

Sherry Zoch

City Approves Base Bid for Red Top Jail

By Heather Wagner

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A base bid of \$96,000 was accepted for Phase I of the installation of 32 piers in the Red Top Jail. The base bid will cover half of the piers needed; to install all 32 piers would cost approximately \$192,000.

Sheri Zoch, vice president of the Friends of the Llano Red Top Jail told Council at the June 3 meeting that the Friends have \$45,000 of the \$96,000 necessary to cover the base bid. A matching grant of \$25,000 leaves a shortfall of \$26,000, which the City agreed it could cover out of funds already budgeted.

Zoch asked that the City consider fronting the costs for the entire \$192,000 for the project, citing the recommendation that it would be best to install all 32 piers at once instead of doing half now and half later. Donnie Hopson submitted the lone bid; Alderman Allen Hopson recused himself from discussion and voting.

Last year, the City allocated \$20,000 to the Friends of the Red Top Jail; it was the first time the City had given that amount to the group. Zoch asked Council to consider giving the Friends \$100,000 now to cover the piers, and not allocating funds for the next five years.

Once the piers are in, the Friends would then begin working to replace the floors, which will cost around \$25,000. Zoch said that she is currently working on a grant from the Mary Phema Moore Charitable Trust for \$40,000, as well as a grant from LCRA for \$25,000.

Zoch told Council that long-range plans are to make the Red Top Jail a first class museum, much like the Nimitz in Fredericksburg. Based on a consultant's opinion, it will cost around \$2.1 million to get it to that state. To have the museum back to where tours can be given, will cost \$310,000; that figure does not take into account volunteer labor.

Council discussed and approved the early termination of a lease of 906 Ford Street with current tenant, Robin Chiesa. Chiesa requested that the City consider letting her out of the three-year lease early so that she could move her taxidermy business to a larger location. City Manager offered the Council three options; to not terminate the contract, allow Chiesa to sublease, or terminate the lease and look for a new renter.

Alderwoman Jeanne Puryear asked that the Council consider terminating the lease, and offering the use of the building to a non-profit, such as the IDEA lab at no cost.

Council voted to terminate the lease, advertise the vacancy, but explore the option of allowing a non-profit to utilize the space.

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Note: Sherry Zoch is president Friends of the Llano Red Top and can be reached at swzoch@zeecon.com or 325-248-0284