

BIG BEND Sentinel

Vol. 93 No. 45 • February 12, 2026

Our 100th Year

Marfa, Texas • TWO DOLLARS



FACEBOOK

Presidio favorite?

County Judge Joe Portillo hopes his hometown Presidio—with more voters than Marfa—will boost him to the top.



FACEBOOK

Meeting voters

Challenger David Beebe has been spending most of his time knocking on doors in Presidio

Judge's race heats up in Presidio

"We've got to empower ourselves"

By SAM KARAS

Presidio

On an uncharacteristically wet and gloomy morning in Presidio, David Beebe, a candidate for county judge, pounded the pavement—figuratively speaking, as many of the backroads in the county's largest and most impoverished community aren't paved at all. Beebe, a tall self-proclaimed gringo who typically adds extra height with a cowboy hat and tinted glasses, doesn't exactly blend into a South County street scene, but he's not a true outsider, either. "It's amazing how many people I know from back when I was Justice of the Peace," he said, referring to his start in Presidio County politics over a decade ago. "It's not necessarily good or bad—but it does mean I'm not a completely new face."

Beebe has been hitting the campaign trail hard, knowing that he has a long way to go to become a household name in Presidio, the hometown of his competitor and the first Presidio County Judge to hail from somewhere other than Marfa, José ("Joe") Portillo, Jr. Last time he ran, Portillo delivered a decisive victory: 1,228 to 608 against Cinderela Guevara of Marfa.

Portillo didn't return multiple phone calls to participate in this story, but one can only imagine that he's wondering if he'll be able to pull off the same bruising performance. After all, 2022 was an unusual victory in an unusual year. Incumbent Guevara had started to rub some of Marfa's more progressive wing the wrong way with controversial political moves like declaring an "invasion" of migrants at the border to attract border security funding from Austin. Later that year, Big BendSentinel reported that Guevara had been taking money from a conservative PAC that had been funneling money into trying to turn the traditionally blue borderlands red.

Portillo defeats Guevara

Guevara's party flip to Republican was a flop with voters, who turned out for Portillo in droves. Even in Marfa's Precincts 1 and 7, the results were a bloodbath—folks didn't seem to mind voting for a mostly unfamiliar candidate,

so long as they weren't hitching their star to Gov. Greg Abbott. (In fact, more people turned out for Portillo in Precinct 7 than in any single precinct in his hometown.) "I was really happy he won," Beebe told potential voters at a candidate forum last week in Presidio. "But I think now I could be doing a better job."

While Portillo was running for judge in 2022, Beebe was running to represent Marfa on the Presidio County Commissioners Court and handily defeated Republican Gary Willbanks 381-152. Beebe and Portillo served side-by-side amicably for the first few years, both expressing that making financial decisions on behalf of the cash-strapped county was unlikely to earn either of them friends. "There's no cherry on the ice cream," Portillo was fond of saying of the county's excruciating budget-drafting process. "In fact, there is no ice cream."

The tone of county politics started to shift just after the close of the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget cycle, when Portillo began to openly float the idea of taking on debt to tackle costly outstanding projects, including repairs to the county courthouse and outdated equipment at the road and bridge department. The judge later changed his tune, supporting a petition launched by Fernando Juarez, a member of Presidio City Council and a candidate for Commissioner's Court, to strike down a call for certificates of obligation that he'd been among the first to suggest. (Portillo has since clarified that he would like to see the county pursue more grant-funded opportunities to address these issues.)

Defund effort spurs fight

At the end of the FY 2025-2026 budget drafting process, Portillo made the controversial decision to pull funding for the Marfa Golf Course and Vizcaino Park and advocated to fold the Veterans Service Officer and Emergency Management Coordinator positions into his own office. While the latter two initiatives failed, the parks were successfully removed from the county's long list of financial burdens and a non-profit group is hard at work trying to figure out how to run them without county support.

The increasingly acrimonious mood spurred Beebe to throw his

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FACEBOOK

David Beebe hits the road to Presidio, where he hopes to buy a small home.

Call for school board members unanswered

Marfa

The Marfa Independent School District School Board is still seeking letters of interest to fill a vacancy left by Place 1 Trustee Stela Fuentez, who resigned from the board in January.

Those interested in serving on the board should review the following qualifications and submit a letter of interest addressed to Board President Philip Boyd and the Marfa ISD Board of Trustees. The letter must be hand delivered to the superintendent's office at 400 W. Lincoln Street by 4 p.m. Friday, February 13. There will be a school board meeting on Monday, February 16, to review the potential candidates.

The district is also seeking Place 1 and Place 2 candidates for the May 2 General Election. As of Monday, February 9, Boyd said there were not yet any interested applicants. Place 1 is currently held by Fuentez, who is retiring from the board. Place 2, currently held by Lori Flores. School Board elections have been canceled for the past four years due to too few candidates applying for the positions.

Those interested in running may pick up a ballot application at the superintendent's office. Applications must also be returned by 4 p.m. February 13.

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

See the qualifications on page 6

INSIDE



How the Big Bend wall hurts me

A sense of place may be destroyed. Page 9

Sentinel News Project



Longtime officials race for Jeff Davis judgeship

Community center is hot topic

By ROB D'AMICO

Fort Davis

Riding championship rodeo for Sul Ross State University long ago might have prepared Jeff Davis County Judge Curtis Evans to hold on tight and endure the bucks that have been part of the county's politics of late. In a solidly Republican county, infighting has been par for the course in the past few years over everything from EMS services to construction of a new community center.

With no Democratic primary candidate, the winner of the race will go on to likely win the general election in November.

Evans' opponent in the March 3 primary for county judge—Lane "Buster" Mills—said the bickering and accusations hurled back and forth between officials and the public are a key reason why he's running. "We're just not unified," he said. "The local government offices don't function well together, and I can make them as a group to move forward with our community."

Evans said he has his own criticism of how some county offices

work, but he's keeping it under his hat because he believes that focusing on success in his initiatives will put everyone on the same page. "There's three major things that hold our communities together that make them sustainable, and that is healthcare, education and housing," he said. "And we have the opportunity now to get those three things in tip-top shape going forward."

Evans grew up in Marfa and graduated from high school there before heading off to college, ultimately ending up at Sul Ross. "I've been in the ranching business

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County Judge Curtis Evans wants to spur growth in the county to preserve the property tax base.



Lane "Buster" Mills is depending on his deep roots in Jeff Davis County to give him an edge.

Presidio kids win at drawing contest

An international art compenion hosted by Mexico

By KATE BUBACZ

Presidio

Seven schoolchildren in Presidio were named winners of the global drawing contest hosted by the Mexican Consulate. Their drawings will be exhibited throughout Presidio through the end of February, and visitors are encouraged to participate in a scavenger hunt to find all the winners. Fort Leaton will be hosting a special one-day exhibition of the drawings on February 14, which is free to the public.

As visitors seek out all seven exhibitions throughout town, the Mexican Consulate is giving kids



KATE BUBACZ

Sara Sanchez, one of the seven Presidio student prize winners

and adults an art "passport" that will be stamped at each location. Once a visitor has all seven stamps and has identified all seven winning images, they can turn

it into the Mexican Consulate for a prize.

The drawings come from children all over the world—at

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JEFF DAVIS COUNTY SHERIFF
Bodycam captures Flash detained by a deputy in Fort Davis last June.

Publisher sues Jeff Davis County

David Flash, the publisher of Big Bend Times, an online news outlet, has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against Jeff Davis County officials alleging they unlawfully detained him and charged him with unconstitutional harassment charges, among other attempts to stifle his work as a journalist and violate his constitutional rights.

The 51-page lawsuit, filed on January 18 in federal court in Pecos, Texas states that: “The elected policymaking officials of Jeff Davis County, being County Judge Curtis Evans, Sheriff Victor Lopez, and joined by County Attorney Glen Eisen, Justice of the Peace Mary Ann Luedecke individually and in concert with each other acted under color of law to chill and suppress by intimidation, seizure, arrest, that also constituted prior restraints to Flash’s exercise of his constitutional rights.”

Flash’s complaint outlines an “unconstitutional” banning of him from the Jeff Davis County Courthouse, and a June 27 confrontation in which he was detained for photographing a Commissioners Court meeting. County Judge Evans and Sheriff Lopez said he was being “disruptive.”

“While being handcuffed, Flash was injured from the excessive use of force that led to his being unlawfully detained for approximately thirty minutes during which time Flash was unlawfully charged with disorderly conduct under Texas Penal Code § 42.01,” the lawsuit states. The ongoing conflict also included a traffic citation, a “false” warrant notice sent to Flash and the proceedings around the county’s harassment charges filed against him. All charges and legal issues were eventually dismissed.

CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

Texas campaigns heating up

Early voting in the March 3 primary begins Monday, February 17 and concludes on Friday, Feb. 27. A full slate of contested races will be on the ballots in both Republican and Democratic primaries. The deadline to request a mail ballot is Feb. 20, according to votetexas.gov.

One of the most closely watched statewide races for both parties are the primary races for U.S. senator. Incumbent GOP Sen. John Cornyn faces two challengers: Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and U.S. Rep. Wesley Hunt, R-Houston. On the Democratic side, U.S. Rep. Jasmine Crockett, D-Dallas, faces state Rep. James Talarico, D-Austin. There are many other contested races on the ballot as well.

Voters can access election information, find out if they are registered to vote, and obtain other pertinent information at votetexas.gov.

30K voucher applications on first day

More than 30,000 school voucher applications were submitted last week on the first day of the state’s new program to give families taxpayer-funded accounts for private school tuition and homeschooling expenses, the Houston Chronicle reported. The applications will be accepted until March 17 and are not first-come, first-served.

The Legislature provided \$1 billion in funding for the program’s first year, which is projected to support up to 100,000 accounts. If it receives more applications than can be funded, an income-and disability-based lottery will be held to determine which families receive vouchers.

“When parents have more options, students have more opportunity – and that’s a win for Texas,” acting Comptroller Kelly Hancock said in a news release.

Officially called Texas Education Freedom Accounts, the program is being administered by the state comptroller’s office and Odyssey, a New York-based tech contractor.

School walkouts could trigger TEA probes

A rash of student walkouts in Texas to protest the ongoing ICE crackdown in Minnesota has prompted the Texas Education Agency to warn school districts they could face investigations and possible loss of funding, The Dallas Morning News reported. In a letter sent last week to school districts, the agency warned that students must be marked as absent, with schools risking loss of daily

attendance funding. It stated that teachers or school systems who “facilitate walkouts” will be subject to investigation and sanction.

After thousands of students from 14 campuses in the Austin ISD left class to protest ICE activity, Gov. Greg Abbott called on Education Commissioner Mike Morath to investigate.

“AISD gets taxpayer dollars to teach the subjects required by the state, not to help students skip school to protest,” he wrote on X. “Our schools are for educating our children, not political indoctrination.”

Besides Austin, several school districts in and around the Dallas-Fort Worth area experienced student walkouts. Organizers pointed out that protests are protected speech, with the harshest consequence being an unexcused absence.

State back in court soon over no AC in prisons

Texas will soon return to federal court to defend not providing air conditioning in many of its prisons, according to the Texas Standard. The plaintiffs include advocacy groups and incarcerated individuals, who claim that the heat levels in un-air-conditioned prisons constitute cruel and unusual punishment.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice argues that the prison system needs more funding and resources. Two-thirds of the state’s 103 prison facilities lack air conditioning in cell blocks and dorms. Temperatures inside those prisons often rise above 90 degrees, according to readings now required by law.

“There is no mitigation measure other than air conditioning that can protect people from death or sickness due to the heat,” attorney Erica Grossman said. “People living in Texas prisons should not be subjected to conditions we won’t even subject animals to.”

County jails are required to keep temperatures between 65 and 85 degrees. Animal shelters also have heat rules.

Measles cases reported in Dilley immigrant center, West Texas

Two detainees at the family immigration center in Dilley, 70 miles south of San Antonio, have “active measles infections,” federal and state officials said. The Texas Tribune reported some migrants have been quarantined at the nation’s only family detention center. More than 1,400 people are being held at the facility.

A Department of Homeland Security spokesperson said medical officials were monitoring detainees and taking “appropriate and active steps to prevent further infection.”

“All detainees are being pro-

vided with proper medical care,” Tricia McLaughlin said.

The Texas Department of State Health Services is collaborating with DHS to determine the number of vaccine doses needed for the Dilley facility. DSHS has also reported three confirmed measles cases in Reeves and Ward counties among non-Texas residents who spent time there.

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease spread through coughing, sneezing or simply being near an infected person. The MMR vaccine is considered the most effective way to prevent measles.

TEA hires inspector general to investigate teachers

The Texas Education Agency announced last week that it has hired an inspector general to oversee the agency’s growing number of investigations into the conduct of Texas teachers, the Houston Chronicle reported. Serving the role will be Levi Fuller, a former chief of staff to state Rep. Andy Hopper, R-Decatur.

“With more than a decade of experience holding bad actors accountable, Levi will help root out the flawed few that sew distrust among families and school communities while helping to restore confidence in the teaching profession,” Education Commissioner Mike Morath said.

TEA investigations can result in teachers being placed on the “Do Not Hire” list, dismissal, or suspension of teaching licenses. The most serious cases are vetted by the State Board of Educator Certification.

RRC completes digitization of 100 million records

The Texas Railroad Commission recently surpassed digitizing more than 100 million oil and gas records, making nearly a century’s worth of documents available online.

“Digitizing 100 million records represents a significant achievement in the Railroad Commission’s ability to better serve Texans, streamlining access to our vast library of files and continuing to expand our modernization efforts,” said Wei Wang, executive director of the RRC.

Digitized records are available on the RRC’s website at <https://tinyurl.com/yh4e6bf5>.

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

Early voting starts Tuesday

Voting for the March 3 primary elections runs from Tuesday, February 17, to Friday, February 27 at the following times and locations.

Presidio County
Voters from any precinct may cast their ballots at either location.
USO Visitors Center, 302 S. Highland Avenue, Marfa.
Spencer Building, 803 O’Reilly Street, Presidio
Tuesday, February 17-20, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturday, February 21, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Sunday, February 22, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.
February 23-27, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
March 3, Election Day 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Voters must vote at their precinct location—the USO Building or Spencer Building.

Brewster County
Voters from any precinct may cast their ballots at this location: Judge Val Clark Beard Complex, 203 North 7th Street, Alpine

Tuesday, February 17 through Friday, February 20, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturday, February 21, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Sunday, February 22, Noon to 6 p.m.
Monday, February 23 through Friday, February 27, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
March 3, Election Day, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Voters must vote at their precinct.
Precinct 1: Assembly of God Fellowship Hall, 802 N. Highway 118, Alpine
Precinct 2: Judge Val Clark Beard Complex, 203 North 7th Street, Alpine
Precinct 3: Marathon Community Center, 2nd and Ave E, Marathon
Precinct 4: Alpine Civic Center, 801 W. Holland Avenue, Alpine
Precinct 5: Panther Junction Visitor Center Community Room, Big Bend National Park
Precincts 6, 7: JW “Red” Pattillo Community Center, 201 Rex Ivey Road, Study Butte
Precinct 8: Alpine Food Pantry, 933 E Gallego Avenue, Alpine

Jeff Davis County
Voters from any precinct may cast their ballots at this location: Jeff Davis County, District and County Clerk’s Office, 111 N. Street (double green doors).
Tuesday, February 17, through Friday, February 20, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturday, February 21, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Sunday, February 22, 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Monday, February 23, through Friday, February 27, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
March 3, Election Day 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Voters must vote at their precinct location.
Precincts 1, 2, 3: Jeff Davis County, District and County Clerk’s Office, 111 N. Street (double green doors).
Precinct 4: North Main and Eighth Street, Valentine.
Precinct 5: DMPOA Community Center, 101 Yellowknife Trail, Fort Davis.

For a full list of local candidates in the tri-county area, visit bigbendsentinel.com/election2026



VITALANT
Hank Pearson, a Fort Davis High School student steps up to donate blood.

Blood donors are superheroes

A nonprofit organization, Vitalant urging residents to participate in a blood drive Thursday, March 5, 2026, at the Baptist Church Fellowship Hall, 111 S. Agave Street, Ft. Davis. Medical personnel from Odessa will be on hand to collect donations.

Blood donors are described as “superheroes” because transfusions are vital for saving lives,

including accident victims, cancer patients, and newborns with blood incompatibilities. All blood types are needed.

The donation process takes about one hour. Anyone age 17 or older—or 16 with a parent’s permission—is eligible to donate. To sign up, please call Vitalant at 877-258-4825 or Dr. Sherill Easterling at 325-207-6427.



Visit the Chinati Foundation, an artist-created, artist-centered museum in Marfa, Texas.

Open Wednesday–Sunday.

Book your guided tour at chinati.org/visit

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Niños de Presidio ganan en concurso

La contienda por la magistratura se intensifica en Presidio

Arte exhibido en todo Presidio

Por KATE BUBACZ

Presidio
Siete estudiantes de Presidio fueron nombrados ganadores del concurso mundial de dibujo organizado por el Consulado de México. Sus dibujos se exhibirán en Presidio hasta finales de febrero, y se anima a los visitantes a participar en una búsqueda del tesoro para encontrar a todos los ganadores. Fort Leaton albergará una exposición especial de un solo día con los dibujos el 14 de febrero, con entrada gratuita para el público.

