



New authority in news launches in Hood County vowing “For the People, By the People”...

NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

in recent years, most notably since the COVID pandemic, the general American public has seemed to mistrust what has become known as “Legacy Media”. The talking points are the same across all major news sources. The headlines all parrot each other, and the only differences you will find are in the slant of their presentation which would be either Left or Right on the “accepted” political spectrum. What seems to have been lost is truly unbiased reporting. EVERY story is an Op/Ed, and The People are fed whatever “programming” it is those approved production teams are instructed to supply. The mandate among main-stream journalism to present facts and draw only logical conclusions when possible, is completely lacking. Legacy Media platforms are agenda driven vessels: whether it is CNN, NBC, Fox News, or even NewsMax.

This ever-increasing rebellion among Gen-X, Millenials, and Gen Z against the Legacy Media narrative is strong. The disinformation, half-truths, and outright lies from people and systems they were generationally told to trust have turned millions of post-BabyBoom Americans into skeptics of all information, especially that which comes from “trusted sources” at major networks.

The younger generations have turned to independent journalists, podcasters, and on-line publications such as The Blaze, The Daily Wire, Shawn Ryan, Candace Owens, Tucker Carlson, Tim Pool, Steven Crowder, Joe Rogan, etc to find interviews and reporting that allows for the consumer to make up their own minds about what is true and encourages independent research by viewers, so that THEY can make an educated decision on a topic. The new flow of information through independent voices has become like a rain storm. And a very refreshing one.

What does media mistrust have to do with Hood County? Some people may not be aware, but Hood County has its own agenda driven publication: The Hood County News.

Paul Hyde acquired the Hood County News (HCN) in August of 2020 and his friend, Sam Houston, has since become the COO and Publisher of HCN. (Other publications owned by The Hyde Media Group listed below) Since that time, HCN has been a tool used to target private citizens and political opponents that Paul Hyde and his associates do not support. The newspaper routinely publicizes hit pieces on people within the community and distributes misinformation riddled articles, which are seldom or never retracted. On the other side of that local “establishment media” coin, is the real power behind weaponized news: The power over what is NEVER REPORTED AT ALL.

Our community deserves a better, more honest newspaper. One that is committed to reporting the truth in its raw and, at times, inconvenient form. We all deserve a publication that is not swayed by “someone’s truth” or self-serving narrative, but rather reports the facts. What we currently have at HCN is one sided reporting at best, and many times real news stories that impact our community are simply ignored. We have news that is apparently sold to the highest bidder, so to speak, and the entire publication reeks of bias and obfuscation.

After months of conversation, a small group of community members decided that a better news product could be created, which would serve to educate our community with facts, rather than influence the people with one sided opinions. From this conversation eventually came an agreement, and from that, the Hood County Express, a tiny start up publication, committed to integrity in reporting, was born.

At this time we would like to welcome you to the Hood County Express newsroom. It is our goal to grow the HCE news into a respected, truth telling machine; Where integrity cannot be bought, the news is real, the OP/EDs are labeled as such, and the truth will never be sold.

–Staff Writer

EXCLUSIVE: SECRET SERVICE AGENT?

HOOD COUNTY JUDGE ELECTION UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND THE RACE

Every four years, Hood County voters choose their next County Judge. Making fully informed decisions can be challenging even in the most intensely covered state or national elections, and the difficulty increases significantly for local races. Most Texas communities are served by a single newspaper and its corresponding online presence (website, social media accounts, and email list). Many communities also have large social media groups where much of the active engagement revolves around rumors and rants about the local political scene.

Candidates running for local office face their own serious challenges in getting their positions known widely, due to the short public campaign season (about 3½ months) and overstretched campaign budgets. In essence, the public needs as much relevant information as quickly as possible during a local campaign season to make the best decision possible.

A County Judge election has an added twist: determining the relevant issues is difficult when the nature of the job itself is not widely understood.

In Part One of this two-part series, we answer the following questions:

- What is a County Judge in Texas?
- What are the relevant issues facing the candidates this cycle?
- What do the candidates say about themselves?

