

...West of 98

(Continued from previous page)

They believed him to be a relic of the past and themselves the future of American government. Now, he was their boss. Unlike the seven previous vice presidents who had replaced a deceased president, he had less than a year to firm his grip on office before would stand for reelection.

On November 27, Johnson and his aides were mapping out his plans for the months to come. Kennedy's legislative agenda had largely been stymied by Southern senators who understood legislative power better than Kennedy and his lieutenants. Johnson, meanwhile, was a master of the process. As Senate Majority Leader, Johnson had overseen passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957. The law was watered down, but it was the first civil rights law enacted in over 80 years. Johnson now proposed to prioritize Kennedy's civil rights bill that was stalled in Congress. His aides told him not to waste his time. So long as the Senate was controlled by arch segregationists, meaningful civil rights legislation was doomed. If Johnson prioritized civil rights and failed, it would have disastrous consequences at the

ballot box in 1964. Johnson replied to his aides:

"Well, what the [heck] is the presidency for?"

To be sure, Johnson is a complicated figure. His ethics were dubious. His political legacy is difficult. But in that moment, he understood his role better than most elected officials ever do. The United States desperately needed meaningful civil rights legislation. Citizens were fighting and even dying for the right to vote and the right to be treated equally under the law. If a president could not be troubled to stick out his neck for the basic freedoms promised in the Declaration of Independence, why even bother holding the office?

The rest, as they say, is history. Johnson indeed stuck his neck out. With shrewd political wrangling, he oversaw passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, one of the most important laws ever enacted by our country.

I ran across this quote recently in a Johnson biography and I have thought about it a lot ever since. It strikes me as a roadmap that all elected officials at every level should consider: what is the office for? Is it for keeping yourself re-elected? Or

is it to do big, difficult things that matter to your constituents? I cannot speak for our state and national officials. I hope they ask these questions of themselves and I encourage you to hold them accountable to this standard.

I can only speak for myself. Stamford has a lot of big, difficult needs. We need better streets and parks. We need better water and sewer infrastructure. We need affordable and accessible broadband internet. We need more high-quality jobs that attract new residents and encourage our young people to raise their families here. These needs are not unique (every rural community has them) but they're also not easy. They require thinking big. They require marshalling local state, and federal resources, and they require sticking your neck out.

And to that, I look to the wisdom of LBJ. What is the office for? It's to get things done.

James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the "West of 98" website and forthcoming podcast. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com.

operational expenses.

The board reviewed the bank statements and petty cash reconciliation. The credit card statement was not available as Ms. Sonnenberg is investigating a questionable charge on the bill.

The board reviewed all bills that have been paid.

The board moved to executive session at 5:29 pm.

After completion of the executive session at 6:07 pm, Lanette Fletcher made the following motion: (1) to allow Ms. Toms to provide a luncheon

for Employee Appreciation Day on Friday, February 26; (2) to make an addition to the employee sick leave policy that sick leave can be used for employees and/or their immediate family needs; and (3) enter into contract with Cross Health Care Management. The motion was seconded by Gina McCutchen and the motion carried unanimously.

Lanette Fletcher moved that the meeting be adjourned. Jerita Taylor seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 pm.

Vaccination numbers approach 800 in county

By Hal Spain

The good news on the COVID vaccination front recently is that currently there are 774 county residents who have received at least one dose of the vaccine, with 342 fully vaccinated. Total confirmed plus probable cases remain steady at 5 compared to 5 cases also being reported last week. Three cases were reported as lab confirmed and two probables, with two located in Bronte and three in Robert Lee. Overall for the length of the pandemic, the State Health Department lists Coke County with 219 confirmed cases, and 221 probables, for a total of 440. 452 cases are listed as recovered, along with 11 fatalities.

Area locations who currently have supplies of the vaccine include Shannon Pharmacy, (325) 655-8191; La Esperanza Health Clinic (2 locations), (325) 658-

5339; the San Angelo Health Department, (325) 657-4214; HEB Pharmacy (2 locations), (325) 223-0771; and Walgreen's, (325) 947-3677. Residents may also register at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LXX7S6V>, or [cosatx.us/vaccineform](https://cosatx.us/vaccineform). You may also contact the Ballinger Hospital Clinic at (325) 365-5737 to obtain their toll-free number to register. Currently only those 5 or older, first responders, and those 16 or over with health conditions are eligible to register for the vaccine, along with teachers and child care workers.

County residents can find up-to-date coronavirus information and what to do if you're sick, testing, and information at [dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus](https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus). Those with local issues and questions are advised to contact the County Judge's Office at (325) 453-2641.

ECCHD board meeting minutes told

The East Coke County Hospital District Board of Directors met for a regular meeting on Monday, February 22, 2021, at 5 pm, at Bronte Church of Christ Fellowship Hall. President Bedford presided over the meeting. Other board members present were Lanette Fletcher and Gina McCutchen. Administrator Daisy Toms, Director of Nurses Amy McKinney, Chief Financial Officer Johnny Mathis, and Business Office Manager Fran Sonnenberg were also present. Michael Bohensky and Jerita Taylor were absent.

The meeting was called to order at 5 pm by President Bedford.

A quorum was established.

Prayer was led by Everett Bedford.

There were no public comments.

Minutes of the January 18, 2021, meeting were reviewed. Gina McCutchen moved that the minutes be approved as presented. Lanette Fletcher seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Voting Clerk Fran Sonnenberg presented a certification of unopposed candidates to the board. Since the two candidates who filed are unopposed, the election can be cancelled. Gina McCutchen moved that the election be cancelled. Lanette Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The two candidates, Gina McCutchen and Jerita Taylor, will take the oath of office and receive a certificate of election at the regular May meeting.

Amy McKinney gave the Director of Nurses Report. She reported one new admission since the last board meeting. Amy also gave the board an update on COVID testing for essential caregivers as well as the pending date for second COVID vaccinations. Open visitation inspection is scheduled for Tuesday, February 23.

Daisy Toms gave the Administrator's Report and reported that BHRC is fully staffed except for a PRN CNA and Social Worker.

The 300 Hall has had extensive damage due to pipes bursting during the recent

winter storm. An insurance claim will need to be filed. Decisions will be made about the necessary repairs after the insurance adjustor's report.

The beautician should be returning to the facility next week.

Jerita Taylor arrived at the meeting and Amy McKinney departed the meeting.


Mr. Mathis gave the Chief Financial Officer's Report. He previously furnished via email to the board financial statements for the Monthly Balance Sheet, Monthly Per Patient Day Operating Statement, and Accounts Receivable Aging as of January 31, 2021. He also furnished a flow chart depicting revenues, revenue days, and



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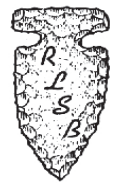
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