**Concerned Citizens Oppose City of Granbury's Proposed Location for a Wastewater Treatment Plant**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Granbury, TX—** In September 2019, the City of Granbury submitted an application to the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for a sewage treatment plant at 3121 Old Granbury Road. Based solely on information the City provided in their application, TCEQ issued a draft permit for the facility in May 2020. It is important to note that TCEQ protocols normally used in the permitting process were not followed because of the pandemic. Consequently, TCEQ experts did not visit the site to verify the field conditions presented in the application, which resulted in the granting of a draft permit based on inaccurate information.

When citizens near the proposed sewage plant first learned of the facility in March 2020, hundreds of affected homeowners, business owners, and stakeholders went on record with TCEQ to express their concerns. Citizens were opposed to the facility because of the severity of negative impacts a sewage plant at that location would potentially have. In December 2021, TCEQ Commissioners granted a Contested Case Hearing. The virtual hearing was held March 7-9, 2022 before the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH).

During the hearing, attorneys and subject matter experts presented testimony and evidence that support arguments made by Bennett’s RV Ranch and Granbury Fresh that a sewage plant on Old Granbury Road will do extensive damage to the environment. In addition to violating TCEQ regulations implemented to protect water resources, the City’s proposed buffer zone of 150-feet from Bennett's RV Park is a direct violation of the 500-foot buffer required by TCEQ for a facility of this type.

Testimony from the City’s water quality expert confirmed that the plant would damage Rucker Creek and Lake Granbury; nevertheless, the City’s primary argument ***for*** the sewage treatment plant was based on the economic impacts associated with delays in construction of a sewage plant. Testimony from the City’s economics expert showed significant costs that are the direct result of the City's choice of an environmentally damaging site, and the City’s failure to pursue an alternative location for a new sewer facility in the face of years of opposition.

The economic impacts presented at the hearing reflected ***only*** the potential losses associated with construction delays, and ***did not*** address the costs a sewage plant on Old Granbury Road will have. Construction of a sewage plant in the heart of the City's business corridor and in close proximity to schools, parks, and established homes would have significant and costly impacts on local businesses, residents, the environment, tourism, and Lake Granbury. Noxious odors would undoubtedly lead to closures of nearby established businesses and restaurants, but these costs were not considered. Additionally, the economic expert did not address the costs of an algae bloom along the discharge route, costs which include loss of tourism dollars, costly fish clean-up, impacts on the City's drinking water supply, pet and small animal mortality, and human illnesses caused by harmful contents in the effluent.

During the hearing, subject matter experts from both sides presented the results of water quality studies that confirm that the discharge from the wastewater treatment facility ***WILL*** harm the environment and significantly lower water quality along the discharge route and Lake Granbury for aquatic life, irrigation, and recreational uses. If the City had been responsible and submitted water quality assessments as part of their application, they would have known this and could have avoided years of costly delays and moratoriums in pursuit of a permit that clearly does not meet TCEQ standards. Clearly, the resulting delay in developing adequate sewage treatment capacity for Granbury rests solely on City officials who selected a site that violates TCEQ regulations.

In 2020, City officials claimed to have been unaware of the Lake Granbury Watershed Protection Plan and the more than ten years of strategic planning conducted by their predecessors who proposed a more environmentally friendly sewage treatment solution for Hood County. As a result, millions of taxpayer dollars have been wasted, and years of collaborative planning for wastewater infrastructure to address the explosive growth in Hood County was ignored.

The testimony and evidence presented during the hearing will be considered by the SOAH judges to prepare their recommendation to TCEQ to either deny or approve the City’s permit request. Although the City has stated that a ruling from TCEQ on the permit is expected in early summer 2022, that information is incorrect. Rather, it will likely be Fall 2022 before TCEQ Commissioners issue a decision to deny or approve the permit.

Those opposing the poorly planned sewage facility location remain optimistic that City officials will do the right thing and pursue an alternative location, rather than continue to create years of even more delays before changing course to achieve a reasonable solution.