What's in a Name? Unlike other county elective positions—such as Sheriff or District Attorney—whose responsibilities are well-known and generally consistent across the state, the role of County Judge in Texas is much less understood. Is the County Judge a Commissioner? A traditional judge? The “boss” of all county employees? Does the position have authority over other elected officials?

In Texas, the County Judge serves as the chief executive and administrative officer of the county, presiding over the Commissioners Court, which acts as the county's governing body responsible for setting budgets, taxes, and policies.

Key Powers:

- Approving expenditures
- Overseeing county operations
- Directing emergency management
- Representing the county in administrative matters

Additional Responsibilities Include:

- Preparing and submitting the proposed county budget
- Calling elections
- Posting public notices
- Canvassing returns
- Heading civil defense and disaster relief
- Overseeing certain statutory welfare functions
- Serving on the juvenile board

Notably, a County Judge is not required to be a licensed attorney; the Texas Constitution only mandates that the judge be “well informed in the law of the State.” Most county judges statewide are not lawyers.

Judicial responsibilities in the constitutional county court include handling probate, guardianship, juvenile, and mental competency cases, as well as appeals from justice courts, serving as a magistrate, and conducting inquests when needed.

In counties like Hood County, which has a separate county court at law, the County Judge typically handles a limited judicial caseload focused on the areas above, while broader misdemeanor criminal and civil matters (up to \$250,000) are often shifted to the county court at law, whose judge must be an attorney.

Is the County Judge a Commissioner?

No. The County Judge is not a County Commissioner. The position presides over the Commissioners Court as its presiding officer—responsible for maintaining decorum, counting votes on resolutions, and voting only to break a tie. It is customary for the County Judge to refrain from debating with Commissioners and to reserve judgment for tie-breaking votes. This standard has not always been followed by current County Judge Ron Massingill, who has engaged in heated debates with Commissioners and members of the public, contributing to increased public frustration and one federal lawsuit.

What Are the Relevant Issues?

Nothing happens in a vacuum, including local issues. Few truly “local” issues are untouched by larger regional, state, or national forces. Separating the “noise” that shapes opinions from the “signal”—the matters local officials can actually influence—can be difficult in a limited-information environment.

As the County Judge campaigns heat up, voters should focus on the relevant issues to better distinguish noise, platitudes, and rhetoric from detailed, reasoned solutions.

Here are key issues heading into the March 2026 primary:

1. Industrial Sprawl

2. Most Hood County voters are aware of industrial sprawl, largely due to the ongoing controversy over the bitcoin mining data center in Mitchell Bend. Since that conflict began, several other large industrial projects have emerged in various stages of planning, development, or construction, including:

- Wolf Hollow III Gas-Fired Power Plant – Mitchell Bend
- Solar Power Generation Plant – Across the Brazos River from Pecan Plantation
- Amazon Data Center – Former site in south Precinct 2; new potential site unknown
- Tolar Data Center – Comanche Circle Project
- Hospital Area Data Center – Land under annexation consideration by the City of Granbury

The “signal” from candidates: specific plans to influence or control these projects, particularly through Subchapter K of Chapter 231, Texas Local Government Code. This provision grants Hood County exceptional regulatory powers over unincorporated areas to protect the Lake Granbury watershed and Brazos River while promoting orderly growth. Unlike most Texas counties, Hood County’s Commissioners Court can impose comprehensive controls resembling municipal zoning, including regulations on population density, building sizes, lot occupancy, infrastructure, and utilities. The Hood County Development Commission, recently convened for the first time, advises on these matters.

1. Weaponization of County Law Enforcement

2. The recent “Ouchie Meme” arrest and short-lived prosecution of local veteran Kolton Krottinger highlighted concerns about politically motivated investigations and prosecutions by the Hood County Sheriff’s Office and District Attorney’s Office. This case is the latest in a series of questionable actions under Sheriff Roger Deeds, including those involving Constable John Shirley, Commissioner Dave Eagle, Hood County Republican Chairmen Nate Criswell and Steve Biggers, Pastor Diane Rasberry, Precinct Chairman Van Vernon, and citizen Bryson Mead.

