major factor in the rise of habeas corpus petitions from immigration detention, said Sandoval-Moshenberg, one of the nation’s leading experts in immigration law. That decision barred the use of class-action lawsuits in immigration detention cases. “Our side sort of warned the Supreme Court, if you rule this way, you’re dooming the federal courts to an onslaught of individual habeas cases. And we were right, and this is now the result of it. Every person has to file their own lawsuit to challenge the same policy, instead of there just being a single class action challenging the policy,” Sandoval-Moshenberg said.

Minnesota cases

A large portion of the habeas corpus petitions going before El Paso judges in recent weeks have involved immigration detainees brought from Minnesota to Camp East Montana, ICE’s largest detention facility that currently holds 3,000 people, an *El Paso Matters* review of court records showed.

Many of those detainees were moved from Minnesota to El Paso on the same day they were detained in the Trump administration’s massive crackdown that has spawned massive protests, leading to the killings of two American citizens by federal agents in Minneapolis.

The rapid movement of detainees from Minnesota to Texas is a deliberate effort to make it more difficult for them to seek relief through habeas corpus, said Brendan McBride, an attorney in Anoka, Minnesota, who is representing six clients on habeas corpus petitions filed in El Paso and San Antonio since the beginning of the year. Heidy, the community college student, was one of those clients.

McBride moved to Minnesota in 2019 from San Antonio, and has maintained his admission to practice law in the Western District of Texas. “When you file a petition for a writ of habeas corpus, it has to be filed in the federal district court that encompasses the geographic area where the petitioner is currently being held by the government. And that means that in order to file a petition for a writ of habeas corpus, the lawyer that’s filing it for you has to be admitted to practice already in that particular federal district court,” McBride said.

Moving detainees also takes them away from their immigration attorneys, who are most familiar with their clients’ legal issues, he said. “And in order to prevent their lawyers who are working for them in the immigration system from representing them, the lawyers who know the most about the situation and have the direct relationship with them, they’re whisked away to a different district where those lawyers aren’t admitted to practice. They have to find someone in the district where the detainees have been moved to file the habeas petition for them.”

Finding another lawyer, in an area where a detainee’s family has no contacts, can be time consuming and expensive, Sandoval-Moshenberg said. And that can carry serious consequences. “It means that people who don’t have the financial resources end up giving up their cases and accepting deportation,” he said. “In cases in which the habeas corpus litigation, for whatever reason, is taking a long time, it means that the person might not get access to a bond hearing before their immigration case is decided. Immigration cases for people in detention take place at a lightning-fast pace. And so it’s a bit of a race against time.”

And with record numbers of people now held in immigration detention, there aren’t enough lawyers to handle all the potential claims of unlawful incarceration, McBride and Sandoval-Moshenberg said.

In Minnesota, volunteers are helping families file their own habeas corpus petitions for loved ones in immigration detention, McBride said. “There’s been a massive outpouring of mutual aid and coordinated efforts to help people here. And one of those things has included a lot of people volunteering to help families navigate the process to file their own when it [costs] too much, or because there’s too many for the few lawyers that can do it,” he said.

Court records show that multiple people seeking habeas corpus relief without an attorney, known in legal parlance as filing pro se, have won their cases before El Paso judges in recent weeks. But pro se filings add to the challenges of detainees. “If they’re filing pro se habeas corpus petitions without a lawyer, they don’t have [online court] accounts, those are probably being mailed. So, that’s another level of delay,” McBride said.

How El Paso federal judges are responding

Because habeas corpus petitions involve a person’s freedom, and at times their safety, federal law makes them a priority for judges. When a petition is filed, a judge gives the government an order to “show cause” why the petitioner should continue to be detained. The petitioner has a chance to respond to the government’s filing, and the judge generally decides whether to grant the petition within a few weeks of when it was filed.

El Paso has four federal judges with lifetime appointments, all of whom are handling habeas corpus petitions. David Briones, who was appointed to the bench by President Bill Clinton in 1994, and David Guaderrama, appointed by President Barack Obama in 2012, have senior status, a form of semi-retirement that allows them to reduce their workload while retaining their full salary and staff.

