

MINUTES

On this, the 31st day of August, 2026, the Commissioners Court of Jack County, Texas, met in Emergency Session at 9:00 a.m., beginning with a prayer and the pledge of allegiance to the American flag and Texas flag, with the following individuals present:

Brian Keith Umphress	County Judge
Gary Oliver	Commissioner Precinct 1
Ronald Fitzgerald	Commissioner Precinct 2
Henry Birdwell	Commissioner Precinct 3
Vanessa James	County Clerk
Lisa Perry	County Auditor
Brad Campsey	County Treasurer
Frank Hefner	Emergency Management / IT
Macauley Johnson	County Judge's Assistant
Ron Butler	TDEM Liaison
Tracie Pippen	District Clerk
Heather Mahaffey	Assistant County Auditor
Alinda Cox	Extension Agent
Taylor Chapa	Extension Agent

The following public members were in attendance: Anna Fitzgerald, Ashley Anderson and, .

Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. with a quorum present.

Emergency Meeting Determination

Consider and acknowledge the existence of an emergency and urgent public necessity related to the Ross Fire pursuant to Texas Government Code §551.045 and place the factual basis for the Emergency Meeting into the official record of the Jack County Commissioners Court.

Judge Umphress moved to deem the Emergency Meeting necessary. Commissioner Birdwell seconded the motion, and it passed. (4-0)

Ross Fire - Local Disaster Declaration

Discuss, consider, and take appropriate action regarding the Local Disaster Declaration previously issued by the Jack County Judge pursuant to Texas Government Code §418.108, including consent to its continuation or renewal, ratification and confirmation of actions taken pursuant to the declaration, and authorization of appropriate continuing disaster-response and recovery measures.

Judge Umphress made a motion to ratify and extend the [Declaration of Disaster](#) filed on Tuesday, August 25, 2026. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fitzgerald, and it passed. (4-0)

Ross Fire - Emergency Operations Update

Receive reports, updates, and briefings concerning the Ross Fire, including current fire conditions; containment and suppression operations; damage assessments; affected acreage; impacts to Jack County residents, property, livestock, agricultural operations, infrastructure and public safety; evacuation and reentry operations; and local, regional, state, federal and mutual-aid resources engaged in response and recovery operations.

All representatives present introduced themselves:

Jeff Jackson – Jack County Rural Fire Department
Jerry D. Bullard – Reeves County Emergency Management / TDEM ISFT
Matthew Childs – TDEM
Brandon Mason – TDEM
Sam Bundy – TAMES
Jeremy Jennings – Jacksboro Fire Chief
Johnathan Vance – TIFMAS Taskforce A
Kevin Leverage – TIFMAS Taskforce A
Steven Ricker – TIFMAS Taskforce A
Chris Sutterfield – TIFMAS Taskforce A
Destiny Garcia Fuller – TFS TAMES
Alinda Cox – Extension
Taylor Chapa – Extension AMR

Ross Fire – Fire Department and Emergency Response Operations

Receive reports and discuss response activities of Jack County rural and volunteer fire departments, the City of Jacksboro and Jacksboro Fire Department, emergency management, law enforcement, EMS, mutual-aid fire departments, state agencies, and other governmental or emergency-response organizations participating in Ross Fire operations.

*Jason Jennings, Jack County Rural Fire Chief, gave an update on the cost to the department and the plans they have to keep the fire contained. Jack County has about 108 volunteers, and about 70 of them were on the fire.

*Jeremy Jennings, Fire Chief of the City of Jacksboro, spoke on the cost to their department for repairs of vehicles.

* Sam Bundy with the Texas A&M Forestry Service had 500 people on the fire.

* Matthew Childs with TDEM said they worked to push information to the State to help get the assistance that the County needs.

* Sheriff Hauger called in every deputy for traffic and evacuations; DPS sent troopers, and extra game wardens were sent to the area as well. They got a call during the fire from a landowner about theft that happened on their property, and they were able to find the property and arrest the suspect.

* Extension office will be doing assessments for livestock that will begin when the fire is at 50 percent containment, and Alinda has been tasked with coordinating hay donations.

Ross Fire – Documentation and Accounting of Disaster-Related Costs

Discuss, consider, and take appropriate action concerning the identification, collection, preservation, documentation, and accounting of all costs, expenditures, personnel time, equipment

usage, fuel, supplies, materials, contracted services, mutual-aid expenses and other costs incurred as a result of the Ross Fire by Jack County, Jack County rural and volunteer fire departments, the City of Jacksboro and Jacksboro Fire Department, and other participating governmental or emergency-response entities, including documentation necessary for potential reimbursement, disaster assistance, grants, insurance claims, mutual-aid reimbursement, or state or federal disaster- recovery programs.

Frank Hefner will apply for a FEMA FMAG (Fire Management Assistance Grant). We must capture every moment that each crew, precinct, trucks, employees, law enforcement, City of Jacksboro, and City of Bryson were involved with the fire. All fuel, maintenance costs, personnel, and receipts should be given to Frank for compliance.

Ross Fire - Administrative and Financial Coordination.

Discuss, consider, and take appropriate action necessary to establish procedures for the submission, verification, compilation, and retention of Ross Fire incident records and disaster-related expenditures, and to designate or authorize appropriate County officials or personnel to coordinate such documentation with responding agencies and governmental entities.

Forms are being given to document hours, costs, vehicles, equipment, time, and repairs needed. The City of Jacksboro needs a truck repaired. Rural Fire Chief Jennings added that the Rural Fire Department will cover the cost of the repair since the County will reimburse the department. Chief Jennings asked that the Court provide \$50,000 of assistance to the Rural Fire Department for now.

Commissioner Bridwell made a motion to approve a \$50,000 [donation](#) to the Jack County Rural Fire Department from the County reserves. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fitzgerald, and it passed. (4-0)

All expenses will be itemized.

Ross Fire – Immediate Emergency Response and Recovery Actions.

Discuss, consider, and take appropriate action regarding immediate measures reasonably necessary for the continued response to and recovery from the Ross Fire that are within the authority of the Jack County Commissioners Court and that are directly related to the emergency or urgent public necessity identified in this notice.

We are not yet in the recovery process. The northern part of the fire is in better shape than the southern part. We have reactivated the Jack County Long Term Recovery group to help with assessments; Frank will meet with them.

Judge Motion to approve the Order Continuing Local State of Disaster, Ratifying Emergency Actions, and Authorizing Documentation of Costs and Recovery Activities Related to the Ross Fire. Commissioner Birdwell seconded the motion, and it passed. (4-0)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Birdwell moved to adjourn. Commissioner Fitzgerald seconded the motion, which passed unanimously (4-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 10:18 a.m.

Brian Keith Umphress, County Judge

Gary Oliver, Commissioner Pct. #1

Ronald Fitzgerald, Commissioner Pct. #2

Henry Birdwell, Jr., Commissioner Pct #3

Terry Ward, Commissioner Pct. #4

ATTEST:

Vanessa James, County Clerk