

SPOTLIGHT

Texas is made up of 254 counties, each with a team of locally elected and appointed county officials serving their community. Polk County's elected offices include a County Judge and four Road & Bridge Commissioners that make up the Commissioners Court, the County Court at Law Judge, four Justices of the Peace, four Constables, a County Clerk, District Clerk, District Attorney, Treasurer, Tax Assessor-Collector and Sheriff.

There is no hierarchy in county government, so the only boss of these elected officials is ***You, the People.***

There are two District Court systems that serve Polk County, the 258th and the 411th Courts, which are responsible for appointing our County Auditor. The County Judge appoints the Emergency Management Coordinator, and all other officials are appointed by the Commissioners Court to run various county departments. These include Aging Services Director, Environmental Enforcement Officer, Fire Marshal, Grant & Contract Coordinator, Human Resources Manager, IT & Systems Administrator, Maintenance Superintendent, Museum Curator, Permits/Inspections Supervisor, Social Services Director and Veterans Services Officer. Learn more about your local offices by reading this latest installment of

Spotlight on Polk County:

Justice of the Peace Courts

Polk County

SPOTLIGHT ON POLK COUNTY: *Justices of the Peace*

When Polk County was initially formed in 1846, six Justice Courts were created. Later, the county was reorganized and the number of Justice Courts was reduced down to four, with one Justice Court for each Road Commissioner Precinct. These Justice Courts are the “People’s Court” where people can appear with or without a lawyer to have their cases heard in an expedient manner. We hold bench trials and jury trials to be determined by the parties in the case.

Historically, Justice Courts were designated by the Texas Legislature as statutory courts with jurisdiction over Class C misdemeanors, punishable by fine only, and civil cases and small claims cases that do not exceed the jurisdictional limit set by the Texas Legislature.

Today, Justice Courts hear Class C criminal cases that carry fines ranging from \$1.00 to \$500.00, Texas Parks and Wildlife violations with fines ranging from \$25.00 to \$500.00 and transportation code violations with fines ranging from \$1.00 to \$200.00. Some fines set by Texas statute range up to \$3,500. The guilty party must also pay court costs in most instances.

In 2020, the Justice Court civil jurisdiction increased from \$10,000 to \$20,000 for civil and small claims cases.

Texas J.P.’s, by virtue of our office, are also notary publics and magistrates. Some magistrate duties we perform are property hearings, dead body inquests, probable cause and bail setting hearings, animal cruelty hearings, issuance of contraband search warrants, issuance of arrest warrants upon receipt of criminal complaints, issuance of emergency mental health warrants, and examining trials and other hearings as authorized by law. In Polk County, we also stand as Truancy Courts to enforce The Texas Compulsory School Attendance laws.

On a lighter side of things, we Justices of the Peace are also authorized by law to conduct weddings for persons who hold a marriage license.

The Justice Courts play an integral part in the Texas Justice system and have changed a lot since the inception of the state but still remain the cornerstone of Justice in Texas.

Justice of the Peace Precinct 1 ~ Judge Darrell Longino
101 W. Mill St. Suite 152, Livingston, TX 77351 ~ 936-327-6841 ~ www.polkcountyjp1.com

Justice of the Peace Precinct 2 ~ Judge Sarah Rasberry
14115 US HWY 190 West, Onalaska, TX 77360 ~ 936-646-3674

Justice of the Peace Precinct 3 ~ Judge Robert Johnson
201 W. Ben Franklin, Corrigan, TX 75939 ~ 936-398-4114

Justice of the Peace Precinct 4 ~ Judge Jamie Richardson
602 E. Church St. Suite 135, Livingston, TX 77351 ~ 936-327-6865