

Letter to the Editor

By George "Jody" Sweeney

Our Levy Court Commissioners face many issues, especially lately in regards to the moratorium, appeals for exemption from the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances, and the number of developments that have been submitted for review. The process to gain approval for a new development requires the application to pass through many State and County agencies and committees. By the time the application has reached the Levy Court, it has already been approved by all. After Public Comment on the application, one of the Commissioners must make a motion to approve or deny the application. The Commissioner making the motion must give reasons supporting their position. If it is seconded, it then comes to a vote of all Commissioners. During the vote on the application, Commissioners can either agree with the motion, adding comments supporting their position or stating "For the reasons stated". However, if they do not agree, they can simply state, "No". The Commissioners who disagree never have to explain why they disagree. Sometimes they do, as Mr. Ennis did during the Moratorium vote on August 21.

I would like to see a change in how voting takes place. If a Commissioner disagrees with the motion, I would like to hear the reasons why they disagree. Too many times I have been in the audience and heard a Commissioner disagree with the majority but not have to account for why they disagree.

Because Levy Court is acting on the advice of other State and County agencies and committees, the Commissioners usually have no option but to approve an application that seems to meet the requirements of laws and regulations. They are nothing more than a rubber stamp in the process, making them ineffective in representing the majority of residents in their district.

The Commissioners' should have the ability to deny an application based on their representation and the impact of that application on the County and their specific Districts. An application should be presented to Levy Court Commissioners before the State and County agencies and committees that force adherence to laws and regulations. Since the Commissioners represent the residents in their District, it is the majority opinion of those residents that should be expressed when voting for this pre-application. If the Commissioner votes in a way that is not in the favor of their district, the residents will voice their opinion during the next election. If approved to move forward, the Developer making the request would then be free to move forward with State and County approvals. If denied, the Developer would only have expended a minimal amount of money without all the fees associated with an application.

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