



CITIZEN GROUP ADDRESSES COMMISSIONERS COURT

By Carrie Gourley
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On Wednesday, June 11, the Waller County Commissioners Court met at 9 a.m. at the Joe Kuciemba Annex in Hempstead. Waller County Commissioner Pct. 4, Justin Beckendorff, led the meeting, also attended by Waller County Commissioners Kendric Jones, John Amsler and Walter Smith. Waller County Judge Trey Duhon was not in attendance.

A presentation on the newly formed Citizens In Defense of Waller County (CDWC) made a presentation to the court concerning its formation and purpose. John Erwin, a member of the group, made the presentation to the court.

Erwin explained that the purpose of CDWC is to stress the negative effects of the proposed TexasLand Theme Park, to be built at the junction of FM 1887 and FM 3346 south of Hempstead. The land was purchased on March 31, 2025 by Tango Lima Bravo Oscar LLC, with the agent listed as Hugh Edward "Skip" McGee III, father of the project's impetus, Elizabeth "Lizzy" McGee.

Resistance to the theme park began when our own Texas Representative, Stan Kitzman, sponsored HB 5685, which suddenly appeared on the House Calendar on April 22, a mere three weeks after purchase of said property.

In a prior statement, Lizzie McGee had stated in regards to her project, "We're going to put it somewhere where the people want us, and we understand that it could bring jobs, but it will also bring traffic, and there's a lot of considerations."

Erwin said that residents learned of the project when House Bill 5685 was filed on April 22 and that there had been no news, no review, and an absolute lack of transparency. McGee had previously met with the Mayor of Waller, who rejected the proposal due to water supply. She had also met with Judge Duhon, who turned the proposal over to the Waller County Economic Development Corp., which also rejected the project.

Erwin spoke of many concerns about the location of TexasLand, especially the lack of sufficient roadways and two-lane roads that would require massive roadwork in a county already struggling with road maintenance. Erwin also pointed out that theme parks are notorious for accidents and injuries and that Waller County lacks emergency room facilities to support the needs of a theme park. CDWC is also concerned about increases in crime that accompany theme parks, and noise pollution, including music, loud rides, crowd noise and exiting traffic.

The need for massive amounts of water, regulation of wastewater, more trash and debris and air quality are other concerns related to the development of a theme park.

McGee wants to build an historic Texas history park, when nearby, Erwin noted, that we already have San Felipe State Historic Site, Washington on the Brazos (which is currently receiving massive updates), George Ranch, Fanthorp Inn as well as many other nearby historic sites already available. Waller County also boasts Jellystone Yogi Bear Park, Dewberry Farms, Oil Ranch and a new water park under construction on FM 1488, near the county line.

In other business, several payments for professional services in regards to the Mobility Bond, as presented by Waller County Engineer Ross McCall, were approved by the court.

Prosperity Bank was approved for bank depository services for the term August 21, 2025 through December 31, 2025.

A \$2,133,237.76 payment for construction service to Sedalco, Inc. was approved by the court for the new courthouse. Another \$300,143.67 to Sedalco was approved for the Justice Center Modulares.

Danny Rothe, Waller County Director of Facilities, stated that the outside stonework on the building is nearing completion so that the scaffolding is now coming down. Intricate terrazzo stonework on the Grand Staircase is a slow process due to lack of space for workers. However, Rothe still expects a mid-September completion and a Grand Opening in November.

As for the Justice Center modular buildings, Rothe Expects completion of that project by August.

Additionally, the court approved an acceptance letter for a proposed purchase sale agreement between Waller County and the City of Houston. The agreement is for the purchase of 1,400 acres, located across from the Waller Recycling Center just north of Brookshire. The county received a \$25,000,000 grant to be used for the purchase price of \$19,000,000 with \$6 million remaining for maintenance. The county plans to develop the area with a detention pond and a future park. A due diligence study will be made as to the use of the property before a purchase is completed.

The City of Houston bought the Waller County land years ago for possible development of a future airport. However, the city is currently expanding George Bush Intercontinental Airport instead and no longer has need for the Waller County land.

Sale of Fourth of July fireworks for unincorporated areas of the county was also approved by the court.