

... Letter

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Precinct 2 had over 50 inches of rain. Due to budget constrictions, the devastation to our precinct roads from these rains will take years to repair. My goal is to continue to repair our roads in the most efficient manner possible, and we are continuing to improve the equipment for the road hands increase safety and get more done with less labor. We did manage to utilize some state grant money to re-top 2.25 miles of one of the roads at Oak Creek Lake. We are continually patching and repairing our roads weekly. The good news is that your County is continuing to provide the services that you expect and deserve despite budget constraints.

Have you seen your County Park in Bronte? The Restoring Bronte Foundation has been instrumental in adding new playground equipment, exercise equipment, a disc golf course and a sand volleyball court. We drilled a water well in the park this year. It allows us to keep the swimming pool in great shape and water the trees at a minimal cost. The savings to the county from the water well are substantial - based on last year's water bills from the city, the well will pay itself off in one year or less.

In terms of revenue - twenty years ago, oil valuations accounted for approximately 90% of your county's total revenue. In 2014, oil's contribution was 63.6%, in 2015 it was 54.5%, in 2016 it was 41.5% and in 2017 oil's contribution was 35.9%. Reviewing these numbers shows that oil's depletion rate is continuing to decrease exponentially. The results of these financial issues are that in 2016, Coke County lost over \$400,000 of revenue because of oil, and we lowered the total number of employees by 19% overall. The results of these financial issues are that in 2016, Coke County lost over \$400,000 of revenue because of oil, and

we lowered the total number of employees by 19% overall. It was a tough decision, but right-sizing staff and other cuts while still using \$240,000 of reserves allowed us to balance the budget without a tax increase.

This year's proposed budget is \$2.635 million, and we are losing \$260,000 in revenue. Therefore, we are proposing a 4% increase in the tax rate for the county. Last year's rate was .640837 per \$100 of valuations and this year's proposed rate is .685409 per \$100 of valuations. The tax increase will amount to \$86,000 worth of additional revenue for the county. In order to balance the budget, we will use \$250,000 of reserves. Looking ahead, we anticipate that additional valuations will be added to the tax role next year in the form of a new pipeline project and some of the windmills coming off their abatements. I am hopeful that these additions will be enough to offset the deficit budget we are proposing for 2017.

Well...now for the bad news (as if the notice of a tax increase was good): The Texas Legislature is in session. Currently SB1 and HB 4 labeled "property tax relief" are being considered. I beseech each of you to review the details of this legislation. I would be happy to forward you a series of documents dealing with this issue. But, in my opinion all this bill will do if passed in its current form is hamstringing your local government's ability to function in their current manner(s). Our State Senator is currently a champion of SB1. Therefore, what he is actually saying is that our local city, school and county governments do not have the ability to manage our local affairs. And that you, as voters, do not have the common sense to fire your local officials if they mismanage your tax payer dollars. If you contact a legislator, ask him/her to oppose SB1 and or HB4 and then please emphasize the importance of passing legislation

that prohibits the State of Texas from imposing a mandate on your local governments without total funding provisions.

Consider this from Ben Zeller, Victoria County Judge: "As a conservative Republican county judge in a growing county, I'm concerned by Sen. Paul Bettencourt's property tax plan, Senate Bill 1. Entitled the Texas Property Tax Reform and Relief Act of 2017, it failed to pass during the regular session, but is again under consideration in the special session. I believe the bill will never live up to its promising name. Unfortunately, it doesn't cut taxes. It's just a distraction from a problematic school finance system, and the eagerness of many in Austin to use unfunded mandates to pay for things they haven't found the money to cover. For years, the Legislature has quietly shifted

the burden of paying for schools onto local property taxpayers like you and me. However, there's nothing quiet or subtle about the big increase in property taxes coming our way. While this tax increase is hidden, lurking under Rider 3 of the Texas Education Agency budget, at least it's in plain English: **'Property values and the estimates of local tax collections on which they are based shall be increased by 7.04 percent for tax year 2017 and by 6.77 percent in tax year 2018.'** Under the Texas Constitution, funding schools is a state responsibility. Not long ago, the state paid more than half the cost of education. However, local property taxpayers now shoulder the majority of this burden, with the state paying about 38 percent of the tab. As state

funding for schools has diminished over time, local property taxpayers have made up the difference, increasingly being treated like a credit card with no limit. Counties like ours collect taxes on behalf of local school districts, and as the messenger bringing the tax bill, we're often blamed when school taxes go up. SB 1 takes the blame game further, and we shouldn't fall for it." Ben Zeller - Victoria County Judge

To my friends in Precinct 2, thanks for allowing me to serve you as your Commissioner, I am enclosing a business card with my contact information for your convenience. Please feel free to contact me. Find me on Facebook and Twitter.

Sincerely
Paul Williams - Commissioner,
Precinct 2, Coke County Texas
"God Bless Texas"

Emergency Siren Signals

Cities of both Bronte and Robert Lee

- 1 Long Ring - Wind Advisory over 60 mph**
- 2 Rings - Fire or VFD Meeting**
- Another 2 Ring - Call for Additional Firefighters**
- 3 Rings - Tornado Warning**
- 1 Long Continuous Ring - All Clear for Tornado**
- 4 Rings - Alarm Test**

**Farm-Ranch, Commercial,
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NEW TO MARKET! Over 2700 square feet in this large 4 bedroom 2 story home with 2 full baths and 1 half bath! Living room with space for the whole family and a large kitchen with open concept dining! Trailer/Boat parking, workshop, storage building, an additional lot with pens ready for animals, plus lots of yard space! 1 car attached garage and 2-car detached garage! Tons of storage and plenty of room! Close to the school or to the field for those Friday night lights!

PLENTY OF ROOM! Large open concept home with many storage buildings and 2 workshops! Fireplace in living room. Room to park RVs, etc. Large eat-in kitchen and space that can be used for dining room or home office. Reasonably priced and just a couple of blocks from school!



PERFECT HOME FOR WEEKEND GETAWAY IN THE COUNTRY AND NEAR LAKE! Landscaped and fenced yard comes complete with storage buildings, two covered RV sheds, chicken pen, greenhouse, outdoor shower and more! Well and rain water catch systems! Began life in 1978 as an open concept mobile home, but is now attached to beautiful den complete with wood burning stove! Both master and second bedroom have bathrooms! Enjoy the outdoors and area's wildlife from the wrap around covered porch!

Melinda McCutchen
(325) 473-8863

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(325) 650-0615



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"Let God be your Head Coach!" W.E.B. Construction, Edwin, Wyndell & Family; Robert Lee Care Center; Hal Spain, Coke County Treasurer; Wayne McCutchen, Coke County Sheriff; Pitcock Properties, Jerrod Pitcock 325/650-4079; Debbie Childers; Coke County Cowboy Church; Clawson Mechanical, Marty Boyd, Coke County Constable

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Robert Lee
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