

## Some community members unhappy with idea of Belton annexation

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BELTON - When there are a few pieces of pie left and a lot of family members stretching out to get them at the same time, some members may not end up satisfied.

Apply that imagery to cities that are trying to annex land to extend their extraterritorial jurisdictions (ETJ) in the same areas or regions and one can see the potential for conflicts to arise. ETJ is the amount of land the state allows cities to claim for future planning and growth purposes and is based on the size of the city. Once a city annexes land, its ETJ increases. Why Belton wants to extend its ETJ?

With a population of over 16,000 people, Belton has a one-mile ETJ, but its two big brothers - or neighboring cities - Killeen and Temple have larger ETJs.

Killeen claims it now has a population of about 100,000 and should have a five-mile ETJ, while Temple, with a population of around 50,000, has a 3 1/2 mile ETJ.

In other words, Belton cannot annex land and extend its ETJ at the same rate as Killeen and Temple. This is problematic to Belton city leaders who would like to extend and protect the city's 'logical sphere of influence' in the region for the next 20 to 25 years, especially in light of the direction Killeen and Temple are extending their ETJs.

Killeen is barreling toward Stillhouse Hollow Reservoir and Temple could advance its ETJ to the southwest and east of Belton's potential growth areas. The area under consideration

With the ETJ movement of Killeen and Temple in mind, on July 13, the City Council voted 6-1, with Councilwoman Carrol Wallace dissenting, to direct City Manager Sam Listi to prepare municipal service plans and set public hearings regarding the annexation of eight one-mile tracts of land. The land is east and west of Interstate 35.

The first presentation and public hearing will be held Tuesday beginning at 7 p.m. in the Belton City Hall at 333 Water Street.

Listi said the city staff is scheduled to present some land use information, and the city's proposed municipal service plan for each tract at the meeting.

The following are the tracts that will be presented:

- Along and on both sides of U.S. 190 beginning in the vicinity of Airdale Road west one mile, to a point about 800 feet west of Dog Ridge Road, continuing about 175 acres.

- FM 1670, from Countryside Lane, south one mile to Sherwood Boulevard, beginning about 1,000 feet south of U.S. 190, extending south one mile to a location about 800 feet of Sunflower Lane and continuing about 178 acres.
- Along and on both sides of the Lampasas River, generally southeast of I-35, extending for a distance of one mile, and continuing about 122 acres.
- Along and on both sides of the Lampasas River, generally northwest of I-35, extending for a distance of one mile and containing about 126 acres.
- Along and on both sides of Tahuaya and Smith Dairy roads generally west of I-35, extending one mile to a location about 1,300 feet west of the intersection of Amity School Road and Smith Dairy Road and continuing about 135 acres.
- Along and on both sides of Elmer King Road begin at its intersection with I-35, about one mile and containing about 145 acres.
- Along and on both sides of West Amity Road beginning at its intersection with I-35, extending west one mile to the intersection of West Amity and Smith Dairy Road, and continuing about 151 acres.
- Along and on both sides of East Amity Road beginning at its intersection with I-35, extending east one mile to a location about 1,100 feet east of Fox Road, and continuing about 127 acres. Unhappy people and a flurry of activity

The news that Belton was preparing municipal plans and might annex pieces of land along the east and west portions of the I-35 has made some people unhappy.

The Gerstenberg families - three families who have owned farms and ranches along Elmer King Road for 90 years - are an example.

In a Sept. 20 letter written by Ken C. and Vera Gerstenberg; Leonard and Louise Gerstenberg; and Lodene (Gerstenberg) Moore, the relatives said that they like being in the country and have no desire to be in Belton's city limits.

'We have all the utilities and other services that we need and don't see that Belton can benefit us in any way,' the letter states.

'Why do you propose to take a strip along the Lampasas River when there is no access other than across an individual's property? We will not be developing river front property on our farms.

'... There is no other reason for such actions. The bottom line is getting tax money for your more property to be included in your tax base.'

In recent weeks, 113 land owners, fearing they would become part of Belton's ETJ and would eventually be subject to a property tax, petitioned Salado to be added to its ETJ since it does not levy a

property tax and the village's board of alderman voted to accept their petitions.

Though Salado only has a half a mile ETJ, it is allowed under Sec. 42.022 of the Texas Local Government Code to expand 'to include an area contiguous to the otherwise existing extraterritorial jurisdiction of the municipality if the owners of the are request the expansion.'

On Oct 7., the Salado board of alderman is expected to vote on over 150 more petitions from landowners who also wish to become part of the village's ETJ. City leader outlooks on the possible annexations

'I know this is a hot topic and the only citizen I ever met that wanted to be annexed was a developer' who wanted to get his subdivision divided, said Councilman Jim Covington. 'If I lived outside of the city limits I wouldn't want someone to annex me either. The problem we have is the land-grabbing going on by Killeen and Temple is just forcing small cities like Salado and Belton to protect our areas of influence.'

Covington noted that Belton can't grow to the north because Temple is already there and that its movement to the southwest and east could hamper the growth of Belton.

As for the idea that Belton is just trying to annex to expand its property tax base, Covington said the idea doesn't hold water because the city is looking at strip 'surgical annexations' of land and is not trying to annex an area with 500 homes in it.

He added that providing service to the new areas would outweigh the property tax any areas annexed can bring in.

Covington said while Belton has some mutually agreed upon boundaries with Temple that date back to the 1960s, he said there is no way to work with Killeen. If Killeen annexed its present ETJ into its city limits, its ETJ would then extend to a portion of the I-35 frontage road.

'The question they need to ask themselves is do you want to live in Belton or do you want to live in Killeen,' he said. 'Do you want o live in Belton or Temple.'

Councilman Bill Stanford said he thinks it's important that Belton try to protect itself from the growth of Killeen and Temple, but he said since he has been on the City Council, he has always held the position that he would only vote for voluntary annexations.

'If at this time the majority of the people are against annexation, I cannot annex them against their will,' Stanford said.

However, Stanford said: 'They have to understand they're going to be in Belton, Killeen or Temple.' What's next

The City Council will hold a second public hearing and annexation presentation on Oct. 12 and could move to annex the land on Nov 2.