Mientras los visitantes recorren las siete exposiciones por toda la ciudad, el Consulado de México les entrega a niños y adultos un “pasaporte” artístico que se sellará en cada lugar. Una vez que el visitante tenga los siete sellos y haya identificado las siete imágenes ganadoras, podrá entregarlo en el Consulado de México para recibir un premio.

Los dibujos provienen de niños de todo el mundo; en el edificio administrativo del Distrito Escolar Independiente de Presidio, las imágenes ganadoras procedían de Alemania, Perú, México y Bolivia, además de Presidio. Más de 1000 niños presentaron dibujos sobre el tema “Este es mi México: Pueblos y Barrios Mágicos”, de los cuales 50 fueron seleccionados como ganadores. Dado que el mayor número de ganadores provenía de Presidio, se le ofreció al consulado la oportunidad de exhibir las imágenes. El cónsul, Gamaliel Bustillos Muñoz, extendió la invitación a toda la comunidad.

“Las obras de arte que están invitados a descubrir en la galería transmiten una sensación de asombro, esperanza infinita y ensueño”, dice Adele Jancovici, propietaria de The Dreamers Gallery, que exhibe siete de las imágenes. Señala que las coloridas imágenes contienen un profundo sentido de pertenencia.

La inauguración de la exposición, que tuvo lugar al mediodía del 2 de febrero, se celebró en el edificio del Distrito Esco-

lar Independiente de Presidio y contó con la presencia del alcalde, el cónsul mexicano, el superintendente escolar, tres profesores de arte y una de las ganadoras. Sara Sánchez, alumna de sexto grado, realizó su dibujo de un “pueblo mágico” cuando estaba en cuarto grado. Dice que todavía le encanta dibujar y que planea participar en el próximo concurso.

“Me encanta trabajar con los niños porque no tienen prejuicios”, dice Brenda Muñoz, profesora de arte de la escuela primaria. Ella enseñó a los siete ganadores, tres de los cuales ahora están en la escuela secundaria. Cuando se anunció el concurso, les explicó el tema y guió a los estudiantes para que pensaran en cómo interpretarlo. Después de eso, les dio rienda suelta a su creatividad.

“Estaban entusiasmados con los premios, con la idea de que sus dibujos se exhibirían y viajarían”, comenta, y añade que también había una sana competencia en la clase para ver quién hacía el mejor dibujo.

La Sra. Muñoz ha sido profesora de arte en el distrito durante tres años, enseñando a casi 450 estudiantes de primaria después de dejar su carrera como diseñadora gráfica en la Ciudad de México. Aunque es una maestra relativamente nueva, es una veterana del concurso de dibujo. Solía colaborar en su organización cuando trabajaba en el consulado de El Paso. Su esposo es el actual cónsul en Presidio.

El éxito del concurso de dibujo es una de las varias colaboraciones artísticas con el consulado. La Sra. Muñoz y sus alumnos crearon una instalación artística colaborativa para el Día de Muertos el año pasado, que se exhibió en el consulado.

Esta interpretación contemporánea de una ofrenda se realizó con figuras de origami de papel elaboradamente construidas para que se movieran con el viento, y se acompañó de frutas de cerámica. Cuando la galería The Dreamers Gallery organizó una noche de cine con el consulado a finales de octubre, también presentaron una exhibición sorpresa de la ofrenda.



Los dibujos celebran la historia y la cultura de México.



Los maestros de arte Anthony Carrasco y Támara Carrasco, el cónsul mexicano Gamaliel Bustillos Muñoz, la ganadora Sara Sánchez, la maestra de arte Brenda Muñoz, el alcalde John Ferguson y la superintendente de Presidio ISD Carmen Rubner.

“Tenemos que empoderarnos”

Por SAM KARAS

Presidio
En una mañana inusualmente lluviosa y sombría en Presidio, David Beebe, candidato a juez del condado, se dedicó a recorrer el pavimento, en sentido figurado, ya que muchas de las carreteras secundarias de la comunidad más grande y empobrecida del condado no están pavimentadas. Beebe, un autoproclamado gringo alto que suele acentuar su estatura con un sombrero de vaquero y gafas de sol, no encaja del todo en el ambiente callejero del sur del condado, pero tampoco es un auténtico forastero. “Es increíble la cantidad de gente que conozco de cuando era juez de paz”, dijo, refiriéndose a sus inicios en la política del condado de Presidio hace más de una década. “No es necesariamente bueno ni malo, pero sí significa que no soy una cara completamente nueva”.

Beebe ha estado trabajando duro en la campaña, consciente de que le queda un largo camino por recorrer para convertirse en una figura reconocida en Presidio, la ciudad natal de su competidor y el primer juez del condado de Presidio que proviene de un lugar distinto a Marfa, José (“Joe”) Portillo Jr. En su última campaña, Portillo obtuvo una victoria decisiva: 1228 votos a 608 contra Cinderela Guevara, de Marfa.

Portillo no devolvió varias llamadas telefónicas para participar en este reportaje, pero es de suponer que se pregunta si podrá lograr la misma contundente actuación. Después de todo, 2022 fue una victoria inusual en un año inusual. El actual presidente Guevara había comenzado a irritar a algunos del ala más progresista de Marfa con controvertidas medidas políticas, como declarar una “invasión” de migrantes en la frontera para atraer fondos de seguridad fronteriza de Austin. Más tarde ese año, el Big Bend Sentinel informó que Guevara había estado recibiendo dinero de un Comité de Acción Política (PAC por sus siglas en inglés) conservador que había estado canalizando fondos para intentar convertir en rojas las zonas fronterizas, tradicionalmente demócratas.

El cambio de partido de Guevara hacia el Partido Republicano fue un fracaso entre los votantes, quienes acudieron masivamente a votar por Portillo. Incluso en los distritos electorales 1 y 7 de Marfa, los resultados fueron un baño de sangre: a la gente no parecía importarle votar por un candidato prácticamente desconocido, siempre y cuando no se aliaran con el gobernador Greg Abbott. (De hecho, más personas votaron



ROB D'AMICO

El concejal de la ciudad de Presidio, Silverio Escontrias, y Maritza Armendariz conversan con el juez del condado Joe Portillo en un encuentro en Marfa el 3 de febrero.



FACEBOOK

David Beebe se reúne con sus electores en un evento en Marfa el 8 de febrero.

por Portillo en el distrito 7 que en cualquier otro distrito de su ciudad natal). “Me alegré mucho de que ganara”, dijo Beebe a los potenciales votantes en un foro de candidatos la semana pasada en Presidio. “Pero creo que ahora podría estar haciéndolo mejor”.

Mientras Portillo se postulaba a juez en 2022, Beebe se postulaba para representar a Marfa en el Tribunal de Comisionados del Condado de Presidio y derrotó con facilidad al republicano Gary Willbanks por 381-152. Beebe y Portillo trabajaron juntos durante los primeros años, y ambos expresaron que tomar decisiones financieras en nombre de un condado con problemas de liquidez probablemente no les haría ganar amigos. “No hay nada mejor que eso”, solía decir Portillo sobre el arduo proceso de elaboración del presupuesto del condado. “De hecho, no hay nada mejor”.

El tono de la política del condado comenzó a cambiar justo después del cierre del ciclo pre-

supuestario del año fiscal 2024-2025, cuando Portillo comenzó a plantear abiertamente la idea de endeudarse para abordar costosos proyectos pendientes, como las reparaciones del juzgado del condado y el equipo obsoleto del departamento de carreteras y puentes. El juez cambió posteriormente de postura y apoyó una petición presentada por Fernando Juárez, miembro del Ayuntamiento de Presidio y candidato a la Corte de Comisionados, para anular la solicitud de certificados de obligación que él había sido uno de los primeros en sugerir. (Portillo ha aclarado posteriormente que le gustaría que el condado buscará más oportunidades financiadas con subvenciones para abordar estos problemas).

Al final del proceso de elaboración del presupuesto para el año fiscal 2025-2026, Portillo tomó la controvertida decisión de retirar los fondos para el Campo de Golf de Marfa y el Parque Vizcaino y abogó por integrar los puestos de oficial de servicio para veteranos y coordinador de gestión de emergencias en su propia oficina. Si bien estas dos últimas iniciativas fracasaron, los parques se eliminaron con éxito de la larga lista de cargas financieras del condado, y una organización sin fines de lucro trabaja arduamente para encontrar la manera de administrarlos sin el apoyo del condado.

