

**A Private Citizen and Taxpayer's Comments on the
Proposed Joint Agreement to Create the
Central Texas Spaceport Development Corporation (CTSDC)**

I wish to formally express my concerns regarding the proposed joint agreement involving the Central Texas Spaceport Development Corporation (CTSDC) and its assumption of jurisdiction over all of Burnet County for "Spaceport Project" purposes that remain ambiguously defined in the proposal. While acknowledging the potential economic benefits of this project, I assert that its development must be subject to careful consideration of governance, fiscal responsibility, environmental impact, and the well-being of local residents.

Nonprofit Governance and Ceding Constitutional Duties:

The proposed structure of CTSDC as a nonprofit entity, governed by a board of directors rather than elected officials, raises significant concerns regarding the delegation of powers traditionally held by the Burnet County Commissioners Court. This arrangement could undermine local control over public resources, land use, and policy decisions, potentially violating both the Texas Constitution and Burnet County precedent. To preserve local governance, the Burnet County Commissioners Court must retain ultimate oversight of decisions impacting public lands and policies. Moreover, the nonprofit entity must be bound by strict limitations in its charter to ensure that it does not override the authority of elected officials.

Concerns Regarding Voting Control:

The current agreement grants Williamson County a majority vote on decisions concerning the Spaceport Project, which will affect the entirety of Burnet County. This creates a disproportionate influence over decisions that directly impact Burnet County residents. Given that Burnet County taxpayers and citizens should have primary input on matters affecting their land, resources, and community, I respectfully request a reconsideration of this voting structure to ensure that Burnet County maintains fair and appropriate control over decisions impacting its residents and environment.

Request for Public Workshop:

In light of the significant concerns outlined above, I formally request that a public workshop be held to ensure greater transparency and public involvement before any final decisions are made. Such a workshop would allow the community to be fully informed and provide an opportunity to address unresolved issues. This step is necessary to build public trust and ensure that the final agreement reflects the rights and interests of Burnet County residents.



Additional Key Concerns:

1. No Financial Burden on Burnet County Taxpayers:

It is imperative that the financial responsibility for the Spaceport Project does not fall on Burnet County government taxes or taxpayers. All funding for the project should be sourced from state grants and private investments outside of Burnet County. The potential economic benefits must not come at the expense of the financial interests or environmental integrity of Burnet County.

2. Prohibition of Eminent Domain:

Eminent domain should not be employed to acquire private property for the development of the Spaceport. Any such action would infringe upon the property rights of Burnet County residents and should be expressly prohibited under this agreement.

3. Transparency and Public Involvement:

The development and execution of the Spaceport Project must ensure full transparency, with meaningful opportunities for public participation at every stage. This includes any proposed expansions, such as more rocket engine testing pads and future launches, which could significantly impact the community.

4. Tourism and Environmental Impact Assessment:

Reviews must be conducted to assess the potential disruption to local tourism, ecosystems, air and water quality, and noise pollution, and ensure that the "Spaceport Project" does not adversely affect wildlife or the quiet enjoyment, or quality of life of Burnet County residents.

5. Limitation on Expansion of Facilities:

The proposed agreement grants CTSDC broad authority over all of Burnet County for the spaceport project without clear limitations on the number of facilities that may be developed, including new testing or launch pads. Such unchecked authority could result in the uncontrolled expansion of facilities in residential or ecologically sensitive areas, potentially circumventing local zoning laws. Strict limits must be established to prevent this outcome.

While the Central Texas Spaceport Project holds potential economic benefits, it must be developed in a manner that respects the governance, fiscal integrity, and environmental interests of Burnet County. I urge the relevant authorities to address these concerns and incorporate the necessary safeguards into the proposed agreement to protect the rights and interests of Burnet County residents. Following are some suggested amendments for your consideration. Perhaps a committee is necessary?

Summary Sheet

This document reviews the proposed joint agreement to create the Central Texas Spaceport Development Corporation (CTSDC) for the Spaceport Project and offers possible solutions to safeguard Burnet County taxpayers and residents. The goal is to ensure transparency, accountability, and that no taxpayer funds or local resources are used to finance the Spaceport Project.

Key Concerns:

Concern	Description
No Taxpayer Responsibility	Burnet County taxpayers should not bear any responsibility for funding the "Spaceport Project."
No Property Tax Increases	Burnet County taxpayers should not bear any property tax increases for the "Spaceport Project."
No Tourism Dollar Funding	Burnet County tourism and hotel taxes should not be used as a funding source.
No Eminent Domain	Eminent domain should not be used to acquire property for infrastructure development.
Transparency	Require quarterly (or more frequent) public reports on the progress and finances of the 'Spaceport Project,' in accordance with the Burnet County Commissioners Court's request.
Public Access to Records	CTSDC records should be accessible to the public and filed with the Burnet County Clerk.
Location of Office	The CTSDC office should be located in Burnet County and accessible to the public during regular business hours.
Jurisdiction: "All of Burnet County"	Concerns about the CTSDC's jurisdiction over the entire county and how this could affect land use and future developments.
State Funding and Reimbursement	Ensure that "Spaceport Project" development costs are reimbursed through state funds, without relying on BC taxpayer funds.

Nonprofit Governance and Ceding Constitutional Duties

The Central Texas Spaceport Development Corporation (CTSDC) is proposed as a nonprofit entity, meaning it would be governed by a board of directors rather than elected officials. While this structure offers flexibility and can attract private investment, it raises serious concerns about the delegation of powers traditionally held by the Burnet County Commissioners Court to a private entity.

This structure could be seen as an attempt to cede critical constitutional duties and authority over public resources, land use, and policy decisions, traditionally reserved for elected officials, to a nonprofit organization. Such a shift could undermine the principle of local control and diminish citizens' influence over matters that directly affect their community. Importantly, this delegation could be viewed as circumventing the protections and governance frameworks established by the Texas Constitution and the Burnet County Charter.

