

Williamson Central Appraisal District

Board of Directors Meeting

Minutes of April 9, 2020

Charles Chadwell, Chairman, called the regular meeting of the Williamson Central Appraisal District Board of Directors to order Thursday, April 9, 2020 at 9:07 a.m. Board members present Charles Chadwell, Harry Gibbs, Donald Hisle, Rufus Honeycutt, Jon Lux and Larry Gaddes. Quorum declared.

This meeting was conducted via a Zoom teleconference.

Receipt of Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Taxpayer Liaison Officer's Report

Report on Property Owner Contacts

Rouse reported on the status of his contact with property owners. He indicated only receiving one call of any consequence, which had already been resolved, since the Board's last meeting.

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 – March 12, 2020

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Directors for the regular meeting – March 27, 2020

Monthly Financials

Quarterly Taxing Unit Payments

Lankford provided information to the Board regarding the quarterly taxing unit payments. He shared with the members a number of taxing units that had not been able to provide their payment timely, primarily due to the recent pandemic and their inability to conduct meetings timely. Lankford recommended approval of the late payments.

Hisle made a motion to approve the consent agenda items as presented. Honeycutt seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

The February 2020 financials and expenditures were reviewed and filed for audit.

2021 Budget

Budget Board Meeting Calendar

Lankford reviewed the budget calendar dates. He pointed out the state mandated deadlines of June 15th and September 15th. No motion was made.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Status Update

Status on Contact with Entities

Lankford displayed a listing of taxing units that he had been in contact with to explain the concept of this year providing a certified value estimate, due to the Coronavirus pandemic. He indicated that new law had given the ability to Chief Appraiser's to supply an estimate at certification. Lankford mentioned that he had not heard of any concerns from the taxing entities regarding certifying with an estimate. He mentioned that this would place additional pressure on ensuring the accuracy of this estimate and indicated that these would be conservative. Lankford explained this process.

No motion was made.

Visits from the Public

Lankford discussed the District's plan for public visitors to the office. He displayed information that would be provided in the appraisal notices that would be mailed to property owners. He indicated that information shared would advise owners, due to the Coronavirus situation, to check the District's website for updates on the status of the office being open to the public. The website will be updated as needed. Lankford also displayed the appraisal notice envelope indicating that there were multiple locations on the mailout to show owners the District's current status. He also mentioned that the outside of the envelope would indicate that the appraised value would be showing as of January 1st, by law, which was before the current pandemic had begun.

Lankford announced that he was working to draft a press release. This release, he hoped, would show property owners the extra steps taken to prove the District is not ignoring the issues. The release will include outlining the District's efforts to contact both the Governor as well as the Comptroller's office to assist with reducing property values for this year. Lankford also mentioned the idea of valuing property at last year's number, which he indicated, was presented to the Governor; however, the Governor's office expressed that the full legislature would need to make that decision.

Lankford reviewed signage that would be posted at the District office alerting property owners to the current situation. He also announced that a mail slot would be placed at the front of the District's building for those who wish to hand deliver documents.

Lankford reviewed information included on the District's website showing that the office is closed to the public. He announced that owners would be encouraged to utilize the online protest system. He also indicated that he had given extensions on deadlines for both Business Personal Property renditions as well as freeport applications. He announced that, due to the specific language in the tax code regarding ag applications, he felt the deadline for these could not be extended.

Honeycutt mentioned the information located on the District's website, indicating this to be a great resource for property owners.

No motion was made.

Emergency Funds Expenditure Approval

Lankford announced some emergency funds that were used in order to allow for District staff to begin working from home in order to help stop the spread of the Coronavirus. He displayed information showing different necessary emergency purchases including equipment for laptops, display ports, a teleconferencing app and a few additional laptops. Lankford reminded the Board that, per their policy, he is able to spend up to \$15,000 in an emergency. He announced that, if the Board approves today's submitted emergency expenses, the fund replenishes for any additional emergency needs.

Lankford announced that an updated version of the Zoom teleconferencing app would be needed to provide a toll-free phone number in order for the public to participate in open meetings, per the Governor's order. He mentioned that the District was looking into a new cloud-based phone software, Ring Central, that would allow for teleconferencing. Lankford announced that Ring Central was utilizing the Zoom platform.

Hisle moved to approve the previously spent emergency funds in response to needs brought by the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak. These funds were used to provide additional computers and supplies for employees to work from home during this event. The total expenditure was \$10,650.62. Honeycutt seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Lankford thanked the District's Information Technology staff members for the outstanding job they had done in providing the needed equipment.

No motion was made.

Chief Appraiser's Report

Fire Suppression Update

Lankford was pleased to report that the fire suppression system was finally in place. He reminded the Board that they had asked that the District look into a gas-based suppression system. Lankford displayed pictures of the equipment located in the District's computer server room. He thanked the District's I.T. Manager, Michael Page, for his efforts on completing this project.

WCAD Initiatives

Lankford reminded the Board that the District had started using MRA (Multiple Regression Analysis) to formulate adjustments in sales comparison grids for residential properties. The goal was to start sending notices using the five best comparable sales with adjustments. Lankford expressed the large amount of work it took to incorporate this into the District's computer system. He announced that it was a very accurate way of valuing property and that 3,298 properties would be valued, this year, with the sales comparison grid. Lankford was hopeful that this would start mitigating some of the protest levels; he felt the results/impact of these efforts would most likely be seen in the coming years.

Entity Meeting Reminder

Lankford reminded the Board that the Entity Meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 14th at 8 a.m. and would be held using the Zoom platform. He invited the Board members to attend and informed them that he would be reviewing the District's plan for this year so the taxing units would get a better understanding of what the appraisal district did in response to the Coronavirus. Lankford mentioned that he would also review values for this year.

Google Review Update

Lankford expressed his appreciation to the District's Customer Service team. He announced that they had worked to make the District's Google reviews reflect the same results the office sees internally through surveys. Lankford announced that the District's Google reviews were showing at 4.1 stars and that there had been 77 reviews.

Lawsuit, Arbitration and SOAH Reports

Chadwell inquired if there was any noticed changed in lawsuit activity. Chris Connelly, the District's Deputy Chief, shared that the effects of COVID-19 would most likely be seen in next year's appraisals. He announced that new lawsuits and arbitration would not be filed until after the District started receiving protests.

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

Board Agenda Additions for Future Meeting

There were no specific items discussed for future meetings.

Board Announcements

Chadwell asked that Lankford provide an update on staff working remotely. Lankford announced that, as part of working remotely, he had been having weekly meetings with management staff. He was pleased to report that the efficiency level was showing to 100% in three to four departments and that the remainder of the departments were showing at an 80% range, with the anticipation of reaching 100%.

Lankford announced that, overall, everything was going surprisingly well and that staff was very happy and morale was high. He indicated that, if staff continues to be efficient working from home, he may consider allowing staff to work from home one day per week in the future. Lankford expressed how proud he was of the District's employees.

The Board set their next meeting date as follows:

Thursday, May 14, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

The Board also considered the following future meeting dates:

Thursday, June 11, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Thursday, July 9, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Thursday, September 10, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 10:24 a.m.

Respectfully,

Charles Chadwell, Chairman

Charles Chadwell, Chairman

Donald H. Hisle

Donald Hisle, Secretary