

AUDITOR & ASST. COUNTY AUDITOR SALARIES - PUBLIC HEARING  
KINNEY COUNTY FIRE RESCUE CENTER - 203 E. EL PASO STREET  
BRACKETTVILLE, KINNEY COUNTY, TEXAS  
JANUARY 27, 2025 - 1 P.M.

01:08

1 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: All right. For the  
2 record, my name is Roland Andrade. I'm the District Court  
3 Judge of the 63rd that encompasses Kinney County, Val Verde,  
4 and Terrell County.

01:08

5 We're here in Kinney County in reference to the  
6 auditor's salary and the assistant county auditor's. This is  
7 a public hearing. Public notice was posted in the local paper  
8 here and -- earlier in the month, and today is January 27th,  
9 2025. It's 1 o'clock.

01:08

10 So, for the record, who do we have here?

11 MS. PADRON: Martha Padron.

12 (Court reporter requested clarification.)

13 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Speak loud and clear.

14 MS. PADRON: I'm tax assessor/collector, Martha

01:08

15 Padron.

16 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Your name for the  
17 record.

18 MS. JONES: Cheryll Jones, county auditor.

19 MR. WEINGARDT: Matt Weingardt, county auditor.

01:09

20 MS. BUENTELLO: Debra Buentello, assistant  
21 auditor.

22 MS. RIVAS: Sara Rivas, library director.

23 MR. VILLARREAL: Angel Villarreal, legal  
24 assistant.

01:09

25 MR. MORGAN: Nicholas Morgan, EMS director.

01:09

1 SHERIFF COE: Brad Coe, sheriff.

2 MR. MOORE: Richard Moore, EMC.

3 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: Janelle Hobbs, Water  
4 District.

01:09

5 MS. HOBBS: Janelle Hobbs.

6 (Court reporter requested clarification.)

7 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Janelle Hobbs?

8 MS. HOBBS: Janelle Hobbs.

9 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: Janelle.

01:09

10 MS. HOBBS: Kinney County Groundwater District.

11 MR. ELLIS: Greg Ellis, E-L-L-I-S. I'm the  
12 general counsel for the Kinney County Groundwater Conservation  
13 District.

14 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay. Let's start to

01:09

15 the left.

16 COMMISSIONER WARD: Tim Ward, county  
17 commissioner.

18 COMMISSIONER MONTALVO: Joe Montalvo, county  
19 commissioner.

01:10

20 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: John Paul Schuster,  
21 county judge.

22 COMMISSIONER DODSON: Dennis Dodson, county  
23 commissioner.

24 MS. FLORES: Rebecca Flores, judge's assistant.

01:10

25 MS. ROJAS: Nayeli Rojas, deputy clerk.

01:10

1 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: All right. Does --  
2 anybody has a comment on the salary of the county auditor's  
3 office and/or the assistant county auditor?

01:10

4 MS. PADRON: Yes, I have a question. What are  
5 you perceiving to increase it to?

6 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Say --

7 MS. PADRON: So where is it at this time?

8 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Right now, it's set  
9 at --

01:10

10 MS. JONES: 56.

11 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: \$56,000?

12 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: Yes.

13 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: What is it, Judge?

14 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: 56 something, but

01:10

15 it's -- it's like an \$8,000 difference. 56 something. Let me  
16 see if I can find it. Hold on.

17 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Well, I thought I had  
18 it in the notes, also.

19 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: It would be -- we can  
20 get it. Hold on. We can get it.

01:11

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible cross talk).

22 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: You-all want to keep  
23 talking?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 50- --

01:11

25 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: No, no. Let's take

01:11

1 care of that.

2 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: Short of 50- -- it's  
3 just short of \$57,000.

4 MS. PADRON: Mine's \$58,446.

01:11

5 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: It's probably real close  
6 to that. That's not -- that's your longevity and everything.

7 MS. PADRON: That's -- yeah, close.

8 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: So yeah. Yeah, so it's  
9 probably --

01:11

10 MS. PADRON: So is it about the same --

11 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: Yes, ma'am.

12 MS. PADRON: -- at this time?

13 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: Yes, ma'am. It's  
14 just --

01:11

15 MS. PADRON: The treasurer, myself --

16 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. PADRON: -- and the auditor?

18 (Court reporter request to speak one at a time.)

01:11

19 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: It's bad acoustics. So  
20 the answer -- the question you had was, what was the going  
21 rate for the --

22 MS. PADRON: At this time.

23 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: -- salary at this  
24 point. And your next question, which is 50- -- a little less  
01:11 25 than 57.

01:11

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 50- --

2 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: 50- --

3 MS. JONES: Judge \$56,304.22.

4 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: There you go.

01:11

5 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay. And --

6 MS. PADRON: What are you proposing?

7 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: What am I proposing?

8 There's a little history, but right now I'm proposing \$75,000.

9 MS. PADRON: Okay. So how is that justified?

01:12

10 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: How is that justified?

11 MS. PADRON: Yes.

12 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Unfortunately, we're in

13 a new era with a bunch of grants that run in through this

14 county. The Operation Lone Star Grant, the Stonegarden, which

01:12

15 has been here for years, but there's other grants that need to

16 be taken care of.

17 MS. PADRON: If I'm not mistaken, we have grant

18 writers, and I think the sheriff has someone who handles the

19 grants.

01:12

20 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay.

21 MS. PADRON: Is that correct?

22 SHERIFF COE: I couldn't hear you.

23 MS. PADRON: Oh, you have Carla, she handles the

24 grants --

01:12

25 SHERIFF COE: She handles the grants.

01:12

1 MS. PADRON: Yes, so his secretary --

2 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay. So what is your  
3 recommendation?

01:12

4 MS. PADRON: I feel if -- it's not justified if  
5 the rest of the department heads or officials do not receive  
6 the same salary. But before that, I don't see how it's  
7 justified just because of that.

8 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay. Anybody else  
9 have the same question?

01:13

10 SHERIFF COE: Yes, sir. I understand the grant  
11 situation, but as far as I'm concerned, and speaking for some  
12 other people, she knew what the salary was when she took the  
13 position.

01:13

14 Now, at the end of the year, if she does a  
15 bang-up job and knocks it out of the park, at the end of the  
16 year, yeah, I would say we would go for it. But to me, it  
17 would be like Ms. Rivas coming in here and saying, hey, I know  
18 what the salary was last year at the library, I know I  
19 accepted this year, but I want a raise, so --

01:13

20 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay. Go ahead, sir.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And I'm kind of along the  
22 same lines as Brad, that if you're bringing her salary up to  
23 be more competitive in the market what another auditor would  
24 get in another county, then you need to do a valuation for all  
25 departments in the county to bring them up to a competitive

01:13

01:13

1 pay, if you're going to do that for her. So you can't do it  
2 for just one person without doing it for everybody that is a  
3 county employee.

4 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay. Anybody else?

01:14

5 SHERIFF COE: And to top on that, I mean, what's  
6 the EMS director of Val Verde County make, as opposed to here?

7 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: The auditor in  
8 Val Verde County?

9 SHERIFF COE: Uh-huh.

01:14

10 MS. PADRON: He's right there.

11 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: He's right here.

12 SHERIFF COE: Not the auditor, EMS director.

13 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Oh, EMS director.

14 SHERIFF COE: (Indiscernible cross talk) -- EMS

01:14

15 director. He's not like a special (indiscernible cross  
16 talk) --

17 MS. PADRON: Oh, he would know that, too.

18 MR. WEINGARDT: The EMS director, that's --

19 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Do we have one?

01:14

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They're hospital based.

21 MS. PADRON: Uh-huh.

22 MR. WEINGARDT: Yeah, we have a district  
23 hospital. I mean, we do have -- we have one, but it's -- he's  
24 not really EMS.

01:14

25 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: But that's not through



01:14

1 the county?

2 MR. WEINGARDT: On the hospital, no. We're a  
3 district (inaudible cross talk) --

01:14

4 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Like he just stated,  
5 that's through the Val Verde Regional Medical Center district,  
6 the hospital district.

7 MR. WEINGARDT: Yeah, we have a service  
8 coordinator, but -- emergency service coordinator, but not an  
9 actual EMS director, service coordinator.

01:15

10 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Is that Mr. Garza?

11 MR. WEINGARDT: It is.

12 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: How much does he get?

13 MR. WEINGARDT: He's currently around 65.

14 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay.

01:15

15 MS. PADRON: And, also, if for somebody working  
16 remotely, as you mentioned, right, comes in once a week,  
17 twice, you think that's justified?

18 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay. Any other  
19 concerns?

