DA, Staff Hit Ground Running

High Profile Cases, Regular Activity in Works for 106th Attorney's Office

By Russel Skiles
Lamesa Press-Reporter

LAMESA -- Faced with several high-profile cases in addition to the regular activity, new District Attorney Michael Munk and his staff have had to hit the ground running.

But after six weeks in office, Munk said they are getting a good handle on the situation and becoming more familiar with the many cases that are pending across the four-county 106th Judicial District.

Munk, who earlier had served as an assistant district attorney for the 106th Judicial District, defeated incumbent Brian Kingston in last spring's Republican primary and did not face an opponent in the general election.

He took office on Jan. 1.

Munk is excited both about his new position and the staff he has assembled.

"I'm looking forward to bringing the district attorney's office in a new direction," he said.

"I'm thankful and fortunate to have the staff I do, and with them I think I'll be able to achieve that goal."

Munk has hired Jason Bujnosek and Roxanne Cox as full-time assistant district attorneys.

Bujnosek was an assistant in the county attorney's office in Brownfield for the past eight and a half years.

Cox, who comes from San Antonio, has experience in the U.S. Air Force Judge Advocate General's office, the U.S. Attorney's office in Washington, D.C., and the Bexar County District Attorney's office.

Joe Nagy, a former assistant district attorney who is now the county attorney in Seminole, will be working part-time to help with felony cases in Gaines County.

"A big bulk of our work is in Gaines County and he is our man on the ground, so to speak, to answer questions from law enforcement, look over warrants and handle other things over there," Munk said.

Hired as a special investigator is Tommy Binford, who was serving as chief deputy with the Garza County sheriff's office and has been a deputy for 21 years.

Two holdovers from the previous administration who remain on the staff are Sue Randall as an investigator and Shontundra Adams as a paralegal.

Jana Ball recently has joined the staff as a receptionist and "girl Friday" handling a variety of chores, Munk said.

Headquartered in the district attorney's offices at the Dawson County Courthouse Annex, Munk noted that his career as a prosecutor has geographically come full circle over the past seven years.

"Maybe I'm supposed to be here," he commented.

Having previously worked as a patent and trademark attorney in New York and Connecticut, Munk said he was visiting friends in Texas when he was approached by then-District Attorney Ricky Smith.

Munk said Smith asked him if he had an interest in criminal law, and invited him to attend some criminal cases in the district.

"After going to court a few times I really liked it," Munk said.

He joined the district attorney's staff in Lamesa in 2006, initially serving as a victims' advocate.

When he passed the state bar exam later that year to begin practicing law in Texas, Munk was promoted to the position of assistant district attorney.

In 2008, Munk won election as the county attorney in Garza County, a position he held until winning the district attorney's post.

The 106th Judicial District encompasses Dawson, Gaines, Lynn and Garza counties.

Even with his past experience, Munk admitted that the past few weeks has been something of a learning process as he has become familiar with pending cases and organized the workload with his staff.

"Jason and Roxanne have been a great help doing research for me," he said. "Their skills have really come in handy."

Two high-profile cases the staff already has been working on involve a double-homicide last year in Gaines County and an officer-involved fatal shooting in Lynn County.

The Gaines County case, involving the May 2012 shooting deaths of 30-year-old John Allan and 29-year-old Jay Doyal, is still in the discovery process of sharing information between his office and the attorneys for the four defendants charged with capital murder and murder.

"I don't see it proceeding to a trial anytime soon," he said.

Investigative work is continuing in the Lynn County case.

"We take any kind of shooting very seriously -- officer-involved or not -- and it will be presented to a grand jury," Munk said.

The new district attorney also said he is excited about becoming part of the Lamesa, community and is in the process of purchasing a house here.

"There are quite a few challenges for us in the future, but I am looking forward to meeting them to the satisfaction of the voters in the district who trusted me enough to endow me with this responsibility," Munk said.

(Editor's Note: Russel Skiles is the Publisher of the Lamesa Press-Reporter, a twice-a-week newspaper publication in Lamesa. The LPR is a sister publication of the Seminole Sentinel, both of which are owned by Roberts Publishing. Skiles, in addition to his publisher's duties, currently serves as the President of the Texas Press Association's Board of Directors.)

Lamesa Press-Reporter Photo/Russel Skiles

SETTLING INTO OFFICE

Michael Munk (seated), who took office at the first of this year as the new 106th District Attorney, has hired Roxanne Cox and Jason Bujnosek as his assistant district attorneys. They will also be assisted by Gaines County Attorney Joe Nagy. (LPR Photo)

News Brief

Seminole Police Dept. Continues to Warn Locals of Phone Scam

Seminole Police Dept. officials are warning local residents, especially those who are elderly, of a telephone scam which has hit the West Texas region.

According to SPD Chief Bernie Kraft, scammers are calling local residents -- primarily elderly -- pretending to be a family member, such as a grandchild, who "is stranded and is in need of money to get back home."

"We just want to get the word out to let people know that this is taking place and to be aware of the scam," said Kraft, who confirmed his own mother -- who resides in a neighboring community -- was recently contacted by scammers.

Local residents are urged to use caution when answering phone calls, and to not answer calls from unfamiliar telephone numbers which may show up on caller identification programs.

If you or someone you know may have been contacted by a potential scammer, or became a victim of a scam, you are urged to contact the Seminole Police Dept. or Gaines County Sheriff's Dept. at their non-emergency number, (432) 758-9871.

Gaines Co. Public Record

Marriage Licenses

Normando Soto, 44, and Lorena Barrandey, 39, both of Denver City.

Juan C. Valenzuela, 40, and Claudian A. Caballero, 28, both of Odessa.

