

RIO GRANDE VALLEY

Commissioners Court chief counsel resigns, arrest pending

BY EMMA PEREZ-TREVIÑO
THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

A courier on Tuesday delivered a letter of resignation on behalf of Cameron County Court chief legal counsel Doug Wright.

Wright, 56, resigned before the start of a Commissioners Court meeting in which his job status with the county was to be discussed.

An arrest warrant for Wright had not been served at press time Tuesday after two attempts to arrest him failed, officials said. He is charged with public intoxication and disorderly conduct in connection with an incident on South Padre Island Aug. 13. Island police say Wright was exposing himself and appeared drunk.

Wright's attorney said his

client would turn himself in today.

"What can I say? I feel sorry and bad for him and the county," Pct. 1 Commissioner Pete Benavides said before the court adjourned to executive session. "It's another hickey for the county."

Wright has not been available for comment, but his two-sentence letter of resignation was brief and thanked

the court for its attention. "Hopefully, he will address issues he may have," Pct. 2 Commissioner John Wood said.

Wright is serving six months probation from a November 2004 arrest on South Padre Island for striking a traffic sign and fence.

District Attorney Armando Villalobos is seeking to revoke Wright's probation on

the case before Court-at-Law No. 3 Judge Daniel T. Robles. The warrant for Wright's arrest was issued Friday.

Sheriff Chief Deputy Gus Reyna said Tuesday that deputies went to arrest Wright Monday and Tuesday, but that no one was home. Reyna said Wright's attorney Rick Zayas said Monday that Wright was out of town and would turn himself in today.

The civil division's litigation attorney Richard Burst is now acting chief counsel. He had no comment on Wright's resignation and said it is up to Commissioners Court to fill the vacancy.

Wright has been advising the court for more than 10 years and directly since 1996.

eperez-trevino@brownsvilleherald.com

Funding for county magistrates approved, employment begins Sept. 1

BY EMMA PEREZ-TREVIÑO
THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

Cameron County Commissioners Court on Tuesday approved \$40,000 each for new part-time magistrates Luis V. Saenz and Patricia Hernandez Edelstein who will be stationed at the Carrizalez-Rucker Detention Center starting Sept. 1.

The magistrates are not considered county employees, rather contract attorneys under the district and court-at-law judges who appointed them. The positions also are known as hearing officers with almost the same authority as justices of the peace.

Saenz and Edelstein can continue their private practices. Saenz is a special prosecutor for District Attorney Armando Villalobos, a defense attorney in private practice, and now a contract judge. Saenz has not been available for comment on the appointment.

Pct. 3 Commissioner David Garza said Tuesday that he had been contacted by local justices of the peace with complaints about the magistrate appoint-

ments and funding approvals.

Garza said justices who volunteered their services at the Olmito jail have asked for but not received stipends. They were also willing to continue performing their magistrate duties without pay but new legislation requires magistrates have a law degree.

"It makes sense," Garza said, noting that he had wanted someone else to "say it out loud."

Villalobos told Commissioners Court Tuesday that the magistrates work for district and court-at-law judges who will provide them with instructions on bonds to set.

County Judge Gilberto Hinojosa said the court wants the magistrates to go twice to the jail facility Monday through Sunday.

According to the agreements Commissioners Court approved, in the event both Edelstein and Saenz cannot magistrate due to their court conflicts, Hinojosa has to find a temporary magistrate at additional costs to the county.

John L. Shergold, an applicant for the posts who was not interviewed, said Saenz and

Edelstein are qualified but complained about the process. "Everyone should be treated the same and I believe that everyone on the list deserved an interview," Shergold said.

Commissioners Court also approved an increase in pay to contract attorneys who earn from \$5,100 to \$5,500 a month. At District Judge Menton Murray Jr.'s request to equalize pay, the court upped the payment to \$6,000 for all.

Murray said the attorneys have more obligations because Villalobos is filing complaints in many cases before indictment.

Also at Murray's request, the court approved \$2,000 monthly payments each to contract attorneys Phillip Cowen and John A. Olson to handle appeals for indigent defendants. Cowen and Olson will be the only attorneys to handle the appeals.

Garza abstained on the second request, after noting that he would like to know how many appeals are filed each year for indigent defendants.

eperez-trevino@brownsvilleherald.com

Parents could face charges in child's death

Boy used family's gun in apparent suicide

BY SERGIO CHAPA
THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

The parents of a 12-year-old boy who died days before he was expected to testify against his alleged abuser are under investigation for not securing their handgun.

Authorities described Thursday's death of Jorge Antonio Cavazos as a "tragedy" and "devastating," but said his suicide and how he got access to his parents' gun remains under investigation.

The boy was expected to testify on Monday against Manuel Ortiz Muñoz, 62, who is accused of molesting him and three other boys at St. Anthony Catholic School in Harlingen last year. Ortiz worked as a janitor there.

La Feria Police Chief Don Garcia said the investigators believe that the boy got the gun from an unlocked file cabinet at his family's home on the 500 block of Magnolia Street.

"This is still in the preliminary stages of an investigation," Garcia said Tuesday and declined further comment.

Under state law, it is illegal to store, transport or abandon an unsecured gun in a place where children are likely to be or obtain access to it. Making a firearm accessible to a child is a Class C misdemeanor except in cases where a child is killed or is seriously injured where it becomes a Class A misdemeanor punishable up to one year in jail and/or a \$4,000 fine.

State law prohibits police from arresting family members of a child who dies in such firearms accidents for seven days after the child's death.

Cameron County District Attorney Armando Villalobos said his office is working the La Feria Police Department to investigate the case. "It's important that parents obtain or use gunlocks," Villalobos said.

The district attorney said the criminal case would move forward. Ortiz remains in custody without bond after he failed to appear for a court hearing on the case on Friday. Court records show that his trial was postponed until Oct. 24.

Villalobos said it might be necessary to re-indict Ortiz before a grand jury but assured that prosecutors have more than enough evidence to take him to trial.

The district attorney said prosecutors are considering showing a videotaped interview of Cavazos as evidence in court.

schapa@brownsvilleherald.com

Elizabeth Arden

Exclusively at Dillard's!

8-Piece Gift

Yours with any \$21 Elizabeth Arden purchase.

Your gift contains:

- NEW .5 oz. Perpetual Moisture 24 Cream
- .16 oz. Bye Lines Anti-Wrinkle Serum
- Color Intrigue Eyeshadow Duo in Sparkle/Ember
- Color Intrigue Lipstick in CZJ
- 1 oz. Hydra-Gentle Cream Cleanser
- .33 oz. Elizabeth Arden Provocative Woman Eau de Parfum Spray
- Green angled clutch
- Key ring mirror

One gift per person, please, while supplies last.

BONUS!
Your
Second Gift

Receive a .85 oz. Red Door Revealed fragrance (a \$25 value) as your second gift with any \$37.50 or more Elizabeth Arden purchase. While supplies last.

Dillard's welcomes your Dillard's charge, Visa, Master Card, American Express, Discover or Diners Club Card.
SHOP MONDAY - SATURDAY, 10A.M. TO 9 P.M.; SUNDAY NOON TO 6 P.M.
SUNRISE MALL 546-4581

Dillard's