

8-30-17 County Judge's Article

COUNTY EMPLOYEES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In the community meetings that I held this past two weeks, I emphasized that some 30% of the county government's revenue comes from sources other than property taxes. And the efforts of our county employees plays a huge role in the generation of these additional funds.

I pointed out that about half a million dollars is generated in county and district court from felony and misdemeanor case settlements where fines and fees are paid, some while the individuals are on probation. Many county employees in the district and county judge's offices, the county and district clerk's offices, the DA's office, adult probation office, sheriff's office and Jail are involved in this effort.

The justices-of-the-peace, and constables generate some \$200,000 collectively in non-traffic fines and fees per year and collect about \$350,000 in traffic fines each year from tickets written by sheriff's deputies and DPS officers in the county.

The sheriff's deputies write about \$200,000 in traffic tickets that are collected, the DPS officers about \$125,000, and the constables about \$25,000. The sheriff's office also collects another \$30,000 in various fees each year. The biggest additional source of revenue in the last three years has been the housing of inmates from other counties (primarily Coryell) in our jail which last year totaled \$850,000 in additional revenue. We spent \$100,000 housing overflow in other counties for a net gross revenue of \$750,000 (that's three quarters of a million dollars)!

As you know, the county tax office also collects the taxes for all the other taxing entities in the county: schools, cities, watersheds. What you may not know is that they charge a fee for their service, collecting a total of some \$70,000 per year from these other entities for this service. This coupled with some \$30,000 for miscellaneous other services rendered by their office totals some \$100,000 per year that they contribute to the county's revenue stream for their efforts.

In addition they collect the auto sales tax for the state with the county's portion being some \$150,000 last year, and they also collect auto license fees, the county's portion (over \$750,000 last year) being divided equally each year amongst the four precincts for county road maintenance.

All this adds close to another million per year from the tax office to the revenue side of the county's budget besides the county's \$11 million plus cut of the ad valorem taxes that they've collected.

The health department also gets in on the act generating revenue by charging certain adm fees when applicable, applying for refunds wherever possible from Medicare for shots given such as flu shots, seeking refundable indigent healthcare costs from hospitals when clients become medicare eligible, and by charging a fee for septic inspections. These total over \$100,000 per year which helps offset the health department budget of just over \$200,000 per year which has been reduced from over \$300,000 per year through various cost reductions and shifting of costs to grant funds where possible.

The major other source of income other than ad valorem taxes is the county ½ cent sales tax which brought in \$1.1 million last year which has been deteriorating in recent years.

So in conclusion, a major reason that the county ad valorem taxes that have been collected over the past seven years have remained at or below \$11.2 million per year and will remain at that level this coming year with the county tax rate remaining at 70 cents per \$100 is because of the increased revenue from other sources made possible by the efforts of the officials and employees of the county. I want to thank them for their efforts on our behalf, the taxpayers of Milam County.