

BILL GRAVELL JR.
County Judge
WILLIAMSON COUNTY TEXAS

APRIL 23, 2024

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CLERK
TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
MC-105, TCEQ
P.O. BOX 13087
AUSTIN, TX 78711-3087

RE: WILLIAMSON COUNTY MUD NO. 56
TCEQ INTERNAL CONTROL NO. D-02122024-014
CN: 606229912 RN: 111906376

To Whom It May Concern:

Williamson County writes in response to your notice dated March 27, 2024, copy attached, regarding the submission of a petition for the creation of the above-referenced Williamson County MUD No. 56 of Williamson County ("District"). The County opposes the creation of the proposed District unless certain conditions are met.

The County is requesting a contested case hearing.

The County understands that this is a formal protest proceeding and tenders its opinion, findings, conclusions, and any other information that would assist the TCEQ.

The County has authority over various functions – including but not limited to transportation, emergency services, and health and safety – that may be affected by the creation of the District and that the petition fails to take into account. See, e.g., Tex. Local Gov't Code §§ 232.001-.011 (county authority for road construction in subdivisions as well as other subdivision regulations); Tex. Local Gov't Code § 251.003 (county order and rulemaking authority for roads); Tex. Local Gov't Code, Chapter 233, Subchapter C (fire code in unincorporated areas); Tex. Local Gov't Code, Chapter 232, Subchapter E (infrastructure planning provisions in certain urban counties); Texas Local Gov't Code, Chapter 233, Subchapter B (building and set back lines); Tex. Local Gov't Code, Chapter 233, Subchapter E (fire code in unincorporated area); Tex. Local Gov't Code, Chapter 418 (emergency management); Tex. Transp. Code § 251.016 (general control over roads, highways and bridges); Tex. Transp. Code, Chapter 254 (drainage on public roads). Thus, the County has statutory authority under state law over numerous issues contemplated by this petition and is, therefore, an affected person. 30 Tex. Admin. Code § 55.256(b).

For example, the County notes that, in your notice item (4), the District seeks traditional road powers including:

"(4) design, acquire, construct, finance, improve, operate, and maintain macadamized, graveled, or paved roads, or improvements in aid of those roads; and (5) provide such other facilities, systems, plants, and enterprises as shall be consonant with the purpose for which the proposed District is created."

However, the District does not state that it will not convey the road, particularly the maintenance, to the County without limitation. Considering the recent legislative changes outlined below, the County no longer accepts roads from newly created MUDs into the County's maintenance system without a corresponding obligation of the MUD to maintain the road after a specified time period.

Since the 2017 and 2019 legislative sessions effectively ended unilateral annexations by cities, the fiscal burden of developmental control has fallen on counties in general. Historically in Williamson County, MUD creation included agreements between the County and the neighboring municipality that would lead to annexation of that MUD by the municipality after a stated time period, thus limiting the financial exposure of the County in relation to the MUDs. Now however, despite this legislatively created increase in financial exposure to the County by limiting the ability of cities to annex MUDs, the current tax laws cap county tax rates to such a degree that the ability to address growth by counties is severely hampered. Because of these fiscal constraints, new residents of the County, such as those residing in this proposed District, should not shift the cost of development onto the current residents and the County's position and recommendation is that the proposed District help bear the continued cost of its development. This is consistent with recent efforts by the County to share costs between the County and legislatively created MUDs through the enacting legislation and/or Consent and Development Agreements.

For legislatively created MUDs, Williamson County, with the help of Senator Schwertner, has addressed this increased fiscal burden on the County by successfully negotiating Consent and Development Agreements that provide cost sharing between the County, the property developer/owner, and the MUD. The following paragraphs include standard terms in these agreements that the County argues should also apply to the TCEQ created MUDs for equity and public health and safety.

ROADS

The County has adopted a Long-Range Transportation Plan ("LRTP") which provides for the planning and future construction of certain road corridors within the County ("Corridor Project"). The County request that the Owner will convey, or cause to be conveyed, by special warranty deed, in fee simple and free and clear of all liens and encumbrances, to County, at no cost to the County, 100% of the right-of-way required for any roads which are shown within the boundaries of the Land as Corridor Projects in the LRTP within either 30 days after the final alignment for any Corridor Project is set; or, in the case that a final alignment for any Corridor Project has not been set, prior to the approval of any preliminary plat containing any Corridor Project within or directly adjacent to the Land.