Charles R. Earhart, 29, of Seminole and Cathy D. Beyers, 29, of Hobbs, N.M.

Gaines Co. Court Filings

State of Texas vs. Mathew Blain Kyle, driving while license suspended.

State of Texas vs. Daniel R. Garcia, theft by check.

State of Texas vs. Juan Grado, theft by check.

State of Texas vs. Daniel R. Garcia, theft by check.

State of Texas vs. Ricardo Marquez, accident involving damage.

State of Texas vs. Ricky Bates, possession of marijuana.

State of Texas vs. Staci Rebecca Hadderton, driving while license suspended.

State of Texas vs. Donti V. Peets, traffic offense.

State of Texas vs. Vanessa Nicole Sellers, traffic offense.

State of Texas vs. Luis Enrique Rivera, driving while intoxicated -- second.

State of Texas vs. Pedro (Peter) Knelsen Banman, driving while intoxicated.

Gaines Co. Court Dispositions

State of Texas vs. Frederick Cho, reckless driving, order of dismissal.

106th Dist. Court Filings

West Texas Agriplex, Inc. vs. Chet Grissom and Legacy Hill Farms, Inc., suit of debt.

106th Dist. Co. Dispositions

No dispositions to report this week.

Warranty Deeds

Anna Krahn to Anna Krahn Hilderbrand, all of lot 2, Parrott Sub.

Owen L. Barron and Linda C. Barron to Brandon Kemper and Tonia Kemper, 719.93 acres in N/central part of league 290, being tract known as block 7 and W/parts of tracts of blocks 1, 2, Gray CSL; SE/640 acres of section 4, league 290, Gray CSL; 185 acres in league 290, block 3, Gray CSL.

John Siemens and Tina Siemens to JW&T, Inc., 4.87 acre tract in S/part of S/70.25 acres of SE/4 of section 166, block G, WTRR.

JW&T Inc to Cody Culver and Kayleigh Culver, 4.87 acre tract in S/part of S/70.25 acre of SE/4 of section 166, block G, WTRR.

United Fule and Energy Corp and Eddins Walcher Co. to Western Petroleum, lots 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, block G, OT Seagraves.

United Fuel and Energy Corp, OK Gas Co., Eddins Walcher Co to Western Petroleum, tracts between blocks 16 and 21, WD Hart Addtion; lots 1-18, block 16, WD Hart Addition; lots 1through 9, block 21, WD Hart Addition.

Bernardo N. Peters and Anna N. Peters to Gerome Black and Cindy L. Black, lot 10, La Tierra Sub.

Genoveva Almager Ambriz, Elvia Amabilia Berryhill and Lyla Gonzales to Lyla Gonzales, S/2 of W/2 of block 10, Austin Acres Resub.

Pete Peters and Elizabeth Peters to Randy Cavazos and Trashan Cavazos, E/45 feet of lot 17 and W/45 feet of lot 18, block 4, Western Hills Addition.

Dean Ericson and Katy Ericson to Cartus Financial Corp., lot 3 and N/10 feet of lot 4, lot 18, Sunset Acres Addition.

Peter B Martens and Sara Martens to Jacob Peters, lot 6, replat of Western Classic Estates.

Abe S. Peters and Susie Peters to Letisha F. Peters, lot 6, block 59, Riley Replat.

David B. Martens to Anna Martens, no exhibit attached.

John Klassen and Elizabeth Klassen to John Klassen and Eva Klassen, N/80 feet of S/160 feet of tracts 36, 37, situated in E/part of section 194, block G, WTRR.

Joe Mark Hughes to Kelly D. Hughes and Cassie S. Hughes, NE/4 of section 354, block G, CCSD and RGNG.

Joe D. Hughes and Jerry Mac Hughes to Kelly D. Hughes and Cassie S. Hughes, NE/4 of section 354, block G, CCSD and RGNG.

Karan Robertson and Rodney Payne to Chester Wayne Payne and Dennis Roger Payne, N/2 of section 270, block G, WTRR.

Chester Wayne Payne and Dennis Roger Payne to Isaac K. Peters and Susie G. Peters, N/2 of section 270, block G, WTRR.

Cornelius Koethler and Margaretha Koetheler to Matthew Castleberry and Bailey Castleberry, lot 50, La Tierra Sub.

Chester Wayne Payne and Dennis Roger Payne to Karan Payne Robertson and Dulan R. Payne, S/2 of section 5, block C-35, PSL, 320 acres.

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With that in mind, there will be certain times that there will be limitations to news stories, letters to the editor and briefs, and their appearance in our publication to you.

The *Sentinel* does reserve the right to edit and restrict pre-produced stories and information for space limitations, editorial purposes, and time restrictions.

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Matters of Record

Seminole Police Dept.

Feb. 6 -- Seminole Police Officers were dispatched to the 100 block of S.W. 8th St., in reference to property damage.

SPD officers gathered information and a report was made. An investigation is underway.

Feb. 8 -- Seminole Police Officers were dispatched to the 700 block of N.E. Ave. B, in reference to an assault.

An officer's investigation revealed a male subject had assaulted his wife.

The subject, identified as Timothy John Villanueva, 27, of Seminole, was placed under arrest and transported to the Gaines County Law Enforcement Center, where he was booked in for a charge of assault/family violence.

Feb. 9 -- Seminole Police Officers checked on a suspecious vehicle in the parking lot of a church in the 200 block of N.W. 23rd St.

According to SPD reports, the subject in the vehicle was attempting to harm himself.

The subject, who was not identified in the SPD reports, was seen by MHMR personnel and was transported to a mental health hospital in Midland.

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