01:15

20 SHERIFF COE: I remember I was trying to get --  
21 look for a pay raise for my dispatchers before Senate Bill 22.  
22 I had to contact all counties with basically the same size  
23 population and see what their duties were, as opposed to our  
24 duties, to see if it was even warranted for the pay raise. I  
01:15 25 had to do all the legwork before and put it out to

01:15 1 commissioners before they said yes or no.

2 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay. Anything other  
3 concerns?

4 MS. PADRON: I'm the same of what they're saying  
01:15 5 is the -- I think we should go -- they should go by -- with  
6 all the department heads and all of the elected officials, not  
7 just one person.

8 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay. Again, I'm just  
9 curious, Operation Lone Star has given you more work? If it's  
01:16 10 yes, it's no big deal.

11 MS. PADRON: And, also, during the -- excuse me,  
12 the budget workshops is one -- during budget is when we  
13 present our proposed requests, salaries.

14 At that time is when the commissioners review  
01:16 15 everything and justify whether we -- and if the funds are  
16 available, whether we can get a raise or adopt a raise like  
17 that. And then, in the middle of the year for any of us to  
18 come and say, oh, I want a raise, that's not justified.

19 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: I understand, but my  
01:16 20 question was, based on the Operation Lone Star, are you having  
21 to do more work?

22 MS. PADRON: Oh, I don't. Lone Star?

23 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Uh-huh.

24 MS. PADRON: The sheriff's office does that and  
01:16 25 the grant monies do that.

01:16 1 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay.

2 MS. PADRON: Yes, sir.

3 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: And did you have to  
4 incur more work because of Operation Lone Star?

01:16 5 MS. RIVAS: No. Every department has their own  
6 different -- that they have to work on. Like I have -- I  
7 don't think the other departments have to look for programs  
8 that I need to have at the library. It's very different, but  
9 it's a lot of work.

01:17 10 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: There's no doubt that  
11 everybody here is working hard and underpaid. We're county  
12 employees.

13 My salary compared to other states is -- we're  
14 about the lowest in the nation, if not the world. And every  
01:17 15 year they go and ask for more money for district court judges.  
16 But just like you said, this is what I signed up for. And  
17 just because I have Operation Lone Star, I'm an elected  
18 official, but in this particular situation with the county  
19 auditor, my job is to appoint someone to do the job, and my  
01:17 20 hands are clean after I appoint her. She's going to have to  
21 deal with the commissioners court on a daily or weekly basis  
22 to see where we're at as a county.

23 So, if you don't mind, Cheryll, where are we  
24 at -- where are we at from the date that we sat down and where  
01:18 25 are we at today and all the issues? If you want to talk about

01:18

1 the issues, we can.

2 MS. JONES: Sure.

3 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: It's your public  
4 hearing, Judge.

01:18

5 MS. JONES: Okay. Well, in my first three  
6 months, I --

7 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: You want to sit over  
8 here, that way everybody can hear you.

9 MS. JONES: Sure.

01:18

10 All right. Well, in my first three months, I  
11 was able to come in and immediately file the Indigent Defense  
12 report, which an unexperienced auditor would not have been  
13 able to do. This will bring at least \$10,000 to the county.

14 I was able to use my training that I had from  
15 prior counties to aid with SB22 so we didn't lose that money  
16 and encumber it appropriately.

01:18

17 I was not able to help the county attorney's  
18 office because we did not give correct benefits to his  
19 employee that would have qualified under the SB22 grant.

01:19

20 Purchasing does not follow purchasing guidelines  
21 by state or internal policies, which we have been working on.

22 The financial system is an absolute disaster.  
23 The current one does -- the balance sheet doesn't even balance  
24 and we can't close out. Prior entries were not made, and we  
25 are in the process of integrating to a new financial software

01:19

01:19

1 system, which is a great deal of work, including rewriting the  
2 chart of accounts to be in compliance with state requirements  
3 as long as -- as well as GASB.

01:19

4 We have -- the forensic audit uncovered \$1.7  
5 million dollars worth of misappropriated funds, along with not  
6 having audits in all fee offices, along with a multitude of  
7 other issues.

01:19

8 We have -- our internal controls are not being  
9 followed.

01:20

10 Let's see. We don't properly track any  
11 inventories, so that's got to be completely redone in  
12 accordance with our grants.

13 I've been tasked with being the insurance pool  
14 coordinator, which most county auditors are not the insurance  
15 pool coordinator. Trying to get that done.

16 I wrote the application for a bank depository,  
17 which usually the treasurer does.

18 We also wrote the RFP for outside auditors.

01:20

19 Last week we were notified of an OLS audit where  
20 the State is questioning \$979,000 worth of expenses that were  
21 not appropriately accounted for. That has to be responded to  
22 by the auditor as the financial officer. The financial  
23 officer should be the one signing off on all FSR reports for  
24 the grants.

01:20

25 During that, we notated that our grants were not

01:20

1 being appropriately accepted and budgeted by the court,  
2 therefore, all expenses out of a grant are not legal.

3 Shall I go on?

01:21

4 SHERIFF COE: Please do. (Inaudible cross  
5 talk) --

6 MS. JONES: I've also had to notate other  
7 nonexpenses -- you know, purchases that didn't comply with  
8 grants so that we don't lose it.

01:21

9 OLS is effectively on hold by the State until  
10 they are satisfied that we have answered all of their findings  
11 and we have corrected and modified and will not repeat those.  
12 And then we'll be audited again. Then I still have to add in  
13 all of the outside fee offices.

01:21

14 So, yes, we have a lot of work to do. I have a  
15 financial audit that's also due, and those things are needed  
16 in order to apply for further grants that this county relies  
17 on. This county can't afford to pay back any grant money.

18 MS. PADRON: Now, the statement of expenses, the  
19 monthly statement of expenses, we haven't received.

01:21

20 MS. JONES: You're right. We can't because I  
21 can't close the books because the monthly -- the general  
22 ledger is incorrect. Prior years' records were not adjusted  
23 correctly.

01:22

24 The balance sheet hasn't balanced in years from  
25 what I can tell. And the way the current financial

01:22

1 software -- the way it works, if you close the books, you  
2 can't go back. I have to fix the last year's fiscal year for  
3 the audit and for grants and then I can close and move  
4 forward. But I have to discover and figure out and reconcile

01:22

5 everything that was not prior -- was not previously done by my  
6 predecessor.

7 MS. PADRON: So you can't give us a simple  
8 spreadsheet of each department of what our expected balance  
9 is?

01:22

10 MS. JONES: Well, I could, but my question to  
11 you is, why aren't you keeping track of your -- what you're  
12 doing as well?

13 MS. PADRON: I am --

14 MS. JONES: So, yes, I intend to -- but no

01:22

15 that --

16 (Simultaneous discussion interrupted &  
17 clarification requested by the reporter.)

18 MS. JONES: That software doesn't spit out a  
19 spreadsheet. I would have to manually go in --

01:22

20 MS. PADRON: (Inaudible cross talk) -- yeah,  
21 it's pretty easy. Power of the pencil.

22 MS. JONES: Sure.

23 (Simultaneous discussion interrupted &  
24 clarification requested by the reporter.)

01:23

25 MS. PADRON: Okay. So when we submit a request,

01:23

1 a PO, we're keeping track of what we have, what we spend.

2 You're not doing that?

3 MS. JONES: It's in the software. It tells me  
4 how much is per line item, yes.

01:23

5 MS. PADRON: So before -- so you can sign off on  
6 a PO, wouldn't you have to know what our balance is?

7 MS. JONES: Yes, you're --

8 MS. PADRON: And you said you can't balance it.

01:23

9 MS. JONES: I -- no, the balance sheet doesn't  
10 go. I have to go in and look at each line item and see and do  
11 some manual calculations when we --

12 MS. PADRON: Yes.

13 MS. JONES: -- yes, we're -- when we audit it.

14 MS. PADRON: Can you -- can you provide that at

01:23

15 least to us?

16 MS. JONES: Well --

17 MS. PADRON: The department. It's not the whole  
18 budget. I'm saying each department has a budget.

19 MS. JONES: Well, I have to manually do it every  
20 month, yes.

01:23

21 MS. PADRON: Can you do that?

22 MS. JONES: Not at this time.

23 MS. PADRON: (Inaudible cross talk.)

24 MS. JONES: But that is a process that we are

01:24

25 working to, yes, because I have to fix -- I can't just push



01:24

1 the button, and I can't -- I don't have time to stop and  
2 manually calculate, if I'm trying to fix all of these other  
3 things.

