

Comments to Post Oak Savannah GCD

Linda Curtis, April 14, 2020 • LIVTexas.org • SAWSAct.org • 512.213.4511

Thank you for making these public comments possible.

I volunteer for the League of Independent Voters, a non-profit, non-partisan organization that has long tried to resolve the dispute about San Antonio's mining of the aquifers shared by our "Simsboro counties" – Burleson, Milam, Lee and Bastrop counties.

I emailed to you all a copy of an open records request I filed on February 20 with the District. Your attorney is asking the Attorney General to allow you to withhold many of these records. Please know that you can direct your attorney to withdraw the challenge and provide us these records.

Let me tell you why we are pursuing these records. Vista Ridge is at a crossroads now that the project is complete and needs permanent financing to continue operating. Minimal pumping starts in April not because anyone needs or can use this water, but, I believe, to save this project from what is going on in the world.

I trust you all know that there are engineering problems that have delayed full bore pumping until the summer. But, the "bills" to Vista Ridge lenders are coming due now, during perhaps the most sudden international financial crisis the world has ever seen!

Just last week, the SAWS Board voted to give General Manager, Robert Puente the power to negotiate and execute contracts without its own prior approval. The Mayor and Council have refused to exert proper oversight and control over SAWS – a public utility -- for years, while they're allowing Puente to be vastly overpaid in one of the poorest metro areas in the country.

At a time when "credit-worthiness" is a moving target due to COVID-19 financial uncertainties, Puente will no doubt be tempted to help salvage the Project. But whether Vista Ridge should be saved should be answered in public before someone signs on the dotted line.

I realize you are all volunteers too and it's an especially difficult time for officials. But, let me remind you how Vista Ridge began. It began right here in the Post Oak District with the decision to use water leases procured by a man who had just pled guilty to stealing \$2.4 million from his employer.

I believe you all know there are real problems with those underlying leases.

You could do something that should have been done years ago by conducting a thorough and independent review of those leases. You have the money to do it. But, do you have the courage?

I am working with some courageous citizens in San Antonio who plan a mass petition drive to force a public vote on SAWS Accountability and an independent audit of Vista Ridge. If we truly are "in this together", in a time of crisis, then let's do the right thing together. Thank you for your service.