

Williamson Central Appraisal District

Board of Directors Meeting

Minutes of September 9, 2021

Charles Chadwell, Chairman, called the regular meeting of the Williamson Central Appraisal District Board of Directors to order Thursday, September 9, 2021, at 9:01 a.m. Board members present; Charles Chadwell, Harry Gibbs, Jon Lux and Lora Weber. Donald Hisle attended via phone conference and Larry Gaddes was absent. Quorum declared.

This meeting was conducted via a combination of conference call as well as in person. Some of the District's management staff attended the meeting.

Pledges of Allegiance

Receipt of Public Comments

Several members of the District's taxing units were present to comment on the performance of the District and the outstanding service they had received. It was mentioned how extremely valuable the taxing units find the Entity meetings that Lankford and Chris Connelly, the District's Deputy Chief Appraiser, conduct prior to the final approval of the District's budget. Some other comments included the responsiveness, compassion, and respect that Lankford and his staff had shown.

Kenneth Adix, the Chief Financial Officer for Round Rock ISD, mentioned that he had previously worked at Pflugerville ISD, and wanted to express his appreciation of the job done by Lankford and his team. He expressed that he felt that the District sets the bar in terms of the service provided and he was extremely satisfied with this service, which he had received over the last twelve years. Adix spoke high praises for all the work that had been done.

Robert Powers, the Finance Director with the City of Leander, was also present. Powers mentioned that he had worked in his current position for twelve years. He expressed his thanks to the Board and to the District staff. He mentioned that each year their office relies on the work done at the appraisal district and that they could not do their job on the local level without this work. He expressed the importance of being able to rely on the information received yearly throughout the budget process. Powers mentioned that, in particular, he wanted to thank the professional staff and the Chief Appraiser at the District and expressed his appreciation for the responsiveness they had shown throughout the years. He expressed his reliance on Lankford to help navigate through the legislative process and understand the tax changes. He indicated that without the work done by District staff and the leadership of the Chief Appraiser, his office could not get through their process near as smoothly.

Julie Kiley, the First Assistant County Auditor for Williamson County, wanted to take the opportunity to thank Lankford and his staff. She mentioned that she had been working with the County for 27 years and been the First Assistant for over 20 of those years working very closely with the appraisal district and the tax office. Kiley mentioned the very aggressive growth within Williamson County which creates challenges concerning right of way and other programs. She expressed her appreciation for the responsiveness of the District. Kiley also thanked Lankford and his staff for their assistance in educating her office on the proper way to manage those types of issues as well as for other assistance provided to the County.

Charley Crossfield, the attorney for Williamson County, was also present. He thanked Lankford for his assistance and mentioned his responsiveness. Crossfield expressed his appreciation for Lankford's assistance in explaining some complexities regarding certain properties.

Jeff Wood, who mentioned he had been working as the Director of Finance for the City of Taylor for about two and a half years, came to Texas from Michigan. He mentioned that he had discovered quickly upon his arrival that the tax and appraisal process in Texas is different than it is in Michigan. Wood indicated that he had reached out to Lankford for guidance. He expressed his appreciation for Lankford personally taking the time to assist with his questions. Wood mentioned that Lankford had assisted him in understanding the appraisal process, the appraisal district and helped him set up an exemption. Wood commented on the District's budget process and expressed his appreciation for the transparency and for Lankford and Connelly for personally discussing changes to the budget. He commented on the new process the District had put in place this past year on the appeals side. He mentioned that the City of Taylor started out with \$355 million dollars under appeal; however, by the time they had received their certified value, this number was much less, which had made their job much easier. Wood indicated that he could not say enough about Lankford and his staff and what had been done at the District. He announced to the Board what a great staff they had and indicated that he felt that starts with the Chief Appraiser.

Valerie Covey, County Commissioner of Precinct 3, was present and mentioned that although she was not present on behalf of the court, that she was present as a Certified Public Accountant and someone who appreciates numbers and accuracy of those numbers. She mentioned that with the growth the last fifteen years that she had served, she'd seen a difference and an improvement in the District. She mentioned that she could easily contact Lankford or any of his staff and ask a question and knew she was going to get reliable accurate information. Covey indicated that she had gotten calls from those she represents who were concerned about appraisal values and the appraisal process. She indicated that she felt comfortable sharing the information she receives from Lankford and his staff with her constituency in knowing that it's accurate. Covey reminded those in attendance that laws change, and processes change, and that the District's processes had improved tremendously over the time that Lankford has been the Chief Appraiser. Covey expressed her appreciation personally to Lankford, also from her constituency as well as from Williamson County and all the taxing entities. She also thanked the Board for the work they do and for their time spent. Finally, Covey thanked Lankford for his leadership.

