Local Control Options for Hill Country Counties

Annalisa Peace
Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance
June 5, 2018
Many of the problems we’ve just seen are addressed within cities through zoning and municipal ordinances.

In Texas, counties have very limited authority.

- Counties lack the authority to manage stormwater and control flooding at the local level
- Without any mechanism to require that new developments pay for themselves, all citizens pay for new infrastructure to accommodate growth
- Counties cannot preserve the health, safety, and quality of life for their citizens by prohibiting incompatible land uses
- Counties are not given the tools to protect critical watersheds that replenish local karst aquifers, which are exceptionally vulnerable to pollution
- Counties are not given adequate tools to set minimum standards for water and wastewater infrastructure and emergency services
Past Legislative Attempts

2005 79th Session

• SB 142 (Wentworth)
• HB 477 (Casteel)

2007 80th Session

• HB 3447 (Rose, Howard, Hildebran)

2009 81st Session

• HB 3265 (Rose, Doug Miller, Gallego)
What could new legislation include?

- A list of possible tools that a Commissioners’ Court might choose to have

  These additional powers would be helpful in Texas’ fastest growing counties:
  - The ability to set standards for water or wastewater systems
  - The ability to require minimum fire suppression systems
  - The ability to require improvements to streets and roads
  - The ability to require a minimum amount of open space or imposing a limit on the amount of impervious cover for aquifer recharge and stormwater management
  - The ability to require vegetative buffers or adopt other measures to minimize conflict between incompatible land uses
  - The ability to assess impact fees that can pay for new infrastructure required to serve new developments

- A requirement that a Commissioners’ Court must place any proposed new powers on a ballot for county residents to vote.

- No new powers would accrue to a county without county citizen approval.
For more information about the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance visit www.AquiferAlliance.org
You may contact Annalisa Peace: 210-320-6294 annalisa@aquiferalliance.org

To stay involved, sign up for action alerts at:
https://aquiferalliance.org/sign-up-for-action-alerts/