El Paso has two district judges handling full caseloads, and who have been assigned most of the habeas corpus petitions. Kathleen Cardone was appointed by President George W. Bush in 2003, and Leon Schydlower was appointed by President Joe Biden

in 2024.

An *El Paso Matters* review of habeas petitions show that Cardone, Briones and Guaderrama generally give the government a short window to respond to the show cause order, from two to seven days. In their show cause orders to the government, Cardone and Briones often mention that the petition includes claims similar to prior cases where Western District of Texas courts have granted relief sought by a detainee. “As alleged, her case appears materially indistinguishable from several others in which this Court has found a procedural due process violation,” Cardone has written in numerous show cause orders for the government.

Briones routinely chides the government for prior actions on immigration cases. He and Guaderrama regularly issue temporary restraining orders that bar the government from moving or deporting detainees while their habeas corpus petitions are pending. “Due to prior incidences in this Court of Respondents or their assigns removing petitioners from the United States and/or jurisdiction of the Western District of Texas—El Paso Division even after the Court orders them not to do so, this Court, in its discretion, finds good cause to issue a temporary restraining order restraining Respondents from removing Petitioner from its jurisdiction or the United States until further order of the Court,” Briones writes in show cause orders.

Schydlower, the newest El Paso judge on the federal bench, takes a notably different approach from his three colleagues in handling habeas cases. He gives the government far more time to respond to show cause orders—often three weeks. One result is that habeas petitions before Schydlower are decided much more slowly than with the other judges, if at all.

Several attorneys who regularly handle habeas corpus cases in the Western District of Texas told *El Paso Matters* they can’t understand why Schydlower is taking a much slower approach on such cases than his El Paso colleagues. The attorneys asked not to be identified so they didn’t put their clients at risk by being seen as criticizing a judge. “Justice deferred is really justice denied, because clients give up, they give up hope. When they’re in illegal detention for three or four months or six months, they suffer there,” one attorney said. “People lose hope when they have to be stuck in that for a long period of time and have no idea when they can leave, and frankly, why they’re there.”

The other three El Paso judges continue to move forward with habeas corpus petitions in their courts, including issuing orders Friday for the government to provide bond hearings for detainees.

After Heidy was released, McBride and his co-counsel, Terja Kristina Bouvin Larsen, made one final plea in a Jan. 28 court filing to Cardone.

“The other relief Petitioner requests of the Court—and anyone else who still believes in the importance of the rule of law—is that the justice system deals with the aftermath of a campaign of terror and cruelty that has unnecessarily wasted an enormous amount of public resources, including the time and effort of the court and its staff, and that the Court simply remember Heidy.”

—ROBERT MOORE

This story was originally published in El Paso Matters on February 1, 2026.

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OPINION



Looking back at Porvenir after Uvalde

THERE ARE a few similarities between Uvalde, Texas, made infamous after the May 24, 2022, mass shooting and the massacre at Porvenir, Texas, on January 28, 1918.

There are several troubling facts about both mass killings. Perhaps the most troubling is that both mass killings of Mexican Americans involved the infamous Texas Rangers. Of course, no one likes to think heroes of legends and movies could have been involved, but they are. This troubling fact has been known since Texas Rangers and other agencies failed to risk their lives and attempt entry into the classroom where Salvadore Ramos, the killer, took position.

There are about 160 miles between Porvenir and Uvalde, as well as more than a century in time. Both events have further damaged Texas history, which flies against myth and legends about the heroic Texas Rangers. Porvenir has been described as a state-sanctioned massacre and Uvalde as a pattern of a disturbed individual bent on destruction.

Stepping back a step, it also reveals a disturbing pattern in American society regarding violence, marginalized vulnerable communities and ongoing failures of institutions responsible for protecting them.

One of the least known and best kept secrets is that Texas Rangers accompanied by local ranchers and U. S. Cavalry soldiers executed 15 unarmed Mexican American men and boys in Porvenir, in 1918. It was justified by authorities as a response to alleged banditry but later revealed the victims were innocent and targeted because of their ethnicity. Others suggest it was based on greed for their land.

