

**Emergency Meeting of the Commissioners' Court
March 3, 2024**

Be it remembered that the Honorable Commissioners' Court of Hemphill County, Texas met in an emergency meeting on this the 3rd day of March, 2023.

Those present and presiding were:

Lisa Johnson	-	Hemphill County Judge
Dawn Webb	-	Commissioner Precinct #1
Tim Alexander	-	Commissioner Precinct #2
Dale Schafer	-	Commissioner Precinct #3
Nicholas Thomas	-	Commissioner Precinct #4

Others present were: Daniel Moore, Texas Division of Emergency Management, Eric Hutmacher Samantha Taylor, Sheriff, Brent Clapp, Courtney Kendall

Call to Order.

Judge Johnson called the meeting to order on Sunday March 3, 2024 at 2:04 p.m. She noted that all members of the Court were present.

Burn Ban.

No action was taken. Burn ban is in place.

Public Comments.

No public comments were made.

Consider/Approve extending our Disaster Declaration regarding the Smokehouse Creek Wildfire.

Judge Johnson said that the Disaster Declaration she signed on February 27, 2024 is coming to an end. She said the declaration needs to be extended since there are active fires still going on. Daniel Moore with Texas Division of Emergency Management said that the Disaster Declaration needed to be extended every 7 days until everything was settled. Judge Johnson said that when we are under the Disaster Declaration, it allows the County more time and leeway with certain things. Daniel explained that with the Disaster Declaration in place the judge is able to do a star request, for example, rolling dumpsters for the fire debris removal, pallets of water, services, equipment, meals, or the personnel to assist the needs of the people in the county. Judge Johnson said that another thing that the Disaster Declaration allows, is that if the county should have to make any purchases like the rolling dumpsters at some point that exceed more than \$50,000 and not under the declaration the county would have to go out for bids. Nicholas moved to approve extending the Disaster Declaration for Hemphill County regarding the Smokehouse Creek Wildfires. Tim seconded the motion which carried unopposed.

Consider/Approve going out for bids for rolling dumpsters for fire debris removal.

Judge Johnson said they have been working on a debris management plan. The plan includes rolling dumpsters that would be put in different parts of town where most of the damages occurred. The residents would put their burned debris in the rolling dumpsters. The debris would have to be hauled away because our transfer station will not be receiving the debris. She said it might not be more than \$50,000 but we need to be prepared in case it does. Tim moved to approve going out for bids for rolling dumpsters for fire debris removal. Dawn seconded the motion which carried unopposed.

Update from Judge Johnson on the ongoing emergency situation.

Judge Johnson said the agencies on site supporting us from the beginning were
Texas Division of Emergency Management
Texas Forest Services
DPS
A&M Veterinary Services
Med Team
Strike Team
Local Sheriff Office
Local Fire Department
Bill Kendall, Emergency management Coordinator

Judge Johnson said the fire will keep flaring up and the Local Fire Department and the Texas Forest Services will take care of flare ups. She said there was air support helping with the fires.

The donation center has been set up at the Hemphill County Extension Office. Extension agent, Tanya and her staff had it up and running by Thursday morning. They are receiving donations and giving them to the people affected by the fires. They have put together a list of all those that have lost their homes. They have contacted them and found out what their specific need were. The first concern was to get a long term shelter plan for everyone affected. She said tremendous progress has been made. CISD worked with Tanya and with a large donation that was received, gave each child whose homes had burned \$500.00 each. The teachers took them to Amarillo to shop for things they needed.

Judge Johnson said that while under the Disaster Declaration, the County can use county employees and equipment to assist the general public. She said Strike Force 1 Search and Rescue Team, walked the entire county taking photographs, GPS coordinates for every dwelling that was destroyed by the fires. They put together a list of 109 dwellings that were destroyed. She said no remains were found. She said there was one fatality due to the fires. A woman was driving through Hemphill County to Oklahoma. For some reason she exited the vehicle and suffered burn injuries.

Judge Johnson said agrelated donations are going through County Extension Agent, Andy Holloway. He has an account set up that goes through the Fire Department. Non-Ag related items go to the extension building and Ag related items to the Animal Health and Nutrition.

Judge Johnson said Tanya also has Wild Fire Relief Task Force that was set up after the fires in 2022. This is under the Baptist Church umbrella. They still had \$20,000.00 from the last fires and met last Friday to get those funds out. 100 % of those donations go to the people that have suffered losses.

Judge Johnson said Eric and Samantha with TDEM are here to help with capturing the expenses, damages and loses the county has accrued. Samantha said they will also be capturing labor, over time for time spent on the fires, equipment, maintenance and any materials used, to seek reimbursement from the State.

Judge Johnson said Precinct barns are without power. She said Sylvia consolidated precinct 302 and 303 to the in town with polling place precinct 301. A generator will be installed in precinct 2 barn. Early Voting was shut down Tuesday when things were getting concerning and let poll workers go home. She tried to open on Wednesday but was unable due to everyone trying to get back to town. Early voting was reopened Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Adjourn

Tim moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:47 p.m. Dale seconded the motion which carried unopposed.

The meeting took place at the city of Canadian, Texas on March 3, 2024.

ATTEST *Lisa Johnson* COUNTY JUDGE

ATTEST *Sylvia Guerrero* COUNTY CLERK