

MINUTES

Of The

WILLIAMSON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT MEETING

July 17, 2001

THE STATE OF TEXAS     )(

COUNTY OF WILLIAMSON)(

BE IT REMEMBERED that at 9:47 a.m. on July 17, 2001, a REGULAR SESSION of the Commissioners' Court of Williamson County, Texas, was held with the following members being present, to-wit:

JOHN C. DOERFLER, County Judge  
MICHAEL L. HEILIGENSTEIN, Commissioner, Precinct 1  
GREGORY W. BOATRIGHT, Commissioner, Precinct 2  
DAVID HAYS, Commissioner, Precinct 3  
FRANKIE LIMMER, Commissioner, Precinct 4  
EUGENE D. TAYLOR, County Attorney  
NANCY E. RISTER, County Clerk  
DAVID U. FLORES, County Auditor

**AGENDA ITEM 1**

Hear any interested person and consider forming the next agenda or adding items to today's agenda.

Jim Vance, of the Williamson County Blackland Conservancy addressed the court regarding their concerns about road projects and development issues.

< Attachment >

## Press Release

July 17, 2001

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:  
JIM VANCE, (512) 365-1938, OR  
JIM JURASEK (512) 352-9875  
WILLIAMSON COUNTY BLACKLAND CONSERVANCY  
P.O. BOX 1217  
TAYLOR, TEXAS 76574

The Williamson County Blackland Conservancy held its organizational meeting on June 29, 2001 in Taylor, with attendance nearly filling the local Knights of Columbus Hall. The meeting attendees affirmed the following proposed Mission Statement for the Conservancy:

*Dedicated to the conservation and enlightened stewardship of the Blackland Prairie agricultural landscape, the heritage of its homesteads and inhabitants, and progressive sustainable development that preserves its environment of productive working lands, open space, rural communities and towns.*

During the meeting, a representative of the American Farmland Trust presented a brief overview of historical trends of fragmentation and conversion in farmlands throughout Texas. Central Texas and Williamson County were identified as facing a high level of threat for conversion in the future as development pressures continue in the region.

Speakers from the organizing committee of 10-12 local residents and members from the general audience offered additional thoughts and experience. The discussion covered recent trends and prospective threats to farmland in Central Williamson County associated with various road projects and further stimulation of expansive suburban development patterns. Many expressed concerns about the potential effects of these projects, and with the lack of consideration for agricultural interests and the heritage of rural Williamson County in positions and decisions by the Commissioners' Court and other regional and State entities.

Specific road projects were identified which may result in significant further erosion of agriculture and the rural heritage which this portion of the county has traditionally sustained. These included the proposed State Highway 130 and various Williamson County Road Bond projects intended to provide a supporting network of arterial roads, especially the proposed extension of Chandler Road eastward from FM 1460 beyond its interchange with the proposed toll highway.

Information available to the public from the preliminary engineering/route alignment studies underway for Chandler Road was reviewed and discussed, as was the alignment of SH 130 and the locations of interchanges and toll plazas indicated in the Final

Environmental Impact Statement that received Federal approval in June.

Under various options, the Chandler Road extension could traverse the county in an east-west orientation from that proposed interchange with SH 130, to FM 1660 north of Hutto and much farther. At various times since Williamson County voters approved a major bond package in November, 2000, the eastern terminus of this project has been suggested by some proponents as either SH 95, FM 619, or perhaps US 79 between Taylor and Thrall. The Williamson County Multi-Corridor Transportation Plan adopted in 1999 identifies a long-range (low-priority) need for an eastern extension of Chandler Road to a terminus at SH 95 at the intersection with FM 1331, and indicates a significantly different alignment to the north of those reflected in the preliminary engineering/route alignment study.

Members of the organizing committee presented a draft statement of concerns in regard to actions by the Commissioners' Court on various road project matters associated with the Road Bond projects and SH 130. Those in attendance were requested to join in gathering signatures on a petition to the Commissioners' Court for:

"a series of public meetings, leading to a formal public hearing on the preferred future direction of Williamson County on road bond project funding priorities, road project justification and route/alignment alternatives, road project characteristics and revisions to the Multi-Corridor Transportation Plan."

