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FROM THE OFFICE OF
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County Eye Newsletter

Last Friday law enforcement and other emergency responders gathered on the courthouse square just before 11 a.m. to honor the memory of Harris County sheriff's deputy Darren Goforth who was murdered a week earlier. Officers turned on their red and blue lights patrol car lights at precisely 11 o'clock for one minute in Goforth's honor.

The idea of the honorarium came from a request from Governor Greg Abbott and organized locally by Kerr County Sheriff Rusty Hierholzer. All local law enforcement agencies and several first responders were represented in the short but impressive event.

Several members of the community, courthouse staff and others joined the participants in a moment of silent prayer at the exact moment Goforth's memorial service began in Houston.

Other recent killings of law enforcement officers around the nation have also impacted the entire country and spurred several other gatherings to honor law enforcement and emergency responders.

We often languish in the idea that nothing like that could ever happen in our town but the reality of the somber moment is that it can happen anywhere. Every family who has a law enforcement officer, fireman, or other emergency personnel in its ranks knows that each day that person leaves for work they face unknown danger.

One of the most moving moments of the Friday event was the children who were there. One little girl rushed to get her photo made with a Kerrville Police officer and later, inside the courthouse, she cheerfully greeted several law enforcement officers with a big smile and a thank you for their service.

We often forget the danger of their jobs and how much we should appreciate their dedicated service to this community. They work nights and weekends and holidays while the rest of us are home with our families, sometimes in the worst of weather conditions. Let's not be naïve and believe it can't happen here, because it surely could.

Next Monday, Sept. 14, will be the second public hearing slated to begin at 9:30 a.m. on the proposed FY 2015-2016 county budget. Only one person stepped forward in the first public meeting and that was to ask two questions which the members of the commissioners' court were not able to answer as part of the hearing.

About two-thirds of the tax revenue collected by Kerr County each year comes from ad valorem property taxes. Unlike the City of Kerrville, the county has limited additional resources for revenue so must depend heavily on the property tax for operating the county government.

With the tax rate frozen for property owners 65 and over, the agriculture exemptions for property and the properties owned by non-profit and tax exempt entities in the county, the challenge of preparing a budget each year presents a real challenge.

Included in the proposed budget is 2 percent COLA (cost of living adjustment) for county employees but the commissioners and the county judge have opted to refuse the COLA for themselves. The budget also includes almost a million new dollars for the road and bridge department which will allow them to get back on track with seal coating the county roads and maintaining the other county assets.

The only new position funded in the budget is a County Emergency Management Coordinator, a position mandated by state law that has been vacant for several years and had not been included in recent annual budgets.

The proposed budget is posted on the county website www.co.kerr.tx.us for the public to review. The tax rate and budget are scheduled to be adopted in the Monday, Sept. 28th meeting of the commissioners' court and the budget year begins Oct. 1.