In contrast, the Uvalde shooting occurred when the gunman entered Robb Elementary and killed 19 children and two teachers. Most of the victims were Mexican Americans, reflecting the demographics of Uvalde. The shooter was not employed by the government, but the massacre exposed serious systemic failures in police response and broader societal issues relating to guns and the protection of children.

The striking similarity between two events is the failure of institutions to protect vulnerable populations. In Porvenir, the Texas Rangers tasked with enforcing the law became perpetrators of violence, acting with impunity and targeting a margin-

alized community. The cover-up and complete lack of accountability highlighted systemic racism and dangers of unchecked authority, which reflect current events today.

In Uvalde, police delay and inadequate response to the shooter drew national outrage. Despite being on the scene, officers waited over an hour before eliminating the shooter. During this time more lives were lost. Investigations revealed confusion, lack of leadership, and a breakdown in communication, all contributed to the tragedy. In both cases, the very institutions meant to serve and protect failed, leading to preventable loss of life.

Both impacted Mexican American communities in Texas. The Porvenir victims living on the border were historically subjected to discrimination and violence. That massacre instilled fear and trauma, leading to the abandonment of the village and a legacy of mistrust toward law enforcement and, most importantly, a hatred of the Texas Rangers, which lingers today.

Similarly, the Uvalde shooting devastated a tight-knit community. The loss of children and the perceived indifference or incompetence of authorities compounded the grief and anger felt by residents.

In both instances, the events became symbols of the vulnerability of minority communities in the face of violence and institutional neglect. The aftermath of both events saw outcries for justice.

The 1918 Porvenir massacre led to the eventual disbandment of the Texas Rangers company involved, though no one was held criminally accountable. In Uvalde, the shooting reignited national debate over gun control, school safety and public accountability. Families and advocates demanded answers and reforms, leading to more legislative hearings and policy proposals, though change remains elusive. Both tragedies serve as catalysts for broader conversations about justice, equity and the responsibilities of those in power.

The acquittal of a Uvalde police officer accused of failing to protect the children has left the parents stunned as once again a lack of accountability raises its ugly head. This matter remains unanswered and exposes the dark side of our American justice system. — **JORGE A. MARTINEZ**

Jorge A. Martinez is an independent journalist

We need to uphold constitutional rights

IN RECENT weeks, our nation has been shaken by the tragic deaths of Renée Good, a mother of three, and Alex Pretti, an ICU nurse and veteran caregiver. Both were killed during federal immigration enforcement operations in Minneapolis. Their deaths have left families devastated, communities on edge, and Americans across the country, myself included, with profound and justified concerns about

the use of force by federal agents acting under the authority of the government we entrust to protect us. I took an oath and served in uniform to defend the rights enshrined in our Constitution. The very rights that make America a beacon of freedom and opportunity. Those rights are not conditional. They extend to every person in every community, not only to those whose views align with our own.

As a veteran, I understand that love of country cannot be separated from respect for its founding principles, and our commitment to those principles must be unwavering.

When life is lost under circumstances that raise more questions than answers, it tears at the fabric of our democracy and weakens the trust between the governed and those sworn to protect them. Upholding constitutional rights

and respecting law enforcement are not competing values. Federal law enforcement and immigration agents carry out difficult and often dangerous work.

But public trust depends on confidence that the law is enforced when necessary and proportional and that every loss of life is met with full transparency, rigorous review and accountability.

—Sen CÉSAR BLANCO

LETTER

Leadership, perseverance needed for ordinance fixes

AT LAST MONTH'S meeting of the City of Marfa's Planning and Zoning Commission, their first meeting in half a year, Commission Chair Stephen "Chick" Rabourn lamented the sad state of our crudely designed and shoddily maintained Planning and Zoning Ordinance.

It's true that our ordinance is a poor reflection of our community's goals and objectives, and bears little resemblance to our Comprehensive Plan. The ordinance, rather, is unduly empowering to a select few who benefit from the chaos and ambiguity it creates. Chick opined that he wished things weren't as they are but that revisions and reform had been tried and had failed.

Chick... we've traced the call;
it's coming from inside the house.

