

Hamilton County Commissioner's Court

Regular Session

Monday, September 24, 2012

9:00 A.M.

Hamilton County Commissioner's Court met in Regular Session on Monday, September 24, 2012 at 9:00 A.M. with the following members present: County Judge Randy Mills, Commissioners Jim Boatwright, Mark Tafel, Jon Bonner and Dickie Clary.

Judge Mills called the meeting to order and opened with prayer.

There were quite a few attendees for the meeting to inquire and to express their discontent upon the recycling center status. The audience believed that the recycling center had been shut down but Judge Mills explained that the court did not budget staff for the facility but continued to budget operating expenses.

Jeanie Harrison read the following letter regarding the recycling center:

To begin with, I am going to give you a little history of the Hamilton County Recycling Center. Only one of the commissioners was here from the beginning.

Mary and I learned of a grant the county had received from the Central Texas Council of Governments and was about to expire, as nobody would step forward and pursue the building of the recycling center. A fenced compound had been built with previous grant money and was being used by the sheriff as an impound yard.

With the consent of Judge Garrett we petitioned CTCOG to extend the grant for 6 months. They were glad to do this and we started our journey into recycling.

We held a community meeting and received some moral support and Evelyn Sprague joined us for a short while, on our quest. We were able to get a building built for a little less than the grant. We went to other recycling centers to inquire the needs to consider. Thus, we made arrangements for a bathroom. A grant of \$800.00 from EDC paid for the bathroom materials and it was installed by Mary's son-in-law at no cost to the county.

We opened for business the first week of March 1998. The response from the community was overwhelming. The commissioners initially agreed to haul our products to be sold, but that didn't last long. We had to borrow forklifts from the local businesses to load the product and had a borrowed pallet jack loaned to us by Jim Boatwright.

In October of 1998 Mary and I wrote a grant requesting \$34,000.00 from CTCOG for purchase of a forklift, pallet jack and a part time employee for 1 year. We received \$20,544.00 and by December we had our employee, forklift and pallet jack. Shortly thereafter we joined Central Texas Recycling Assn to market our products. This turned out to be a very good partnership.

At the end of that year the County agreed to pay for the employee and we had a budget of around \$7000.00. Subsequently we received grants from LCRA of \$2500.00 to extend the concrete to make a loading dock and another grant of \$4310.70 from EDC to extend the building.

Thus the building and the equipment cost the county nothing other than some minor maintenance.

The baler we started with had been purchased with a previous grant from CTCOG and was on loan to Lampasas county.

Commissioner Boatwright and his hands retrieved it for us and installed it in the building. Approximately 2004 we leased another baler from Lampasas County as we were unable to keep up with the baling of the product with one baler.

After nearly 10 years of operating the center with volunteers and a part time employee, Hamilton County agreed to take over the operation in December 2006.

All the monies from the sale of the products went into the General fund.

It was evident from the first sales that the Center would never be self supporting, but it was a service sorely needed in this community. Many times new comers told us that having a recycling center in Hamilton was part of the deciding factor to move to our community.

Now, after all these years you are telling us that we wasted our time because a recycling center is not important to you so obviously it can't be important to the community. As I recall from the many years I

worked at the Center, I never saw a County Commissioner recycle, unless it was oil from your precinct garage.

We all realize that things must be cut from the budget, but we don't understand the underhanded way you cut the Recycling Center. Surely you didn't just out of the blue say it's gone. Surely you discussed it prior to the cut. Surely you could have notified our citizens that this may happen and solicited suggestions to how the center could stay open.

Maybe even use some creative thinking like not using the deputy who has the most seniority and probably a larger salary than most. Maybe, as someone suggested, use a jailer who could also work the prisoners at the center. That would cut down on the cost.

Did you even consider the benefits to the community and the environment?

We secured over \$40,108.45 in grant money for the center and equipment, that you are laying to waste.

You were all elected to do the county's business, and serve your constituents. I find it hard to believe you could be so short sighted to the benefits of recycling in our county.

