

ATASCOSA COUNTY JUDGES REPORT

I understand some county election year candidates were asked about economic development, and tax abatements were mentioned. I have, in this column, gone on record that I do not support tax abatements (nor do any of the commissioners).

In the nineties, I served as Vice President and Treasurer of "Atascosa County Economic Development Corporation," which brought several companies (manufacturers) into Atascosa County totaling around 250 employees, plus Coastal Bend College. I was chair of the "New Business Committee," and we learned many things about tax abatements and promising things to new businesses. In the mid and late nineties, the County, the School District, and the City of Pleasanton all voted to support tax "abatements" to encourage these acquisitions (I think Coastal Bend did not ask because they are a non-profit). We also learned it was wrong to offer incentives to any business that duplicated any present companies. I do not think businesses that size will come here. They want more than tax abatements. We lost the WalMart Distribution Center to Hays County because they were given tax breaks, land, and infrastructure bonuses. We are better off accepting the benefit of the monies spent in large quantities in southern Bexar County, where we can benefit from jobs, housing, and paychecks for Atascosa County residents. I am talking about Toyota, Navistar, and Halliburton, to name a few. We can attract niche businesses if we work at it.

I have turned down many tax abatement shoppers coming through my office as County Judge. We have some solar companies that have been shopping, and they generally go with the County that will provide an abatement. Our County has no competition for such, and the investments can run more than \$400M. I have consulted with many fellow Judges in West Texas who have wind farms and solar farms, and they are using a vehicle that is far superior for the County than tax abatements. It is called a P.I.L.O.T. agreement that puts cash in the County's coffers rather than takes it out and is revenue that the "No New Tax Rate" does not defeat.

On COVID19: January - in 2022 (18 days), we have had 1,569 positives. Of those 1,569 - 1,274 have been in the last seven days. We have now gone over 1,000 active positives. Please be careful and get vaccinated or boosted!

Thank you for listening.