You are the chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission. It is your *duty* to maintain the City's Comprehensive Plan and to keep the Planning and Zoning Ordinance finely tuned to that plan. If things have fallen by the wayside, they have done so under the stewardship of many, but now also including you. To be fair, you are not the cause of these problems, but you are currently the sole gatekeeper to

the instruments of their remedy. YOU set the agenda. If something is wrong, you have the power to try to do something about it.

I understand that you and others have tried to fix issues in the past and have not been able to get the votes from the City Council. This is unfortunate, but it's life. Sometimes things are hard. The answer is not to throw your hands up if your first attempt fails. Perseverance is the name of the game. Yes, you'll learn that Planning and Zoning is, for whatever reason, incredibly political, though of course it shouldn't be.

You'll be obstructed and delayed as you try to dismantle a system that has not come to exist by accident. You'll acquire enemies and friends and those who float between the two. You'll revel in small victories and stew in what will seem like insurmountable defeats. You'll lose and try again. When all is said and done, you will earn your victories and our collective respect and gratitude for your tireless public service.

You are a leader. Lead.

—TONY GEORGES
Marfa



DAVID LONG

Placards remembering Serapio Jiménez, one of the victims of the Porvenir massacre, line posts by a historical marker on Highway 90 east of Marfa.

BIG BEND

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Sentinel News Project

www.bigbendsentinel.com

Published weekly on Thursdays 50 times a year
by Sentinel News Project,
A Texas non-profit organization.

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Annual subscription rates are \$50 in Presidio, Brewster and Jeff Davis counties, and \$60 elsewhere in and the United States. Special rates apply abroad.

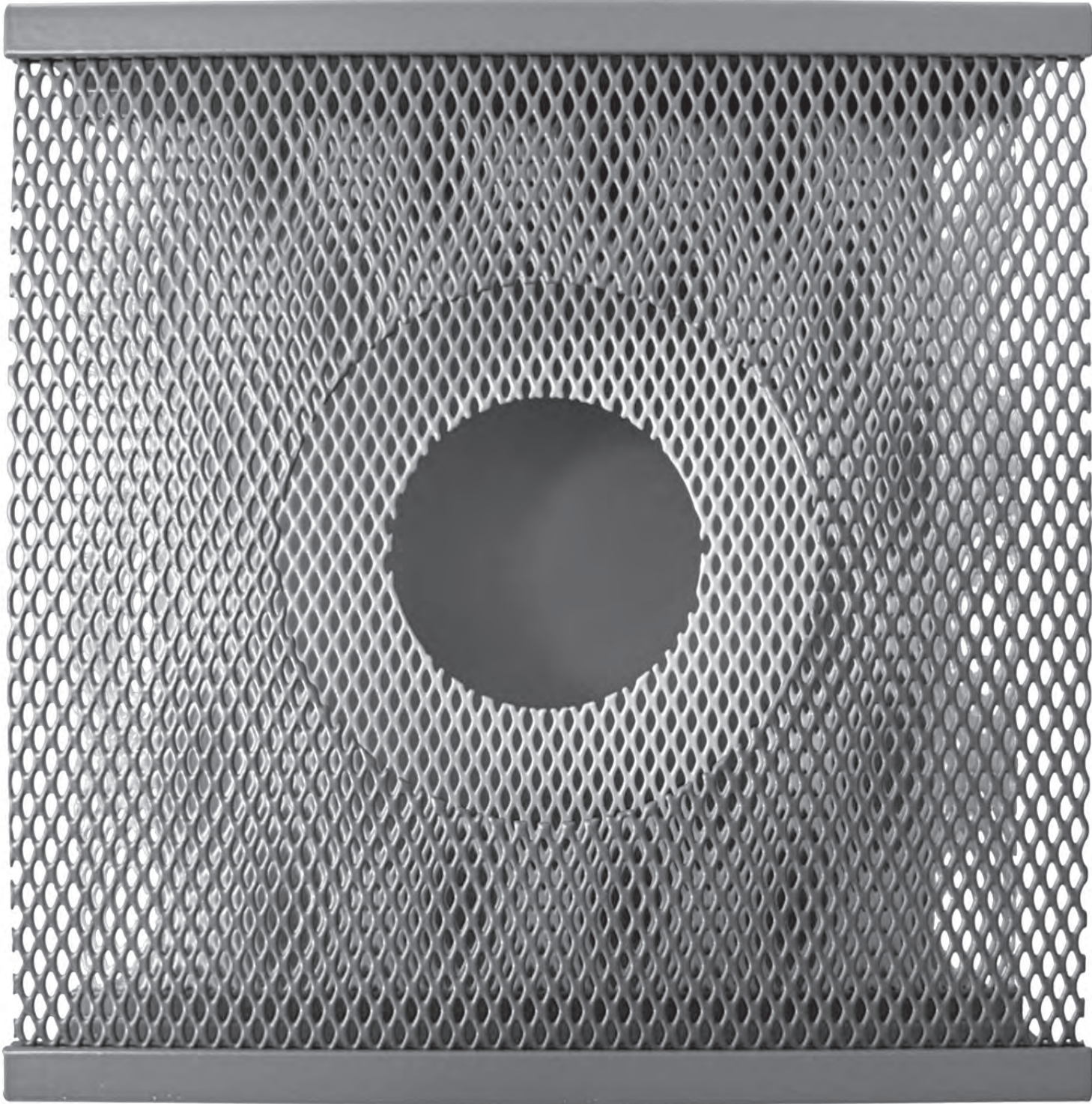
Periodicals class postage paid at Marfa, Texas 79843.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Drawer P, Marfa, TX 79843

