

As a review, the court met last Monday in our May regular meeting with this same agenda item. After much discussion and a couple of failed votes, the court approved the proposal that had been presented by a unanimous City Council.

The basics of that City amendment provided for an increase to the current fire protection contract. In the current contract, the County pays the City about \$488,000 per year, and the City provides supplemental equipment and manpower with a guarantee of 2 men and 2 trucks. Fortunately for the County, Chief McRae has always provided well in excess of this guaranteed minimum.

The amendment would increase the \$488k by \$30,000 per month, or \$360k annually for a total of about \$848k with annual inflation adjustments. The increases would take effect June 1 of this year with a \$15,000 monthly increase, followed by another \$15,000 increase starting in October of this year, or 4 months later to coincide with the beginning of a new budget year. The amendment would also raise the guaranteed manpower from 2 men to 4 men.

With the justification that the \$360k annual increase was occurring too quickly, the court proposed an alternative adjustment that would delay the second \$15,000 monthly increase from October 2017 to June 2018, thereby saving the county \$120,000 while transitioning to the increased annual contract. This was approved by the Commissioners' Court, however the City held to their original proposal of a June and October stair step adjustment.

Please remember that the City's original contract adjustment proposal came in August of last year and included a stair step increase of \$720,000 over a 5 year period ultimately providing 6 firefighters. We did not take any action and delayed any decision on the matter until

this spring. My counter proposal this spring suggested a \$600,000 increase over that 5 years.

Today we consider a \$360,000 increase, down significantly from the original negotiations. While this guarantees 4 City provided firefighters, plus a commander on the scene, this seems to be a level of support that the County can live with.

So we are down to considering how quickly we are willing to ramp up to the \$360k increase. Can we accept a June/October 2017 time frame?

I strongly support this and I ask the Commissioners Court to approve. Let's show our commitment to the residents of the County and our Volunteer Firefighters that we are committed to insuring a sensible balance between the cost and quality of fire protection in Titus County.

Lets show the City of Mt Pleasant that we appreciate the strong leadership and support they have provided for us over the years, and that we understand the increasing cost of that service and are willing to pay our fair share.