The “signal”: candidates publicly supporting increased scrutiny of the justice system through independent audits or state/federal investigations. “Noise” would be reluctance to take a clear stand.

3. Budget Control and Taxation

After voters approved two recent bonds totaling nearly \$150 million—plus the 2023 GISD VATRE that added \$8.2 million annually to taxpayer costs—appetite for new spending may be limited. Historically, the Sheriff’s Office has been the largest driver of budget strain, often requesting off-budget raises and capital expenditures justified as “emergencies.”

The “signal”: specific proposals to keep Sheriff’s Office spending in line with other departments and a commitment to reject favoritism, off-budget raises, and unplanned expenditures.

Who Are the Candidates?

Mark Lowery Mark Lowery supplied the following biography:

For more than 35 years, Mark Lowery has dedicated himself to protecting the citizens of this nation, serving with distinction in various capacities with the United States Government and holding a senior executive position within a private oil and gas company. Mr. Lowery served as a Special Agent with the United States Secret Service for 23 years, retiring as a Senior Executive Service Special Agent in Charge of the Dallas District.

Appointed to the Senior Executive Service in 2004 by the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, he oversaw four offices across Texas, including protective responsibilities for Former President George W. Bush’s ranch in Crawford, Texas.

Following retirement from the Secret Service, Mr. Lowery was selected as Special Agent in Charge for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Office of Internal Affairs, overseeing internal investigations in a five-state region. In 2016, he served as Deputy Director for Security at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, and as a consultant for the 2017 Presidential Inaugural Committee.

Through Lowery & Associates Security Consulting, LLC, Mr. Lowery continues to serve communities by conducting safety and security risk assessments for private corporations, municipalities, places of worship, and colleges in the greater Dallas area. He also provides security consulting for conferences and conventions and applies Secret Service-developed methodologies to conduct behavioral threat assessments.

During his government tenure, Mr. Lowery directed investigations into cybercrimes, financial crimes, bank fraud, credit card fraud, telemarketing fraud, and organized crime. As Assistant Special Agent in Charge and Special Agent in Charge of the Headquarters’ Special Investigations and Security Division, he managed the agency’s most robust hiring campaign, oversaw Top Secret clearance adjudications, and provided policy guidance to senior leadership.

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Mr. Lowery served on the White House Detail during the administrations of Presidents Reagan and George H.W. Bush, conducted numerous domestic and foreign security advances, and traveled to over 50 countries. He held key roles in National Special Security Events, including:

- 1990 G8 Economic Summit in Houston (Site Agent, Rice University)
- 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta (Credentials Coordinator and Site Agent for opening/closing ceremonies and the Olympic Cluster)
- 2016 Republican National Convention (Deputy Director for Security)

Mr. Lowery has received numerous awards, including the U.S. Secret Service Valor Award (1985, the agency’s highest honor) and the Secretary’s Certificate from the Department of Treasury (1986). He served on the Secret Service Peer Support Team and was assigned to rescue and recovery operations following the Oklahoma City bombing.

In the community, Mr. Lowery has served on the President’s Council for Dallas Christian College, the Planning and Zoning Commission for the City of Grapevine, and as a delegate and Sergeant at Arms at the 2024 Texas State Republican Convention.

Mr. Lowery began his career as a uniformed police officer with the St. Louis County Police Department in Missouri for six years. He graduated from Virden Community High School in Illinois and earned a bachelor’s degree in Criminology and Sociology from Illinois State University. He has been married to his wife, Karen, for 40 years. They have two grown, married children with successful careers.