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Cody Barber’s latest ‘Moiré Work’ pays homage to early chair restoration

Artist experimented with ‘psycho color’ chairs



ALEX HOWARD

One of Barber’s smaller 6 x 6 moiré works.

By ALEXIS WOLFE

When artist Cody Barber graduated from Texas Tech with a mass communications degree in 2009, he applied for jobs in television and marketing, but didn’t go straight into his field. He cites the 2008 market crash as cause for a drab job market outlook, which led him to “get creative and start looking for chairs.” He discovered that Lubbock was flooded with mid-century modern furniture of iconic design—thanks to the university’s contracts with Herman Miller and Knoll in the 1950s and ‘60s—which he instinctively gravitated towards. This surplus enabled Barber to collect and “edit” chairs by Eames and Bertioia, adding color to designs that were typically only sold in black and white. “I would powder coat one of these chairs a psycho color you hadn’t seen before,” he says, “which made the final product a recognizable design in an unrecognizable color.”

A Lubbock native, when Barber first moved to Marfa in 2013, he operated a design shop out of the storefront that is now Para Llevar, where he sold powder-coated furniture and other objects of interest—hammers, rakes, pickaxes, you name it. At first, Barber outsourced his powder coating work to a business in Lubbock, but eventually grew tired of the commute. In 2016, he decided to invest in his own equipment and open up shop—unable to find an affordable studio for rent in Marfa, he first operated out of a metal building in Fort Davis.

At the start of the pandemic, Barber was forced to close down his design shop on E. San Antonio and take on more freelance work for builders and homeowners in the area. Today, he operates a fully functional powder coating studio on the south side of town, where he creates his own art and offers powder coating services to the greater Big Bend region, often taking on large-scale architectural projects.

Barber possesses a natural inclination towards good design. “A chair is a standard. So when I started seeing chairs that were different and breaking that standard, and that happened to be in Lubbock, I noticed.” Barber began frequenting a local powder coating shop there armed with old chairs, restoring

them to sell them online for income. He refers to himself as a “chair-hunter” during those early, post-college days in which he would cruise around nearby neighborhoods looking for beat-up chairs, sometimes knocking on a stranger’s door and offering them cash for one spotted in the front yard or on a porch—such a situation was dubbed a “porch score.”

With the powder coating shop owner in Lubbock less interested in the small jobs that Barber would bring in over time, his son, Jonathan Shelby, took on the projects for cash after hours. It was during this time together that Barber could ask questions about the process, with Shelby becoming his mentor. “After the first chairs I had powder coated, I thought, *I want to do this to everything*.”

