

CARD

P.O. Box 2905
Wimberley, TX 78676

Dear Wimberley Valley Resident,

This message is for everyone who cares about the Wimberley Valley way of life.

Citizens Alliance for Responsible Development (CARD) HOSTS AN URGENT MEETING:

**PROTECT OUR WIMBERLEY VALLEY – TOWN HALL MEETING
6:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JANUARY 12th WIMBERLEY COMMUNITY CENTER**

INVITED EXPERTS WILL PRESENT FACTS ABOUT TWO COMPETING PLANS – ONE BY THE CITY, THE OTHER BY AQUA TEXAS – TO STOP THE POLLUTION OF CYPRESS CREEK. IN BOTH PLANS, CYPRESS CREEK WILL BE CLEANED. BUT THE IMPACT ON ALL OF WIMBERLEY VALLEY WILL BE VASTLY DIFFERENT. THIS DECISION WILL GREATLY IMPACT YOU, WHEREVER YOU LIVE. PLEASE ATTEND, BE INFORMED, AND BE HEARD.

Wimberley is nearing a critical decision that will dramatically impact our whole area's future. In mid-January or soon after, City Council will vote on whether the people of Wimberley will continue to have control of Wimberley Valley development, or hand it to a private company, Aqua Texas, which has been a nightmare for towns in Texas. Recently, at a huge expense, our neighbor city of KYLE sued to rid itself of Aqua Texas' costly business partnership, poor quality control and damaging environmental practices.

Why is Wimberley Valley in this situation? Our beautiful Cypress Creek, where it passes through town on its way to the Blanco River, is heavily polluted from failing septic systems in the central downtown area. Signs posted downtown warn people to stay out of Cypress Creek, an embarrassing and dangerous situation for a town dependent on tourism and proud of its beauty.

Over the past two years, Wimberley has worked with professional engineers and State regulatory agencies to design a modern sewer system for the Central Area. The plans are ready and permits issued, a low interest construction loan has been approved, a grant of \$1,000,000 toward the construction cost has been approved, and bids are currently being taken. The city is ready to move forward with construction of the sewer system and a treatment plant that will produce Type 1 effluent – safe for human contact. Water from the treatment process will be used beneficially to irrigate Blue Hole Regional Park, saving aquifer water.

Any Type 1 effluent that cannot be used for irrigation during wet weather will be stored in a 500,000 gallon tank. If there is ever not storage enough, excess will be trucked away to an offsite location. These extensive backups are to ensure effluent will not enter Deer Creek, Cypress Creek or the Blanco River – solving a major concern of residents along the Blanco.

In 2016, an option was presented to allow Aqua Texas, part of Aqua America, a Pennsylvania-based New York Stock-Exchange company, to own and operate the city's sewer system. Wimberley would still have to build the sewer collection system, but the sewage would be piped north to Aqua Texas' Type 2 plant. Aqua America's business plan is to acquire small municipal water and sewer systems, operate them for maximum profit, and

raise rates dramatically. This pattern has occurred in Texas and several other states. Most of you have heard the horror stories about Aqua Texas operations in Woodcreek North, Woodcreek, and Mountain Crest: lift station overflows, leaking sewer and water lines, high rates, and poor customer service.

Aqua Texas, the local arm of Aqua America, has a mandate for growth and has stated openly it wants to grow without having to submit to current city controls. Under the contract Aqua Texas demands, Wimberley would lose its ability to exercise reasonable control over which developments get new connections. This is because Aqua Texas can only make money on the Wimberley deal if they can successfully push major residential growth – subdivisions, apartment complexes and townhomes – which will bring in massive population growth, and with it major box stores, franchise motels and fast food businesses. This would dramatically change the small-town character of Wimberley forever; think Dripping Springs.

To that end, Aqua Texas has made an outrageous demand: that the city GIVE them its valuable Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (CCN). This hands Aqua Texas a complete monopoly over this city's service FOREVER. In addition, since cities cannot give away monetarily valuable assets (the CCN) without compensation, such a gift to Aqua Texas would be subject to legal challenge and further delay the sewer system, and clean water, possibly for years.

CARD believes strongly that a city-owned and operated sewer system that keeps growth in the control of the people of Wimberley is in the best interest of Wimberley Valley residents and businesses.

With the Aqua Texas option, the city would lose control of rates. Its only recourse would be prohibitively expensive appeals to the Public Utility Commission which the city cannot afford to fight - not against Aqua America's army of lawyers skilled at crushing small town challenges.

A small but powerful lobbying group has pushed hard for this self-destructive change and City Council appears close to going along with it. If they do, Wimberley and future councils will be stuck with this decision forever. Please let City Council know you trust the people of Wimberley, not an out-of-state-run company, to look after our own best interest. Tell them to vote for the City system, and not give away our future to Aqua Texas/Aqua America and to massive growth and development.

BE INFORMED ABOUT THE DRAMATIC DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE NON-PROFIT CITY PLAN AND THE FOR-PROFIT AQUA TEXAS PLAN, AND WHY IT WILL IMPACT YOU, WHEREVER YOU LIVE IN OUR BEAUTIFUL VALLEY. COME TO THE MEETING. BRING YOUR FRIENDS.

PROTECT OUR WIMBERLEY VALLEY

TOWN HALL MEETING

6:30 P.M., THURSDAY, JANUARY 12

WIMBERLEY COMMUNITY CENTER

ONE BLOCK FROM DOWNTOWN

14068 RR 12, 78676

CARD Steering Committee

www.hayscard.org