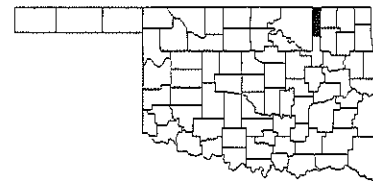




THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Washington County Administration Building
400 South Johnstone, Room 201
Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003

Phone: (918) 337-2820 Fax: (918) 337-2892



Mitch Antle
DISTRICT 1

Mike Bouvier
DISTRICT 2

Mike Dunlap
DISTRICT 3

April 11, 2022

Dewey City Council
c/o Mayor Tom Hays
411 E Don Tyler Avenue
Dewey, OK 74029

Mayor Hays and Councilpersons:

During your council meeting of March 21, 2022, an agenda item called for discussion of the Washington County Fairgrounds. Mayor Hays read from a prepared letter to express his concerns. We would like to address those concerns.

The Board of Washington County Commissioners would first like to express that we pride ourselves on accessibility and responsiveness to all of the Washington County citizenry. As such, if at any point the City of Dewey feels less than heard, please feel free to reach out to any one of the commissioners. Additionally, Commissioner Antle, District 1 Commissioner, recognizes that the bulk of the Dewey City proper is within District 1 of Washington County and has stated to the council that he will present himself to your council at any time you so desire. That aside, we will attempt to provide a satisfactory answer and/or explanation to the questions raised in the aforementioned letter.

Your letter opens with the question of "Why are we abandoning the historical Washington County Fairgrounds?" Throughout the last year, Commissioner Bouvier, District 2 Commissioner, has been attempting to develop, through the Washington County Public Facilities Authority (WCPFA), a plan of action to move forward with the funding and construction of a new exposition center for Washington County. That endeavor has created some confusion within the community and needs to be clarified. As we have reviewed from the news article that first brought this to our collective attention, there is a report naming the Board of County Commissioners. This report has not been presented to the BOCC, nor have we acted to proceed with the document as presented.

The second charge of the letter was a statement and not a question, but warrants addressing as well. This statement "For decades the County has neglected the buildings and grounds." is grossly inaccurate. In reviewing expenditures for the last three fiscal years (FY19, FY20, & FY21) the county has expended some \$50,000 on capital projects that include new LED lighting within the facility and arenas, the HVAC systems, plumbing and electrical projects, paint and maintenance equipment for the

facility. Additionally, the maintenance and operations of the facility are an annual liability in the neighborhood of \$42,000 to \$45,000. So to be accurate, our collective tax dollars have contributed to the maintenance, operations and capital improvements of the Washington County Fairgrounds totaling some \$200,000 (excluding the largest liability of personnel expenses). We hardly feel that this expenditure of tax dollars shows a pattern of neglect.

The next question, “How have we transitioned from not being able to rework and make improvements to our existing Washington County Fairgrounds to asking the citizens of Washington County to build a huge expo?” is answered above in making moot the foundation of the first part of the question with readily available and accessible expenditure documents within your county government and to the second part stating that this plan of action has not been presented to the BOCC.

The next three paragraphs of the letter express the position of the City of Dewey. The statements will be taken under advisement and we believe will be taken into serious consideration should the concept of this project proceed. As always, we appreciate any public input and would encourage the City of Dewey to engage in this process to ensure that their voice is not only heard, but given the weight of cooperation by way of the inter-local partnerships we strive to maintain with all of the communities of Washington County.

The final paragraph of the letter asks several questions that all county citizens should be aware of.

The first question: “If there are no monies available to maintain the current Fairgrounds, how will the Expo be maintained?” Again, the opening assumption is moot as previously explained; however, the question of maintaining a new exposition center is a valid question. As the BOCC has not been directly informed from the WCPFA, we cannot answer.

The second question: “What is the business plan?” The BOCC has not been directly informed from the WCPFA and cannot answer.

The third question: “Is there any guarantee that it will be able to support itself?” The BOCC has serious concerns with the facilities ability to support itself and have not been directly informed by the WCPFA. As to a guarantee, that portion of the question can be answered simply as no; there is no way for the WCPFA or the BOCC to guarantee a self- supporting facility. Our efforts with our existing fairgrounds are to bring them to a position of neutrality. As a government entity, we do not believe that the County should be in “business”. That is for the private sector. We do not want to compete with any

business; we endeavor to develop business to the benefit of the residents of the County to ensure they have a vibrant, flourishing and successful community to call home.

The fourth and fifth questions (which have been consolidated as they appear to be relating to the same issue): “What will smaller venues do?” and “Where can they hold their events?” The assumption is that the reference of smaller venues would mean smaller events. We believe, as we have had the opportunity to see similar facilities throughout the state with travels to meetings for multiple organizations, boards and committees that are an obligation of the BOCC, any new facility would have the capacity to partition larger areas and create size appropriate portions of the facility to address the community’s needs. Having said that, we again must state, the WCPFA has not communicated with the BOCC any clear path in that regard and cannot answer directly. The sixth question: “How much will it cost to use the facility?” We believe that could be answered through the “business plan” referred to in your earlier question, and again, cannot answer as we have not been informed of the action taken by the WCPFA.

It is noted that the recurring theme above of a lack of communication between the WCPFA and the BOCC has created substantial issues in the development of this project. It has also created a sense of confusion and distrust within the community. These are additional hurdles to an already complex project and must be rectified should this process move forward.

Again, we greatly appreciate the input from the City of Dewey, encourage the City of Dewey and any community within Washington County that believes their voice to be quieted by this process to engage in this process.

Sincerely,

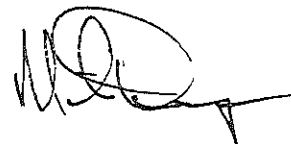
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