As fate would have it, he has. Barber continues to powder coat various furniture, sculptures, bicycle parts, crushed aluminum cans, horseshoes, railroad spikes, and the like. He recalls that his first sculptural venture began when he powder coated a crushed beer can, shifting his focus from the utilitarian to the art form. Barber says the most rewarding part of owning a powder coating studio in Marfa is that it maintains his connection to the community and allows him to “offer something that adds beauty to our town.” Mixing color for Bordo’s front-facing sign and, most recently, transforming the library’s book drop box from light green to Shorthorn purple are among two happily listed examples.

In 2024, a few years after pandemic-acquired projects slowed and he was able to focus on his own work again, Barber debuted *Impact Work* at the Marfa Country Clinic—a series of aluminum panels intentionally distressed or warped through interactions with various tools and then powder coated in

custom color, rendering each piece a record of time, action, and effect. When offered a show at Wrong Gallery in late 2025, Barber seized the opportunity to revisit his work with moiré patterns, a process he explored from 2017 to 2020.

Like much memorable work, Barber’s first foray into *Moiré Work* was an accident. More than the Eames and Bertioia designs themselves, Barber is infatuated with their material of expanded metal. He honors and obsesses with their materiality, depositing color as an act of play and homage to the original. “I started asking myself,” he recalls, “How can I capture this moment that I love so much in powder coating the chairs and turn it into a work of art?”

A moiré—an optical effect where two similar patterns overlap to create new, shimmering lines or patterns—happens more naturally with fabric, but requires intentional manipulation of the material to make it occur with wire mesh. While experimenting in his studio, Barber realized he was witnessing an optical illusion, resulting from the layering of intricate metal; he could produce distorted, holographic

patterns that morphed as he swiveled his gaze, looking through the layers of wire mesh. “I didn’t even know what a moiré was when I first saw it,” Barber says, “It wasn’t until an architect taught me the function of moiré in building design. I only knew that I was witnessing an optical illusion, and I wanted to make more of it.”

Barber draws an unlikely comparison between his latest works and his beginnings of making flyers for the punk bands he played in growing up, layering image on text on image, creating something blurred and new. He says what excites him most about *Moiré Work*,

though, is “the opportunity to physically mix color in real time” for the viewer as they shift around the duochrome frames.

While Barber’s latest work exists as a powerful force on its own, capable of warping reality for the viewer—some claim headaches or disorientation after staring into the hand-welded frames for too long—it could not exist without his chair-hunting past. “Another thing I love about it,” Barber says, “is that it all comes back to the chairs. This is something you wouldn’t know from just looking at any of the work. How would you ever look at one of those pieces and think, chair?”

And yet—chair. In an artist statement for a February 8 show in a New York gallery (which displays a collection of the smaller 6 x 6 moiré works), Barber writes, “The six sculptures I made ... are a direct result of chair maintenance. The works have parts that I need to assemble. I think of legs and feet. The graphic moiré patterns they exhibit are visually exciting; spirited backrests.”

But despite Barber’s latest success with *Moiré Work* and as the sole powder coater in town, the cost of real estate in Marfa makes up much of what he is thinking about these days. Barber has been renting for the past 13 years. As of late 2023, his studio is on the market. Originally listed at \$550,000, today the building (paired with the house adjacent) is listed slightly lower at \$495,000, rendering it unobtainable to him. The dream to secure his studio and purchase the home directly across the street is somehow out of reach, and he spends a lot of time thinking about how he can afford a new chapter for himself. “It’s the classic trope,” Barber says, speaking of the unexciting story of gentrification, “The artists come in and make an area desirable, then the rich come in and force the artists out. It’s basically what’s happening.”

And in this way, despite its purported values, Marfa remains a difficult place for an artist to build a life, though Barber has no desire to pursue his career elsewhere. “I really can’t imagine doing all of this anywhere else. This town and the people have been really good to me.”

Moiré Work is on view at Wrong Marfa, 110 Highland St., through February 22, 2026.



ALEX HOWARD

Cody Barber in his powder coating studio.