Ron Sutton Ron Sutton was contacted about contributing his biography but chose not to participate. A review of publicly available information yielded the following:

Born and raised in Abilene, Sutton attended public schools there from first through 12th grade. He graduated from Hardin-Simmons University with degrees in Political Science and Business/Public Administration. His career was in the textile and needle trades industries, involving extensive travel.Sutton has been married to Barbara, his high school sweetheart, for 57 years. They have two sons, two daughters-in-law, and eight grandchildren. The family has lived in Hood County for 31 years, which Sutton calls the finest place in Texas.

Editor’s Note:

Ron Sutton had no significant pre-campaign online presence, but his campaign emerged quietly online in early 2025. Political observers noted his close mentoring by current County Judge Ron Massingill in the months before the filing period. Sutton’s public silence on the “Ouchie Meme” case is noteworthy given that his campaign treasurer is the wife of Sheriff Roger Deeds. Close ties to both Massingill and Deeds represent a political risk in the current Hood County landscape.

In Part Two of this series, both candidates will be offered a long-form interview with follow-up questions. Readers are encouraged to submit questions for consideration in next month’s article.



RON SUTTON



MARK LOWERY

The Arrest That Changed Everything: Hood County's Reckoning

The attorney that declared war on government overreach



CJ GRISHAM DRESSED AND ARMED FOR COURT



Grisham's approach was unapologetic and confrontational. He wasn't interested in playing nice with authorities he believed had crossed a constitutional line. And his strategy worked.

Grisham wasn't alone in bringing attention to Krottinger's plight. Two other vocal advocates—Nate Criswell and Sarah Fields—joined the chorus, using their platforms to shine a spotlight on what they characterized as government intimidation of free speech.

Together, this trio created a perfect storm of media attention. Their relentless advocacy, combined with

ENTER CJ GRISHAM: THE ATTORNEY WHO DOESN'T BACK DOWN

Grisham's legal maneuvering and social media presence, turned a local arrest into a national story about the limits of law enforcement power and the protection of constitutional rights.

Conservative media outlets picked up the story. Legal scholars weighed in. Civil liberties organizations took notice. Hood County, a small Texas community, suddenly found itself at the center of a debate that reached far beyond its borders.

The pressure campaign worked. A judge dismissed the felony charge against Krottinger, effectively overturning the "online impersonation" accusation that had led to his arrest in the first place.

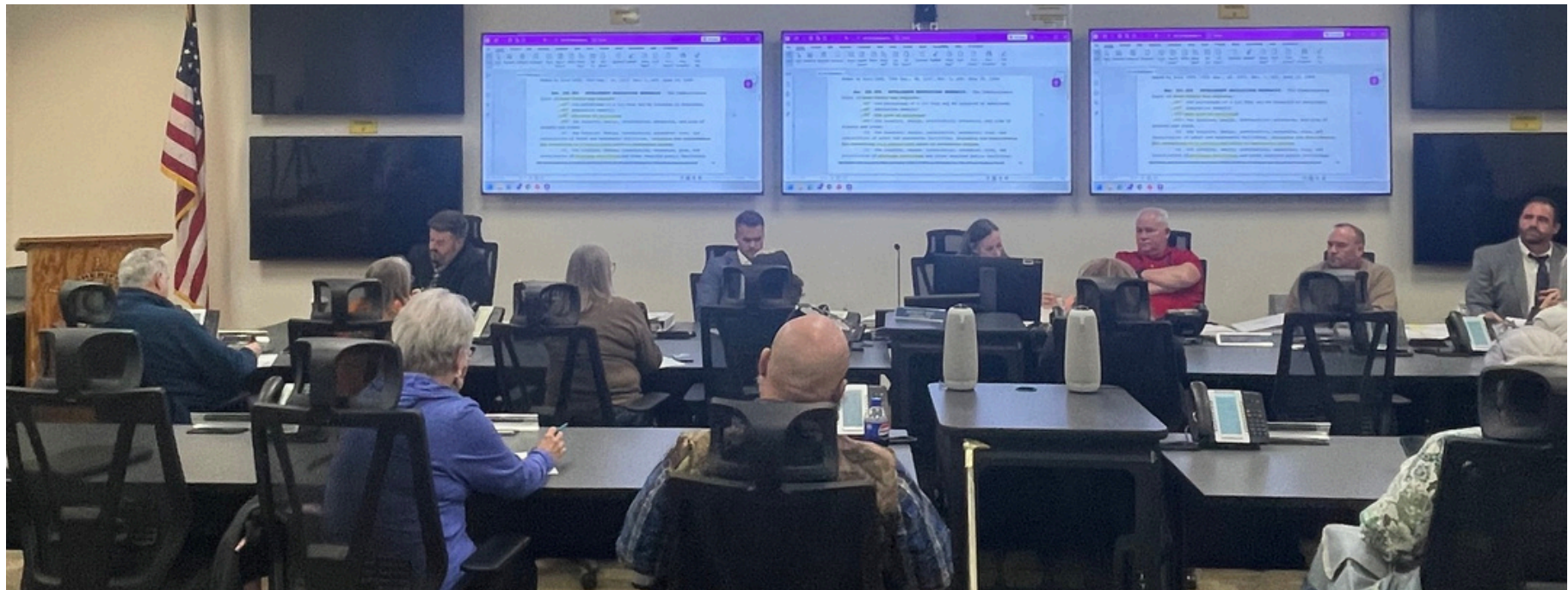
For Krottinger and his supporters, it was vindication. The legal system had recognized what they'd been

