

JUDGE'S REPORT

June 2026

Happy Summer, Wheeler County! It seems to have finally shown up in all its heated glory! This month started with an introduction to various supervisors and managers associated with Aramark, the operating company for the workforce facility in Mobeetie. Just for everyone's information, the site's project name is the Caprock Workforce Hub ("CWH"). Not only was I able to meet the contact personnel for Aramark, but I was shown a more detailed site plan related to emergency services, along with the heads of our volunteer fire departments, sheriff's and ambulance staff. The information was valuable to our first responders in that it is very beneficial for them to know how and where to access the various areas of the CWH should an emergency occur. As the CWH construction progresses, emergency management personnel will be allowed to tour the CWH to be able to familiarize themselves with the layout.

It is also budget time in the courthouse. I have been working closely with our county auditor and elected officials to begin the complicated process of working through every department's budget requests line by line. According to the appraisal reports, our property valuations are down this year compared to last year, therefore our revenues are at a deceased level. This is always a difficult situation to deal with, but I have been remarkably impressed with the willingness of our elected officials to do what is necessary to get our County's budget in line with what is available and still be able to handle the County's business efficiently.

On June 9, I attended the Wheeler Chamber of Commerce ("WCC") board of directors and monthly member's meeting. Discussions were held regarding this year's 4th of July celebration and an Estate Planning education event ("EPEE") in September. The EPEE will be free of charge, and all are welcome to attend. It will focus on essential estate planning documents everyone should have and what those documents accomplish for you. I will do my best to let you know more about this event as the WCC finalizes the plans. Watch the Wheeler Chamber of Commerce Facebook page for this and other events throughout our county.

I received a notice letter from Xcel Energy related to the Potter County to Beckham County new 345w transmission line. I know many of our county residents received the same notice and are probably concerned about the effects this may have on them individually and Wheeler County as a whole. I attended the open house offered by Xcel on Wednesday, June 10 at the AgriLife building in Wheeler to obtain any information that was available at this time related to the line.

I was informed the notices received are only the very beginning of the process and all the lines shown in the plats provided are only possibilities and are by no means the finalized route for the line. Xcel is required to submit multiple potential routes for the line to the Public Utilities Commission ("PUC") for consideration. Xcel will make recommendations for its preferred route, but it is ultimately up to the PUC to make the final determination of which route will be used. Based upon information Xcel receives from the landowners affected by the project, it will narrow down the options to be presented to the PUC. If you are a landowner who received notice, please be sure to complete the questionnaire that accompanied your notice letter and get it back to Xcel. That information is used to make decisions on which line is preferable. If you make a good argument against the line on your property, it may influence Xcel's decision.

Monday, June 15, I attended a jury trial in Deaf Smith County for observational research and to educate myself should I ever have to hold such a trial. Judge D. J. Wagner, County Judge for Deaf Smith County, was kind enough to invite me to attend and observe how he handles this sort of court event. I'm doing my best to educate myself in certain areas of courtroom procedure by leaning on those experienced who are close to home and are willing to mentor me a bit. I am truly blessed to have others in my same position who are very willing to offer support and answer questions.

Thursday, June 25 brought severe weather conditions to our county that caused hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage to property in the City of Wheeler and Town of Allison. High winds (tornados in my opinion), hail and flooding affected many of Wheeler County's residents and several visitors. Pinion RV Park took a hard hit. Thank you to all of those who pitched in to help with the clean up and repairs! Wheeler County residents are so generous with their time and resources when it comes to helping each other and I'm very grateful for each and every one of you.

City Administrator, Dan Sams, Mayor, Dale Kidd and I all got a crash course in all the paperwork that is involved when a natural disaster occurs in your city and county. Dan and I met with representatives from the Texas Department of Emergency Management ("TDEM"), Texas Commission on Environmental Quality ("TCEQ"), Red Cross and three (3) local news stations on Friday, June 26, following the storms. TDEM was instrumental in assisting us both with completing and filing the paperwork necessary to make a declaration of disaster for our area. TCEQ assisted with getting the proper permit for an emergency debris site set up.

Commissioners' Court held a Special Open Meeting on June 29 to hold this year's first Budget Workshop, which I feel went really well. We are still waiting for some final numbers to come in on some budget items. The next Budget Workshop will be on July 27. Everyone interested is welcome to attend. We also held an Emergency Open Meeting to deal with issues related to the storms from June 25.

Tuesday, June 30, I attended a class in Amarillo hosted by Perdue, Brandon, Fielder and Mott, on property taxation and the calculations that go into determining tax rates. It was a lot of information, and it made me appreciate everything our county auditor, Nichole Mock, and our elected tax officials and treasurer do for our county. While we all cringe when it comes to property taxes, these ladies are willing to take on the job and do it right. Thank you, Nichole, Renee, Cindy and Kimberly for keeping up with all the tax laws and regulations.

That is all for this report and as always, I look forward to preparing the next report which will be published and posted the first week of August. If anyone has certain questions they would like to see addressed in the next Judge's Report, please feel free to email those to me at chalone.hefley@co.wheeler.tx.us. I hope everyone will keep seeking the positive, and in all you do, do it with all your heart, as to the Lord. Colossians 3:23

Sincerely,

Chalone S. Hefley
Wheeler County Judge