

Freestone Central Appraisal District
Directors Meeting

Minutes of November 13, 2024

Regular Meeting # 543

The Freestone Central Appraisal District Board of Directors met at the appraisal office located at 218 North Mount, Fairfield, Texas. Board members present were Craig Dunlap, Daniel Ralstin, Stanton Brown, Jerry Don Sanders, Lovie Whyte, and Sid Fryer. Representing the appraisal district was Don Awalt, Chief Appraiser; Jason Moore, Deputy Chief Appraiser; Carol Clark, Administrative Assistant.

Mr. Dunlap called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Mr. Dunlap established proof of the posting of public notice of the meeting in accordance with the Texas Open Meeting Act from the affidavit attached to the foot of the posted agenda.

Mr. Dunlap then declared a quorum of members present.

The board considered the minutes of October 9, 2024. Mr. Brown made a motion to approve the minutes as presented with a second by Mr. Sanders. The motion carried.

The board then considered the district's monthly financial report for October 9, 2024. Mr. Awalt reviewed the bill list pointing out the payments made to Pritchard & Abbott; \$10,660.00 for the Real Estate Software contract, and \$3,150.00 for web hosting. A payment was made to Texas Association of Appraisal Districts (TAAD) for Ms. Tina Gilley Lee, and Mr. Coltin Bottoms for a scheduled class. Mr. Awalt pointed out expense payments made for the 2024 TRCA Conference for Ms. Debbie Bowden, Mr. Jason Moore, and a payment for himself. There was also travelling and training paid for Ms. Gilley Lee for her 2024 RPA Review Level III with Mr. Lee Flowers. Mr. Awalt briefly reviewed the Budget vs Actual showing multiple accounts that were over budgeted. He added that he would review the accounts in more detail during the line item adjustments listed next on the agenda. Mr. Sanders made a motion with a second by Ms. Whyte to approve the monthly financial report for October 2024. The motion carried.

Consideration and action were taken on the Line Item Adjustments to the 2024 Operating Budget. Mr. Awalt reminded the board of the accounts that were overbudgeted as shown in the October 2024 Budget vs Actual. He added that he would be presenting his proposed adjustments with no changes to the budget; funds would be moved between accounts.

Mr. Awalt explained to the board that the district's health insurance had increased from \$175,651 to \$187,151, a difference of \$11,500 which is the January 2025 premium to be paid one (1) month in advance in December 2024. Mr. Frank Campos will make adjustments during his 2024 financial audit. Postage & Mailing Services decreased by \$6,000. The mailing of postcards was included in postage in the 2023 budget, but the district is no longer required to mail those postcards to the taxpayers; the budgeted amount was \$34,500 and decreased to \$28,500. While Employee Health Insurance and postage had the biggest changes there was no changes to the overall balance of zero. Mr. Awalt pointed out the 2024 Cost Share which was calculated using the 2023 adopted tax rates. He reminded the board that after all adjustments were made there was no change in the budget amount or the entities contributions for 2024. Mr. Awalt then asked the board to approve his report with the adjustments. Mr. Fryer made a motion to approve the Line Item Adjustments to the 2024 Operating Budget. Mr. Brown seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The board considered Item VIII on the agenda *Accepting Janitorial Service*. Mr. Awalt briefly reviewed the bids included in the packet first informing the board that the district had a contract with MS Smith Janitorial Services but they cancelled their services without prior notice. After calling a few local companies five (5) bids were submitted. The bid submitted from Wilson Janitorial was for \$850 per month. Family Ties Commercial Cleaning Services also submitted a bid. Mr. Awalt stated that

