



STATE OF TEXAS *
 COUNTY OF HAYS *

ON THIS THE 19TH DAY OF AUGUST A.D., 2019, THE COMMISSIONERS' COURT OF HAYS COUNTY, TEXAS, MET IN SPECIAL MEETING. THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS WERE PRESENT, TO-WIT:

RUBEN BECERRA	COUNTY JUDGE
DEBBIE GONZALES INGALSBE	COMMISSIONER, PCT. 1
MARK JONES	COMMISSIONER, PCT. 2
LON A. SHELL	COMMISSIONER, PCT. 3
WALT SMITH	COMMISSIONER, PCT. 4
ELAINE H. CÁRDENAS	COUNTY CLERK

THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDINGS WERE HAD, THAT IS:

THE SPECIAL MEETING WAS SET UP AS A WORKSHOP FOCUSED ON THE ELECTION PROCESS, INCLUDING SELECTION OF JUDGES/ALTERNATE JUDGES, SELECTION OF VOTE CENTERS (EARLY VOTING AND ELECTION DAY), AND VOTING LOCATIONS FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS.

CALL TO ORDER

OPENING STATEMENTS

JUDGE BECERRA opened the meeting, saying that it was being held to give the community an opportunity for input into the selection of vote centers.

LINDA CALVERT, President, League of Women Voters, commended the court on approving the change to vote centers, but said the League of Women Voters, would like to see greater transparency and more open processes in the future, with more time for reflection on proposed decisions such as elections security. She encouraged more diversity in decision making about elections issues and better accommodation of people living in rural areas of the county. On behalf of the League of Women Voters, she advocated for a polling location at the LBJ center.

JENNIFER ANDERSON, Hays County Elections Administrator, explained that there was not a rural location among the recommended sites because there was not a viable one. She talked about the challenges of selecting sites within the strict guidelines established by the Secretary of State, and emphasized that the sites are not permanent—that they are recommended for the upcoming election on constitutional amendments, but can be changed. She said there will be an opportunity before the 2020 election to select new sites to be approved by the Commissioners Court. Party chairs, she pointed out, will select the locations for the primaries.

JENNIFER VETRANO, City Secretary for the City Of Kyle, offered two additional locations in Kyle that had previously been excluded from consideration: (1) Kyle City Hall and (2) Hays CISD Administration building. She said both would be available for early voting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Lauralee Harris requested more than six vote centers in Kyle, citing the town’s rapid growth as an indication of the need. She also advocated for a location at Texas State University and one on the east side of I-35. She suggested a commercial site be considered, as well as churches.

Connie Gray suggested using the clubhouse at Rolling Oaks for Pct.3. She was happy that the Texas State students are able to vote at any location.

Harvey Jenkins requested that the location at the health department be used, rejecting the statement that there was inadequate parking. He said the elimination of the site worked against Blacks and Hispanics.

Joseph Cascino called for a polling location at Texas State University, arguing that the lack of a location there disenfranchises everyone on campus, including conservative staff, students and others. He argued that centers are needed in general in high density areas.

Zachary Price, a student from University of Texas in Austin, helps register student voters. He stated that the University of Texas has multiple voting location on campus. He said the Texas State University students and staff are being disenfranchised by not having the voting location on campus.

Alex Meed said there was a critical need for a polling location on campus, and suggested there should be a second polling location on campus to relieve the long lines experienced in 2018.

Ric Galvan, of Texas Rising, an advocacy group for youth voting rights, called for a polling location on campus.

HAYS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT MINUTES



AUGUST 19, 2019

Nicholas Eastwood, of Texas Rising, an advocacy group for youth voting rights, protested the potential disenfranchisement of student voters on one of the largest college campuses in Texas, saying that many students do not have transportation to get to off-campus locations easily.

Jane Hughson, Mayor of San Marcos, corrected the information given earlier that the upcoming election is only for Constitutional Amendments. She pointed out that San Marcos City Council elections are also being held in November 2019. Referring to a meeting she had attended with university personnel where alternate locations for vote centers were discussed, she said the Texas State University location was clearly better than other options.

Jeannie Lewis spoke in support of the League of Women Voters position and against the disenfranchisement of students. She argued for protecting student rights to vote, alluding to the Texas Civil Right lawsuit filed during the 2018 election, saying that it should be a priority to have a Texas State University vote center.

Kayta Ehresman, a student at University of Texas in Austin, spoke in support of opening an on-campus voting location at Texas State University. She compared the wait times of the Texas State students to the lesser wait time of other temporary voting locations.

Larry Calvert, cited the extraordinary growth of the county, saying the proposed sites overlooked the unincorporated parts of the county, which are the most rapidly growing areas.

Sherry Anderson expressed concern about voter suppression across the county, citing the short notice of the proposed vote locations. She argued for a location on the east side of I-35 and something at Texas State University.