01:24

4 MS. PADRON: Are we able to go into your office  
5 and look at our budget on your computer? I mean, we can look  
6 at it and see what we have. We're keeping track, but the  
7 bigger budgets, like bigger departments, I'm sure it's  
8 difficult to keep track --

9 MS. JONES: Right.

01:24

10 MS. PADRON: -- unless you are. And I know the  
11 only time you're going to approve a PO is if we have funds --

12 MS. JONES: You're correct.

13 MS. PADRON: -- (inaudible cross talk) -- we  
14 like to keep a running a balance --

01:24

15 MS. JONES: Yes.

16 MS. PADRON: -- and have our own sheet. So can  
17 we do that? Can we go into the office at any time to get a  
18 printout or just review what you're looking at so we can say,  
19 oh, yes, I have -- oh, I'm running out there, I better do a  
20 budget adjustment, things like that.

01:24

21 MS. JONES: Yes, which we intend to get out, but  
22 I'm only one person.

23 MS. PADRON: No, Debbie is there as well.

24 MS. JONES: Okay. I am only one person when it  
25 comes to the accounting side of this. She doesn't hold an

01:24

01:25

1 accounting degree.

2 MS. PADRON: Well, we're not asking that. We're  
3 asking --

4 MS. JONES: So --

01:25

5 MS. PADRON: -- if she can assist us as well,  
6 because she always has in the past. And when you were gone,  
7 she's helping us, too. Okay. So she does help us a lot. So  
8 I'm just trying to give credit to where credit is due.

9 So the question again, can we at any time go  
10 into your office and look at the -- our budget -- our  
11 individual budget, not anyone's else? I know it's public  
12 record.

01:25

13 MS. JONES: Well, yes, it is public record  
14 with --

01:25

15 MS. PADRON: Can we?

16 That's what we have a hard time with, Judge.

17 MS. JONES: Yes.

18 MS. PADRON: What are we allowed to do or ask  
19 or (inaudible cross talk) --

01:25

20 MS. JONES: And by all means, send me an email,  
21 and when we get to the new software and I get this balanced,  
22 those will roll out every month.

23 MS. PADRON: So we don't know when that will be?

24 MS. JONES: It's --

01:25

25 MS. PADRON: It could be months. We're already

01:25

1 three months into the budget --

2 MS. JONES: You are --

3 MS. PADRON: -- (inaudible cross talk) --

01:25

4 MS. JONES: You're correct. And we've had a lot  
5 of fires come up.

6 MS. PADRON: (Inaudible cross talk).

7 MS. JONES: And, no, I can't guarantee a time  
8 frame. And I'll work to getting what you need done, but I  
9 also have got to get that software conversion done and then

01:25

10 the things will be electronic. POs will be electronic, budget  
11 reports will be electronic and they will go out like  
12 clockwork, but I have to fix the prior problems first.

13 MS. PADRON: And you're not sure how long that  
14 will take?

01:26

15 MS. JONES: Well, as long as I can stop getting  
16 fires blowing up in my face that I wasn't expecting, then  
17 yeah, we can get there a lot faster. There was a lot more  
18 wrong than there was right. There's not a single thing with  
19 regard to county finances that is being done correctly. And  
20 that's a lot of work to fix, and Rome wasn't built in a day,  
21 and I can't do it all at once.

01:26

22 MS. PADRON: So did you notice this when you  
23 first went into office? Were you -- presented it to the  
24 commissioners if the (inaudible cross talk) --

01:26

25 MS. JONES: No, that was not presented to me

01:26

1 when I took this. Not at all. I don't even think they knew  
2 the magnitude of the problems that was going on with the  
3 finances.

4 (Cell phone going off.)

01:26

5 MS. PADRON: But when you did take the position,  
6 you knew the salary at the time?

7 MS. JONES: Yes. And when it was presented to  
8 me, it wasn't with all of these problems that had to be fixed.

9 (Inaudible talk due to cell phone going off.)

01:27

10 MS. PADRON: So you're saying it wasn't  
11 presented to you, but the salary was? The salary was?

12 MS. JONES: Yes, the salary was.

13 MS. PADRON: So -- but you accepted the job with  
14 the salary set at the time?

01:27

15 MS. JONES: Yes.

16 MS. PADRON: With no conditions?

17 MS. JONES: That -- well, there was other  
18 salaries that was being considered at that time, but we had to  
19 have the public hearing first.

01:27

20 (Inaudible talk due to cell phone going off.)

21 MS. PADRON: I'm sorry, I'm trying to turn this  
22 off.

23 So, Judge, when you had the hearing the first  
24 time, how many (inaudible cross talk) --

01:27

25 MS. JONES: We didn't have it.

01:27

1 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: We haven't had a  
2 hearing, and that's --

3 MS. JONES: Right, so --

01:27

4 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Well, when I first  
5 appointed her and we came up with the salary range -- you  
6 know, kudos to commissioners court. I mean, they feel the  
7 same way as you-all. You know, this is what we've been paying  
8 previous county auditors what the going rate here --

9 MS. PADRON: I'm just trying to turn it off.

01:28

10 Uh-huh.

11 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: And, again, that's why  
12 it's --

13 MS. JONES: I'm --

01:28

14 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: It's -- you have to  
15 understand that we're not in the position where we were, not  
16 even six years ago. Six years ago, you know, we would come  
17 down here once a month, have court, and get out of here,  
18 right?

19 MS. PADRON: Uh-huh.

01:28

20 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: And we didn't have to  
21 deal with Operation Lone Star. We didn't have to deal with  
22 too many of the -- of the grants that are out there.

23 Operation Lone Star and SB22, that alone -- I've  
24 had those issues in Val Verde County, too. So my county  
01:28 25 auditor and I -- and I got to give him kudos, too, that we all

01:28

1 sat down and tried to figure out what Operation Lone Star was  
2 and what we could spend it on or what was available, and it  
3 took us a couple of months, but we figured it out.

01:29

4 So, again, Carla runs Operation Lone Star here,  
5 and I never had any -- no one had ever complained about it. I  
6 know Judge Shahan, he was the original county judge at the  
7 time when he inherited Operation Lone Star and then Judge  
8 Schuster took over. But it's a learning experience. And when  
9 you're talking about millions of dollars and statutes and  
10 requirements that we have to follow, that's a lot of work.

01:29

11 And I just want to also say, in addition to  
12 that, you have to -- you have to create those relationships.  
13 So my big thing is that, who is in charge in Austin, you,  
14 know? You know, I didn't even know, you know, that the courts  
15 had anything to do with Operation Lone Star as far as the  
16 budget is concerned, right.

01:30

17 MS. PADRON: Uh-huh.

01:30

18 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: My county judge in  
19 Val Verde didn't tell me a thing about it and, you know, there  
20 was like \$2 or \$3 million there, just sitting there, and no  
21 one knew anything about it.

01:30

22 So I finally said, well, my girls are working  
23 overtime, we're -- we created the rocket docket here in Kinney  
24 County to push these cases. And, again, a little background  
25 on that is that if we don't dispose of 85 -- 80 percent, 90

01:30

1 percent of our cases down the road within a five-year period,  
2 which is called CJIS -- I think some of you-all may be  
3 familiar with that -- the terminology -- is that they pull our  
4 grants.

01:30

5 So it's very important that the courts and the  
6 sheriff's office and the district attorney's office, we all  
7 work together and make sure these cases are taken care of.

01:31

8 So, again, you know, how do we learn about how  
9 to run this Operation Lone Star Grant? So we're lucky enough  
10 to find out who's running the show in Austin. Matt has a  
11 relationship with them.

01:31

12 Nowadays, if we have to do a budget adjustment,  
13 it's not easy to do, but it can be done if it's done properly.  
14 So I only bring up those relationships because Cheryll and  
15 Matt knows the same people, they know the same auditors around  
16 Texas.

01:31

17 And I'm one of the -- I emphasize that I don't  
18 want to have to reinvent the wheel. If I have a judge in a  
19 different county that's dealing with Operation Lone Star, I'll  
20 ask for their advice, and so do these two. They'll ask other  
21 auditors, what's going on? We'll ask Austin, what's going on?  
22 What do we need to do?

01:32

23 And so that's where -- this, where we're at  
24 right now, this is where Val Verde was six years -- four years  
25 ago.

01:32

1 MR. WEINGARDT: You're correct, Judge. It's  
2 true, I walked in -- well, I walked into a bad software  
3 conversion. She's on the front end of a bad software  
4 conversion.