Each person who attended the meeting was provided with a survey form designed to gather information about the Conservancy's potential organization, its objectives and priorities, as well as the respondents' attitudes on various issue statements related to farming, road projects, development patterns, rural environment preferences and political representation.

Roughly one-third of the attendees submitted a completed survey form, either that night or later by mail, generating a reasonable profile of attitudes and opinions of the nascent organization's supporters. More detailed results from this survey are presented in the accompanying material, but are summarized as follows:

- ◆ Any eastward extension of Chandler Road beyond SH 130 is perceived with moderate-to-high negative attitudes and few positive feelings.
- ◆ An extension of Chandler Road from FM 1460 to SH 130 receives a mixed viewpoint, trending slightly negative of purely neutral and essentially balanced among positive and negative.
- ◆ Construction of SH 130 receives a mixed viewpoint, slightly more positive in consideration for near-term implementation and more negative in consideration of delayed or deferred implementation.

- ◆ Frontage road construction with SH 130 receives a mixed viewpoint, with somewhat stronger preference expressed for project implementation which would exclude frontage roads.
- ◆ There is moderately strong preference for the Road Bond funds to focus on areas of existing congestion and rehabilitation and reconstruction without significant right-of-way expansion, and moderately negative preference for new alignments that replace or supplant existing county roads.
- ◆ Significant negative sentiment exists toward the use of bond funds to expand development opportunities for a greater number of landowners.
- ◆ There is a strong preference that Road Bond fund priorities should be clearly established by specification of criteria and with public involvement, and an even stronger aversion to granting complete discretion to the Commissioners' Court for such decisions.
- ◆ The premise that farming and farmland preservation is as important as other forms of economic development is strongly endorsed, and a premise that economic development is generally more important is strongly rejected.
- ◆ A Collin County or Orange County, California model of future growth for Williamson County is viewed with a strongly negative perspective.
- ◆ Retention of the traditional rural environment and small towns as much as possible in the future is perceived as a highly positive objective.
- ◆ Encouragement of rural subdivisions in clusters or compact areas around community centers is considered moderately preferential.
- ◆ Strongly positive viewpoints exist toward continuation of farming profitably and sustaining the presence of farmlands and open space.
- ◆ There is moderately positive preference for reducing or de-emphasizing suburban sprawl, and strong concurrence that creation of affordable homes is insufficient justification for unconstrained conversion of farmland and erosion of agriculture.
- ◆ Sentiment toward selling out and either retiring or acquiring farmland elsewhere is somewhat mixed, but generally more negative than neutral.
- ◆ The preference for living in a rural area amidst working farms is strongly positive.
- ◆ There is a mixed, and generally balanced viewpoint regarding new school construction at the urban/suburban fringes, with moderately positive feelings toward rehabilitation, upgrading and expansion of existing schools.
- ◆ There is a clearly positive desire for major infrastructure decisions to be based on full and honest assessment of the probable development effects.
- ◆ A strong preference for greater emphasis to be placed on enhancing and renewing smaller towns and communities through public and private investment programs is essentially matched by preference for less emphasis in expansion of suburban areas.
- ◆ There is a strong desire for greater consideration of farmland preservation by State and local governments in making public policy decisions.
- ◆ A regional future which contains large areas of open space, farms and ranches

