

## Erath County Judge's Summary for August 2021 (August 13, 2021)

The Erath County Commissioner's Court meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of each month, and as needed during the month. Meeting notices including Agendas and Minutes are posted on the County website <https://www.co.erath.tx.us/agendacenter>

The county auditor and I have prepared a proposed budget for fiscal year 2021-2022. It was filed with the County Clerk's office and was posted to the county website <https://www.co.erath.tx.us/Archive.aspx?AMID=38> on August 11. The budget contains detailed and itemized projections of the expected revenues from taxation of properties and sources other than taxation such as grants and service fees. Also listed are all expected expenditures for the ensuing fiscal year. It also contains figures for the amount of county investments and debt or other county obligations. Any significant expenses (construction, equipment, etc.) are also detailed in the proposed budget.

The Commissioner's Court has already held meetings and workshops with each elected office holder and department head to review funding levels to maintain effective operations. Meetings will continue into September as we continue to make any adjustments. During this process, we review the amounts expended on delivering essential services in previous years so that each department can receive adequate funding to continue operating in the most efficient manner. Any increase requests will be evaluated by the Commissioner's Court to determine if funding is feasible and necessary. We continue to be mindful of and on the lookout for any new mandates or requirements due to local or legislative changes that necessitate added funding from county resources.

In reviewing the over-all budget for the upcoming year, we have to keep in mind how it affects your County Tax Rate. The state has mandated that we do not exceed 3.5% over the previous year without holding a special referendum (election). This year, we are able to propose a rate within the State mandate. Property valuations have been reviewed, and we expect about \$75M in new property valuations in the upcoming year. This helps us to make realistic revenue projections to help determine the proposed tax rate for the new fiscal year which begins October 1, 2021. Our proposed tax rate for 2021-2022 is .004355 per 100k in property valuations.

A we hold meeting to adopt the Final Budget, public hearings will be scheduled. The public is invited to attend and participate in the public hearings. You can track the schedule of the hearings on our website <https://www.co.erath.tx.us/agendacenter>.

ERATH COUNTY	
Tax Year	Tax Rate
2021-2022 Proposed	.4355
2020-2021	.4444
2019-2020	.4560
2018-2019	.4458
2017-2018	.4700
2016-2017	.4700
2015-2016	.4700

As proposed, a home valued at \$100,000 would have an assessment of \$435 in County Taxes for the new tax year. Our tax/budget year runs Oct. 1-Sept. 30.

Major items that are included in the Proposed 2021-2022 Budget include:

- Adding four Sheriff's Deputies (to address added duties including residents requiring Mental Health services and transportation to Mental Health service facilities);
- Adding four Jailers (necessary to better manage a growing inmate population); and

- A 3.09% employee pay increase.

As we engage in discussions regarding expenditures and the tax rate, I assure you that we remain vigilant of how your tax dollars are being spent and that we continue to search for opportunities to incorporate budgetary strategies to minimize the impact on Erath County citizens. We understand that we have to be good stewards of taxpayer dollar\$.

**Services paid for with your tax dollars include:**

<b>Law Enforcement</b>	<b>Jail</b>
<b>Courts System</b>	<b>Elections</b>
<b>Marriage Licenses</b>	<b>Fire Protection</b>
<b>Death Certificates</b>	<b>Property Deeds/Land Records</b>
<b>Veteran's Services</b>	<b>Birth Certificates</b>
<b>Voter Registrations</b>	<b>Mental Health Services</b>
<b>Vehicle Registrations</b>	<b>Subdivision Regulations</b>
<b>Indigent Health Care</b>	<b>911 and addressing services</b>
<b>Emergency Management</b>	<b>Emergency Medical Services</b>
<b>Sewage System Permitting</b>	
<b>County Road and Bridge Construction/Maintenance</b>	

Regarding federal funds: The County has been allocated \$8.2M under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). \$4.1M, or one-half, has already been received. We will be exploring ways in which to access the funds, as there are many rules regarding how the funds may be used. In general, a jurisdiction is allowed to use the funds to make "necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure." Also, as a general rule, the funds can be used where jurisdictions or organizations have experienced shortfalls in funding due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will be monitoring the allowed uses to see where the federal \$ can be used to benefit all county residents.

Please let us know how we can better serve you.

You may contact my office with any opinions or suggestions at (254) 965-1415, or send me an email at [countyjudge@co.erath.tx.us](mailto:countyjudge@co.erath.tx.us) We are here to serve you, until next time –

Regards,  
Alfonso Campos – Erath County Judge