01:32

5 But it was -- we had 47 accounts, everybody had  
6 their own account all spread out throughout the county over  
7 multiple different banks. Everything was out of statute.  
8 Elected officials were just writing checks on their special  
9 accounts, which shouldn't happen.

01:32

10 And all that, that's just clean up stuff, and  
11 that's not a big deal. But when you concentrate on what is a  
12 big deal, just like last year I lost half my staff -- cancer,  
13 stroke, and pregnancy. So we were severely undermanned as  
14 well, but what we had to concentrate on was grants and

01:32

15 payroll. You can't screw those things up. You can't screw up  
16 people's pay and you can't screw up the grants.

17 Why can't you screw up the grants? Because  
18 that's not your money, you didn't budget for that money. If  
19 you do have to replace that money, taxes either have to go up  
01:32 20 or services have to be cut.

21 And, unfortunately, that's where you're at right  
22 now with this. It's simply -- I never thought I'd find  
23 another county that was as grant heavy as Val Verde, where we  
24 had almost as much in tax revenue as we did grants.

01:33

25 Here in Kinney, you have one grant that's more



01:33

1 than your tax revenue. So it is very important to lock down  
2 the grant. You get the grant locked down, you get the  
3 software conversion locked down, and then things can come back  
4 down and be normalized.

01:33

5 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: I think -- you know, I  
6 think you need to explain that software conversion. Is that  
7 something that was already going on or is that something that  
8 we just happened to have -- that you ran into or how did that  
9 happen?

01:33

10 MS. JONES: The software conversion was going  
11 on, but by statute the software belongs to the auditor. And I  
12 looked at it and the -- I looked at what they had already  
13 signed up for, and I actually was pretty impressed with the  
14 program. It will work very well for a county this size. It  
15 does almost everything my software at a big county did.

01:33

16 But the chart of accounts, which is the general  
17 ledger, is not correct. It's missing a lot of required funds.  
18 It's intermingled amongst itself and it needs an overhaul, and  
19 so that is what I'm in the process of writing.

01:34

20 And when the chart of accounts then is in place,  
21 that will lead to us being able to go live with software and  
22 run payroll through it. I believe Diana R. is keeping track  
23 of employees through it, so less set up there, and then we'll  
24 be able to go live.

01:34

25 So we're really very close to going live. I

01:34

1 have to finish the chart of accounts, though. That's very  
2 important. The chart of accounts is the general ledger, runs  
3 everything for the county.

01:34

4 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: And, again, these  
5 grants are not matching grants. This is -- this is free money  
6 to the county, free money to Val Verde. I don't -- I had to  
7 learn Operation Lone Star Grant from day one.

01:35

8 SB22, Sheriff, that's a whole different animal,  
9 and I know you're learning on that on a daily basis. I've sat  
10 down with the district attorney's office, just because -- if  
11 they spend money on SB22, then that's less money -- there's  
12 more money available on Operation Lone Star. And, of course,  
13 they also have the BPU grant. Again, I'm talking about the  
14 district attorney's office.

01:35

15 So SB22, Sheriff, that's a whole different  
16 animal and it's -- and it's hard to figure out what the State  
17 wants. And there's so many little things about it, and  
18 Suzanne has -- our DA has kind of figured it out, but they  
19 want -- Austin wants you to spend that money, but they want  
20 you to spend it properly.

01:35

21 And there's a lot of things that could be  
22 covered -- and, again, I'm not going to -- I'm not getting  
23 involved in the day-to-day operations. That's her job and  
24 that's your county commissioners. But I would -- I would love  
25 to get us back on our feet and get going in this county.

01:36

01:36

1 So, I'm sorry, you had another question.

2 MS. PADRON: Yes, sir. So I always understood  
3 that every year when you set your budget, you have a hearing  
4 for the auditor's salary; is that correct? Every year. Okay.

01:36

5 So you did have one for Donieta for -- correct? You had a  
6 hearing, Judge, correct?

7 MS. JONES: No. No.

8 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: No, we never --

9 MS. PADRON: You never had to have --

01:36

10 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: We never had a hearing,  
11 and that's one of the things that when we came up to here --  
12 we have them all the time in Val Verde, and it was just  
13 something that we just took for granted here in Kinney.

14 MS. PADRON: So you-all didn't have a hearing  
15 for the auditor. What happened there?

01:36

16 MS. JONES: The court, it doesn't set the salary  
17 for the auditor.

18 MS. PADRON: No, no. I'm saying --

19 MS. JONES: So they --

01:36

20 MS. PADRON: -- as far as the public hearing,  
21 there's always a --

22 MS. JONES: Yes.

23 MS. PADRON: In the past, I've always known that  
24 they always -- it's always in the paper about the auditor, the  
25 assistant auditor --

01:36

01:36

1 MS. JONES: No.

2 MS. PADRON: -- set salary and then they move  
3 forward with that.

4 MS. JONES: Right.

01:37

5 MS. PADRON: That's what I was asking about.  
6 Did you-all not have one?

7 MS. JONES: Huh-uh. It's been --

8 MS. PADRON: So how long has it been since  
9 you-all had a hearing --

01:37

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't know.

11 MS. PADRON: -- a public hearing for the auditor  
12 in Kinney County? Can't remember?

13 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: No. See --

14 MS. PADRON: So --

01:37

15 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: -- I've only been  
16 around for four years, so --

17 MS. PADRON: So, Judge, so you're -- so what you  
18 do is you wait for the commissioners to let you know when the  
19 hearing's -- are you initiating it or --

01:37

20 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: No, this is my -- this  
21 is my public hearing.

22 MS. PADRON: So they initiated it? Okay. So  
23 you didn't request it --

01:37

24 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: I initiated -- I get to  
25 appoint the county auditor and, again -- well, we talked about

01:37

1 salary. Obviously, the commissioners court does not agree  
2 with what I wanted initially, so that's why we're here. But  
3 things have --

01:37

4 MS. PADRON: So then the current, before -- so  
5 the salary would just automatically be renewed on the auditor,  
6 because you didn't have a hearing?

7 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Correct.

8 MS. PADRON: I see.

9 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: During that time --

01:37

10 MS. PADRON: And --

11 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: -- and no one ever  
12 complained.

13 MS. PADRON: And so that's why you're saying  
14 that you haven't had a hearing? That's why you're saying  
15 that?

01:38

16 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: We never had a hearing  
17 for Donieta.

18 MS. PADRON: Okay. So now let's go back to the  
19 salary. Where would that salary come from? Their -- our  
20 budget?

01:38

21 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Through the county.

22 MS. PADRON: The taxpayer budget?

23 MS. JONES: Yes.

24 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: To the taxpayers'  
25 budget and your commissioners court. They need to figure

01:38

01:38

1 out how to come up with that money.

2 MS. PADRON: If it's approved? Okay. Now, also  
3 one step -- the assistant auditor, what are you proposing for  
4 her salary?

01:38

5 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: I think it was 42 --  
6 43-2. Is that what you're -- is that what you're getting  
7 already, Deb?

8 MS. BUENTELLO: (Inaudible cross talk.)

01:38

9 MS. PADRON: I don't know the exact amount. I'm  
10 sorry.

11 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay. We're trying to  
12 do that at \$20 an hour, so that's 43,200 -- \$43,200. And  
13 we're also asking for, if need be, an assistant, a third -- a  
14 second assistant county auditor, \$41,600, and out of that  
15 \$41,600, \$17,680 is provided by Operation Lone Star Grant,  
16 so --

01:38

17 MS. PADRON: (Indiscernible) grant --

18 (Court reporter requested clarification.)

01:39

19 MS. PADRON: No. I'm just commenting on what he  
20 said.

21 We don't know how much you're getting  
22 (inaudible) --

23 I do have another a question.

24 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: That's why we're here.

01:39

25 MS. PADRON: So we have to do it every year now?

01:39

1 MS. JONES: Yes.

2 MS. PADRON: Have a hearing every year?

3 MS. JONES: Yes. Yes, every year.

4 MS. PADRON: (Indiscernible cross talk) --

01:39

5 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: We're going to do it  
6 every year now.

7 MS. PADRON: Okay.

8 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Every year we'll be  
9 here.

01:39

10 And I understand -- Sheriff, I understand where  
11 you're coming from where, you know, you stated, well, you  
12 know, this is what she signed up for. Again, you can say,  
13 well, she should have known, but, you know, when you and I got  
14 into office, we didn't know a lot of things that were going  
15 on, right?

01:39

16 SHERIFF COE: That's true. But as a elected  
17 official, I can't come in in the middle of a budget year and  
18 say, hey, I need more money.