Elaine Cogburn, the Chief Financial Officer for Leander ISD, was present and indicated she could just repeat what the Board had heard in this morning's meeting. She indicated that she had served in several different school districts across the state including: Lubbock, Dallas, Tarrant, Collin, Hays, Travis and most recently Williamson. She mentioned how impressed she was with the appraisal district. Cogburn also expressed how extremely valuable the entity meetings are before the certified values indicating that values drive the taxing units' budget and knowing this information ahead of the deadline is extremely valuable. Cogburn also mentioned that she had never experienced any appraisal district reviewing the budget in as much detail as Lankford provides and expressed her appreciation for this transparency. Cogburn announced that Becky Garcia, Leander ISD's Director of Treasury and Debt Management, who had worked with Lankford for many years, was also present and could reiterate the sentiments shared today. Cogburn also thanked the Board for their tireless effort.

Terry Cook, County Commissioner for Precinct 1, was present at the meeting. Cook reminded the Board of the cave that had been discovered in Williamson County a few years back and discussed the issues this had caused for property owners.

These owners had a town hall meeting where Lankford had addressed each of their questions with respect and honesty. Cook expressed that she could not be more impressed with Lankford who gives his time so readily. She also reminded the Board of the town hall meeting conducted by Lankford and Gaddes concerning appraisal and property taxes. Cook mentioned that Lankford had answered each question brought to him with so much respect to each person. She reiterated that Lankford is very responsive, compassionate, and respectful to people. Cook also mentioned that she has found District staff to be very helpful.

Lankford and Chadwell expressed their appreciation to all for their attendance.

Taxpayer Liaison Officer's Report

Report on Property Owner Contacts

Charley Rouse, the District's Taxpayer Liaison Officer, was present to report on the status of his contact with property owners. He indicated that he had received some calls where the property owner did not receive the notice from the Appraisal Review Board.

An email address for Rouse was discussed. Lankford reminded the Board that Rouse does indeed have an email address; however, most owners prefer to communicate via phone, at least initially.

2022 Budget Workshop

2022 Budget Review

Lankford reminded the Board of their previous budget workshops and indicated that the reduced budget was showing a three percent merit, for a total budget amount of \$10,257,900. He announced that this would give the Board more flexibility to do something more than three percent. Providing a four percent cost of living increase plus a two percent merit was discussed. Lankford indicated that the initially proposed budget to the taxing units would not be increased. The salary survey spreadsheet, which had not changed since the last meeting, was distributed to the Board.

Public Hearing on 2022 Proposed Budget

Chadwell opened the public hearing on the 2022 proposed budget. There were no public comments. The public hearing was closed.

Approval of 2022 Budget (Resolution 2021-01)

Lux moved for approval of the 2022 budget as submitted with a three percent merit salary increase for employees; for a total budget amount of \$10,257,900. Chadwell seconded. Lux, Chadwell, Gibbs, and Weber voted for, Hisle did not vote. The motion carried. Weber thanked the staff for their work.

Lankford announced that about ten years ago, the District's entire evaluation system was rewritten, and this evaluation is still being utilized by the District's management team. He indicated the first step in the process was to note each department's salary, the amount included under merit per department and the number of employees in that department. Lankford reviewed a sample which was distributed to the members. He indicated that, to receive a merit increase, the employee must obtain the minimum score on their evaluation.

Lankford indicated that the scores were arrayed to decide how many points each particular employee receives. The document was then signed by the manager and director of that department and then returned to Lankford for final approval. Lankford expressed the District's wishes to encourage performance of its staff. He discussed the District's pay ranges for staff members and indicated that previous employment experience is considered when deciding salary. This document was distributed to the Board. He also noted that meetings are held with underperformers to discuss how they can improve. Lankford mentioned that survey cards, queue statistics and other metrics are utilized to help gauge an employee's performance.