I am sorely disappointed with the actions of the Sheriff and the entire Commissioners court.

(Recorded in Commissioner's Court Papers Book 44 Page 490)

Janice Johnson also spoke in support of the recycling center as well as Damon Chumney. Mr. Chumney stated that the people did not know about the cuts made to the recycling center.

Mr. Chumney also stated that a balanced budget was presented because we raised taxes. This budget is a joke. Budget transfers occur through the rest of the year. The budget is not taken seriously.

Judge Mills told the citizens that nothing could be done today. We have completed the budget; it is set in stone but we will have to determine who is willing to give up the funds to fund the recycling center.

We left money in the budget for the electricity and maintenance repairs for the equipment in case there were volunteers who wanted to fund it. Staffing is the problem. Mills continued that we have a "sacred cow" here. The public does not want us to raise taxes.

Leadership Hamilton may want to take the recycling center over but there are liability issues here that we may not be able to overcome. County Attorney Mark Henkes will help us.

Many of the recycling centers are profitable but this one is a service to the public. Judge Mills continued stating that he recycled but he uses the one in Stephenville because the hours are more compatible with his schedule. Mills said there is good news because there is interest that someone if interested in running the facility.

Tafel supports the recycling center but the liability is of great concern.

Jeanie Harrison asked why the liability is such a strong issue; when has liability become such an issue?

Bonner added that he would be looking closely at the liability issue.

Sheriff Bewley stated that he heard the strong reaction from the public. Bewley stated that last year I agreed to keep James Lancaster on to run the recycling center. This year due to the budget cuts I lost three positions in Hico and one in Hamilton. Although, I am not in the budget process but I am on the team supportive of the court through the process.

Bonner stated that he would like to see the recycling center go back to all volunteers.

Janice Johnson asked why did the county take over.

Jeanie Harrison stated that there was a grant which allowed for a part-time employee for one year and then the court said they would pick up the part-time employee when the grant expired.

The court will put the recycling center on the October 8, 2012 agenda for more discussion and hopefully the court will have more information for the citizens.

A motion was made by Clary and seconded by Bonner to approve the budget amendments. Recorded in Commissioner's Court Papers Book 44 Page 474)

The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Bonner and seconded by Clary to approve the following consent agenda:

- A. Minutes of 9-10-2012 Commissioner's Court Meeting
- B. Minutes of 9-17-2012 Commissioner's Court Meeting
- C. Approve Departmental Reports (Recorded in Commissioner's Court Papers Book 44 Page 502)
- D. Approve bills submitted for payment -\$130,167.37 (Recorded in Commissioner's Court Papers Book 44 Page 479)

The motion carried unanimously.

Hamilton County Restoration – Continuing to work on the county clerk's office vault door; blinds up in the courtroom, end of the month the acoustical panels will be installed and the cushions for the benches will be installed around the first of October.

Hamilton County Courthouse Annex- Various offices are moving in

The court took no action on the burn ban. They decided to place it on the September 28, 2012 agenda.

A motion was made by Bonner and seconded by Boatwright to approve the out of state training for AgriLife Extension Service for the Progressive Training in Ardmore, Oklahoma October 10, 2012. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Clary and seconded by Bonner to ratify the appointments of Ms. Donna Twait of Coryell County for a two year term and Mr. Steve Wick of Bell County to fill the remaining term for September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013 to serve on the Central Counties Services (MHMR Centers) Board of Trustees. The motion carried unanimously. (Recorded in Commissioner's Court Papers Book 44 Page 521)

A motion was made by Bonner and seconded by Boatwright to ratify the appointment of Kay Solomon Court Administrator for the 220th Judicial District Court. The motion carried unanimously. (Recorded in Commissioner's Court Papers Book 44 Page 522)

Future Agenda Items: Recycling Center – Burn Ban

A motion was made by Boatwright and seconded by Clary to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

County Judge

Attest: _____

County Clerk