Susan Raybuck acknowledged the challenges of finding suitable locations, but argued for convenient voting locations not only for students, but for veterans, people with disabilities and people in rural locations.

Roland Saucedo expressed his displeasure at the lack of transparency and the failure of the elections office to bring an important issue before the people with sufficient time for consideration. He also commented on the omission of people on the vote locations committee who represent poll workers and people who assist the elderly and people with disabilities.

Sandra Tenario, who had been a member of the committee, said she believed she had appropriate experience to be on the committee, but explained that it was a difficult task to find countywide locations that would serve everyone. She said the committee looked for places in high density areas convenient to people in the community. There were other considerations such as the availability of storage. She says schools are increasingly reluctant to participate because of security concerns.

Rosemary Nelson said she was mystified that Wimberley was getting the same number of vote centers as Kyle—six. She also urged the elections office to make it easy for people to vote by keeping the same locations over time.

Jimmy Alan Hall urged the elections office to make it as easy as possible for people to vote and to make it possible to vote within 30 minutes. He reminded the court that Dana DeBeauvoir, Travis County Clerk and Elections Administrator, who has many years of training and experience in elections, cautioned against changing locations the first time vote centers are used. She strongly recommended keeping old locations. In keeping with that recommendation, Hall recommended having a location at the LBJ center on campus.

Donna Haschke, Chair, Hays County Democratic Party, emphasized the importance of finding a location on the east side of I-35 and at Texas State University.

Richard Cronshey commended the elections administrator on moving to vote centers and paper ballots. But, he urged the identification of polling places on campus, at Chapa and in Uhland.

Lisa Marie Coppoletti, recommended adding Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel.

Maxfield Baker, who is running for San Marcos City Council, said it was devastating that this meeting happened before students were back on campus. He recommended a site at the LBJ student center on campus.

Gary Harlow, resident of Wood Creek, encourage the Commissioners to think outside the box to solve this problem.

Brandon James, of MoveOn Texas, spoke of the confirmation given, last school year, that voting locations would stay the same. As the new school is about to start students have learned the voting location has been changed. Request that the voting location be placed at LBJ student center.

John Cassidy of Driftwood stressed the importance of listening to the people.

Cindy Cassidy of Driftwood expressed appreciation for the move to vote centers, but requested that criteria be posted online in the future so people in the community could help find suitable locations.

HAYS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT MINUTES



AUGUST 19, 2019

Catherine Wicker, State President of Texas College Democrats, who served on the Texas State University voting committee expressed concern that there were not enough polling places where students could vote. She said there is a perfect room available on campus and that the university will make parking available.

Ethen Pena, a student at Texas State University and member of MoveOn Texas, likened the local elections process to conditions in countries with failing democracies, saying there should be easy access to voting for students.

Emma Mayers, a member of MoveOn Texas, said she had waited in line 3 hours to vote at Texas State University in 2018. She would like to keep the polling location at LBJ student center.

Daphne Tenorio, of the Kyle City Council, urged that a site be found on the east side of Kyle. She said she had been fielding constant phone calls since the list was posted and said the city of Kyle should be involved in the selection process and should represent the people, working to ensure that every person has a reasonable opportunity to vote.

David Crowell objected to the lack of transparency in the selection of voting machines and vote center locations, saying there had been inadequate opportunities and time for public engagement. He claimed Hays is the first county in Texas to choose the Hart machines, that more than 65 counties have chosen the ES&S equipment.

Alex Bimel, member of MoveOn Texas, argued for a vote center at the LBJ center on Texas State University campus, pointing out that if citizens don't vote at 18, they do not develop the habit of voting.

Hanlon Skillman, resident of Wimberley, said 1300 new voters had been registered at Texas State University in October and November of 2018, and pointed out that the university is comparable to a town of 40,000 people. He argued for two centers at Texas State University, one at the LBJ student center.

Gloria Salazar pointed out that Texas State University isn't just students—that it is also one of the largest employers in the area and that staff and faculty will vote there, as well as students. She also advocated for a center on the east side of the county and at the WIC center.

Sam Brannon noted that the move to vote centers violates the Republic Party of Texas platform. He commented about the lack of follow through from the Elections Office on the input of citizen committees, and to respond to his requests for documents submitted under Public Information Act.

Ana Juarez, Ph.D., a member of the committee on voting at Texas State University, agreed with an earlier speaker that potential voters on campus include faculty and staff, as well as students. She called attention to a standing committee on voting that would be meeting August 30. She said the area around the Saddlebrook Trailer Homes is one of the most diverse and marginalized areas in the county and needs a voting center nearby to accommodate people who do not have transportation or the ability to take time off from work.

Matt Ocker recommended firing Jennifer Anderson, the Elections Administrator, and complained of widespread corruption in Hays County on the part of both Republicans and Democrats.