Request for Proposals for District Depository

Lankford announced that it was time for the District to request proposals for its depository. He indicated that currently the District utilizes VeraBank for this service and that the last time proposals were requested there was a very low response rate.

Weber moved for approval for the appraisal district to request proposals for its depository. Lux seconded. Weber, Lux, Chadwell, and Gibbs voted for, Hisle did not vote. The motion carried.

Server Room Generator Purchase

Lankford discussed the District's need for a generator for its computer server room. He announced the District's preferred vendor to install this generator had an issue with an expired Texas Buy Board license. The Texas Buy Board is a cooperative that was created to increase the purchasing power of government entities. Lankford indicated the need for a generator was noticed most during the snowstorm earlier in the year. The District's server room could not be run and therefore staff could not work remotely. Lankford announced that this generator would have paid for itself in that one week and that the District only would have needed to power the server room and the air conditioning unit that provides cooling to this room. Discussion followed.

It was decided that this item would be postponed, and the District would obtain additional proposals. No motion was made.

Virtual Attendance of Board Member – Agenda Posting

Lankford asked for the Board's guidance regarding virtual attendance at Board meetings. He informed the Board that a quorum of its members must be present at the physical meeting location and members attending virtually must be able to be seen. He announced that to prepare for the meeting and revise the agenda posting, the District would need to be made aware of the Board's wishes four business days ahead of the meeting date.

Lankford announced that the Governor had lifted the open meeting law emergency suspensions that had previously been in place due to COVID-19. He indicated that a member may participate remotely and be counted as present if the video and audio feed of the member's participation is broadcast live at the meeting.

Lux expressed the importance of having a process in place for virtual attendees to identify themselves. The Board also discussed the idea of closing the virtual meeting any time the Board were to adjourn to executive session.

Chadwell made a motion that the Board agenda be posted including a number to be utilized for virtual attendance. Lux amended the motion to include closing the meeting during executive session and seconded the motion with this amendment. Chadwell, Lux, Weber, and Gibbs voted for, Hisle did not vote. The motion carried 4-0.

Chief Appraiser Review Questions

Lankford announced that the questions in the Chief Appraiser evaluation had been included in the Board's packet. He asked the members if they would like any changes to the review questions. The Board discussed that these questions could be provided to the advisor that Weber, Lux and Chadwell were working with regarding this evaluation.

No revisions to the Chief Appraiser Review questions were requested.

Employee Holiday Approval

The paid time off chart for staff, which was previously approved by the Board, was distributed to the members. Short and long-term disability benefits were discussed. Chadwell expressed his appreciation to Lankford for providing this chart.

Lankford announced that the Williamson County Tax Office was providing its staff with two floating holidays. He indicated that, due to the District's schedule and deadlines, he prefers to specify these two holidays. Lankford expressed the preference of the District to allow staff additional holidays on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving and the Tuesday after Labor Day.

Weber made a motion to adopt the District's holidays as presented. Lux seconded. Weber, Lux, Chadwell, and Gibbs voted for, Hisle did not vote. The motion carried 4-0.

Consent / Possible Action Items

The consent agenda includes non-controversial and routine items that the Board may act on with one single vote. Any Board member may pull any item from the consent agenda in order that the Board discuss and act upon it individually as part of the regular agenda.

Consent Agenda Items:

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Directors for the regular meeting – August 12, 2021

Monthly Financials

Quarterly Taxing Unit Payments

Lux moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Items IX. A-C. Gibbs seconded. Lux, Gibbs, Weber, and Chadwell voted for, Hisle did not vote. The motion carried 4-0.

The Board moved to agenda item XII. A.

Chief Appraiser's Report

Tax Rate Website

Lankford announced that by August 7th the tax rate postcard notifying owners of their certified appraised value and proposed tax rate from each taxing unit must be mailed. Owners see the no new revenue rate and the voter approval rate. Lankford displayed the tax rate website. He indicated that a number of taxing units have not yet adopted their tax rates.

Lankford announced that public hearings are indicated on the tax rate website (Williamsonpropertytaxes.org) in case owners wish to attend. The owner can also include comments to provide their feedback to the taxing unit. Chadwell requested that, if legally allowed, this be added to the District's website.

Lawsuit, Arbitration and SOAH Reports

Lankford reviewed the lawsuit and arbitration reports. There were no State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) on which to report.

