

FROM THE OFFICE OF
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County Eye Newsletter

August rain, green grass, and cool temperatures...not the usual description of Kerr County this time of year but all is welcome. Schools around the county both public and private plus Schreiner University opened their classroom doors to thousands of eager students this week...and maybe a few not so eager.

A reminder to all of us who travel the roads and streets to watch for school buses and children in the areas around the school campuses and near bus stops in the morning and evenings. As the daylight time shortens the danger rises. Take time to drive carefully and leave the cell phones off. Tragedy can happen in a split second.

County road and bridge and maintenance crews will be busy cleaning up from the weather event...rain always brings with it the debris to be removed from county roads and bridges. Mowing crews will be busy again in just a few days also.

The final touches are being put on the county budget for 2016-2017 and property owners are looking at a 1 ½ cent property tax increase primarily to fund increased costs of law enforcement in the county.

In 2016 voters overwhelmingly approved a bond issue to add a significant number of beds to the Kerr County Jail facility and to provide funds to update and refurbish the existing law enforcement center. Few of us in today's environment will argue the need for law enforcement to be the best we can afford so the tax increase for the bond and the additional increase for staff and other expenses this year should be money well spent.

The smaller portion of the tax increase will provide funds for a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for county employees. Elected officials have the option to decline the COLA but, in reality, everyone's expenses have increased over the past year. If you've been to the grocery store, paid utility bills or paid attention to the prices of most anything you buy in our economy, you have noticed that prices have slowly risen over the past year.

The county's proposed 1.75% COLA is modest and less than other taxing entities in the area have proposed for their employees. Keeping good employees who perform their jobs as required means they must be paid a fair wage. Kerr County has a lower than average unemployment rate but finding qualified applicants for some jobs can be a real challenge for employers.

Nobody likes to see taxes increase but county services must be available to the public and employees must be available to perform those services. Budgets can be reduced and staff can be trimmed but the services provided by county government can't be transferred to any other entity or replaced with lesser quality providers.

The past two weeks of watching the great performances of athletes at the Olympics in Rio has provided a positive diversion from all the political intrigue in the upcoming elections in November. Now, we are back to reality, and to the anticipation of the November election.

Election workers in the county election office are busy preparing for the election. Ballots will soon be ordered. Election judges have been designated. Volunteers are busy registering new voters around the county.

Early voting begins two months from today, Oct. 24. Early voting will be at the Cailloux Center and the West Kerr County Annex in Ingram.

For more information on registering or other questions about the upcoming election contact the county elections office at 830-792-2242 or find information posted on the county website www.co.kerr.tx.us/elections