saying all along: the meme was satire, not impersonation. It was protected speech, not criminal conduct.

But the dismissal didn't end the controversy—it intensified it.

Grisham's handling of the Krottinger case has made him a polarizing figure. Free speech advocates praise him as a hero willing to stand up to government overreach. His supporters point to the dismissal of charges as proof that his aggressive strategy was justified.

With criminal charges dismissed, the immediate threat to Krottinger has passed. But the federal lawsuit filed by Grisham continues, potentially setting precedents that could affect how online speech cases are handled across Texas and beyond.



The Hood County Development Commission Meeting

The Oath of Office

By Jim Bell

The following is the oath of office used to swear in each Development Commissioner, and the Ex Officio Chairman, of the Hood County Development Commission.

I (state your name) do solemnly swear and affirm, that I will faithfully execute the duties, of Development Commission representative for Precinct (#) of Hood County, of the State of Texas, and I will to the best of my abilities, preserve, protect and defend, the constitution and laws of the United States, and of this great state, so help me God, and I furthermore do solemnly swear or affirm, that I have not directly or indirectly paid, offered or promised to pay, contributed or promised to contribute, any money or thing of value, or promised any public office or employment, or the giving or withholding, as a reward to secure my appointment, whichever the case may be, so help me God. This is strong, airtight language for an oath of office.

Ex Officio Chairperson: Christine Leftwich
Commissioner, Precinct 1: Tyler Scott
Commissioner, Precinct 2: Matt Long
Commissioner, Precinct 3: Tod Garner
Commissioner, Precinct 4: Robert Carter

At this meeting, the Judge arrived late, held over with previous responsibilities, so he missed the start of the meeting. The Commission began on time, digging right into business, and when the judge arrived, he swore in the Commissioners and the Ex Officio Chairman in by administering the oath of office. Immediately afterwards they had the prayer, then the room stood for the Pledge of Allegiance, and the Pledge to the Great State of Texas.

The Commissioners re-commenced, and the meeting was relive broadcasted as a zoom call. The zoom connection

was between the Commission and the lawyer hired by Hood County to represent them as council in this endeavor. The Lawyer, from the Bracewell firm, constantly provided council during the meeting regarding the legalities and interpretations of statutes in this issue.

Clint Head exerted strong influence in the meeting, quoting a thorough knowledge of the procedures and interpretations of statutes that others on the Commission, soaked up like a sponge. He was an invaluable source of information. So was the input of Jeannie Stacks. Who is the Health Inspector/Code enforcement inspector at City of Granbury.