01:39

19 But the question I have is, like with my  
20 deputies, when we first started, everything was nice and slow.  
21 When Operation Lone Star kicked in, because of what was going  
22 on, they went from 60-hour weeks to 70-hour weeks to 80-hour  
23 weeks, only getting paid for 60. But I never came in and  
24 tried -- to commissioners for a 22 percent pay raise based on  
25 the fact that -- you know as well how many cases we have

01:40

01:40

1 submitted to the court. We made over 2,000 arrests in two  
2 years, which is head and above anything that's ever been done  
3 in the past.

01:40

4 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Well, and I -- and,  
5 again, I agree, but that's when we all should have sat down  
6 and said, okay, what exactly can Operation Lone Star cover for  
7 the sheriff's office?

01:40

8 And just recently, on SB22, that's all law  
9 enforcement money, and what is that exactly going to cover for  
10 your deputies and other items that you may need. That's  
11 something that all of us needs to sit down.

01:41

12 And we've had those come-to-Jesus meetings with  
13 Val Verde County because a lot of people just want to drag  
14 their feet, and I'm like, if I have money appropriated toward  
15 the court, then I want to make sure I utilize it, get these  
16 people paid what they're worth and -- because it's free money.

01:41

17 SHERIFF COE: Yeah. Well, I agree on that  
18 because I'm trying to spend every dime of Senate Bill 22 so I  
19 don't have to give it back, so we get the same amount next  
20 year.

01:41

21 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: I think we're all on  
22 the same board, but I think we all need to sit down. When I  
23 say "we," "you-all," and say, you know, okay, this is the  
24 amount of money we have -- and I hate to throw Val Verde  
25 County under the bus. But we had the first meeting, they



01:41

1 said, you know what, we only have \$200,000 left.

2 I said, oh, shoot, that's not bad. You know,  
3 it's -- I don't know -- \$5 or \$6 million. Well, we met again  
4 three weeks later. Oh, we got \$600,000. So, you know,  
5 something was wrong. So at the end of the year -- and that  
6 was the first cycle, remember, Sheriff, it was two years.

01:41

7 SHERIFF COE: Yeah.

8 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: So at the end of two  
9 years, we left \$1.2 million on the table. You think the  
10 taxpayers are happy about that?

01:42

11 SHERIFF COE: No, they're not happy about that.

12 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: So how much are we  
13 leaving on the table here that our taxpayers doesn't know what  
14 is left on the table and what should have been spent  
15 appropriately if we just sat down and said, okay, if I need a  
16 new vehicle -- and, again, you can't wait till the last minute  
17 to ask for a quote, right?

01:42

18 You get approved for a vehicle, you better put  
19 that -- ask for a quote right away and not till the very end,  
20 because Austin is going to say you waited too long, and that's  
21 what's happening in a lot of these grants.

01:42

22 MS. JONES: Gave back half a million in OLS from  
23 last fiscal year.

24 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: In Kinney County?

01:42

25 MS. JONES: In Kinney County.

**01:42**

1 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: All right. So --

2 MS. BUENTELLO: Judge, I have a question. So  
3 for OLS, if there's approved time for overtime, who -- how  
4 many people decide on who gets that?

**01:43**

5 MS. JONES: I decide.

6 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: It's still through the  
7 grant. And I'm going to tell you that OLS does not like  
8 paying overtime. They prefer that you -- from what I  
9 understand -- and every year it's going to change. From what

**01:43**

10 I've seen, they said -- they rather you hire somebody else and  
11 cover through OLS than to give somebody overtime.

12 Am I right or wrong?

13 MS. JONES: Yes.

14 MS. PADRON: Okay. So her pay's already been  
**01:43** 15 approved. When will she receive that pay for overtime?

16 MS. JONES: Okay. I have --

17 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: That's a whole  
18 different question.

19 MS. JONES: Right.

**01:43**

20 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: I think that's been  
21 taken care of.

22 MS. JONES: Well, yes, because she reports to me  
23 and I determine her work hours, and right now I don't want her  
24 working overtime. I don't think it's --

**01:43**

25 MS. PADRON: Right. Yes, ma'am. Previously.

01:43

1 MS. JONES: But previously, her overtime --

2 MS. PADRON: Has been approved?

3 MS. JONES: She's gotten comp time per the  
4 county policy; that's how that was.

01:44

5 MS. PADRON: Is that an option? Isn't it? Comp  
6 time versus pay?

7 MS. JONES: Well, the county policy is comp  
8 time. Unless you are law enforcement, which has different  
9 rules --

01:44

10 MS. PADRON: For the OLS.

11 MS. JONES: Well, the OLS grant provides that.  
12 But she is a county -- she reports to me and I report to the  
13 judge, and the court has no purview over her, except she does  
14 have to --

01:44

15 MS. PADRON: (Indiscernible cross talk).

16 MS. JONES: -- follow those policies. Right.  
17 So she gets comp time, and she has gotten comp time for any of  
18 her overtime that she has been working.

01:44

19 MS. RIVAS: So her pay's going to -- it's also  
20 for -- it's also an increase for her pay (indiscernible cross  
21 talk) --

01:44

22 MS. JONES: Her pay is reflective of what the --  
23 was previously budgeted. We didn't reduce it. I left it. I  
24 recommended to the judge to leave it at that. It is his  
25 choice. He could cut it or he could raise it. But the

01:44 1 auditor and the auditor's assistant --

2 MS. RIVAS: No. The question is because it was  
3 on the agenda, it's going to be a (indiscernible cross  
4 talk) --

01:45 5 MS. JONES: The merit pay, is that what you're  
6 talking about?

7 MS. RIVAS: No, no, no. The salary.

8 MS. JONES: Oh, the salary?

9 MS. RIVAS: The salary.

01:45 10 MS. JONES: Yeah, that's -- that's his order.  
11 He orders the salary, the court has to -- we have to pay for  
12 it out of the county budget, however that comes.

13 MS. PADRON: So the assistant --

14 MS. JONES: It should be budget neutral for her,  
01:45 15 though.

16 MS. PADRON: Your assistant auditor's not  
17 getting a raise?

18 MS. JONES: No.

19 MS. PADRON: She's doing the same work; grants,  
01:45 20 OLS. Why wouldn't she?

21 MS. JONES: She's doing accounts payable.

22 MS. PADRON: That wouldn't be fair to her,  
23 Judge. Not fair to us, but she works in that same office.  
24 Why not?

01:45 25 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay.

01:45

1 MS. PADRON: It's not fair to us, but you don't  
2 oversee our budget, right? They do. Can you recommend  
3 anything for us?

01:45

4 MS. JONES: I believe she did get a raise,  
5 though, when the county passed their budget.

6 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: I can recommend, like I  
7 told you earlier, that you guys are overworked and underpaid.  
8 That's all I can say about that.

9 MS. PADRON: That's all you can say.

01:46

10 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: And we're all in the  
11 same position. But that's why we're having a public hearing,  
12 and if you think she deserves more, then that's fine and  
13 dandy. It's my motion.

01:46

14 MS. PADRON: As you said, that there's a lot of  
15 work there and they have (indiscernible) -- justified.

01:46

16 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: And, again, I don't  
17 want you to think -- I think one of your questions was where  
18 are you going to get the money from. And, again, I can't  
19 speak of this commissioners court. I mean, I've been on  
20 different boards before I was a judge and having to deal with  
21 budgets.

01:47

22 And to a certain extent, I try to stay away from  
23 that. But when you listen to the commissioners meeting -- I'm  
24 not saying this one -- there's always money for something.  
25 And, yeah, and it's up to you-all to advocate for yourselves.

01:47

1 I tell my people all the time -- my JPs -- we  
2 have four.

3 MS. PADRON: Uh-huh.

01:47

4 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: And they've been --  
5 they complain all the time, but I say how -- if you're not  
6 going to complain to commissioners court, it's not going to  
7 get -- they're not going to hear. Now, that's not to say  
8 they're going to say yes, right? They just said, you know  
9 what, maybe next year, maybe next year, and next year will  
10 finally come one of these days.

01:47

11 I lost my train of thought on that one. Oh,  
12 where is the money going to come from? Prime example -- and,  
13 again, I don't know what the -- our sheriff's office, we, in  
14 Val Verde -- okay, let's say, for example, we budget 30  
15 people. And how many times are we fully staffed on the  
16 sheriff's office, right? So we have 15 people working. Where  
17 does that 15 -- those 15 officers' salary go?

01:47

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

19 MS. PADRON: Yes.

01:47

20 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Right?

21 MS. PADRON: It's sitting there.

22 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: It's sitting there,  
23 right? So you're going to tell me there's not money  
24 somewhere.