Peter Porcher, resident of Kyle, expressed satisfaction that a site would be made available at ACC for early voting. He objected to the excuse that some locations were ruled out because of inadequate parking.

Linda Calvert, President, Hays County League of Women Voters, spoke again, summing up concerns: she suggested reducing the number of sites in Wimberley, and creating more in Kyle; adding a location on the east side of I-35; establishing a site in rural areas. She asked how much more time there would be for comment on the vote center locations, and said the map and list of proposed locations would be posted on the League of Women Voters website. She also commented on the selection of the HART voting machines and said it would have been helpful to have more information for comparison of the two options.

Will Webber, an alumnus of Texas State University, contrasted his experience voting on campus in the late 1970s to the 2018 election, noting the passion of today's youth and the importance of their citizen engagement in our democracy.

Kelly Stone, resident of San Marcos, called for an end to gerrymandering.

Harvey Jenkins asked for better communication and earlier announcements.

Esther Garcia, resident of Hays County, feels that there is a hidden agenda to disenfranchise Texas State University students.

Kaitlyn Horner, a student at Texas State University and member of MoveOn Texas, commented in favor of a voting center at LBJ.



COMMISSIONERS' AND JUDGE'S COMMENTS

Walt Smith, Commissioner, Precinct 4, expressed his viewpoint that any location selected on the Texas State University campus area should also be readily accessible to others living in the general area—e.g., those who travel via Lime Kiln Road. He said the parking limitations make the LBJ center and other locations on campus difficult for others. Although generally in support of more locations, Commissioner Smith explained that there are many challenges. During early voting, for example, vote centers must remain open a full two weeks, which makes it very difficult at some locations, such as schools and churches, which have security concerns.

Lon Shell, Commissioner, Precinct 3, urged the court to begin planning soon for the 2020 elections so that there is ample time for citizen input and consideration in what he predicts will be the largest turnout in Hays County elections history. Speaking on behalf of his constituents, he said he thought Wimberley could manage with fewer vote centers, and agreed that more were needed in other areas. He suggested looking at precinct boundaries to identify potential locations that would be convenient to people in multiple precincts. He said more tenacity was needed in finding solutions for densely populated areas where no one will agree to be a vote center. One option, he suggested, would be to build a vote center.

Mark Jones, Commissioner, Precinct 2, acknowledged the challenges of finding viable locations, and questioned Jennifer Anderson on some of the options such as Seton, CTMC, the fire station on Wonder World and the Rolling Oaks area. Anderson acknowledged the objections to committing to two full weeks with set up and tear down, and pointed out that Wi-Fi access is another constraint, especially in rural areas such as Rolling Oaks. Jones advocated looking for something on the east side of I-35, especially around Uhland and Niederwald, and agreed that there might be locations in Precinct 4 in the middle of San Marcos that would be convenient to Precinct 5.

Debbie Ingalsbe, Commissioner, Precinct 1, said the county can and must do better. Information needs to go out sooner so people can review it and have input. She pledged to work with her colleagues to do a better job in the future. She commented that many long established Hispanics and others have financial and medical constraints that need to be considered in selecting vote center locations. She noted the need for a location on the east side of I-35 and one at Texas State University. She also suggested the fire station on Bunton Creek Road might be more readily accessible than the CISD administrative offices. She also thought a Broadway location would be good—perhaps at the warehouse, where a layer of chip seal could be put down to improve the parking lot. Commissioner Ingalsbe ended by saying there should be a permanent citizens committee to help develop processes so there are no surprises in the future.

Ruben Becerra, Hays County Judge summed up some of the recommendations and offered additional suggestions:

- Keep the LBJ location;
- Add another location on campus;
- Revisit ISDs; and
- Post information earlier, but label as “draft,” with individual sites shown as “pending,” “confirmed,” etc.

Miscellaneous Comments Made in Response to Commissioners' Statements

- In response to talk about the number of poll workers needed, the complications of finding suitable locations, etc., members of the audience pledged to help and recommended announcing a call for volunteers.
- In response to the proposed Strahan Arena site, Katherine Wicker, who had been on the campus elections committee, said the site was deemed inappropriate because of safety issues and walking distance for most students.
- A student who has worked at polls in the past suggested possible curb-side information to cater to the disabled voters, possibly appealing to high school and college students to work at the polls.



ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Judge Becerra to adjourn court at 8:49 p.m.

I, ELAINE H. CÁRDENAS, COUNTY CLERK and EXOFFICIO CLERK OF THE COMMISSIONERS' COURT, do hereby certify that the foregoing contains a true and accurate record of the proceedings had by the Hays County Commissioners' Court on August 19, 2019.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elaine H. Cardenas".

ELAINE H. CÁRDENAS, COUNTY CLERK AND EXOFFICIO
CLERK OF THE COMMISSIONERS' COURT OF
HAYS COUNTY, TEXAS