Furthermore, the Owner will dedicate to the County, in fee simple and free and clear of all liens and encumbrances, at no cost to the County, through plat or otherwise, as determined by the County, 100% of the right-of-way required for any roads which are shown within the boundaries of the Land as arterial roadways ("Arterial(s)") in the LRTP. The County agrees that it or another governmental entity will be responsible for the design and construction of any Corridor Project and paying the cost for same. Commencing upon the tenth (10th) anniversary date from the date the County provisionally accepted a Subdivision Road, the District shall be solely responsible for any maintenance, repair or reconstruction or both of any Subdivision Road.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Pursuant to the authority set forth in Section 49.216 of the Texas Water Code, the District and the County shall negotiate in good faith the terms of a contract pursuant to which the District shall provide funding to the County for the incremental costs incurred by the County for law enforcement services in that portion of the Land located in the

County, including the costs of additional personnel, vehicles and equipment associated with the provision of law enforcement services to the Land within the County. Funding shall include per law enforcement position cost for compensation, benefits, vehicles and equipment, as kept by the Williamson County Budget Office. Owner and District acknowledge that any such funding would be used to enhance law enforcement services in Williamson County, as well as in, on and around the Land. Furthermore, the provision of such funding will not mandate or require County to designate, allocate or assign specific law enforcement personnel, vehicles, equipment or services to areas of the Land and that any additional County law enforcement personnel, vehicles, equipment or services funded by District will be assigned countywide. Owner and District understand and agree the County shall not be required to increase its budget for additional law enforcement personnel, vehicles, equipment and services in the event the County does not receive appropriations or other expenditure authority sufficient to allow the County, in the exercise of reasonable administrative discretion, to do so.

FIRE AND EMS SERVICES

Pursuant to the authority set forth in Section 49.351 of the Texas Water Code, the District and the County shall negotiate in good faith the terms of a contract to provide for fire-fighting and emergency medical services within the District including providing for necessary buildings, facilities, land, and equipment for such services. As necessary to implement any such contract, the District shall develop a plan that describes the contract, including a presentation of the financial requirements under the contract, submit such contract to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for approval, and conduct an election for approval of the plan and financing, all in accordance with the requirements of Section 49.351(g)-(i) of the Texas Water Code.

Owner and the County agree to negotiate in good faith the terms of one or more agreements pursuant to which the Owner shall convey, or cause to be conveyed, to the County by special warranty deed one or more sites within the Land for establishment of necessary buildings for fire and/or emergency medical services at no cost to the County. The agreement(s) will set forth terms for timing of conveyance, identification of site(s) that do not materially impair development of the Land, and may provide for funding of construction of the buildings by Owner.

ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICES

The District and the County shall negotiate in good faith the terms of a contract pursuant to which the District will provide funding for the incremental costs incurred by the Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter for providing animal control services to that portion of the Land located in the County. For future planning purposes in relation to a contract to be executed between the County and District, the Parties acknowledge the firm of Jackson & Ryan Architects prepared a Capacity Study, dated December 4, 2014 that cites that seven (7) cats and ten (10) dogs are attributed to every one-thousand (1,000) individuals, or 370 homes. As of the Effective Date of this Agreement, the average cost to provide shelter and care at the Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter is approximately \$500.00 per animal. Based on the abovementioned Capacity Study and current cost estimations and projections, for every 370 homes constructed in the Land, the District would pay to the Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter for shelter and care of cats and dogs the amount of \$185,000.00. The Parties acknowledge the Capacity Study is a 2014 study and that the average cost to provide shelter and care per animal at the Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter is based on current day estimates and projections. Thus, the actual cost to provide shelter and care per animal at the Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter may be different than such estimates and projections; and that these amounts are only being provided for future planning purposes.


Additionally, MUDs will place an even greater burden on law enforcement, emergency medical, fire and animal control services that are already very strained in the county and that, not only will the health and safety of the residents of the developer's MUD

be affected, all other residents that the county provides such services will also be affected. The first MUD came in 1974 and in the last 10 years the number of MUDs has almost doubled versus the previous 38 years, growing from 41 MUDs to 80 and acreage has increased by 15,620 acres (72% increase) in the last 10 years. In the last 20 years the numbers of MUDs have grown by 627% (from 11 to 80 MUDs) and acreage has grown by 319% (8,926 to 37,373 acres). The burden is too great on the County without the long-term commitment of the MUDs to also bear the burden of growth on the services normally provided by cities and now attempting to be shifted to the County.

In conclusion, the County believes that all MUDs created within the County should have the same or similar provisions regardless of whether it is created by the Legislature or created by the TCEQ. Therefore, the provisions required in either the legislation or Consent and Development Agreements should also be included in a TCEQ created MUD, thus allowing all County residents, especially those living in MUDs, to be treated fairly and equally.

Therefore, as referenced above, the County opposes the creation of this MUD and requests a contested case hearing.

Sincerely,


Bill Gravell (Apr 24, 2024 08:50 CDT)

Bill Gravell, Jr.
Williamson County Judge

Enc.