01:48

25 And so Cheryll's already saved us, just right

01:48

1 off the first week, 10,000 bucks.

2 MS. JONES: Well, \$10,000 on that report, and  
3 the SB22 was almost \$100,000 by encumbering that correctly.  
4 Uh-huh.

01:48

5 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: So she's already saved  
6 us over 100 grand. And, again, that's money that could have  
7 been -- that they could order to be paid back, but we'll go  
8 bankrupt. I mean, we can't afford \$100,000. We can't afford  
9 \$50,000 to go -- to pay back to the government for these  
10 grants. Okay.

01:48

11 I think Kinney County is in a position where  
12 they want us to do well with Operation Lone Star. They want  
13 the sheriff -- you know, he's arrested thousands of people,  
14 now we need to prosecute them. We're doing well prosecuting  
15 people.

01:49

16 And, you know, I'm not going to tell you who  
17 gave me the comment this morning, but people are avoiding  
18 Kinney County, which is good. They're running through  
19 Maverick County, and they see Kinney County county line,  
20 they'll just turn around.

01:49

21 How true that is, I don't know, but our numbers  
22 are down. And, again, it's only because of the law  
23 enforcement that we've done, that you've worked on the past  
24 two or three years, and us -- the district attorney's  
25 prosecuting them and us sentencing these individuals not to

01:49

01:49

1 mess with Kinney County.

2 So as far as Operation Lone Star is concerned,  
3 Austin wants us to do well. You know, we're in the news all  
4 the time. The sheriff is in the news. Brent is in the news.

01:49

5 They don't want us to fail, but at the same  
6 time, people are asking every day, you know, where's all this  
7 money going to? You know, how many times you get a public  
8 information request in your office?

9 You may not get one, but --

01:50

10 MS. PADRON: I don't.

11 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: -- the sheriff has  
12 probably got a thousand of them, right? Public information.

13 SHERIFF COE: It's never asking about the money,  
14 it's always asking about who's in jail where.

01:50

15 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Well, they're always  
16 asking where the money's going. And the people that they talk  
17 to every day trying to help us fix the budget and make  
18 modifications if need be, they don't want us to fail. But at  
19 the same time, we just can't lay down and say, well, this is  
20 the way it's always been and -- it can come back and bite us  
21 on the butt. And that's you-all, because my hands will be  
22 clean.

01:50

23 MS. PADRON: Commissioners have anything to say?

24 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: Judge, I just have one  
25 thing. The initial request was \$65,000. You said \$75,000

01:50



01:51

1 today?

2 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: \$75,000.

3 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: Okay. I just want to  
4 verify because that was the initial request, and that's where  
01:51 5 I came up with \$8,000 difference, you know, 57-ish or whatever  
6 to the 65. But today's proposal --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible cross  
8 talk) --

9 COUNTY JUDGE SCHUSTER: -- is \$75,000.

01:51

10 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: The can of worms that  
11 were opened. We knew it was bad, but we didn't know it was  
12 this bad.

13 And, again, I'll subject that to -- she's going  
14 to be doing -- working a lot of overtime. And the next budget  
01:51 15 that comes up, she -- if everything's cleaned up, then we go  
16 back to a lower amount.

17 MS. JONES: Uh-huh.

18 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: But if she's putting  
19 in, you know, 60 hours, 70 hours, and saving us money and  
01:51 20 saving us having to pay back a bunch of money, I think we need  
21 to motivate her to keep us out of trouble.

22 And, again, in September when we come back and  
23 if everything's fixed, and then we'll reevaluate that she's  
24 not going to be putting in those types of hours. So I --

01:52

25 COMMISSIONER MONTALVO: (Indiscernible cross

01:52

1 talk) might not even need an auditor back then --

2 (Court reporter requested clarification.)

3 COMMISSIONER MONTALVO: My name is Joe Montalvo.

01:52

4 If she -- if everything is fixed the next year, we might not  
5 even need an auditor for the salary of a county is less than  
6 10,000.

7 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Oh, I agree. I agree.

01:52

8 If Operation Lone Star goes away, SB22, any of the grants that  
9 need to be taken care of -- if they no longer exist and we can  
10 go back to the good ole' days, we don't need an auditor.

11 But we're going to have to talk to the treasurer  
12 to see if she wants to take care of that, but -- and I'm not  
13 going to speak for her, but she knows that we're cleaning up a  
14 lot of mess right now. But I agree, I mean, we can go back to  
15 the good ole' days, we don't need an auditor.

01:52

16 SHERIFF COE: Real quick question. If  
17 everything's in a mess that needs to be cleaned up -- and you  
18 mentioned the motivation -- what if we revisit this time April  
19 1st and see where we stand, and if everything has been  
20 rectified and everything, then maybe go for the pay raise then  
21 versus now.

01:53

22 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Well, that's one  
23 recommendation.

01:53

24 SHERIFF COE: I say we -- personal opinion, I  
25 say we put this off till April, have another meeting, see

01:53

1 where we stand, and go from there.

2 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Well, unfortunately,  
3 that's not how the public hearings work. I'm here to get  
4 feedback from you-all. And I understand it's hard to give  
5 increases in anybody's salaries.

01:53

6 Yes, sir.

7 MR. MOORE: How many items are there that you're  
8 talking about that need to be fixed, ma'am?

9 MS. JONES: A multitude. You've got the  
10 software, you got OLS audit. We've got purchasing that's not  
11 done correct.

01:54

12 MR. MOORE: Well, just like instead of  
13 sugarcoating it, just -- I'm looking for what the --

14 MS. JONES: Oh, I don't know what the number is.  
15 It keeps -- every week --

01:54

16 MR. MOORE: What are you at right now?

17 MS. JONES: Oh, at least 10 huge items.

18 MR. MOORE: 10 huge items? And they take up  
19 where necessary to work longer than usual hours?

01:54

20 MS. JONES: Oh, definitely.

21 MR. MOORE: Okay. And then how far out does  
22 those usual hours exceed if you're working outside the usual,  
23 say 8:00 to 5:00?

24 MS. JONES: Well, usually I work at least 60  
25 hours a week.

01:54

01:54

1 MR. MOORE: Okay.

2 MS. JONES: But I'm an appointed official so I  
3 don't get paid an hourly wage. So whether I work 20 hours or  
4 80 hours, it's the same amount for my annual salary.

01:55

5 MR. MOORE: Well, I know that. I worked salary,  
6 too, when I was at Northeast ISD. I was in the engineering  
7 department.

01:55

8 But what I'm trying to understand is, like,  
9 you-all's window where you-all operate and how you operate,  
10 because to know the function of what it's -- to either -- if  
11 you're meeting what's necessary for that amount to ask for and  
12 what is required, I would state on all the stuff that I'm  
13 having to handle. Instead of making it into a small muffin, I  
14 want to make it into a large cake so that everyone can  
15 understand how great it tastes when it benefits the county.

01:55

16 Because you got just, like, a whole detail of a  
17 report -- if I was to do an inspection, I have to give the  
18 means to what's important for the client. If I'm giving them  
19 just bare minimum, they're not going to understand what needs  
20 to be fixed for them to gain that property or gain that  
21 inspection for, say, this building.

01:55

22 If there's problems with it, I need to give them  
23 all the problems. Not just give them, like, here and there,  
24 because then if there's a roof leak here, usually leads into a  
25 bigger problem.

01:56

01:56

1 MS. JONES: The problem is --

2 MR. MOORE: So I'm just trying to understand  
3 where you're sitting at, what you're needing to be able to  
4 gain that amount, because right now I'm seeing just a flat

01:56

5 factor of there's a lot of problems, but what are those huge  
6 problems?

7 MS. JONES: Well, I already listed out the ones  
8 that I know about, and the ones I don't know about I don't  
9 know, because I haven't been able to get to those offices to  
10 see what those problems are. Unlike inspecting a house, I  
11 can't go through and look at everything.

01:56

12 The forensic auditor did identify quite a few  
13 things which need to be fixed, which this court is already  
14 aware of. And I have already identified other things that  
15 have come up in our -- you know, from the State and other  
16 things that I have looked at. But I couldn't give you a whole  
17 list if I wanted to.

01:56

18 MR. MOORE: Because it's just going to keep  
19 going (inaudible cross talk) --

01:57

20 MS. JONES: It just keeps going.

21 MR. MOORE: And you said that -- and, Judge, you  
22 said you're recommending 75?

23 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: 75.

24 MR. MOORE: Is that based off of surrounding --  
25 surrounding departments?

01:57

01:57

1 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Yeah, we looked at  
2 that. Even when -- initially, when I said \$65,000, we looked  
3 at the different counties, different sizes. Some counties  
4 gave actually, like -- some counties the size of this is way  
5 more than \$75,000, others are just right below it.

