



Bexar County Commissioners Court

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Commissioners appoint county court-at-law judge, fire marshal

Court also approves employment agreement for County Manager

Commissioners Court on Tuesday appointed John Longoria from a pool of 40 candidates to serve a vacancy in County Court-at-Law No. 5. The bench was vacated by Judge Jason Pulliam, who was appointed to the 4th Court of Appeals in January by then-Gov. Rick Perry.

Longoria, who currently has a private law practice, has represented San Antonio and Bexar County in various elected and appointed capacities throughout his career. He was on the VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority Board in the 80s, Precinct 1 County Commissioner from 1984 to 1991 and County Judge from 1991 to 1992. He then represented District 117 in the Texas House of Representatives from 1992 to 2003. Longoria also has a long history of civic board memberships. He is a graduate of St. Mary's University School of Law.

"We had an excellent group of candidates presented to us, any one of them could have been nominated for the position," said Precinct 2 Commissioner Paul Elizondo. "John presented the most detailed yet broad sense of knowledge and a practicality, which to me reflects his continued desire to serve the community. It's hard to match his 41 years of public service."

In other business, Commissioners Court appointed Louis C. Lopez III to serve as the County's new Fire Marshal, effective Feb. 9. Lopez is currently the chief fire/arson investigator for the Bexar County Fire Marshal's Office. His 24 years of experience include law enforcement with municipal police departments, volunteer firefighting, fire investigations, emergency management training and fire suppression training. He is an adjunct instructor with Texas A&M University's Emergency Services Training Institute and a Deputy U.S. Marshal with the Lone Star Fugitive Task Force.

"I am happy to see bring one of our own up to this position," said Precinct 1 Commissioner Sergio "Chico" Rodriguez. "Chris is familiar with Bexar County, the volunteer fire departments that serve us, and with the various state and federal agencies we have to work with through large incidents and disasters."

Lopez replaces Craig Roberts, who retired in October and has served on an interim basis since then. Lopez's appointment is for two years.

The Court also approved a 4-year employment agreement with County Manager David Smith, who has served in the position without an agreement since 2011. After February 2019, the agreement renews in one-year intervals with Court approval. The agreement did not come with a salary increase; and any automatic salary increase given to rank-and-file County employees will exclude Smith, meaning Commissioners Court would have to separately consider salary increases related to the Manager.

"From a philosophical standpoint, this is not without precedence — there are a number of county administrators or managers within the state of Texas. And those can be very precarious positions because they are subject to the sometimes not-so-logical will of elected officials," said Precinct 3 Commissioner Kevin Wolff. "I think this is a very fair agreement. It does provide the County Manager some insulation, but at the same time it retains all the powers given to this Court by statute."

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