El creciente malestar impulsó a Beebe a presentar su candidatura, algo prematuro según la ley de Texas, lo que le dio a Portillo la facultad de destituirlo de la Corte de Comisionados. Portillo reemplazó a Beebe por el excomisionado Frank “Buddy” Knight en octubre.

La renuncia involuntaria de Beebe causó cierta sorpresa entre los votantes de Presidio, al igual que el persistente rumor de que había sido arrestado por conducir bajo los efectos del alcohol. Beebe nunca ha sido arrestado por conducir bajo los efectos del alcohol, pero sí lo fue por intoxicación pública en 2016 tras pasar a pie por Stripes para comprar cerveza.

“Como funcionario electo del Condado de Presidio, reconozco mi responsabilidad de exigirme un estándar más alto que el de un ciudadano común”, declaró Beebe a NewsWest 9 en aquel momento.

El incidente fue uno de los muchos disparos en un largo conflicto entre Beebe y la Oficina del Sheriff del Condado de Presidio, un conflicto que ya se ha resuelto, aseguró Beebe a los votantes de Presidio la semana pasada, al tiempo que elogiaba la valentía y la integridad del Sheriff Domínguez.

A lo largo de los años, Beebe ha plasmado minuciosamente en su blog sus reflexiones y observaciones sobre la aplicación de la ley y otros problemas que enfrenta el condado. Es un pequeño ejercicio de transparencia gubernamental, pero él lo considera importante. “Antes de la COVID y Zoom, las reuniones del Tribunal de Comisionados del Condado, las reuniones de la Autoridad Portuaria Internacional de Presidio y todo eso se hacían durante el día; ninguna persona trabajadora razonable, salvo alguien adinerado o jubilado, podía asistir”, explicó. (El compromiso declarado de Beebe con la transparencia es tan grande que ha prometido comprar una casa “modesta” en Presidio si gana para estar disponible para los votantes del sur del condado al menos un día a la semana).

Tanto Beebe como Portillo han insistido durante mucho tiempo en que el aumento del tráfico en el Puerto de Entrada de Presidio podría ser una solución a los problemas presupuestarios de todo el condado, aunque no están de acuerdo sobre cómo y cuándo debería hacerse. A Portillo le gustaría que la propiedad del Puente Internacional de Presidio se transfiriera del estado de Texas al condado, una propuesta que Beebe apoyó en su momento, pero para la que ahora no cree que el condado esté completamente preparado. “Tenemos que empoderarnos”, dijo Beebe. “Parte de eso podría ser dándole poder a gente de afuera que sabe lo que hace y que no viene solo a buscar una estafa”.



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Good Citizens Andrea Johnson, Ava Flores, Anthony Pattillo and Elsa Damm. Not pictured are Marco Brionez and Thomas Garcia.

Area students honored as ‘Good Citizens’

THE PAISANO CHAPTER of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) presented Good Citizen Awards to seniors from area high schools at an awards ceremony on Sunday afternoon, February 1, 2026, held in the First Presbyterian Church of Alpine.

Good Citizens from their graduating classes were selected by their schools based on the quali-

ties of dependability, service, leadership, and patriotism. The 2026 Good Citizens are: Andrea Michelle Johnson, Alpine; Thomas Garcia, Alpine Christian; Anthony Pattillo, Big Bend; Elsa Rayne Damm, Fort Davis; Marco Brionez, Marathon; and Ava Flores, Marfa. They each received a Good Citizen's pin, monetary award, and certificate honoring them with this prestigious national award.

On behalf of the Paisano Chap-

ter, DAR Regent Judy Perry welcomed Good Citizens and their families to the meeting. Dr. Kendra DeHart, Paisano Chapter historian and associate professor of history and chair of behavioral and social sciences at Sul Ross State University, presented the awards. Matt Walter, retired U.S. Coast Guard and retired curator of history at the Museum of the Big Bend, presented a program on "Flags of the American Revolution" to celebrate

the 250th birthday of America. Following the awards and program, DAR members and guests enjoyed a reception honoring the Good Citizens.

DAR is a nonprofit, non-political, national service organization focused on historic preservation, education, and patriotism. For more information on membership or the Good Citizens Award, contact Judy Perry at jperry7134@gmail.com.



Jake Vega heads to All-State band with his clarinet.

Alpine student heads to All-State Band

THE ASSOCIATION of Texas Small School Bands (ATSSB) is pleased to announce the selection of the 2026 All-State Band. More than 10,000 high school band students from across Texas auditioned in 22 different regions for a place in their respective all-region bands.

The top chairs in each region advanced to one of the five area auditions held this past weekend across the state, and only 286 of these students were selected for all-state honors. The All-State bands will meet in rehearsals in San Antonio on February 11-14 and will present a concert beginning at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 14, in the Lila Cockrell Theatre of the Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center in downtown San Antonio.

Jake Vega, a member of the Alpine High School Band, was

selected as a member of this band. He was chosen for this honor in competitive auditions held this year across the state at region and area levels. Jake plays the B flat clarinet at school under the direction of Chuck Wilson, who is a member of ATSSB, a 1400-member group of band directors in class 1A, 2A, 3A and 4A high schools in Texas. This is Jake's first time to perform as a member of the ATSSB All-State Band. Their other interests at school include the Alpine New Music Lab. Jake's parents are Stacy and Ernesto Vega of Alpine.

"Jake worked very hard for this achievement," Wilson said. "Making it to this level against thousands of other Texas students is something that earns him a spot amongst the elite Alpine musicians who have attained this level in the past. I'm proud of him and his dedication to excellence."

‘Cherokee Cowboy’ tribute to benefit Meals on Wheels

Billy Mata and the Texas Traditions, a Texas swing band, will present a tribute to Ray Price and his Cherokee Cowboys tonight, February 12, at the Granada Theatre in Alpine.

The show, sponsored by Modesta Williams, Anne Calaway, Liz Rogers and Theresa Chambers Stolte, will benefit the Sunshine House in Alpine for its Meals on Wheels program. Featured will

be hits like "Crazy Arms," "Release Me," "Please Talk to My Heart," "Grazin' in Greener Pastures," "The Other Woman," and more.

Doors open at 6 p.m. with the show starting at 7 p.m. Tickets are being sold at Sunshine House, 402 E. Holland Avenue. All proceeds go to the Sunshine House. For more information, call 432-837-5402.



Billy Mata brings his band's brand of swing to the Granada Theatre.

Library hosts DIY Valentines

Everyone is invited to a "Do-It-Yourself Valentine Making" event this Friday, February 13, at the Jeff Davis County Library.

Drop in any time from noon to 2 p.m. Craft a unique Valentine, write a love letter or poem, get creative and have fun! All supplies provided for this free program sponsored by Friends of the Library.

‘Por La Ventana’ film screens in San Miguel de Allende



Por La Ventana, which opens in San Miguel de Allende, will come to Marfa later this year.

Exploring ancestral connections through the lens of the Mexican Revolution.

San Miguel de Allende
Marfa Live Arts Director Jennie Lyn Hamilton will present Por La Ventana at the Teatro Santa Ana in San Miguel de Allende,

Guanajuato, Mexico, on February 12, 2026. Por La Ventana is a multimedia piece exploring ancestral connections through the lens of the Mexican Revolution set against the visual backdrop of a black-and-white film which runs the show’s length.
The film is composed of public domain footage from Mexico during the late 1800s and early 1900s, creating a moving historical canvas for the story. At its heart, Por La Ventana is an explo-

ration of connection—an intimate search for meaning, purpose and family ties that stretches from the present day back to the era of the Mexican Revolution.
The narrative weaves together Francisco Madero’s fascination with Spiritism—his belief in communing with spirits for guidance as he stepped into his role leading Mexico into the 1910 Revolution—with Hamilton’s own family history in San Luis Potosí.
It also explores the role the

United States played in the Revolution, recounting the Tampico Incident, which led to the U.S. invasion of Veracruz in 1914 under President Woodrow Wilson.
Por La Ventana will be presented in Marfa later this year. Hamilton said that Marfa Live Arts is “dedicated to uniting the diverse communities of Far West Texas and beyond—engaging, inspiring and bringing people together through the transformative force of the arts.”

Rule presents seven-artist exhibit

The works consider pattern as a way of organizing complexity and creating rhythm through structure.

