

County Clerk

2nd Request for Immediate Action Regarding Defamatory Remarks Allowed by Burnet County at the March 11, 2025 Burnet County Commissioner's Court Meeting

Dear Burnet County Judge and Commissioners,

I am writing to express my concerns about the events that took place during the March 11, 2025, Burnet County Commissioner's Court meeting. Please note that the following account and the opinions I express are based on my personal observations and beliefs regarding what I witnessed during this meeting.

Overview of the Incident

During the meeting, I observed what I believe were false and damaging statements made about a law enforcement officer who had announced his candidacy for the County Judge position. In my opinion, these remarks were more malicious than the typical campaign-style mudslinging; they were a premeditated, intentional attempt to harm the officer's character while influencing the ongoing County Judge appointment process and the 2026 elections.

Nature of the Statements

These remarks were not made in good faith. They were planned and malicious, designed not only to influence the County Judge vote but also to attempt to harm the officer's reputation. These actions seemed coordinated to sway the vote, intimidate the commissioners, and corrupt the appointment process, all with the goal of damaging the officer's impeccable reputation.

Regarding the rancher's allegations, it's important to note that the alleged violation took place in Williamson County: Williamson County conducted an investigation and referred the matter to the Williamson County Attorney, who ultimately declined to file charges. At that point, wouldn't the next step have been to involve the Texas Rangers? Given that the rancher's complaint was handled in another jurisdiction, would it have been appropriate, or even a violation of law enforcement protocol, to expect the officer to respond to the allegations made during the rancher's public comments at the meeting?

Were the individuals behind this attack aware of the legal limitations placed on the officer, and did they exploit these restrictions to intimidate and coerce the commissioners?

in defamation cases. From what I observed, the officer may have legal grounds to pursue a defamation lawsuit since slander is not protected free speech.

If these statements are not retracted and an apology is not issued, the officer could pursue the following legal remedies:

1. **Actual Damages:** Compensation for harm to the officer's reputation, career, and livelihood.
2. **Punitive Damages:** Additional damages to punish the defendant for acting with malice and to discourage future defamation.
3. **Treble Damages for Malice:** Texas law allows three times the amount of actual damages in cases of malice.
4. **Injunctive Relief:** A court order stopping the spread of defamatory statements and forcing a retraction.
5. **Damages:** Compensation for emotional harm caused by defamation.

Additionally, Texas law allows for the recovery of legal fees and costs related to a defamation lawsuit, offering further protection to individuals facing defamatory attacks.

Conclusion

Public comments are an essential part of open governance, but they come with the responsibility of ensuring that statements are truthful and respectful. The false statements made during this meeting were not only malicious and unfounded but likely also constituted slander, a type of defamation through spoken words.

I trust that you will take these concerns seriously and act quickly to address this issue. Public meetings should not be places for character attacks. By allowing these defamatory remarks to continue during the March 11 meeting, the Commissioners Court allowed harm that could have been prevented.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your timely response and action.

Sincerely,

Patty Cope, Burnet County Voter, Taxpayer, and Interested Person.

Opinions in this document are purely my own.

March 17, 2025

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