- is strongly preferred.
- ◆ A regional future where farming and agriculture remain viable economic activities is strongly preferred.
  - ◆ A regional future with a variety of choice in rural, suburban, small town and urban living opportunities is moderately preferred.
  - ◆ A regional future with more varied transportation options than exist today is somewhat preferred.
  - ◆ A regional future that provides a more extensive road network is somewhat less preferable.
  - ◆ A regional future that provides public transportation options in developed areas is somewhat more preferable.
  - ◆ A regional future where roads are designed to limit their effects on stimulating land development is moderately preferred.
  - ◆ A regional future where elected officials work more for the common benefit of everyone for the long-term, rather than the short-term benefit of insiders and development interests, is strongly preferred.
  - ◆ A regional future where the heritage of Williamson County's past is cherished while informed decisions can be wisely made is strongly preferred.
  - ◆ A regional future which offers greater options for owners of agricultural lands to keep such uses viable instead of sale and conversion is strongly preferred.
  - ◆ There is a moderately negative feeling about the quality of representation provided by the respondents' County Commissioner.
  - ◆ There is a moderately negative feeling about the quality of representation provided by the respondents' County Judge.
  - ◆ There is a moderately negative feeling about the quality of representation provided by the respondents' State Representative.
  - ◆ There is a moderately negative feeling about the quality of representation provided by the respondents' State Senator.
  - ◆ There is a somewhat negative feeling about the quality of representation provided by the respondents' U.S. Congressional Representative.
  - ◆ There is a slightly negative feeling about the quality of representation provided by the respondents' U.S. Senator.
  - ◆ There is a moderately strong preference for any farmland conversion in the SH 130 corridor to occur in limited areas and focused or guided by public consensus.
  - ◆ There is a moderately strong preference for any farmland conversion in the SH 130 corridor to have linkage with conservation easements on other lands nearby.
  - ◆ There is a moderately negative preference for any farmland conversion in the SH 130 corridor to be unconstrained or unguided in character or intensity, or be determined solely by dictates of the marketplace and landowners.

ISSUE STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE/ FAVOR	SOMEWHAT AGREE/ FAVOR	NEUTRAL/ NOT SURE/NOT APPLICABLE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE/ DISFAVOR	STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISFAVOR
CHANDLER ROAD EXTENSION: FM 1460 - SH 130	9.7%	12.9%	48.4%	9.7%	19.4%
CHANDLER ROAD EXTENSION: SH 130 - FM 1660	3.2%	19.4%	29.0%	12.9%	35.5%
CHANDLER ROAD EXTENSION: FM 1660 - SH 95	6.5%	0.0%	16.1%	0.0%	77.4%