WHAT REPEATS, Holds brings together work by Sasha Alexandra, Amy Hoagland, Jim Johnson, Richard Kallweit, Matt Larson, Frances Lightbound and Clark Richert—artists who approach pattern not as surface but as a working method through which space, perception, and structure are tested and made visible. Across fiber, painting, print, and sculpture, repetition functions as a way of building meaning: translating labor into form, geometry into experience, and belief into structure.
An opening reception will be held on Friday, February 13, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at RULE Gallery, 204 E. San Antonio in Marfa.
Rather than settling into decoration, the works in the exhibition treat pattern as something practiced and sustained. Systems emerge through slow accumulation, architectural grids, geometric tension, and optical shifts that activate via light and movement. Shadows suggest space beyond the picture plane; fibers, tape, and glass introduce subtle dimensionality; recursive forms hover between order and intuition.
Taken together, the works



Richard Kallweit, “Plaster Inlay Cube,” plaster inlay and pigment, 12 x 12 x 12 inches, 2001.

consider pattern as a human impulse—a way of organizing complexity and creating rhythm through structure. As these distinct approaches enter dialogue, the exhibition produces an ac-

cumulative effect: systems begin to echo, diverge, and reinforce one another. What emerges is not uniformity but a shared field of attention—one in which repetition becomes a means of connection,

and the whole exceeds the sum of its parts.
RULE Gallery is open Wednesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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THE MARFA PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

meets every third Thursday of the month at 6:00pm in the Casner Room at City Hall.

The public is invited to attend.

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AROUND THE BIG BEND

Thursday February 12

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

Live Music: Apis Mellifera

7:00pm-9:30pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

Friday February 13



Regional Science Fair, Odessa, Texas

Email: sciencefair@utpb.edu

Saturday February 14

Return of the Black Bear

2:00pm-3:00pm
Davis Mountains State Park
Park Rd 3
Fort Davis, TX



Heart Some Art

5:00pm-7:00pm
5th Street Gallery, 118 N. 5th Street
Alpine, TX

Justin Upshaw Alcove Social

7:00pm-10:00pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

Black and White Gala

6:00pm-1:00am
Alpine Civic Ctr., 801 W. Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

Sunday February 15

Open Mic Night: Music

5:00pm-8:00pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

Love is a Scam

5:00pm-10:00pm
Granada Theatre
207 E. Holland Ave., Alpine, TX

Tuesday February 17

Brewster Commissioners Court Regular Meeting

9:30am
Alpine, TX

Jeff Davis Commissioners Court Meeting

10:00am-11:00am
Fort Davis, TX



Trivia Tuesday!

7:00pm-9:00pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

Wednesday Feb. 18

Karaoke Night

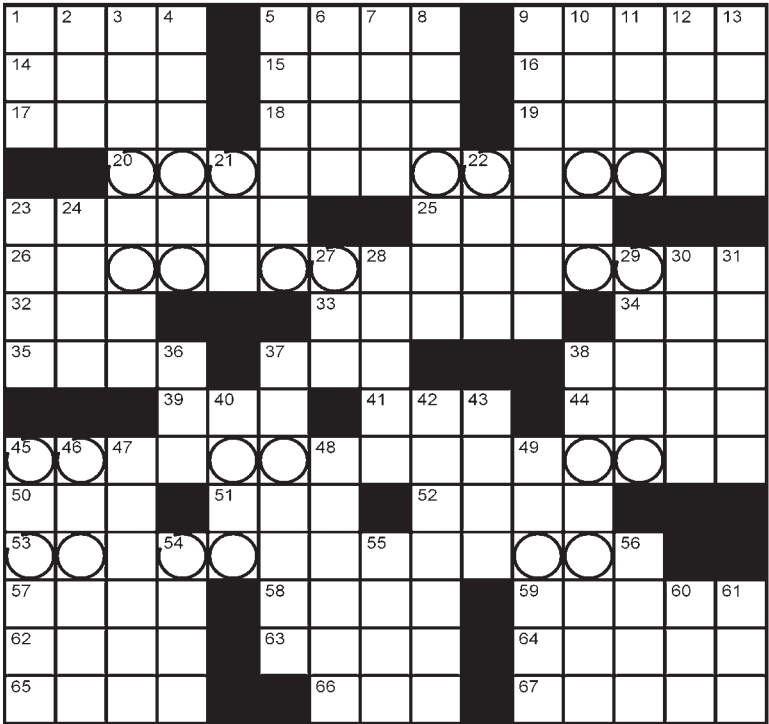
7:00pm-10:00pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine, TX

CROSSWORD

Tritones

By Anna Harkins

2/12



Edited by David Steinberg

ACROSS

- 1 Defeat
5 Societal issues
9 Minor disagreements
14 Home of the NHL's Mammoth
15 Biblical rescuer of animals
16 "The Hunger Games" setting whose name is Latin for "bread"
17 Music's Marvin
18 Driver's shout?
19 Houston batter
20 Activity eased by universal child care (In this answer, note letters 1-3, 7-8 and 10-11)
23 ___ or later
25 Soft cheese
26 Pennsylvania nuclear accident site (... letters 3-4, 6-7 and 12-13)
32 It's about 78% nitrogen
33 Spiel
34 Cape Cod
35 Big name in beans
37 Droop
38 Orgs. that spend big in November
39 Permit
41 "As if!"
44 Resound

- 45 1987 psychological thriller (... letters 1-2, 5-6 and 12-13)
50 Hosp. area
51 Degree for a pro painter
52 Low-quality AI content
53 America, per "The Star-Spangled Banner" (... letters 1-2, 4-5 and 11-12)
57 Poet St. Vincent Millay
58 Posh British school
59 Royal domain
62 Cake layer
63 Rice-A-___
64 Singer Lavigne whose first name is a French month
65 NaCl, e.g.
66 Letters on the Thunder's logo
67 Allows to borrow
DOWN
1 Programmer's problem
2 Flight guess: Abbr.
3 "Apologize!"
4 Perfect match
5 Give the facts to
6 Roller coaster feature
7 "Tomb Raider" protagonist
8 Ice cream relative

- 9 "Nationality" of a famed set of Italian steps
10 Baby blue, e.g.
11 Not for
12 Bird aptly found in "water native"
13 LA air concern
21 Gymnast Suni George
22 Unpartnered
23 Pennsylvania neighbor
27 Craft beer variety, in short
28 Sun output
29 Beaded counters
30 Cheesy chip
31 Vacuum brand
36 Pie ___ mode
37 Campaign worker
38 Dogs in restaurants, for some

- 40 Red Muppet
42 Poisonous element
43 10/20, e.g.
45 ___ mignons
46 French colony that some Louisianans trace ancestry to
47 Road feature that may interfere with a GPS
48 Your partner's name on your arm, say
49 Livestock pen
54 Move like a water strider
55 Clown nose sound
56 Take home
60 Top of a pot
61 New England Revolution's org.

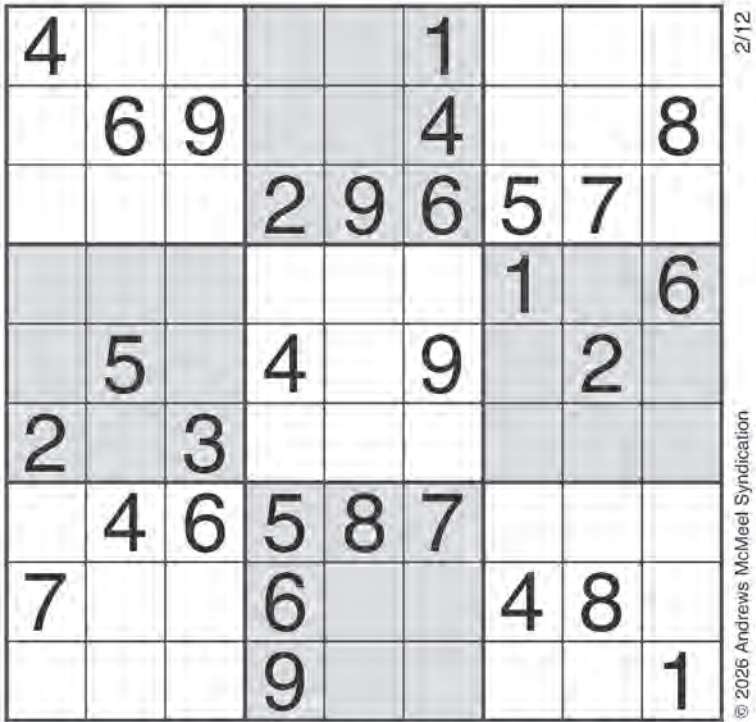
PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER



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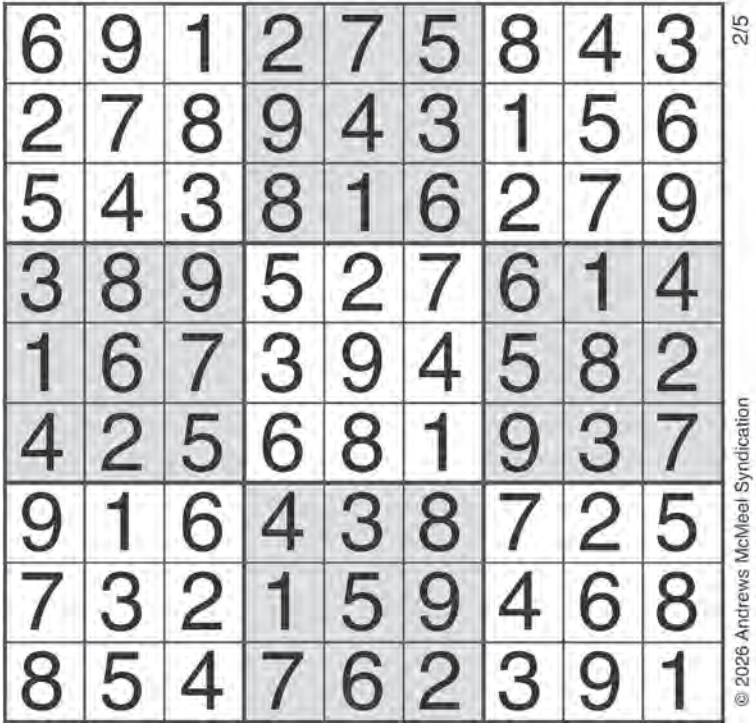
SUDUKO

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



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★☆

SOLUTION:



OBITUARY

San Carlos native model, radio news announcer

CAROLINA NIETO Bustamante, 80, of Presidio, Texas, passed away on February 1, 2026, at home in Presidio.

Rosary was held at 7 p.m., Friday, February 6, 2026, at Santa Teresa de Jesus Catholic Church. Funeral services were held at 10 a.m., Saturday, February 7, at Santa Teresa de Jesus Catholic Church with Father Mike officiating. Burial followed at Desert Hills Cemetery. Arrangements are entrusted to Eternity Funeral Home.

Carolina was born in San Carlos, Chihuahua, Mexico, to Reymundo and Josefina Nieto on May 5, 1945. She went to school in Ojinaga and Juarez where she studied business and accounting. She worked as a news announcer for radio station XEOG in Ojinaga for several years in the 1960s. In her youth she was a model, a medical assistant, an accountant, and she even officiated marriages when she worked at the Presidencia Municipal in Ojinaga. She married Licenciado Jaime Antunez in 1971 in Ojinaga and Julian Bustamante in 2005.

Carolina is preceded in death by her brothers Juan de La Cruz, Luis, Humberto, Tolin, Hernando and Ruben, and her sister, Olga.

Carolina is survived by her



husband, Julian Bustamante; children Patricia Hendrix and Jaime Antunez; brother Arturo Nieto; and seven grandchildren.

The family of Carolina wishes to extend their sincere thanks to all the friends and family who supported her and encouraged her through her long battle with cancer, which she fought with unwavering courage and resolve.

To publish an obituary in Seninel, please send by email to editor@bigbend.sentinel.com. Please accompany your message with a photograph. There is no charge. Copy received by the end of the day Friday will appear in the following week's papger

CLASSIFIEDS AND PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC AWARENESS

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>

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

Has no one met the school qualifications?

Requirements for running for the school board—from page 1

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 mentally incapacitated and the person's mental capacity has not subsequently been completely 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.
5. Be a resident of Texas for the past 12 months and a resident of the Marfa ISD for at least six months.
6. Be a qualified voter.

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.

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Pfaff sewing machine, Pfaff serger, Singer sewing machine, Brother sewing machine (NIB), Quilting stands, quilting books, 3 craft or sewing tables, mountains of quilting fabric-cottons, fleece and upholstery, multiple bundles of batting, bins of sewing notions, tapes, buttons, ribbon, yarn, embroidery thread, craft paint kit with stencils, thread, patterns and kits, boxes of partially complete quilts, jewelry supplies, findings, cord, beads and hanks of stone beads Saturday Feb 14, 9-3, Alpine Country Club Estates, 1010 Matewan.

HELP WANTED

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

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OUR WATER MATTERS

Water infrastructure funding reimagined

PRESIDIO COUNTY Judge Joe Portillo and I recently submitted public comments concerning the proposed implementation plan for a one-time grant program enabled by House Bill 500. Passed by the 89th Legislature, HB500 appropriated \$1.083 billion to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) for water supply and infrastructure projects. Its vague language means that the funding can be allocated to projects and grants “as determined by the board” through the proposed implementation plan.

In our comments, we assert that the implementation plan’s objective to achieve a “simplified project prioritization for allocating available funding” can best be attained by prioritizing eligible projects already approved and partially funded by the Board. We also contend that focusing the HB500 funding on completion of current projects initiated through TWDB’s existing programs represents the most expedient way to ensure the maximum return on the Board’s previous investments.

The implementation plan currently calls for a new round of applications with a complex scoring system to determine eligibility. But we believe the Board should simply refer to the projects already approved in its Intended Use Plans (IUPs). Federal law requires states wishing to qualify for infrastructure capitalization grants to compile IUPs. According to the Environmental Policy Innovation Center (EPIC), these plans contain “a fundable list of projects that are expected to receive assistance from available funds designated for use in the current IUP and a comprehensive list of projects that are expected to receive assistance in the future.” As such, these lists provide the Board with a readily available roadmap because they clearly identify projects already vetted by the TWDB’s existing programs. Furthermore, the eligible entities listed in the IUPs have already proven their financial bona fides through submission of financial audits, loan agreements with the Board, timely loan payments, and adherence to the Board’s disbursement protocols. In addition, the Board’s in-house engineers already possess intimate knowledge of these projects, obviating the need for a new round of applications to ascertain eligibility.

In our comments, Judge Portillo and I also argue that a new round of applications is misguided for straightforward reasons of cost. Disadvantaged communities often must hire outside consultants to complete their applications. Presidio County paid a consultant over \$60,000 to complete its TWDB funding application in 2022-2023. The inevitable result is that millions of dollars are spent on application consultants, instead of going toward the completion of actual projects. Because these fees can be covered by the grant itself, we believe that a new round of applications is an unnecessary waste of precious funds. And since the proposed implementation plan is subject to Chapter 783 of the Texas Government Code, which seeks

“to promote the efficient use of public funds in local government and in programs requiring cooperation among local, state, and federal agencies,” the demand for a redundant round of new applications is by definition an inefficient use of these funds.

The application process is also time-consuming and stressful. Even if outside technical assistance providers are hired on a pro bono basis, entities must still expend their limited human resources to work with those providers to complete what we believe to be needless applications for later phases of projects already approved by the Board. In its 2025 analysis of the TWDB’s Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF), EPIC identified this long-standing

If the law is the obstacle, change it. If the agency is the issue, restructure it. If officials are moving too slowly, remove them.

problem: “Currently, SRF applicants must apply separately under each IUP...even if they rank highly across multiple IUPs. This creates unnecessary administrative burdens, especially for small and under-resourced systems. These applicants often lack the capacity to prepare multiple applications for the same project” and “[f]ailure to automatically consider an applicant’s eligibility across multiple programs also risks leaving available funds unspent.” EPIC suggests “a streamlined cross-referencing mechanism” to reduce administrative burdens and improve fund utilization. Another idea could involve a project pipeline where every approved project is

routinely funded to completion through a combination of grants and loans based on a single initial application.

The virtually unrestricted nature of the HB500 funding provides the Board with a fortuitous opportunity to reimagine its application process. This could not come at a better time because the Board is set to receive billions in additional funding through Proposition 4 over the next 20 years. A cross-referenced, single-application pathway to full completion of all initiated projects could greatly increase the Board’s effectiveness and agility in addressing the state’s mounting water challenges.

The good news is that many of these pressing issues already have solutions. We just need to spend the money more quickly to build them. How can we accomplish this? First of all, voters need to prioritize water in determining which elected leaders to support. Secondly, legislators, and specifically the Water Caucus, need to pass laws that help the Board meaningfully reform its policies and funding mechanisms. And thirdly, the Board itself needs to recognize how much of its own time and energy could be saved by streamlining its processes and reducing its redundant demands on applicants.

If the law is the obstacle, change it. If the process is the issue, restructure it. If officials aren’t up to the task, remove them. Otherwise, we are on a certain path to a drier future where those voter-approved billions sit unspent in the state’s bank accounts because growing numbers of communities are either too poor or too exasperated to access them.—**TREY GERFERS**

Gerfers, a San Antonio native, is board chairman of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District. He can be reached at tgerfers@pcwcd.org

BIG BEND
Sentinel

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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

OPINION

The border in my mind

*Up and down the Rio Grande a thousand footprints in the sand
Reveal the secret no one can define
The river flows on like a breath in between our life and death
Who's the next to cross the borderline*

—WILLIE NELSON

LOOKING DOWN over the swaying side of the horse I saw the river, a thousand feet below. I felt like I was spinning, leaning into the canyon, when big hands pushed me back into the saddle, safely behind the horn.

