

# Williamson Central Appraisal District

## Board of Directors Meeting

### Minutes of May 7, 2014

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Harry Gibbs, chairman, called the regular meeting of the Williamson Central Appraisal District Board of Directors to order Wednesday, May 7, 2014 at 8:02 a.m. Board members present: Harry Gibbs, Deborah Hunt, Cecilia Crowley, Charles Chadwell and Rufus Honeycutt. Quorum declared.

#### Receipt of Public Comments

Charley Rouse, the District's Taxpayer Liaison Officer, was present and commented that he had received a number of phone calls from property owners within the last month. These calls were mainly regarding exemptions as well as complaints of home appraisals being too high. Gibbs expressed his appreciation to Rouse.

Lankford proposed including on the Board's agenda each month an item allowing Rouse to report on any contacts he had made with property owners throughout that month. The Board members agreed. This item will be included starting at the next meeting.

Gibbs mentioned hearing from a gentleman who was amazed at the short wait times at the appraisal district office. Lankford reviewed some of the District's wait time stats.

Consider approval of minutes of the Board of Directors for the regular meeting – April 1, 2014.

Honeycutt moved for approval of the minutes as presented. Chadwell seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

#### Consideration of Monthly Financials and Quarterly Investment Report

The March 2014 financials and expenditures were reviewed and filed for audit.

The Quarterly Investment Report was also reviewed. Gamboa confirmed that all of the District's reserve accounts, held at Union State Bank (USB), are earning interest. Hunt commented that typically USB meets or beats other institution's rates on certificate of deposits including those at TexPool; a local government investment pool.

#### 2015 Budget Workshop

##### 2013 Year-End Financials

Lankford indicated the District to be showing, at the current time, a surplus in last year's budget of \$390,404.

Chadwell inquired about the usage of the surplus funds, to which Lankford reported that the Board would need to obligate the funds or refund them back to the taxing units. Lankford indicated that typically at least a portion of these funds are used to buy down the next year's budget. Discussion regarding this item will be added to the June Board agenda. Crowley requested that in future years, the year-end financial statement also include fund balance.

## 2015 Budget Review

Lankford displayed and reviewed a 5-year summary of the District's budget numbers. He pointed out that the District's budget had remained relatively flat, along with the number of full time employees over the last five years. However, the number of protests and other pieces of the District's workload had drastically increased. Lankford also showed a comparison of taxing entities total levied amounts with the cost per dollar of that levy. He mentioned that the levy had gone up over 17% while the District's budget had only increased about 3.6%; showing a decrease in the District's cost to the entities.

Hunt felt a better comparison might be to include only the entities total operating budget. Lankford speculated that the District could then consider removing its debt service as well to make an accurate comparison between the two. Lankford reviewed the budgeted salary reductions. He indicated that technology the District has invested in has been very beneficial; however additional staff is necessary. He expressed how proud he was of District staff for the job they've done while maintaining such a high service level and minimal wait times.

Lankford reviewed the 2015 proposed budget. He indicated that the salary survey to the entities would be conducted again this year and that additional percent increases could be included in the budget if the Board desired.

Lankford informed members that the medical insurance estimate numbers would be available at their next meeting. He also expressed that the District did not yet have the final estimates from TCDRS; the District's retirement provider. Lankford indicated that Tim Krause, a representative with TCDRS would be available to answer questions at the Board's next meeting.

Lankford recommended converting to an alternate appraisal field work device for the coming year. He mentioned purchasing mobile office software through Tyler Technologies, the District's appraisal software vendor. The existing field work devices would be rolled out to management to assist in meetings and aid with the paperless process. Lankford reported an estimated cost of \$1,500 each for Windows Surface devices and expressed that the District would like to use reserve monies for this purchase so as not to affect the budget.

Lankford reported the District to be in the last year of the Pictometry six-year contract. He mentioned that the cost for this service would most likely be increasing for 2015.

The Board recessed for a break at 9:44 a.m. and reconvened 9:58 a.m.

### Building Reserve Expenditures

Lankford apprised the Board members of some landscaping issues the District was facing due to the recent drought. He requested approval to move monies out of the building reserve account to allow for this expense as well as other minor building maintenance. Lankford displayed the estimated cost of \$10,583.

Honeycutt made a motion to approve moving \$10,583 out of the building reserve account to pay for the expense of the new landscaping and building maintenance. Crowley seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

## I.T. Reserve Expenditure

Lankford expressed the District's desire to purchase both a firewall to increase its network security and a new virtual server. He reported the estimated cost for these two items to be \$10,638 (\$638 for the firewall and \$10,000 for the virtual server). He requested moving funds from the Technology reserve account for these purchases.