01:57

6 So I was kind of surprised that other counties  
7 were giving a whole bunch more than what I was asking for.  
8 But there's other counties that don't have a county auditor.  
9 Terrell County doesn't have one, but, again, it's a small

01:58

10 county. And there's other counties that just -- it's right  
11 below it, it's right around 45, 50, going back to the original  
12 58-5, whatever that was.

13 So it's a big range, so it's not out of the  
14 ballpark. It's still in the middle range. It's not -- she's  
15 not going to be able to say, you know, I make the most in a  
16 small county than anywhere else in the state of Texas, because  
17 there's other counties that are the same size making more  
18 money than what I'm recommending.

01:58

19 MS. PADRON: Can I ask the auditor a question?

01:58

20 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Sure. If you don't  
21 mind.

22 MS. PADRON: Hi, Matt.

23 MR. WEINGARDT: Hey, how are you?

24 MS. PADRON: Question. Good.

01:58

25 Now, in Val Verde, once you set your budget,

01:58

1 have you at any time seen where the commissioners change the  
2 salary of an elected or appointed official?

3 MR. WEINGARDT: Well, elected officials,  
4 obviously -- you know the answer to that -- they can't.

01:59

5 That's set by statute under 152 --

6 MS. PADRON: (Inaudible cross talk) --

7 (Court reporter requested clarification.)

01:59

8 MR. WEINGARDT: Of an elected official, they  
9 can't under statute 152. Which I'm sure you're familiar with  
10 when you go to your training, right. Okay.

11 Now, under the appointed, yes, I have seen it.  
12 I saw where -- I received a \$25,000 increase midyear after the  
13 conditions that I was levied.

14 MS. PADRON: What was the reason, just like --

01:59

15 MR. WEINGARDT: What's the reason? The  
16 financial condition (indiscernible) -- correct for the  
17 taxpayers, which is why we're all here to represent, for the  
18 taxpayers. We want the taxpayers to get the best deal with  
19 the money we collect for them, right? That you collect for  
20 them.

01:59

21 MS. PADRON: Yes.

22 MR. WEINGARDT: You collect the taxes?

23 MS. PADRON: (Inaudible cross talk). The  
24 appraisal office does.

01:59

25 MR. WEINGARDT: The appraisal, okay.

01:59

1 (Simultaneous, indiscernible discussion.)

2 MS. PADRON: Since you're here and you  
3 mentioned (inaudible cross talk) --

01:59

4 MR. WEINGARDT: Now, you ask, can it happen? It  
5 can happen. There's is AG opinions that it can and does  
6 happen, if that's your question. And I'm sure that research  
7 can be provided to you if you wanted to or just a simple AG  
8 opinion search.

02:00

9 MS. PADRON: It's just confusing why it's -- the  
10 budget is set at one time, you know, set in stone and then  
11 later it can be adjusted.

12 MR. WEINGARDT: Why is that confusing?

13 MS. PADRON: (Inaudible cross talk).

14 MR. WEINGARDT: I don't see what --

02:00

15 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Well, I had to learn  
16 that, too. So when -- a lot of times the terminology "budget  
17 adjustment" -- if you listen to their meetings throughout the  
18 year, they say, well, we need to move this money from this  
19 account to that account.

02:00

20 MS. PADRON: The budget adjustments.

21 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: And so Operation Lone  
22 Star is the same thing. Let's say, for example, they gave us  
23 \$30,000 for vehicles, we never bought the vehicles, and say,  
24 okay, we'll ask Austin, can we use the \$30,000 for --

02:00

25 MS. PADRON: Another one --



02:00

1 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: -- an interpreter,  
2 because we're using a lot of interpreters. And they say,  
3 yeah, that's fine. So do a budget adjustment --

4 MS. PADRON: (Inaudible cross talk) --

02:00

5 MR. WEINGARDT: Anybody's pay can change at any  
6 time, with the exception of the elected officials. You know,  
7 employees, appointed --

8 MS. PADRON: True. True.

9 MR. WEINGARDT: Okay. It's just the elected

02:01

10 officials that --

11 MS. PADRON: I'm talking about the same  
12 employee.

13 MR. WEINGARDT: Sure. I'm sure when SB22 came  
14 in, a lot of the deputies should have received a pay increase.

02:01

15 I assume they did, because that (indiscernible) -- correct?  
16 Right?

17 MS. PADRON: I'm not sure.

18 MR. WEINGARDT: You're not aware of that?

19 MS. PADRON: I'm not aware of that.

02:01

20 MR. WEINGARDT: Okay. So you didn't --

21 MS. PADRON: That's okay. I was --

22 MR. WEINGARDT: Okay.

23 MS. PADRON: Thank you.

24 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: No. Again, and we

02:01

25 advertised for this position and, obviously, you know, we like

02:01

1 to hire local, right, but we didn't get anybody that was  
2 qualified to take this and -- and seeing the type of issues  
3 that have come up -- again, I'm not the auditor, I'm not the  
4 commissioners court, but a lot of issues have come up that  
5 we're lucky enough that Cheryll was here.

02:01

6 And, again, the relationships that she has  
7 around the state helped us out on a lot of those issues, so --  
8 can we put a price on that? Probably not, but --

9 MS. PADRON: So there's hope for us.

02:02

10 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: You know, things -- in  
11 this type of business, in the criminal justice system,  
12 sometimes, you know, we just have to, you know, nod our head  
13 and laugh because it's not going to do us any good to have an  
14 aneurysm.

02:02

15 And, you know, we just learn from our lessons  
16 and just move on and keep going and minimize -- minimize the  
17 danger. But let's just fix what we have -- what needs to be  
18 fixed and no -- I don't want to point any fingers at anybody  
19 that, you know, they did this wrong, they did that wrong.

02:02

20 Let's just fix it and move on so we don't have to pay any  
21 money back and the taxpayers don't get harmed.

22 And this is a peculiar position where we didn't  
23 have to deal with this six years ago, but we have to deal with  
24 it now, and lucky -- we're lucky enough that Cheryll was  
25 around, because that's all I could find.

02:03

02:03

1 And, again, times have changed and we need to  
2 move with changes, but if the change goes back to our sleepy  
3 little town, like back in the good ole' days, then, obviously,  
4 you know, Cheryll is probably not going to be here. She needs  
5 to go on and move to bigger and better things.

02:03

6 MS. PADRON: Yeah.

02:03

7 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: You know, Matt's  
8 constantly getting offers, but, you know, Del Rio is what he  
9 likes, you know. I don't think he would want to run around in  
10 Austin or the big cities. But we have to take care of our  
11 people, and I know it's a lot of money, especially in a small  
12 town like this, because we're not used to that. We're not  
13 used to that.

14 MS. PADRON: Yeah.

02:04

15 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: But, you know, our  
16 county -- our assistant county attorneys, they're making more  
17 money than the county attorney. Some of the district  
18 attorney's assistant district attorneys are making more than  
19 the district attorney.

02:04

20 So does that sound fair? I mean, they're  
21 assistants, right, and they're making more than the boss. But  
22 that's the stuff that we have to deal with.

23 You know, when I was assistant district  
24 attorney, I was making what, you know, an entry level is.

02:04

25 MS. PADRON: Since you brought it up, why are

02:04

1 the assistants making more?

2 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Because how are you  
3 going to bring qualified attorneys into this town without  
4 having to pay them good money?

02:04

5 MR. WEINGARDT: And that's also a combination of  
6 the state assisted -- the State doesn't assist on elected  
7 officials' salary, but they will assist on the employees  
8 through SB22 and through other grants.

02:05

9 And I'm sorry, they do receive -- the county  
10 does receive a supplement for the judge and for the state  
11 prosecutor, but not for the DA. They do not, because they're  
12 fully funded through the DA.

02:05

13 But that leads me to another question. So  
14 because of the talent, we don't know what talent -- how much  
15 did Kinney County end up for paying for that forensic audit  
16 all together (inaudible cross talk) --

17 MS. JONES: \$100,000, roughly.

02:05

18 MR. WEINGARDT: So they paid \$100,000 just to be  
19 told of some problems that are identified, not how to fix  
20 those problems, not to fix those problems and not to make sure  
21 that those problems are fixed, just identify the problem?

22 MS. JONES: Correct.

23 MR. WEINGARDT: \$100,000?

24 MS. JONES: Correct.

02:05

25 MR. WEINGARDT: Just to identify a problem?

02:05

1 MS. JONES: Yes.

2 MR. WEINGARDT: Then walk out of town?

3 MS. JONES: Yes.

4 MR. WEINGARDT: Okay.

02:05

5 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: All right. Any other  
6 comments?

