



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: Tuesday, July 22, 2014
Prepared By/Phone Number: Deece Eckstein, (512) 854-9754
Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head: Deece Eckstein, IGR, 854-9754
Commissioners Court Sponsor: Judge Biscoe

AGENDA LANGUAGE:

RECEIVE UPDATE ON WORKING GROUPS TO EXPLORE LEGISLATIVE AND LEGAL REMEDIES FOR INEQUITIES IN THE PROPERTY APPRAISAL SYSTEM.

SUMMARY AND IGR COORDINATOR RECOMMENDATION:

At its meeting on June 10, the Commissioners Court adopted three motions regarding further study of inequities in the commercial property appraisal system and asked the Intergovernmental Relations Office to report back in a month on the status of those initiatives. This is that report.

IGR recommends that the Court direct IGR to proceed with its work on the issues involved and keep the Court advised.

BACKGROUND:

On Monday, June 2, the Commissioners Court met in a Special Voting Session to “[c]onsider and take appropriate action concerning the filing of a challenge petition with the Appraisal Review Board regarding the setting of commercial property values in Travis County.” After discussing the matter in executive session, the Court took no action that day.

On June 10, the Court again considered the issue, hearing testimony from county staff and the public and receiving another briefing in executive session. At the conclusion of its discussion, the Court adopted three motions:

- 1) Direct the Intergovernmental Relations Office (IGR) staff to work with the Auditor and PBO to bring together a working group comprised of all the major taxing units in Travis County as well as the business and real estate community to look for legislative and legal remedies for inequities in the

property appraisal system. IGR should report back in not more than one month that a working group has been created.

- 2) Direct County Purchasing staff to develop a professional services procurement, and solicit the services of a qualified professional to do an impartial analysis of the accuracy of commercial and industrial property appraisals in Travis County. The Planning and Budget Office is directed to identify funding for this procurement.

FRIENDLY AMENDMENT: Have the County collaborate with other taxing entities in Travis County to solicit a partnership and funding for an appropriate study of this issue, for use either in the legislative session and/or later, as appropriate.

- 3) Direct Intergovernmental Relations staff to work with our fellow urban counties, through the Conference of Urban Counties (CUC), to explore legislative and legal remedies for the inequities in the property appraisal system. IGR should report back to the Court in not more than one month that a working group has been created.

Since that time, IGR has been working with county staff and others on these directives. The key focus has been on assembling the working group described in Motion #1. In consultation with other stakeholders, we have decided to divide this group into two subsets:

- ★ a “Citizens Committee,” made up of leaders from the civic, business, neighborhood and governmental communities that will study the issue, ascertain the facts, and make recommendations for legal and legislative remedies to the Court; and
- ★ a “Technical Advisory Committee,” made up of experts from local governments, the commercial real estate industry, the appraisal profession, the Legislature and the appraisal district, that will do research, quantify the problems, examine best practices, and explore statutory and legal options.

Membership of both committees is currently being finalized. A workplan for both committees has been drafted, and the details are being negotiated with the stakeholders. We expect that the working group will make a report to the Commissioners Court later this year, in anticipation of the legislative session.

With respect to Motion #2, the Court has decided to approach the analysis with the assumption that litigation may be involved. Accordingly, the County

Attorney's Office is formulating a litigation strategy, and will brief the Court on that – and on any analysis that will be part of it – at the appropriate time.

With respect to Motion #3, IGR is working with the CUC's legislative team – staff, consultants and the full-time legislative coordinators from the major urban counties – to fashion legislative proposals to address the significant problems with the appraisal process. That team is reporting to the CUC Policy Committee, which sets overall policy for the organization.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING: N/A.

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS: None.

NAMES, PHONE NUMBERS AND EMAIL ADDRESSES OF PERSONS WHO MIGHT BE AFFECTED BY OR BE INVOLVED WITH THIS REQUEST:

David Escamilla
Travis County Attorney
Phone: 854-9415
Email: David.Escamilla@co.travis.tx.us

James Collins, Executive Assistant County Attorney
Travis County Attorney's Office
Phone: 854-9415
Email: James.Collins@co.travis.tx.us

John Hille, Transactions Division Director
Travis County Attorney's Office
Phone: 854-9415
Email: John.Hille@co.travis.tx.us

Sharon Talley, Enforcement Division Director
Travis County Attorney's Office
Phone: 854-9415
Email: Sharon.Talley@co.travis.tx.us

Tom Nuckols
Travis County Attorney's Office
Phone: 854-9262
Email: Tom.Nuckols@co.travis.tx.us

Leroy Nellis, Interim Director
Planning and Budget Office
Phone: 854-9066
Email: Leroy.Nellis@co.travis.tx.us

Jessica Rio, Budget Director
Planning and Budget Office
Phone: 854-4455
Email: Jessica.Rio@co.travis.tx.us

Travis Gatlin, Assistant Budget Director
Planning and Budget Office
Phone: 854-9065
Email: Travis.Gatlin@co.travis.tx.us

Nicki Riley
Travis County Auditor
Phone: 854-3227
Email: Nicki.Riley@co.travis.tx.us

Cyd Grimes
Travis County Purchasing Agent
Phone: 854-9761
Email: Cyd.Grimes@co.travis.tx.us