Chadwell made a motion to approve moving \$10,638 from the Technology reserve account for the purchase of the improved firewall (\$638) and the virtual server (\$10,000). Honeycutt seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

## Board of Directors Policy Revisions

### Appraisal Review Board Payment Policy and Board Policy Resolution

The Board discussed the wording of the Appraisal Review Board (ARB) payment policy within the Board Policy. Lankford asked that the Board consider clarifying the ARB payment portion of the policy. Hunt suggested the wording to state if an ARB member had been absent for two years or less, that member would revert back to the same pay they were receiving when they left the ARB. Any member absent for more than three years would drop back to the first-year member pay level.

Lankford expressed the difficulty this may cause with budgeting and that this could increase that budget line item over time. He also reminded the Board that an ARB member who has served for all or part of three consecutive terms is ineligible to serve on the ARB during a term that begins the next January.

Lankford offered to draft the revised wording and present it to the Board at their next meeting.

No motion was made.

## Chief Appraiser's Report

### Property Owner Surveys

Lankford reviewed the property owner surveys. He mentioned the return rate to be a bit skewed due to the current level of entry. The return number will increase as entry is completed. Lankford reported District staff to be doing an absolutely outstanding job again this year.

Hunt requested clarification regarding online protest filing. Lankford explained the process; indicating that all appraisal notices sent that were eligible to receive comparables electronically, indicated so on the notice. The District will send comparables with each request, if possible. If, for some reason, comparables are not able to be sent, a message is returned to the property owner thanking them for filing their protest. If the property owner files their protest online and has further questions, they can either agree with the suggested value or disagree and decline. They are then given the opportunity to come into the District office and see an appraiser. If the property owner fails to take any action on the online protest, they are automatically scheduled for a hearing.

## Protest Season Update

Lankford reviewed the protest season public services telephone statistics. He reported an approximate 40% increase in the call volume from last year. He displayed these stats as well as the lobby queue statistics. Lankford reported that the District is seeing a 100% increase on protests from last year and seeing an approximate 60% increase on online protests thus far (we have not yet reached the deadline). Lankford felt this year the District would have an extremely busy protest season.

Lankford reviewed the current protest statistics.

## Homestead Exemption Audit Program

Lankford mentioned Lexis Nexis, a vendor who assists in the auditing of homestead exemptions. He reminded members that property owners are only allowed to have one homestead exemption and indicated that a large number of fraudulent homesteads occur each year. These are tax dollars that should be being paid, but aren't. Lankford reported that a sampling of the District's data was given to Lexis Nexis and it was discovered that the District has anywhere from a 3-5% error rate. This vendor has access to much more data than the District.

Lankford reviewed the estimate from Lexis Nexis, which was displayed for the Board members. He reported the estimated cost for this product to be \$201,000 which would also be used to help maintain District records. Lankford mentioned that possibly at a future meeting, he would invite a representative from Lexis Nexis to present this information. He reminded the Board that the price indicated represents a non-negotiated number. Honeycutt suggested discussing this issue with the entities.

Gibbs left the meeting at 10:48 a.m. Hunt acted as the assigned Chair.

## WCAD Initiatives

Lankford shared with the Board the fact that protest hearing reschedules are now available on the District's website. He expressed that hearing reschedules had previously been very time-consuming for District staff and having the ability to reschedule these online would benefit the District greatly. He explained the process.

Lankford mentioned the departmental statistics boards that were being utilized throughout the building and how beneficial these have been.

## WCAD Presentations

Lankford discussed several presentations that he had done since the Board's last meeting. He reported presenting to the Williamson County Commissioners Court and the Hutto Economic Development Group. He also announced meeting with Marty DeLeon and Chadwell regarding the equal and uniform issue and having a meeting with the City of Georgetown regarding their budget workshop.

## Lawsuit Report

Lankford reviewed the lawsuit report.

## Board Agenda Additions for Future Meeting

- ARB Board Payment Policy
- 2015 Proposed Budget
- Insurance and TCDRS Presentations (for budget purposes)
- 2013 Audit

## Board Announcements

Honeycutt informed members that he would be unable to attend the September Board Meeting. Hunt confirmed that she would be unable to attend the Board meeting scheduled for June 5<sup>th</sup>.

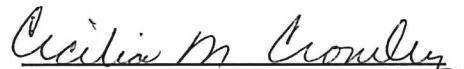
The Board discussed the following meetings:

The August 7, 2014 Board Meeting was cancelled. The Board set a meeting for July 17, 2014 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.

Respectfully,

  
Deborah Hunt, Vice-Chairman

  
Cecilia Crowley, Secretary