

January 14, 2019.

Commissioners Court Statement.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with you this morning. My name is Bryon Barton, I am a citizen and resident of Montague County, and an active member of the Montague County Heritage Association. We are a group of landowners who love our County, and who seek to preserve it's rural beauty.

We are aware that in this forum I may neither pose questions, nor receive a response from this Court - this is neither our desire nor our intent, but rather yours. What some of you may not be aware of is that for two meetings now, you have denied us the right to have our concerns placed on the Commissioners Court agenda. We find this deeply troubling. With all due respect, we feel that when an elected governmental body specifically moves to deny, or stifle, the concerns of its citizens, nothing good comes of it.

Our concerns specifically regard this Commissioners Court's relationship with industrial wind farm corporations. Under Sec. 551.087 of the Texas Government Code, this Court is not obligated to reveal its discussions with industrial wind farm corporations, no matter how advanced, but it is not prohibited from doing so. Section 552.131 allows Commissioners Courts such as this one to hold closed door, behind the scenes negotiations regarding industrial wind farms in our County without ever informing its citizens. All this Court is required to do for Chapter 312 actions, is to give a mere 72 hours' public notice period, and then unilaterally enact fiscal incentives that create industrial wind farms that will scar our landscape for the next thirty years. The Texas Public Policy Foundation, an Austin based energy think tank, in September of 2018 published a research paper written by its vice president, Bill Peacock. It is entitled "Hidden From Public View"

To quote Mr. Peacock,

"...stopping the Chapter 312 process in cities, counties, and special purpose districts is very difficult. Citizens usually receive only a 72-hour notice for the city council, commissioners court, or governing board meeting where the tax abatement agreement and the related tax reinvestment zone

creation are presented. Public hearings are required, but the short notice makes it difficult for citizens to have meaningful input. The governing board can approve the abatement and, if needed, the reinvestment zone, at this initial—and only—public meeting.”

And further...

“The research exposed serious problems. We found that the current process for granting tax abatements in Texas hides negotiations from public view, that attempts at California-style policies were costly and ineffective, and that the Texas wind power story wasn’t one of markets and innovations, but of government favoritism, special deals benefitting big corporations, and hidden costs.”

With all due respect gentlemen, we as Montague County residents do not intend to allow our elected officials to conduct themselves in such a manner without consequence. We therefore respectfully request that this Court be transparent in its dealings with us, and extend to us our right to voice our concerns through an agenda item.

We will be issuing a Press Release this morning.

We thank you for your time.