The delegation of substantial decision-making powers to a nonprofit entity raises questions about whether this is legally permissible under the Texas Constitution. In particular, the Texas Constitution grants local governments authority that cannot easily be transferred to private organizations. Any arrangement that allows a nonprofit to assume significant control over county resources, land use, or public policy should undergo a thorough legal review to determine its constitutionality.

To mitigate these concerns, the nonprofit should be bound by clear and strict limitations in its charter and operating agreements, ensuring that it cannot override the will of elected officials. The Burnet County Commissioners Court should retain ultimate oversight over decisions that affect Burnet County public lands, resources, or policies, ensuring that the nonprofit operates in alignment with the broader interests of Burnet County residents.

Our Beautiful Hill Country Environment:

The proposed Spaceport Project may significantly impact the environment. The Hill Country, known for its unique ecosystems and natural beauty, is home to sensitive wildlife and pristine landscapes. Several environmental concerns arise:

- **Air and Water Quality:** Rocket engine testing and potential future launches could introduce pollutants into the air, potentially affecting air quality and nearby water sources.
- **Ecosystem Disruption:** Local flora and fauna could face disruption due to construction and ongoing operations. Other spaceports, such as Spaceport America in New Mexico, have shown that wildlife habitats can be affected by noise, land use changes, and chemical exposure.
- **Noise Pollution:** The noise generated by rocket engine testing and future launches could negatively affect nearby residents and wildlife, particularly species sensitive to loud sounds.

Possible solutions include:

- Conducting comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) before any development or construction begins.

- Implementing noise control measures to limit disruptions, such as controlled rocket engine testing times and buffer zones around sensitive habitats.
 - Enforcing strict regulations for waste management and chemical use to protect water sources and soil health.
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Proposed Bylaw Amendments for the Central Texas Spaceport Development Corporation (CTSDC):

These proposed bylaw amendments are designed to ensure that the CTSDC operates transparently, with accountability to the public, while safeguarding Burnet County taxpayers, residents, and the environment. The amendments emphasize financial responsibility, public access to information, environmental protection, public participation, and adherence to legal frameworks such as the Texas Open Meetings Act (TOMA).

Amendment 1: No Burnet County Taxpayer Responsibility for Costs

Section X.1 - Funding Sources

The CTSDC shall not seek or use any funds derived from Burnet County or Burnet County taxpayers for the financing, development, construction, or operational costs of the Spaceport Project. The CTSDC shall provide documentation verifying all funding sources and ensure that Burnet County taxpayers are not financially responsible for any part of the project.

Amendment 2: Prohibition of Eminent Domain

Section X.2 - Land Acquisition

The CTSDC shall not use eminent domain to acquire private property for any purpose related to the Spaceport Project, whether current or future. All land acquisitions must be voluntarily negotiated with landowners, with full consent and fair compensation.

Amendment 3: Transparency and Public Access to Records

Section X.3 - Public Access to Documents and Reports

All records, documents, and financial statements related to the CTSDC's activities shall be filed with the Burnet County Commissioners Court and made available for public inspection. The CTSDC shall provide annual financial reports and detailed updates on the project's progress.

Amendment 4: Public Workshops and Quarterly Reporting

Section X.4 - Public Engagement and Reporting

The CTSDC shall hold public meetings quarterly, alternating between Burnet and Williamson counties. These meetings shall be open to all residents, offering an opportunity for feedback. Additionally, the CTSDC shall hold a Public Workshop at the beginning of each fiscal year to provide detailed information about the project.

Amendment 5: Location of CTSDC Office

Section X.5 - Office Location and Public Access

The CTSDC shall maintain an office located within Burnet County, accessible to the public during regular business hours, and serve as a point of contact for public inquiries and information related to the Spaceport Project.

Amendment 6: Limitation on Nonprofit Authority

Section X.6 - Oversight and Authority

The CTSDC shall not have authority to override the local government's decisions on land use or other policies that affect Burnet County's residents. All decisions that impact public policy or land use must be subject to review and approval by the Burnet County Commissioners Court.

Amendment 7: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Requirement

Section X.7 - Environmental Protection

Before any construction or operational activities begin, the CTSDC shall conduct a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to evaluate the potential impacts on air and water quality, wildlife habitats, noise pollution, and ecosystem disruption. The results must be publicly disclosed.

Amendment 8: Limits on Political Influence

Section X.8 - Conflict of Interest and Political Influence

All board members and officers of the CTSDC shall adhere to a strict Conflict of Interest Policy, ensuring decisions are made in the best interest of the community, free from political or personal influence.

Amendment 9: Nonprofit Status and Governance Restrictions

Section X.9 - Governance and Oversight

The CTSDC shall remain a nonprofit entity, but its governance will be subject to oversight by the Burnet County Commissioners Court, which shall retain authority to review and approve major decisions that affect public policy and taxpayer interests.

Amendment 10: No Tourism Dollar Funding

Section X.10 - Restriction on Tourism Funding

Burnet County tourism taxes shall not be used to fund the Spaceport Project. These funds must remain dedicated to promoting tourism and supporting local businesses.

Amendment 11: Compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act (TOMA)

Section X.11 - Open Meetings Compliance

The CTSDC shall comply with the Texas Open Meetings Act (TOMA), ensuring that all meetings are open to the public, with proper notice and the opportunity for public participation.

Amendment 12: Public Notification and Access to Meeting Records

Section X.12 - Public Notification and Access to Meeting Records

The CTSDC shall provide public notice of all meetings, including the agenda and any related documents, at least 72 hours in advance. Minutes of all meetings shall be recorded and posted publicly.