7 SHERIFF COE: Well, if this does go through,  
8 will you be in your office more often than you are now,  
9 because every time the deputies (indiscernible) -- comes over  
10 the paperwork, nowhere to be found.

02:05

11 MS. JONES: I'm typically there every other week  
12 on court weeks. I am available every day. You can reach me  
13 by phone, email. I can have a Zoom meeting, Teams. I'm on --  
14 I am available and I am working, whether I am in my office or  
15 not.

02:06

16 SHERIFF COE: Well, that's one of the biggest  
17 complaints I have out of my office is every time they go over  
18 there, you're never there.

19 MS. JONES: And I do attend a lot of trainings  
20 and a lot of meetings, so yes.

02:06

21 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Questions? And, again,  
22 don't feel bad. I mean, I got the -- your commissioners court  
23 feels the same way and -- but the law -- the statutes allows  
24 me to have a public hearing.

02:07

25 So I'm the bad guy. So if -- once this goes

02:07

1 through, they did nothing wrong. You blame it on me. You go,  
2 that damn Judge Andrade, he's the one that ordered the  
3 \$75,000. And I'm going to order the \$45,000 for the  
4 assistant. So you-all want to make sure you blame the right  
5 person, and that's going to be me. Okay?

02:07

6 MS. PADRON: And you go home today.

7 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Well, I got to go and  
8 divorce some people. It never ends.

02:07

9 So they're put in a bad position, so to speak,  
10 because they have to figure out where this money is going to  
11 come from.

12 COMMISSIONER WARD: Judge, if I may, beyond on  
13 that put in a bad spot, I've been in and out of county  
14 government here since 1981, and there was some very, very lean  
15 times. A lot of you were here as well, in elected position.

02:07

16 And what we've seen is -- and I'm going to take  
17 up for the court, because obviously what's been presented when  
18 terms of "misappropriation of funds" is brought up, it  
19 reflects back on those of us that are seated here. And  
20 that's, in my opinion, a rather unfair method to elevate one  
21 at the expense of others. But this court has done an  
22 excellent job.

02:08

23 In recent years, the tax rate has dropped  
24 unbelievable, but yet we've been able to accomplish more than  
25 ever before. And none of us would ever do anything to

02:08

02:08

1 misappropriate any funds for the people of Kinney County. And  
2 I think that someone needs to rally to the defense of those of  
3 us who work hard and get a W-2 for \$18,000 a year and

02:09

4 nothing's said about that. And trying to make everyone happy,  
5 it's not easy.

02:09

6 And I think that it's -- again, I'm going to say  
7 it again, very unfair for one of the -- the basic premise of  
8 everything that's been said today is that how bad a job we've  
9 done. And I think, as a whole, we've done a very good job and  
10 I think that it's very unfair for the position for anyone to  
11 take to disparage the good efforts and the good hearts of  
12 people that want to do a good job for their hometown, for the  
13 community.

02:09

14 And if that's the way people have to elevate  
15 themselves, what do you have to offer? You know, that's --  
16 that's more of a basic requirement for a job is, what am I  
17 going to bring to the table, not how bad a job you guys have  
18 done and make accusations of misappropriation of funds.

02:10

19 And so I rally to our defense to say, I'll bet  
20 most of this is going to be cleared up. And when it does, the  
21 damage has already been done though. Everyone seated here has  
22 been damaged by this process and it should not have happened  
23 this way, but so be it. It's the way it is. But it takes a  
24 team effort, and that's what concerns me, is that we -- every

02:10

25 one of us involved in this process, in county government, we

02:10

1 need to work as a team.

02:10

2 For too long there's been, you know, the  
3 undercurrent of controversy, and we don't need that. Good  
4 things are on the horizon. I'm always going to be the eternal  
5 optimist. Good things are on the horizon, but not when you  
6 seek to destroy people that are trying to do a very good job.  
7 And that's what happened today. And for anyone that would  
8 differ from that, I don't know how you could from what's been  
9 said.

02:11

10 And so I wanted to share that. I think it's  
11 important for it to be articulated. I'm not ashamed to say it  
12 at all. I've listened to what has been said and it is  
13 concerning. Is this going to continue? You know, are we  
14 going to go forward? Are we going to do things that are in  
15 the best interest of the taxpayers and the citizens? That's  
16 my concern, and so I wanted to share that.

02:11

17 COMMISSIONER MONTALVO: I also wanted to share  
18 that I've been here 30 years and I've never asked for a penny  
19 raise. Never have, because I know how poor this county is.

02:11

20 And to bring somebody in here and just say,  
21 okay, you got to pay her so much because you got in trouble  
22 for this or whatever -- we get pointed for what bad things  
23 that goes on in the county, but nobody looks at us for the  
24 good things we do for the county. People in this county work  
25 hard and get paid very little, and it's a shame.

02:12



02:12

1 Judge, with all due respect, Judge, for you to  
2 bring somebody in and just shove it -- shove her all off on  
3 us, pay her so much -- we don't have the money. Sure, we got  
4 grant money, but that's our money, your money, everybody's,  
5 taxpayers' money. We don't have oil wells or gas wells. This  
6 is a poor county, one of the poorest counties in the state.  
7 People got to realize that. That's all I got to say.

02:12

8 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Anyone else?

9 I may be wrong, but I don't know if

02:13

10 "misappropriation" ever came up, but if it did, then I  
11 apologize. Now --

12 COMMISSIONER WARD: It got brought up several  
13 times, Judge.

14 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Misappropriation?

02:13

15 COMMISSIONER WARD: Yes, sir.

16 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: I hate that word, too.  
17 So if I said that, then I apologize, but I don't -- again, I  
18 don't remember --

19 COMMISSIONER WARD: Was it brought up or not?

02:13

20 Okay.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

22 MS. PADRON: Uh-huh.

23 DISTRICT JUDGE ANDRADE: Okay. Well, that's a  
24 legal term. And the only thing I said about the grants is  
25 that we need to run them correctly and we need to fix it.

02:14

02:14

1                   So, again, I started at the very beginning,  
2 everybody is -- works hard and underpaid, and that includes  
3 you, commissioners. And I know it's hard to go, to move on,  
4 and I don't think -- I don't think people understand that the  
5 only thing that you can rule on is the information that is  
6 given to you.

02:14

7                   So, again, if that information has not been  
8 given to you, then you don't have -- you don't know what was  
9 going on behind the doors. So the only thing that you can --  
10 that you can vote on is the things that are brought before you  
11 on the agenda.

02:14

12                  And all these things with the audit, those are  
13 things that were never brought to you. And my only thing is  
14 we need to -- we need a county auditor. And, again, I keep  
15 going by statute, and again -- and that's why they created  
16 that statute because, obviously, there's always going to be  
17 some sort of animosity between the commissioners court and  
18 sometimes the district judges in all these counties.

02:15

19                  I practiced in Bexar County, and it's a big  
20 city, and they have the same problems that we do, the same  
21 problems that -- commissioners court is always bumping heads  
22 with the district court judges on particular items. And,  
23 again, you think that the big cities are just -- they're just  
24 as smart, but they just have the same problems that we have  
25 here and in Val Verde County.

02:15

02:15

02:15

1                   So if we alluded the fact that you weren't doing  
2 your job, that's not what we said. All we said is that we  
3 need help to provide that information to you and you make the  
4 decisions.

02:16

5                   Now, if you -- if you're telling me today that  
6 you don't want a county auditor at all, then I'll take that  
7 under advisement. But from what I've seen, we need one, and  
8 she needs to be compensated for it.

02:16

9                   Any other comments? All right. One final  
10 remark is that I'll make a recommendation of \$75,000 for the  
11 county -- Kinney County auditor; assistant county auditor,  
12 \$45,000; and assistant county auditor, 41-6, with \$17,680  
13 provided by Operation Lone Star Grant, assuming that we can  
14 find someone.

02:17

15                  But I'm still under the -- I'm going to tell  
16 you, when it comes -- we come back to our budget workshops and  
17 whatnot, let's see where we're at. And if everything's  
18 cleaned up, then salary goes back down. And if all problems  
19 are taken care of and we're back to the 19th century, then we  
20 don't have a -- we don't need a county auditor. I'll put that  
21 on the record.

02:17

22                  All right. We'll adjourn this meeting at 2:17.  
23 Thank you very much.

24                  (Public meeting adjourned at 2:17 p.m.)  
25