CHANDLER ROAD EXTENSION: SH 95 - FM 619 OR US 79	6.5%	0.0%	19.4%	3.2%	71.0%
SH 130 CONSTRUCTION SHOULD HAPPEN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE	22.6%	12.9%	41.9%	3.2%	19.4%
SH 130 CONSTRUCTION MAYBE SHOULD HAPPEN IN 10-15 YEARS	6.5%	12.9%	45.2%	9.7%	25.8%
SH 130 CONSTRUCTION SHOULD NEVER HAPPEN	9.7%	16.1%	25.8%	16.1%	32.3%
SH 130 CONSTRUCTION SHOULD INCLUDE FRONTAGE ROADS	9.7%	9.7%	48.4%	6.5%	25.8%
SH 130 CONSTRUCTION SHOULD NOT INCLUDE FRONTAGE ROADS	29.0%	6.5%	48.4%	9.7%	6.5%
ROAD BOND FUNDS SHOULD FOCUS ON EXISTING CONGESTED AREAS	51.6%	32.3%	12.9%	0.0%	3.2%
ROAD BOND FUNDS SHOULD FOCUS ON REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT RIGHT-OF-WAY EXPANSION	45.2%	25.8%	19.4%	3.2%	6.5%
ROAD BOND FUNDS SHOULD FOCUS ON NEW ROAD ALIGNMENTS AND REPLACE OR SUPPLANT EXISTING COUNTY ROADS	9.7%	12.9%	32.3%	9.7%	35.5%
ROAD BOND FUNDS SHOULD ENHANCE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORE LANDOWNERS	6.5%	0.0%	38.7%	16.1%	38.7%
ROAD BOND FUND PRIORITIES SHOULD BE CLEARLY ESTABLISHED BY SPECIFICATION OF CRITERIA AND WITH PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT	71.0%	9.7%	19.4%	0.0%	0.0%
ROAD BOND FUND PRIORITIES SHOULD BE WHAT THE COMMISSIONER'S COURT DECIDES WITHOUT FURTHER PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT	0.0%	3.2%	16.1%	3.2%	77.4%
FARMING AND PRESERVATION OF FARMLANDS ARE AT LEAST AS IMPORTANT AS THE PROMOTION OF TYPICAL FORMS OF MODERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	77.4%	3.2%	16.1%	3.2%	0.0%
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS GENERALLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN PRESERVATION OF FARMLANDS, FARMING AND RURAL LIFESTYLES	0.0%	3.2%	19.4%	16.1%	61.3%
WILLIAMSON COUNTY SHOULD GROW IN THE SAME WAY COLLIN COUNTY AND ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA HAVE DEVELOPED, REGARDLESS OF THE LOSS IN OPEN SPACE AND WORKING FARMS	0.0%	0.0%	25.8%	6.5%	67.7%
EASTERN WILLIAMSON COUNTY SHOULD RETAIN THE ENVIRONMENT OF SMALLER TOWNS AND RURAL COUNTRYSIDE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE	61.3%	12.9%	16.1%	9.7%	0.0%
NEW RURAL SUBDIVISIONS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED IN CLUSTERS OR RELATIVELY COMPACT AREAS AROUND COMMUNITY CENTERS	38.7%	16.1%	35.5%	3.2%	6.5%
I WOULD LIKE TO KEEP FARMING PROFITABLY AS LONG AS POSSIBLE	71.0%	9.7%	19.4%	0.0%	0.0%
I WOULD LIKE FOR FARMLANDS AND OPEN SPACE TO BE SUSTAINED	77.4%	6.5%	16.1%	0.0%	0.0%
I WOULD PREFER THAT DISPERSED DEVELOPMENT (SUBURBAN SPRAWL) BE REDUCED AND/OR DE-EMPHASIZED IN PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS	58.1%	9.7%	22.6%	6.5%	3.2%
IT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO CREATE AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR NEW RESIDENTS THAN CONSERVE PRIME FARMLANDS AND AGRICULTURE	0.0%	0.0%	22.6%	9.7%	67.7%
I WOULD LIKE TO SELL MY FARM OR FARMLANDS AND RETIRE	0.0%	6.5%	38.7%	3.2%	51.6%
I WOULD LIKE TO SELL MY CURRENT FARM AND BUY FARMLAND SOMEWHERE IN THE REGION AWAY FROM RAPID DEVELOPMENT	0.0%	9.7%	41.9%	6.5%	41.9%

