

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?

Interestingly, the not-yet-appointed County Judge, Bryan Wilson, was present during the meeting. He was the person who solely benefited from the defamatory statements, as he was appointed County Judge shortly afterward. Yet, neither County Judge applicant Bryan Wilson nor the commissioners objected or spoke out against the harmful remarks. Why was there no parliamentary objection or concern raised during the meeting, especially given the seriousness of the situation?

Responsibility of the Commissioners Court

As a concerned voter and member of the community, I chose not to speak up during the defamation "show" portion of the public comments. However, it was the responsibility of the Commissioners Court to stop these harmful remarks from continuing. Commissioners, as public officials, it is your job to ensure that meetings remain respectful. By not intervening, are you allowing harm to be done to the officer's character and reputation? The lack of quick action only made the damage worse.

Cease and Desist Demand

Because of the nature of these statements, I ask that the Commissioners Court take immediate action to issue a public statement about the defamatory remarks made during the meeting. A public retraction of these false statements must be issued, along with a written apology to the law enforcement officer to address the harm done to his character.

It's important that this issue be addressed quickly to restore the community's trust in Burnet County's government.

The Irony of the Situation

Despite the officer's years of dedicated service to both the State of Texas and this community, his character was attacked without justification. One must wonder if these actions were driven solely by his candidacy for County Judge, or if this is part of a broader, more personal form of retaliation. Almost everyone in that room—and those watching on YouTube—would call 911 if they needed help and expect the officer who was slandered, or someone like him, to come to their aid. *The irony of this situation cannot be ignored.*

Legal Considerations and Remedies for Malice

In my opinion, the false and harmful statements made during the meeting are probably slander, a type of defamation that is not protected by the First Amendment. Statements made with malicious intent are especially serious

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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