



Transcript: TownshipFuture Public Comments Regarding Incorporation on November 2020 Ballot

*The Woodlands Township Board Special Virtual Meeting via ZOOM
August 17, 2020 at 9:00am
Made by Walter Cooke*

Good morning. I am Walter Cooke, an attorney and a resident of The Woodlands since 1990.

I am calling in to discuss with you my hope you do not place incorporation on the ballot in November in an attempt to get out of the situation caused by the Commissioners Court's rejection of the Township's proposed extension of the Interlocal Agreement with the County which provides our enhanced policing.

The facts are detailed, but in 2017 the County and Township entered into an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement that provided us our enhanced policing. This agreement terminates on 12/31/2020.

The Commissioners Court at its July 28 meeting approved an amendment to the Interlocal Agreement that extended the termination date to 12/31/2022 and then sent matter to Township for action.

Unfortunately, the Township rejected the County's proposal and instead approved an amendment that extended the Interlocal Agreement to 12/31/2022, but added a provision that extended the agreement for an additional three years to take into account the three year policing transition agreement that was added to the Interlocal Agreement in 2019.

The Township's proposed amendment then had to go back to Commissioners Court for consideration. Unfortunately, since the matter was still open, the County Sheriff expressed concerns about the terms of the three-year policing transition agreement negotiated in 2019 and based on his concerns and his desire to protect his employees, the Commissioners Court rejected the Township's extension proposal and rescinded its motion to extend the Interlocal Agreement to 12/31/2020.

So, as of today, the Interlocal Agreement which provides us our enhanced policing ends on 12/31/2020 and it looks we have to renegotiate the three-year policing transition agreement.

One thing you could do is place incorporation on the 2020 ballot, hope it passes and then cram down the existing three-year policing transition agreement on the Sheriff. I do not need to tell you that would poison our relationship with the County forever.

As Chairman Bunch explained to the Commissioners Court at its meeting on August 11, it was a mistake to couple policing transition matters with the Interlocal Agreement that provides us our enhanced policing.

I respectfully suggest and request that you go back to the County and decouple the policing transition agreement from the Interlocal Agreement and get us a nice clean Interlocal Agreement that is extended to 12/31/2022.

Then put all of this transition planning on ice. There is no reason for The Woodlands to incorporate at this time and no reason to guess what the situation will be if and when incorporation is appropriate. We have already seen that happen. You negotiated a plan with the Sheriff in 2019 and he was happy with it, but today due to changed circumstances, he is not happy with the plan.

So, I think it is a mistake to plan so far in advance such an important matter as to how we transition out of our policing relationship with the County in a manner that is fair to the County and fair to the Township.

Thanks for your time.