That image stuck in my mind, with a whiff of vertigo. It was 1953, the summer I was 5. Lois and Gail, two of my three sisters, had set out in Big Bend National Park on horseback. I don't think they had any choice but to take me along, since as teenagers, they were often my babysitters. Gail told me later that I was sitting in front of one of their "boyfriends," who had secured me with a rope around my waist.

My first summers were all spent in the Big Bend, starting with Mitre Peak Girl Scout Camp, which my mother started in 1947. The summer of '55 I went to the summer camp at Prude Ranch, and the camp year closed with a two-night horseback camping trip. I was galloping through a field in the Davis Mountains. What can be better than that for a 7-year-old cowboy?

When I was 10, I went off to school in New York, and lived in that city for 40 years—with interesting side trips to San Francisco, L.A., St. Petersburg (Florida), Milan, and Hong Kong. I still returned to West Texas, often with the pretext of visiting my family in Midland and Houston. In 1996, my good friends Pam Murfin and Don Gardner (now a director of *Sentinel*) organized a Rio Grande rafting trip—seven days and six nights on the river. My husband, Foster, and 20 friends came along, and we all got into the genius loci, the spirit of the place. After a week of flowing river you fall into a meditative mood that can only be described as Zen. Along the way, we camped (without bothering with tents) on either side of the border. We only encountered two other groups—the first, some American fisherman. And the second, a group of Mexican cowboys. They waved. We took the hot springs, explored the caves, and then one day took a big hike a thousand feet up the side of a cliff, with the help of an Indian trail.

At the top, there was no sign of a road or a telephone pole. I asked Foster, "Where do you think Jesse Helms will put his wall?" It seemed so absurd.

In 2000, Gail helped me find a ranch in Brewster County, 30 miles southeast of Marathon. I've been here, off, and on, ever since. Recently, I noticed I'd marked it as "home" on Google Maps. And I feel that way. It seems like I belong here.

Topophilia

MOST OF US have a sense of their home place. It's not just nostalgia. There is a lot of writing about topophilia, the term coined by W. H. Auden writing about the poet John Betjeman, who described the feeling beautifully. The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard wrote about it in his influential treatise, *The Poetics of Space*.

If you live on a farm, at the seaside, on a mountain range, or in a great city, you know the nature of the place, and it's sealed into your mind perhaps as strongly as my screenshot of the river from horseback.



TEXAS VIEWS—REDDIT

The view of the Rio Grande imprinted in my mind was from a trail on one of the high south canyon walls. Fortunately the current wall plan stops short.

That soaring landscape, the zen flow of the water, the interwoven cultural border is part of your identity. No matter how many miles they are from the river (and I'm writing this 40 miles away), they say they live in the Big Bend (a region the size of Switzerland). And they love this place.

And so it came as a great shock when we realized that where Jesse Helms failed, President Trump seems certain to succeed. He is on the verge of building his big wall. It's all funded. Bids have been sub-

mitted, and *Sentinel* hears that the first contracts are about to be announced. The wall will destroy the genius loci: the zen flow, the interwoven border, the stunning views. We'll be like the people of Kiev, where the topophilia has been bombed into rubble.

And why? According to the DHS, apprehensions of illegals along the Big Bend where the wall is slated to be built, have been reduced to 3,000 a year. So, for the next three years, the American people are going to spend \$222,000 per "illegal"—based on a projected cost of \$2 billion.

But will the wall stop them?

Could it ever be completely finished, with no gaps along the way—as they are all in sections built in the Rio Grande Valley and Arizona?

Are there no alternatives to destroying the place? Of course there are, even if you agree that the "illegals" should all be rounded up.

The American Way has become the Rule of Force—for every problem. No thought about spending the money to keep migrants at home. No thought about dampening the demand for cross-border drugs rather than just smashing the supply. No thought about protecting the historic interdependence of border people and border culture. No thought about protecting the water supply, or cross-border trade.

No thought that this "solution" to illegal migration will never work, without addressing the causes.

I have to remember the wall the is not about effective immigration policy, it's a mad show for the "base." Constuction through the Big Bend seems unstoppable now.

They will destroy the spirit of our place.

—ROGER BLACK

The Adventures of Dick Decent ©'26 Jim Bridges Big Bend Sentinel

DID YOU WATCH THE BAD BUNNY SUPER BOWL HALFTIME SHOW?

YES I DID AND I THOUGHT IT WAS GREAT!

WHAT?!?

BAD BUNNY IS A BAD ROLE MODEL!

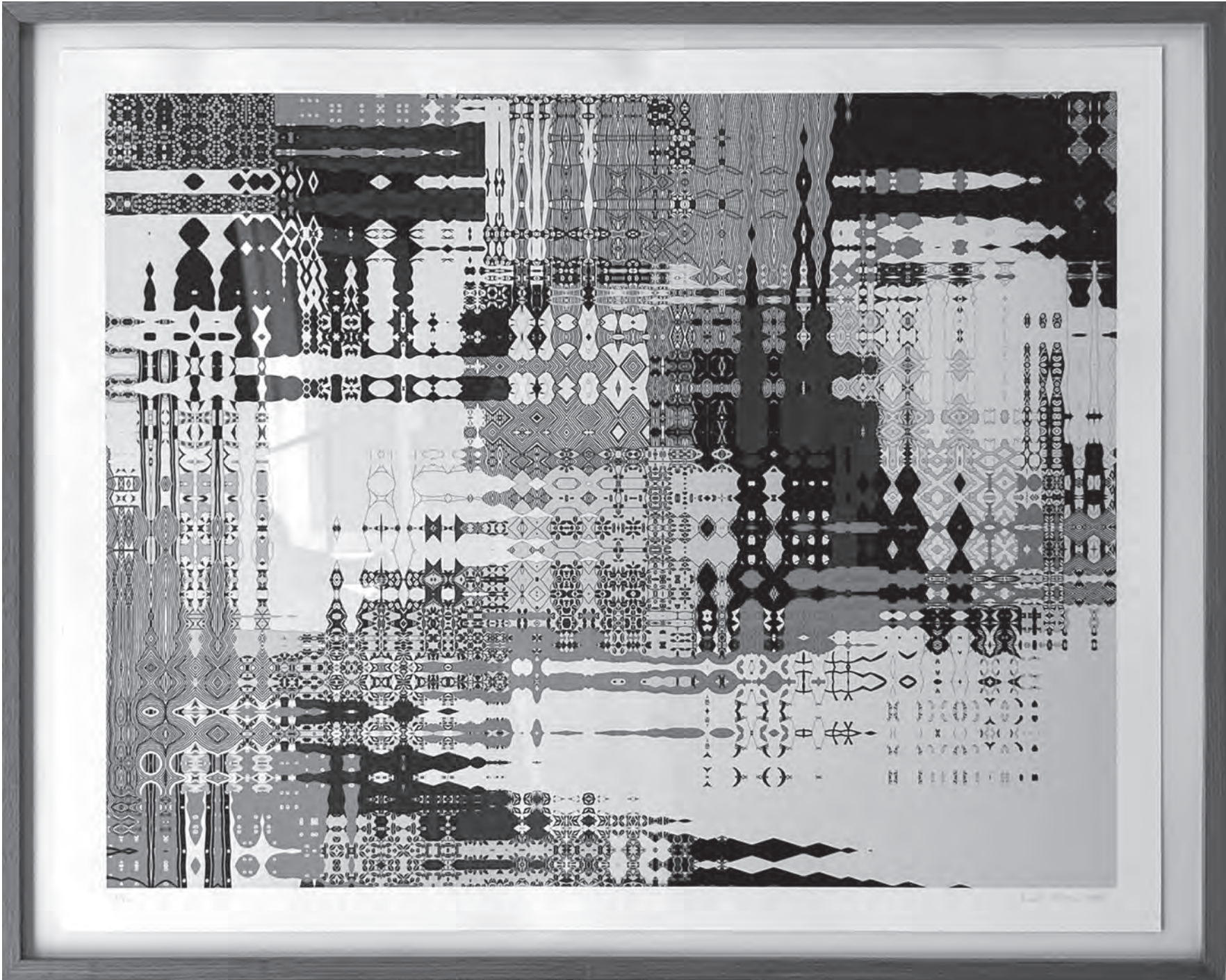
BECAUSE HE CELEBRATED PEOPLE WHO THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN PERSECUTING AND DEMONIZING?

PRECISELY!

