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Belton finalizes annexation of 120 acres

From the Pushing the limits: Belton seeking annexation of up to 1,358 acres series

BY JACOB SANCHEZ | TELEGRAM STAFF Nov 28, 2017 Updated 2 hrs ago



BELTON – The city’s eyes may have been bigger than its appetite on this year’s round of annexation.

Tuesday evening, the Belton City Council finalized the annexation of 120.27 acres. This is a steep cut from the city’s initial study of 1,358 acres.

Two areas are now in city limits. The largest addition to the city of Belton is a 112.5-acre parcel along Shanklin Road and south of Loop 121. And the other area is a 7.77-acre tract on the east side of Toll Bridge Road, between Shanklin Road and the Lampasas River.

The City Council considered the larger area, which was known as area two, in two parts: the Shanklin Road area and the Mesquite Road area. Only the Shanklin area is coming into the city. The City Council decided 5-2 to bring this area into Belton; Councilmen John Holmes and Paul Sanderford dissented.

As for the Mesquite Road area, the City Council unanimously disapproved annexation.

Several Council members said they struggled when it came to deciding what to do with the Mesquite Road parcel of area one.

The city envisions in its thoroughfare plan an extension of Mesquite Road to Shanklin Road in the west and to Interstate 35 in the east. The extension would provide an entrance and exit to Belton Independent School District's 109-acre tract that will hold a future school.

Councilman David K. Leigh said having a road extend from Shanklin to I-35 is critical. However, he added, Mesquite Road is in such poor condition that it makes more sense for Belton to pursue another avenue to build a road from Shanklin to the interstate.

"I don't think we know enough on this," Mayor pro tem Craig Pearson said of the Mesquite Road area.

Mayor Marion Grayson said the Mesquite area gave her the most heartbreak because of a resident's plan to build a home and the road issue with the Belton ISD's property.

She agreed with Leigh that the city of Belton should pursue a partnership with the Bell County Commissioners Court to build a road along the southern edge of the Bell County Expo Center property to connect Shanklin to I-35.

Grayson also addressed an issue of which she wanted Bell County residents to be aware.

“You are surrounded by citizens who will have access to Belton Fire and EMS,” she said, noting that while Belton is close, county residents will be relying on the Salado Volunteer Fire Department and Bell County for ambulance service.

The mayor told county residents they have a choice when it comes to their emergency services. Residents could voluntarily annex into the city of Belton, she said.

“That is a decision you can make,” Grayson said. “I want you to think about that. You are not that far out from city limits.”

Belton’s seven-person legislative body also delayed annexing area three in a 5-2 decision. That area was 51.48 acres located along Old Golf Course Road and the eastern portion of Auction Barn Road west of the existing city limit. Councilmen Guy O’Banion and Dan Kirkley opposed delaying annexation.

Leigh said it was a risk to not annex this area Tuesday evening.

“This is urban development, not rural development,” the councilman said, adding he wants area three to be in city limits.

However, Leigh said he was OK with waiting until next year to annex this area. The timing of bringing area three was just wrong this year, he said.

Area three’s infrastructure needs to be improved, Leigh said. It makes sense for Belton to improve the streets and the water lines because the city has the exclusive right to service this area.

“My concern for the people there is that their fire and police are so much farther away than if they’re annexed,” Pearson said. “I don’t think we can make that decision for property owners. They can request voluntary annexation.”

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