



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE November 23, 2009

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Proposed slaughterhouse denied

“Under the authority of Local Government Code 234.033, I will make a motion to deny location of a proposed slaughterhouse at 855 Slama Road because the operation is incompatible with existing land use of the neighboring area,” said Commissioner Bill Dodson, pct. 2. The motion came after extensive public testimony both for and against the proposal.

Property owner Shamsul Ahmed said he wanted to establish a slaughter house that was USDA inspected in order to be able to sell his meats out of state. He estimated he would slaughter 600 goats and lambs, combined, per week and about 20 to 25 head of young cattle. He said he had chosen the 200-acre parcel, of which an estimate 70 acres is within Ellis County and 130 within Navarro County, as a location for his business because it is temperate, not within a flood zone, and close to Dallas where a market is available for the produce.

According to Ahmed, even the blood would be a marketable commodity, as it is used to flavor some dog and cat foods.

Richard Heller of Dublin, Texas said he raises meat goats and intended to sell his animals to Ahmed.

“We have encountered a lot of prejudice buying and selling goats,” Heller said. “When they see Mr. Ahmed and his partner, the price goes up. I said I would provide them with goats of good quality so they could offer a fair price to their community.”

Professional Engineer Michael Alturk of MA Engineering and Construction was on hand to answer technical questions for the Court, but indicated he had not yet done any design work or drainage studies.

Opponents to the proposal highlighted a variety of issues:

- Doubts that the existing roadway could support the increased traffic the operation would create;
- Safety concerns about heavy trucks on narrow roadways and a narrow bridge;
- The belief that the halal method of slaughtering animals is inhumane;

- Fear that waste products could introduce cryptosporidium into the water supply and other environmental hazards.

Odor, however, was the most common objection.

“(I live near) a sewage plant that was supposed to be clean and not smelly,” said Jimmy Simmons of Pecan Hill. “But it is smelly, and I am a good half mile from it.”

“The prevailing winds will blow the stench across my mom’s home,” said Patsy Goss, whose mother is a neighboring land owner.

“I am down wind,” said James Ferguson. “It will decrease the value of my property.”

“I don’t want to be sitting there trying to enjoy my property, cooking out, fishing in the pond, and have the smell of a slaughter house rolling up across my property,” said Robert Collins, adding that in communities where such facilities have previously been approved, odor is a continuing battle ground.

“I thank everyone for participating and allowing everyone else the respect of speaking their piece,” said County Judge Carol Bush.

Earlier in the meeting, Commissioners cast their votes for candidates for the Ellis Central Appraisal Board for the 2010-2011 term, giving 184 votes to Linda Alvarez and 180 votes each to Johnny Johnson, Phillip Lynch, Ken Marks, and Joe Pitts. The votes will be conveyed to the Chief Appraiser where they will be tallied along with votes from other taxing entities in the county. There are currently five positions available and five candidates have been nominated.

Commissioner Heath Sims, pct. 3, received approval to apply for a grant through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP).

“We need to file for this grant to see what kind of funding we will receive,” Sims explained. “So we can weigh whether it will be better to accept the funding and destroy our tractor, or sell ours and buy one. We need to know the numbers, and we need to apply to find out.”

According to Special Projects Director Holly Davis, TCEQ opened the grant cycle on November 5 with \$18 million in funding and have already awarded \$13 million.

“The Commissioner is in the process of getting bids for the equipment,” she said. “But in the interest of the time frame and the rapidly diminishing funds, we wanted to ask the Court to approve of applying and not wait until the middle of December.”

In other business, Commissioners:

- Reduced the speed limit on Ruby Avenue, Lewis Avenue, Cecelia Avenue, Charles Avenue, Elizabeth Avenue, Griffing Avenue, and Dawson Drive in the Skyline Acres subdivision to 30 mph because the prior speed limit (35 mph) was unreasonable and unsafe;
- Approved four work orders under the County’s interlocal agreement with the City of Alma in pct. 2;
- Took no action on a proposal to increase a part-time clerk in Human Services from 20 hours per week to 35 hours per week for the remainder of the fiscal year;
- Voted to accept payment in the amount of \$1785.18 as full compensation for property damage resulting from a vehicular collision which occurred on August 25, 2008;
- Approved a preliminary plat for Delanie Park, 15 lots, in pct. 4;
- Authorized Rodman Companies of Frisco, Texas to provide equipment at an hourly rate for excavation and grading necessary for the remodel of the new Adult Probation Building, not to exceed \$20,000;
- Authorized an agreement with Southwest Solutions Group of Addison, Texas to provide labor, supervision, materials, equipment and tools to completely disassemble,

move, deliver, and install high density files and shelving for the Ellis County Bond program, including but not limited to shelving in current use and in storage, at a cost not to exceed \$349,998.11 (within budget);

- After a short executive session, authorized the County Judge to sign all legal documents and/or the County Attorney to initiate any and all necessary legal action to sell the real property located at 217 Rogers Street (former Elections Office) in downtown Waxahachie;
- Rejected bids received for ballistic vests for the Sheriff's Office, due to the County's failure to include the phrase "only sealed bids will be accepted" in its recent newspaper ads;
- Declared a 1999 Ford Crown Victoria, a 1998 Ford Crown Victoria, and a wrecked 2001 Dodge Pickup as surplus and authorized sale by competitive bid or auction;
- Approved purchase of one Caterpillar 289C Multi Terrain Loader for pct. 4 at a cost of \$54,892 through the Buy Board; and
- Approved purchase of a 2010 Chevrolet one-ton pickup for pct. 2, also through the Buy Board.