## ISSUE STATEMENT

STRONGLY  
AGREE/  
FAVORSOMEWHAT  
AGREE/  
FAVORNEUTRAL/  
NOT  
SURE/NOT  
APPLICABLESOMEWHAT  
DISAGREE/  
DISFAVORSTRONGLY  
DISAGREE/  
DISFAVOR

I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE IN A RURAL AREA AMIDST WORKING FARMS	77.4%	9.7%	12.9%	0.0%	0.0%
I THINK NEW SCHOOLS SHOULD BE BUILT AROUND THE EXISTING FRINGES OF SMALL TOWNS THAT ARE GROWING	19.4%	19.4%	22.6%	25.8%	12.9%
I THINK THERE SHOULD BE MORE INVESTMENT IN REHABILITATING, MODERNIZING AND EXPANDING EXISTING SCHOOLS	45.2%	25.8%	25.8%	0.0%	3.2%
MAJOR DECISIONS ON INFRASTRUCTURE SHOULD BE BASED ON FULL AND HONEST ASSESSMENT OF THE PROBABLE DEVELOPMENT EFFECTS	58.1%	12.9%	29.0%	0.0%	0.0%
MORE EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON ENHANCING AND RENEWING SMALLER TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH INVESTMENT OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS	51.6%	19.4%	29.0%	0.0%	0.0%
EMPHASIS IN PUBLIC INVESTMENTS SHOULD CONTINUE TO EXPAND SUBURBAN AREAS IN SUPPORT OF NEW DEVELOPMENT	6.5%	0.0%	48.4%	6.5%	38.7%
MORE CONSIDERATION OF FARMLAND CONSERVATION SHOULD BE GIVEN BY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THEIR DECISIONS	77.4%	9.7%	12.9%	0.0%	0.0%
I WOULD LIKE FOR MY CHILDREN TO LIVE IN A REGION:					
WITH LARGE AREAS OF OPEN SPACE, FARMS AND RANCHES	80.6%	6.5%	12.9%	0.0%	0.0%
WHICH SUPPORTS FARMING AS A VIABLE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	77.4%	6.5%	16.1%	0.0%	0.0%
WITH A VARIETY OF CHOICE IN RURAL, SUBURBAN, SMALL TOWN AND URBAN LIVING OPPORTUNITIES	35.5%	22.6%	38.7%	3.2%	0.0%
WITH MORE VARIED TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS THAN WE HAVE TODAY	19.4%	16.1%	54.8%	6.5%	3.2%
WITH A MORE EXTENSIVE ROAD NETWORK	6.5%	16.1%	35.5%	19.4%	22.6%
WITH PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS IN DEVELOPED AREAS	22.6%	19.4%	41.9%	6.5%	9.7%
WITH ROADS DESIGNED <u>NOT</u> TO STIMULATE DEVELOPMENT	45.2%	16.1%	35.5%	3.2%	0.0%
WHERE ELECTED OFFICIALS' WORK EFFORTS ARE MORE FOR OUR COMMON BENEFIT IN THE LONG RUN THAN THAT OF INSIDERS AND DEVELOPMENT INTERESTS IN THE SHORT-TERM	74.2%	6.5%	19.4%	0.0%	0.0%
WHICH CHERISHES THE HERITAGE OF ITS PAST AND CAN MAKE INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT ITS FUTURE WISELY	61.3%	9.7%	29.0%	0.0%	0.0%
WHICH OFFERS PROPERTY OWNERS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND VIABLE ECONOMIC OPTIONS BESIDES SELLING, DEVELOPING, SUBDIVIDING OR CONVERTING ITS USE	64.5%	6.5%	29.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I HAVE BEEN WELL-REPRESENTED BY MY:					
COUNTY COMMISSIONER	0.0%	9.7%	25.8%	9.7%	54.8%
COUNTY JUDGE	0.0%	3.2%	29.0%	9.7%	58.1%
STATE REPRESENTATIVE	6.5%	16.1%	29.0%	16.1%	32.3%
STATE SENATOR	6.5%	9.7%	35.5%	19.4%	29.0%
US CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE	6.5%	16.1%	35.5%	12.9%	29.0%
US SENATORS	16.1%	9.7%	35.5%	12.9%	25.8%
IF THERE IS TO BE FARMLAND CONVERSION AND DEVELOPMENT ALONG THE SH 130 CORRIDOR, I WOULD PREFER THAT IT WAS:					
IN LIMITED AREAS AND FOCUSED OR GUIDED BY PUBLIC CONSENSUS	41.9%	16.1%	41.9%	0.0%	0.0%
LINKED TO CONSERVATION EASEMENTS ON OTHER LANDS NEARBY	35.5%	9.7%	54.8%	0.0%	0.0%
UNRESTRAINED AND UNGUIDED IN CHARACTER OR INTENSITY, AND DETERMINED SOLELY BY DICTATES OF THE MARKET AND LANDOWNERS	9.7%	3.2%	41.9%	0.0%	45.2%

**AGENDA ITEM 2**

Read and approve the minutes of the last meeting.

Moved: **Commissioner Heiligenstein**

Seconded: **Commissioner Hays**

Motion: To approve the minutes of the July 3, 2001 meeting, with a correction reading "Commissioners' Court adjourned at 10:46 a.m. on *July 3, 2001.*"

Vote: 4 – 0 with Commissioner Limmer abstaining from the vote.

**AGENDA ITEM 3**

Hear County Auditor concerning invoices and bills submitted for payment and take appropriate action including, but not limited to approval for payment provided said items are found by the County Auditor to be legal obligations of the county.

Moved: **Commissioner Boatright**

Seconded: **Commissioner Heiligenstein**

Motion: To authorize the payment of \$1,221,711.87 in computer printout from the proper line items, if found by the County Auditor to be legal expenses as appropriated in the 2000/2001 County Budget, approved on July 6, 2001, and to authorize the payment of \$2,231,584.36 with two addendums totaling \$88,857.92 for a grand total of \$2,320,442.28 in computer printout from the proper line items, if found by the County Auditor to be legal expenses as appropriated in the 2000/2001 County Budget, approved on July 17, 2001.

Vote: 5 – 0 with Commissioner Hays abstaining from the vote on invoices #01050958 and #0105090 approved on July 6, 2001, from Gabriels Funeral Chapel. (Conflict of Interest Affidavit attached.)

< Attachment >