

JACK COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

FY 2026-2027 Budget Process

Prepared Statement | September 14, 2026

Judge and Commissioners,

I am speaking today about the proposed FY 2026-2027 budget and the related tax-rate action.

On Saturday at 6:57 p.m., I sent each of you the same core questions I am raising today. I did that before Monday's meeting so there would be time to identify any records I had missed and, if necessary, seek advice from County counsel. As of 9:30 p.m. Sunday, more than 24 hours after I sent that email, I had received no response from the Judge or Commissioners. I also made clear that I was not asking for a group discussion by email.

Here is what I have been able to verify.

Jack County published a notice in the Jacksboro Herald-Gazette on September 5 for today's public hearing on the proposed tax rate. My concern is not whether the tax-rate hearing was noticed.

Texas law separately requires a public hearing on the proposed county budget.

Texas Local Government Code §111.007 requires Commissioners Court to hold that hearing. The notice must be given between 10 and 30 days before the hearing. Section 111.0075 separately requires newspaper publication during that same period. The budget hearing must also occur no later than the 25th day after the proposed budget is filed and before the County adopts its property tax rate.

I have searched the County's meeting records, website and public-notice records. I found today's tax-rate hearing notice. I have not found a separate notice for the FY 2026-2027 county budget hearing, and I have not identified when that required hearing occurred.

There is also a second issue under House Bill 1522. Texas Government Code §551.043 now requires the notice for meetings where a governmental body will discuss or adopt a budget to include access to the proposed budget and a taxpayer impact statement.

Since sending that email, I continued checking the record. I have now identified at least seven completed meetings where the FY 2026-2027 budget was substantively discussed: June 8, June 22, July 20, August 3, August 10, August 17 and August 24. I also attended several of those meetings along with you. The July 20 agenda like several of the others expressly lists a "BUDGET WORKSHOP FY2026-2027." I have not located an HB 1522 taxpayer impact statement for any of those seven meetings. On Sunday evening, the FY 2026-2027 version 005 dated July 31, 2026 proposed budget was available on the County Auditor's Proposed Budgets subpage. **At 7:18 p.m. Sunday, the visible Jack County home page did not show a link to the proposed budget.** I still cannot say what may have been physically attached to every courthouse posting.

I want to clarify the chronology. I did not know about HB 1522 when I asked after the August 24 meeting for a copy of the current working budget. My concern then was simply that the public-facing budget appeared to remain the July 31 version even though the Court had spent August holding workshops and making changes. Learning about HB 1522 later is what caused me to go back and review the notices and budget process more closely.

So my question remains:

What am I missing that would show these requirements have already been satisfied?

Specifically, could the Court please identify on the record:

- the date the proposed budget was formally filed with the County Clerk;
- the date the required public budget hearing was held;
- when and where the required budget-hearing notice was published;
- the HB 1522 taxpayer impact statement and proposed-budget access materials associated with each of the budget-discussion meetings identified since June including today's meeting; and
- the exact version of the budget before the Court for adoption today.

If those records exist, identifying them resolves much of the concern.

If the required hearing did not occur, I respectfully ask the Court to postpone final action and ask County counsel to determine the lawful corrective procedure.

There appears to be a narrow practical window. The Herald-Gazette shows September 19 as the next publication date. That would appear to make September 29 the earliest practical date for a new budget hearing under the 10-day notice requirement. That does not erase the earlier 25-day deadline, so whether a late hearing can legally correct the timing problem is something counsel should determine.

There is also a separate tax-rate deadline under Texas Tax Code §26.05. That deadline is generally the later of September 30 or the 60th day after receipt of the certified appraisal roll. I am still trying to confirm Jack County's actual receipt date, so I do not want to overstate the final deadline today.

The goal here is not to delay County government. The goal is to establish the record, find a lawful path forward while there is still time, protect the validity of the County's budget and tax-rate decisions and give taxpayers the public process Texas law provides.

If the records exist, I hope they are identified today. If they do not, I hope the Court uses the time that remains to correct the process before taking final action.



Skew the Future

SKEW THE FUTURE | CIVIC STEWARDSHIP BRIEF

Shared Resources. Shared Standards. Shared Stewardship.

Thank you for the work each of you puts into serving Jack County, for the hours that go into the budget process and for the opportunity to address the Court today. I appreciate the work of the Court, the County Clerk and County staff in maintaining the public process and record. My purpose in raising these issues is to identify problems early enough to still be useful and to support a clear, lawful path forward for the County and its taxpayers.

Respectfully,

John Barry IV

Founder, SkewTheFuture.com

Civic stewardship from rural Texas

Shared Resources. Shared Standards. Shared Stewardship.

<https://www.skewthefuture.com/>



Mark Hairdel



Julie Waters's Post



Julie Waters is 😞 feeling sad in Crowell.

a day ago · 🌐



Dear Crowell, I write with such a heavy heart. It has been a mere 5 months since Jason Hill held that town hall in Crowell to sell his hyperscale data center with the lure of free electricity for residents.

We had so many questions back then. We didn't know what a BESS was. We didn't know the millions of gallons of water that were used during construction. We didn't know that the electrical needs of the data centers wanting to be built would be 3 times what our electrical grid provides on the hottest day of the summer.