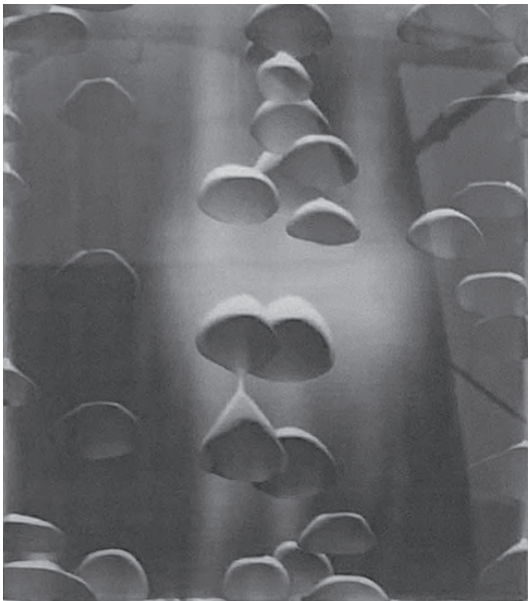
I'LL DECIDE FOR MYSELF WHO THE BAD ROLE MODEL IS!

Celebrating the artist-gallerist dynamic

The new group show at Eugene Binder Gallery offers the viewer a subtle exercise in pictorial arts.



Rachel Stine, “Vision 37” (*Singing Kintsugi and Everywhere*), 2022.



William Wood, *untitled*, 1996.

Photographs by R. PARKS. Carl Fudge, “Everyone has a Theory as to Why I,” 2002.

By R. PARKS

Knocked on the side alley entrance window of Eugene Binder Gallery. Through the glass, I could see the owner and gallery director, Gene Binder, working on something. He seemed mildly frustrated to have been interrupted, but then shifted with brightness to congeniality. Coincidentally, he was putting the finishing touches on the installation of his new exhibit. The new group show at Eugene Binder Gallery (open by appointment only) offers the viewer a subtle exercise in pictorial arts, with eight of nine artists consistently shown by the gallery across different spans of its 40 year history: Carl Fudge, Eugene Basualdo, William Wood, Jennifer Kobylarz, Jack Boynton, Dick Wray, Rachel Stine, Mark Cole and Jeff Elrod. The current exhibition represents an informal culmination, marking the 40th anniversary of the gallery, which Binder started in Dallas in 1986, moved to Cologne, Germany, in 1988, New York City in 1995, and finally landed in Marfa in 2000. It quietly celebrates four decades of relationship-building between the gallerist and his stable of artists. Eugene Binder is a one-man operation, and his dry, laconic point of view on art feels as grounded as the particular works he champions. This is a must-see experience for diehard fans of that certain character of post-New York school painters, of which Eugene Binder might be recognized as a most passionate adherent. I imagine the commitment to a set of aesthetic principles demonstrated as comparable to a monk’s deep resolve to maintain the elaborate logic of their own unique sect. The spirit of devotion to pictorialism as an instrument of a kind of ineffable absolute is practically palpable in the air of the physical space itself. Those who reside in Marfa might be drawn to see the work of the local painter of international renown, Jeff Elrod. The inclusion of Elrod’s work is the anomaly in that his relationship to Binder is a local connection of neighborly colleagues, rather than one of gallerist and artist built over time, which characterizes Binder’s relationship to the other artists on view here.

Binder explains to me that Elrod’s large work, *Burnban* (2017), is titled after a local fire in 2011 that spanned Marfa, Alpine and Fort Davis. Elrod has a tremendous flair for transposing the aura of digital drawing aesthetics to the sensual scale of large-scale painting. A meticulous dot matrices in reddish orange is wonderfully rough-hewn at close viewing. I sense the repetitive marks of the painterly matrices enacted, intentionally avoiding the macro/micro structure of the fractal as a trope of digitality and its implied continuity across nested scales. I ask myself if the fractal becomes present in this painting by Elrod, from a committed abstinence from it. Up close, one notices the central form of a meandering white line, so precise in its digital register from a distance, is apparently a taped form, in a “just so” manner as to precisely bleed and produce a broken edge. Multiple works by Carl Fudge, a pioneering artist of digital imagery, are interspersed throughout the show. As the exhibit is untitled, I joked to myself that I might suggest as a title, “Carl Fudge and Friends,” as that would capture both the importance of Carl Fudge as a defining presence within the curation, and the sense of the exhibition logic as cohering in part according to a spirit of fellowship and fraternity between galleries and artists. A small bookending work, by Fudge (*Everyone has a Theory as to Why I*, 2002) on the far left by the garage door entrance, captures some of the phantasmagoria, I imagine, that must have been felt when Fudge first started exploring digital motifs and printing methods in the early 1990s. In contrast to Elrod, this work delights in an invocation of recursive pattern, in ways that suggest the innocence of a magic carpet ride at the dawn of a new epoch, an artifactual resonance that it leaves behind for us as a trace in the present. While an interplay of the finite and infinite is also native to picture-making more generally, I propose it is worth taking note of Fudge and Elrod’s seemingly contrasting approaches to digital imagery, as anchors of a larger exhibition logic that traffics acutely in pictorial system-building. In addition, I recommend prolonged study of William Wood’s elaborate formal modeling in three works, all sharing the

medium of encaustic, and a meticulous approach to striated light and formal invention. These are explicitly invented formal worlds rendered painstakingly: discover upside-down bowl forms which hang together solemnly both together and apart. Or a corkscrew-like form of an entirely singular morphological identity, transitioning slyly from convex to concave. I might also draw your attention to the opposing side of the gallery, towards an installation of three works by Rachel Stine, in which a taxonomy of pictorial system-building of its own logic is hard at play. Gradient patches of dragged paint assert themselves as characters beside pictograms with a disarming sweetness and simplicity, such as flower petals in one work, heart and droplet pictographs in another. An explicit theater of invented light spans all three of Stine’s paintings on view. At the far wall, I also suggest spending time with a larger-scale work by Carl Fudge, *Deer* (2007), which sets up a beautiful interpretive riddle with its simple title. This painting first appears as merely a meditation on camouflage as a pictorial motif. Once its title registered, the image undergoes a transformative shift in tenor, as deer forms hidden in the camo imagery appear, with warm tones of red—invoking a palette of internal organs under a cartoon light. Some loose animistic reversal might be invoked in the viewer’s own mind’s eye, an interpretive wild goose chase I found utterly believable in the dynamic moment of relation. I returned to the Eugene Binder Gallery for multiple viewings, feeling like an erstwhile bumbling detective, like Peter Seller’s Inspector Jacques Clouseau from *The Pink Panther*, tripping over my own pretenses and inferences. Binder is a character in his own right, like an actor who says more in their silences than in their capitulations to an interviewer’s queries. If the intention is to disappear so that only the works speak, I might propose that the intention backfired. While Binder declined to respond much to queries regarding painting and whether he had a soft spot to the exclusion of other arts, forthrightly monosyllabic: he insisted he didn’t. In contrast, he was much more open to discussions of the stoicism

required for gallerists to maintain the fortitude to continue to operate and present new exhibitions for the public when the local market of fine art sales couldn’t be relied on from a business point of view to reinforce operations. Binder has a dark sense of humor regarding the business side of exhibition-making. I inquired whether Binder could imagine ideal business conditions to support independent exhibition-making ever existing in Marfa’s future as a horizon that art galleries here might collectively rally to reinforce and instantiate together. Binder demurred, “It had once been more than it is now.” I sensed that he had come to take a certain amount of pleasure in the difficulties, as if in reality, he wouldn’t trade in the business conditions of operating in Marfa for the steady stream of inputs and outputs of his New York haydays. On my pad, I scribbled, “Conditions are what they are; the art of it is to be adaptive to any conditions.” I read my paraphrased statement back to Binder, and he concurred, finishing the thought: “Negative responses are never helpful.” Truth be told, I actually felt somewhat guilty, as if Binder was a mythical sphinx and somehow my erstwhile detective had set in motion a release of once-guarded secrets. Suddenly, Binder was talking at length about *Queen’s Gambit*, a show he admires on Netflix. He recalls an anecdotal line that lifts his spirit regarding the existential quandary of the art business. In the scene, the mother tells her chess prodigy daughter that her father has been “indefinitely detained.” Bingo. Suddenly I am convinced I outsmarted the strategic silence of the gallerist, as his practical philosophy of small-town art business survival was, more importantly to me, a crucial keystone into the aesthetic logic of the exhibition. Pictorialism isn’t just a set of moves between infinite and finite spatial enframement. There is a temporal dimension, where difficulties enrich all actions achieved within time’s boundaries. I entreat you to go forth and visit Eugene Binder Gallery and be your own judge, in a state of stoic pleasure indefinitely, with a diehard fellowship of pictorial system-builders as your only company.