Taxing Unit Survey Response Rate

Lankford announced that the taxing unit survey response rate information was an item that Chadwell had previously requested. He indicated that this is an external survey and that the typical response rate of an external survey is ten to fifteen percent. Lankford announced that the District has 163 taxing units and that the response rate was showing to be 46%: well above the normal for external surveys. He mentioned that at least one response mentioned that they were representing multiple municipal utility districts, which considering that, makes the response rate even higher, around 56%.

Employee Survey

Lankford announced that an employee survey had been conducted. He reviewed the survey and discussed its primary purpose. Lankford indicated that the survey had been sent to the District's 69 employees and 61 had responded. He mentioned some of the words staff had used to describe the culture at the District; these words included: family, care, team, honesty and respectful. He gave praise to the District's management team to see this type of response and expressed how happy he was to see how well staff members were engaged. Lankford expressed how proud he was of the District's management team. Chadwell congratulated Lankford for the recognition.

WCAD Customer Survey Card Procedure

Lankford announced that Jamie Radke, the District's Customer Service Manager who was present, had written procedures for the District's distribution of customer survey cards. These procedures were distributed to the Board members. Radke explained the two types of customer check-ins; telephone and walk-in and reviewed the procedures for the concierge and the greeter. Cynthia Sanchez, one of the staff members who had greeted customers, was present and reviewed her procedure as the greeter.

WCAD Google Reviews

Lankford displayed the District's Google reviews. He announced that it takes some time to push a score one point. Lankford indicated that it should only take fourteen 5-star reviews to move this number. He expressed his appreciation to the District's Customer Service staff for their great service.

Lankford informed the Board that the District also gets reviews of its appraisal staff during the appeals season. He proudly announced that the District had received only one 1-star and one 4-star review; the remainder were 5-star reviews. He indicated this to be a good gauge of the level of customer service the District is providing. Chadwell asked how the District's reviews compared to other appraisal districts. Lankford responded that the District scored higher than any other local government office he could find, based on the number of reviews.

Lankford announced that he would be teaching a class regarding customer service at an upcoming Chief Appraiser Institute. He mentioned that he would be reviewing the three major groups that appraisal districts provide service to: property owners, taxing units, and its employees. He announced that all three of these groups had rated the District with extremely high reviews and that staff is doing an excellent job in all areas of customer service.

Board of Directors Election

Lankford reminded the members about the timing of the Board of Directors election process. He indicated that, by October 15th, resolutions containing nominations for candidates were due from the taxing units that are eligible to vote. The ballots, listing the candidates whose names were timely submitted, are due out to the taxing units before October 30th. Lankford announced that, due to new legislation, those entities entitled to cast at least five percent of the total votes must determine their vote by resolution at the first or second meeting of the governing body. He indicated that this information had been shared with the taxing units. The declaration of those candidates who received the most votes is done before December 31st.

Lankford explained the voting process. Chadwell announced that, although he is no longer on the school board, he was willing to serve on this board again but also was willing to step down if Round Rock ISD nominated someone else to take the position.

Lankford announced that all Board election information had been provided to the taxing units, including sample resolutions and other pertinent documents.

Board Agenda Additions for Future Meeting

- Chadwell announced that, as always, if any member has a request for an item for a future meeting to provide this information to himself and Lankford.

Board Announcements

- There were no Board announcements.

The Board discussed the following meeting date:

Thursday, October 14, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. This Board asked that this date be verified with the members not in attendance before a final meeting is set.

The Board recessed for a short break at 10:52 a.m. and then entered executive session.

Chief Appraiser Evaluation & Compensation Process

Chief Appraiser Communications & Performance

Executive Session began at 10:55 a.m. and ended at 11:40 a.m.

The Board returned to open session at 11:41 a.m.

Consideration and possible action on items discussed in Executive Session

Chief Appraiser Evaluation & Compensation Process

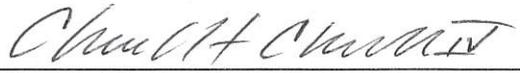
No action was taken as a result of Executive Session.

Chief Appraiser Communications & Performance

No action was taken as a result of Executive Session.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully,



Charles Chadwell, Chairman



Harry Gibbs, Vice Chairman