But we know now.

Five months, we knew Greenbelt Lake was in bad shape at 7.6% capacity but we didn't know how bad it truly was. It had been dwindling forever so we thought it was going to continue to dwindle.

But now it is under 5%.

Greenbelt Lake is truly running out.

We are watching this lake die.

And Crowell and Childress have now declared a state of disaster.

We have no clean running water.

I never thought I would see the day when Texas towns declared a state of disaster over water.

I want everyone to grasp the severity of this.

Do we live in rural village in Vietnam?

What is happening in Texas?

The great state of economic development and business?

My 80 year old parents can't take a shower because boiling enough water is too cumbersome.

They now pay 2 water bills: one to the city for dirty water and one to Walmart for bottled water.

In many ways, this has now become deeply personal. My parents came to the U.S. after fighting alongside the American troops during the Vietnam War. They believed in the American dream. I am the product of that dream.

They worked so hard every single day in the Crowell Cap Factory making baseball caps. Crowell is one of the last few places where you can get a baseball cap made in America.

And my dad is so proud of that. Because of the Vietnam war, he hates communism with a passion. He raised us to be proud Americans. And guess what? Even though they are in their 80s, they still work in



Write a comment...





Julie Waters's Post



of the last few places where you can get a baseball cap made in America.

And my dad is so proud of that. Because of the Vietnam war, he hates communism with a passion. He raised us to be proud Americans. And guess what? Even though they are in their 80s, they still work in that factory!

I digress...but they essentially made minimum wage all of their lives. They taught me the meaning of a dollar.

They sacrificed for me.

They worked hard for me so that I could have a better life.

And now?

I can't even ensure that they have clean running water. 🤔

A basic necessity.

I feel like I have failed my parents and that cuts deep into my soul.

I can't take care of the people I love so much and that raised me.

It makes me so very sad.

(Why don't you just move them? Have you ever met stubborn elderly people? My parents cling to their ways like a politician bought off by Big Tech.)

I write all of this to help you understand my heart and where I am coming from.

And this Monday, Sept. 14, at 9am at the Crowell Activity Center, the Foard County commissioners are going to vote on the BESS and solar farm abatements.

To the people of Crowell, I am begging you to not pass these abatements.

Begging. 🙏

Please learn from our neighbors in Vernon and Childress. Those folks are downright miserable and angry about the multiple data centers they have each.

They WISH they could go back in time and be in our shoes. We have the opportunity to fight this; they don't.

Their traffic is horrific and dangerous.

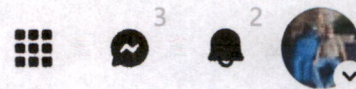
Their housing market is out of control, forcing people into homelessness.

Abilene's electricity rates have gone up.



Write a comment...





Julie Waters's Post

Bright lights fill the night as construction continues 24/7.

Five months, we are now fully aware of the negative consequences of letting data centers into your community.

It does NOT bring jobs or economic development. Billion dollar projects will bring in 50 or less jobs according to tax abatements. [OBJ]

Schools districts don't benefit because of recapture. [OBJ]

Childress has two data centers but are still asking for a bond of over \$100 million.

The cons far outweigh the pros.

 This part is extremely important:

Passing the tax abatements for the BESS and the solar farm ~~on~~ is basically inviting data centers into Crowell.

You are giving the data centers everything they need to run - energy and battery storage.

You may as well put a big sign outside of Crowell that says **OBJ**, "Data Centers Welcomed Here!"

!! To the county commissioners and judge, if you TRULY wanted to keep data centers out of Crowell, you would NOT pass these tax abatements. !!

I cannot get any more clear than this.

If you pass these tax breaks to billion dollar companies, you are opening the door wide for data centers and there is no turning back.

It will be your legacy. It will be on your shoulders. You will be setting Crowell down on this path of destruction. [OBJ]

And we are already in a state of disaster.

We have no water. Please do not invite in any more destruction.

Please, please vote no to these tax abatements on Monday.

Please.

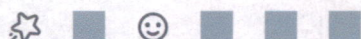
I am begging as the daughter who has failed her parents.

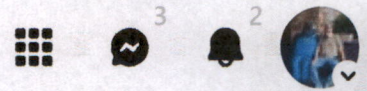


To the residents, you must speak at the meeting. I know you are afraid. But if you don't speak up, the



Write a comment...





Julie Waters's Post



Please.

I am begging as the daughter who has failed her parents.



To the residents, you must speak at the meeting. I know you are afraid. But if you don't speak up, the few who want the abatements will win and eventually you will get multiple data centers.

This is your future.

If you think having no water is bad, it will get worse.

You must have the courage to speak up.

300 people signed Cindy's petition. She went door to door in 100+ degree heat talking to many of you for HOURS. You told her how awful these projects were. You signed the petition and even mailed letters to Jason Hill and the BESS.

I know you don't want these projects.

300 people signed.

Only 769 people live in Crowell.

I guarantee that Cindy could have gotten way more signatures but she is only one person and she is in her 60s. And besides, yall were holding her up for an hour at your house telling her how much you hated data centers.

Please, please speak at the meeting on Monday.



Write a comment...

