

# North Fort Worth Alliance

## Minutes of May 15, 2010 Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Rusty Fuller, Associate Director, at approximately 9:00AM at the Fellowship of the Parks Church. Colleen Demel, Executive Director was ill and Robert Mohler, Secretary was unable to attend.

### Representatives from Communities

Jerry Betts – Summerset Hills

Rusty Fuller – Vineyards at Heritage

Bill Lebo – Trace Ridge

### Community members attending:

Jamie Gallovich - Heritage

Richard Walter – VOWS

Charles Wray – Premier Communities

### Guest Speaker:

B. Glen Whitley – County Judge

Judge Whitley returned to continue his dialogue with the members of the NFWA about county government. We started out by thanking Judge Whitley for getting the lines painted on Old Denton Road so quickly after our bringing it to his attention at the last meeting. Bill Lebo also recognized the fine results of the surprise inspection of the county jail – seven consecutive years of compliance.

The Judge was kind enough to review some of the items about which he spoke at the last meeting.

In Texas a county commissioners' court is comprised of four commissioners who are elected from precincts and a judge that is elected at large. This is regardless of the population of the county. The duties of the commissioners' court are to set tax rates for the county, the overall budgets for the various departments of county government and pass and implement policies. The departments, however, are ultimately responsible for spending their budgets. This calls for collaboration efforts between and among the commissioners' court and the various departments.

One big difference between the latitude to govern between the cities and counties of Texas is that the State tells the cities what they cannot do and tells the counties specifically what they can do. A good example of this is zoning. Counties cannot zone property in the unincorporated areas. This is why you will see conflicting land uses in unincorporated areas.

The County has a 30 man road crew in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Precinct that works on projects in the non-incorporated areas. The Judge said that the County does do road work for the

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City TPW. In those cases, the City provides the materials and the County provides the equipment and labor. As part of our conversations, the Judge speculated that there may be room for the County to work on the postponed section of Beach using asphalt, thereby widening the road until such time as the City can support the bonds to do the final build using cement.

The Judge, in response to a question from Jerry Betts, talked about the difference in the pension systems used by the City of FW and the County. It was his thought that the State should return the control of the pension for the police and fire to the City. The program the City has is a defined benefits plan where the benefits are set by a formula. This can lead to large pensions to individuals who work an inordinate amount of overtime in their last couple of years of employment. This plan is also run by a board of directors which include no members of the City Council. The City is forced to accept the growth assumptions of the plan and simply provide funds.

The County system is a defined contribution system wherein the employees contribute seven percent of their pay to a fund that pays a set growth rate. When the fund makes more than the growth rate the excess is placed in an account to be used in those years where the growth rate is not achieved. The retirement amounts are based on the employee's contributions and a set, predictable contribution by the County.

There was a discussion among the attendees and Judge Whitley about transportation and funding. We spoke about how to fund the needed improvements and the current limitations and tax collection trends. Ideas were discussed like toll roads, taxes based on miles driven, fees through the water bill, personal property taxes based on the price of vehicles and referendums for specific taxes for specific projects with the tax to disappear after the project is paid for.

Here are a few interesting points:

- Revenues received from the 20 cents tax per gallon of gasoline declined in 2009 over 2008 and are trending month by month in 2010 to decline again this year.
- 5% of the 20 cent per gallon gas tax goes to education – not roads;
- Tarrant County is likely to receive only 50% of the amount of money it pays in federal gasoline tax;
- The current gasoline tax can only be use on roads. It cannot be use for mass transit;
- 80% of Tarrant County residents see transportation as a major issue and 80% of the Tarrant County residents were unwilling to fund projects to mitigate the issues; and
- Currently, because of the marketplace, County road projects are coming in 10% or more under budgeted amounts.

Finally, in response to a question, Judge Whitley suggest that keeping the pressure on state and federal representatives wherein you express our transportation needs

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would be the best way to get results. Perhaps making phone calls to their offices when you are stuck in traffic would be a convenient time to call.

Rusty brought up the meeting that Colleen Demel, Mark Brast and he had with Councilman Espino on May 6. Councilman Espino wants to get HOA presidents together with the heads of City departments so that these folks can get a better understanding of the needs and the urgency of the needs of this area of FW. He'd like to have a series of 2 hour meetings, held here, with specific departmental issues.

Rusty asked Judge Whitley if he would be interested in attending these meetings. He said he would and we should notify 2<sup>nd</sup> Precinct Commissioner Gary Fickes, as well. He indicated that he may want his department heads to attend to listen as well.

Rusty asked for community issues:

- Jerry Betts suggest that we initiate a Facebook page for the NFWA. Rusty asked him to look into the cost and how it would be administered.
- Jamie Gallovich asked about the Air Quality Committee. Rusty gave a report on the makeup of the Committee and a summary of the events that have taken place so far, what is slated to happen and when.
- Jamie Gallovich asked how to go about getting merchants in the Heritage area to put in bike racks. She specifically mentioned the complex on Heritage Trace Parkway west of Beach, the strip mall at Old Denton and Heritage Trace and the Alliance Town Center. We can discuss this with Hillwood when they come to talk about the Alliance Town Center. We can find out who owns the complex on Heritage Trace and the strip mall and approach them.

Respectfully submitted,

Russell E. Fuller  
Associate Director