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Grand Opening Celebrated

County officials and employees and members of the public gathered this afternoon to celebrate the opening of the County's new courts and administration building, county jail expansion, and the City of Waxahachie's new parking garage.

"I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the various mayors, city councilmen, elected officials from around the county, law enforcement, and each and every one of you who has chosen to celebrate this momentous occasion," said County Judge Carol Bush. "What an honor and a privilege it is for me to be standing here today hosting the dedication of the new Ellis County Courts Administration building, the new Waxahachie Parking Garage, and our jail expansion."



After a moving invocation by County and District Attorney Joe Grubbs, in which he recognized that there is no authority except from God and asked that each person in authority be possessed of humility and a servant's attitude, Waxahachie High School Senior Camille Spooner sang the national anthem while onlookers turned toward a U.S. flag that has flown over the nation's capitol, provided by Congressman Joe Barton.

On behalf of the Commissioners' Court, Bush went on to extend thanks to the many individuals who have worked together over the last few years to get to this point, beginning with the Facilities Committee appointed by the Court several years ago to study the issue.

"They gave their time, energy, and thick skins and without them, truly, we would not be here today," Bush said.

Members of the original Facilities Committee included Don Frisbee, Dave Risinger, Larry Burns, Jon Davis, and the late Joe Bob Wilson. Commissioners Ron Brown, pct. 4, and Heath Sims, pct. 3, also served on the committee, which worked with then County Planner Clyde Melick and County Engineer Joe White to assess the condition and functionality of existing county facilities and, as Bush said, "chart a course" for the county.

Bush applauded the "Vote Yes" Committee, a self-organized group of concerned citizens who volunteered to educate the community on the need for the new facilities and the sale of bonds necessary to fund the project. This group included Larry Burns, Harold Nolte, Ron Langenheder, Melissa and Lane Ballard, and Mark Singleton, along with many others who worked with them. Following the passing of the bond package, the Commissioners' Court appointed a Citizens' Bond Oversight Committee, chaired by Roy Orr. Members of the Oversight Committee included Cathy Altman, Cheree Barrett, Jimmy Boon, Larry Burns, Ken Chambers, Albert Garcia, Scott Jackson, John Knight, Bill Lewis, James Moon, Charlie Morton, Tommy Rossa, John Tabor, John Wyckoff, and Doug Young.

Bush also recognized the leadership of former County Judge Chad Adams and former Sheriff Ray Stewart, and extended her thanks to numerous county and city employees for their part in the years-long effort. Architects, designers, construction managers, and Jones Lang LaSalle Vice President Jon Vidaurri also received the Judge's thanks and praise for their superior work.

"I want to give special recognition to one County employee who has orchestrated this entire project from its inception. He is the personification of public service," Bush said, speaking of County Engineer Joe White. "Although I know that this is embarrassing him terribly to be singled out this way, it would be wrong of me to give him a cursory mention. He has dedicated himself to this project and has given his expertise, sacrificed blood, sweat and maybe even a few tears, not to mention probably his dark hair to seeing this become a reality."

In closing, Bush spoke of the building at her back as "the new girl in town."

"She is making her debut today. With her 102,000 square feet firmly planted on a solid foundation, I imagine her giving a nod of deference and then a jaunty grin to the red sandstone and granite matriarch across the way, acknowledging the obligations her predecessor has borne alone, and eager to prove herself worthy to share the load. It is a great day for Ellis County, and we should be celebrating for the next 100 years."

Waxahachie City Manager Paul Stevens took a few moments at the podium to give a brief history of the project and the collaboration between city and county, closing with a quote from Winston Churchill, "We shape our buildings; thereafter, they shape us."

It was then that Bush introduced the surprise guest speaker who had been waiting inside the building: Dallas Cowboys great Roger Staubach. As chief executive of the Staubach Company and

now Jones Lang LaSalle, following a merger, Staubach said he is proud to have been part of the team that did such a good job for Ellis County.



“I think you should take a tour of your new facility,” Bush said in closing. “Pat yourself on the back. Come take a look.”

Various county offices are in the process of moving into the facility, with completion scheduled for mid June. Citizens are urged to call ahead when planning to do business with the county in order to avoid unnecessary inconvenience, as some offices may be closed briefly to carry out an efficient move.