Stephanie Wright the owner was the person that cleaned the office for MS Smith Janitorial Services and also charges the same fees of \$750 per month. Tolden's House & Building Cleaning charges \$673 per month and has a contract with the Community National Bank. After speaking with Ms. Teresa Duke, she informed Mr. Awalt that they did a good job. All three companies had insurance and would provide their own equipment and cleaning products. The other two bids were submitted from employees, Ms. Tina Gilley Lee with a fee of \$650 per month, and Ms. Desiree' Frasier with \$550 per month; neither employee had insurance but is willing to purchase coverage if their bid was approved. Mr. Awalt added that since the previous company canceled their services with the district, Ms. Gilley Lee had cleaned the office every weekend. Mr. Brown made a motion to accept the bid submitted by Ms. Gilley Lee for a fee of \$650 per month. Mr. Fryer seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The board considered the Chief Appraiser Performance Evaluation for 2024. At this time, Mr. Awalt and Mr. Moore exited the meeting. The board began to discuss the questions listed on the evaluation form and the survey submitted by each employee. The board's consensus of the staffs surveys is that Mr. Awalt meets or exceeds expectations. They continued to review his evaluation by describing Mr. Awalt's major strengths. Mr. Awalt was able to manage the employees, interact and communicate well with the public and that he is also transparent in keeping the board informed of changes in the office allowing the board to make suggestions and give an input. Mr. Awalt would need to continue to stay updated with practices to meet new and evolving policies and requirements. After lengthy discussion, the board asked Mr. Awalt to return to the meeting to assist them with completing his personal and organizational goals. Mr. Awalt added that his goal is to develop a cross training program within the employees for future continuity when considering the employees that may retire within the next ten (10) years. After evaluating Mr. Awalt's overall performance as excellent, the board then considered the Chief Appraiser's 2025 salary listed as Item X on the agenda.

Mr. Awalt informed the board that by recommendation of the financial auditor his salary must be stated and recorded in the minutes. At this time Ms. Clark exited the meeting to make copies of the 2025 budget for the board to review the Employee Compensation & Benefits for 2025 listing Mr. Awalt's salary. Mr. Awalt pointed out his compensation which had already been budgeted and approved by the board for 2025. Mr. Fryer made a motion that Mr. Awalt's salary for 2025 be set at the budgeted amount of \$89,400 with longevity pay of \$1,800, an auto allowance of \$6,500, communication allowance of \$600 with a total salary of \$98,300. Mr. Brown seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Mr. Awalt reviewed the report submitted from the Taxpayer Liaison Officer. Mr. Awalt read the front page of the report stating that he forwarded an abatement application to Mr. Herbert for his property in Fairfield but the application was filed too late for 2024; the application would be approved for 2025.

Included in the report was the submission of the ARB member applications for two (2) positions; three (3) applications were submitted. Mr. Ron Brokmeyer was appointed for another term and Ms. Darla Matthews-Carroll was appointed as a new member. Mr. Eric Samford was re-appointed as Chairman, and Mr. Gene Reynolds was appointed Secretary. After brief discussion, Mr. Awalt asked the board to accept the Taxpayer Liaison Officer's report. Mr. Brown made a motion to accept the report as presented. Ms. Whyte seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Mr. Awalt then presented the Chief Appraiser's Report for the district's activities since the last meeting.

Noted in the report:

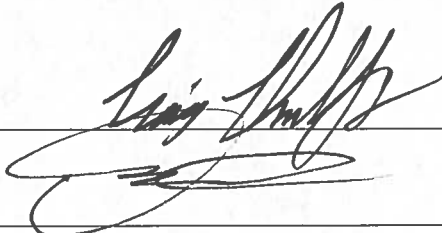
- Field appraisers and assistants continue to review scheduled properties for Area "C" of the 2025-2026 reappraisal plan. Please see attached progress chart.
- We have started to receive transmittals from Linebarger on the Homestead Verification program and are removing homestead exemptions that have been erroneously applied. At this time there have only been a few that actually needed to be removed, but this is a continuous work in progress.
- Applications for two open positions on the Appraisal Review Board for 2025-2026 were submitted by the Taxpayer Liaison Officer to the District Judge for his appointment. Current board member, Mr. Ron Brokmeyer, was re-appointed to fill one position and a new board member, Mrs. Darla Carroll was appointed to the other. Mr. Eric Samford was re-appointed to continue serving as ARB Chairman, with Mr. Gene Reynolds appointed as Secretary.
- Each year in late October / early November, the Texas Rural Chief Appraisers Association holds their annual meeting and conference. Mr. Moore, Ms. Bowden, and Mr. Awalt attended the conference earning 10.5 CE credits towards continuing education.

During the conference, the Steering Committee chairman selects and awards the "Top Hand" award to a person to show appreciation for their work, dedication, and support of TRCA.

For 2024, the "Top Hand" award was presented to Stanton Brown, founding TRCA member and long-time supporter, by Carey Minter, Steering Committee Chairman and Chief Appraiser of Houston County. Furthermore, the Steering Committee elected to rename the award going forward to the "Stanton Brown Top Hand Award".

Mr. Brown was also the opening speaker giving "A Few Words from an Old Cowboy" on customer service.

There being no further business, Mr. Dunlap declared the meeting adjourned at 6:39 p.m.



Chairman

Secretary