Overall, the meeting was very productive. Commissioners from Precincts 1,2 and 4 had done extensive reading into the intricacies of what is important for this Commission to be productive. There was only one vote. That was to advise the County Commissioners’ Court to establish a moratorium on commercial development until they can conduct a realistic evaluation of what all of the ramifications will turn out to be for a data center to come into Hood County. The vote was four to one. The lone vote against it was Robert Carter.

Later in the meeting, the Commissioners discussed minor things. Among those things was the discussion about having a dedicated email, which Robert Carter suggested. This was a good suggestion. No decision resulted from this discussion so far. To be effective as a Development Commissioner, he or she should have an email address especially related to his or her position with the Development Commission.

Hood County Entertainment

WORD SEARCH

Puzzle, Newspaper, Weather, Comic, Breaking, Cinema, Story, Tabloid, Photo, Politics, Article, Headline

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FUN FACTS

Granbury’s courthouse is older than Most Texas Counties

Jesse James might be buried here. or not... nobody agrees.

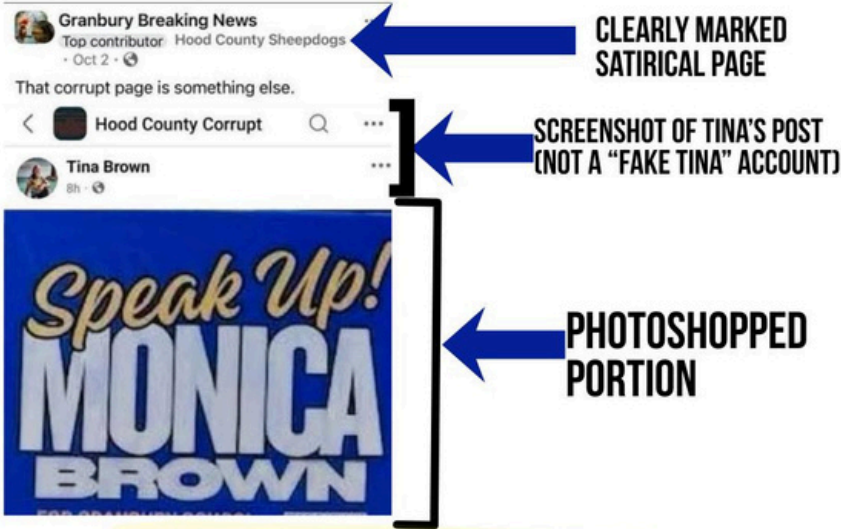
Granbury Square is one of the most preserved historic squares in Texas

Hood County has one of the highest volunteer fire department ratios in Texas

Lake Granbury exists because the Brazos River was tamed

Granbury has one of the most active ghost-tour economies in Texas

MEMES



LEGAL NOTE: Kolton was charged with creating a “fake tina” account. He never created a “fake tina” account. It’s that simple. Tell Sheriff Deeds and the DA to end this WITCHHUNT and go after real criminals. Not stupid photoshopped memes. The Charge was “Online Impersonation-Name/Persona Create Page”

SUDOKU

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YOUR VOICE

YOUR NEWS... WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

At Hood County Express, we're not just another newspaper... we're your newspaper. Built by the community, for the community, we're here to deliver the news you actually want to hear, not what someone else thinks you should know.

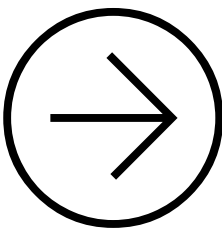
Your Story, Your Way
Here's the best part: You're in control. Want your name attached to your contribution? We'll give you the byline and the credit you deserve. Prefer to stay anonymous? No problem. We'll protect your identity while still telling the truth that needs to be told.

A Paper for the People, by the People
This is what sets Hood County Express apart. We're not influenced by outside interests or corporate agendas. We're driven by you—the people who live here, work here, and care about this community. Your stories matter. Your voice matters. And we're committed to making sure both are heard.

Get in Touch
Ready to share your story or pitch an idea? Reach out to Hood County Express today. Whether you want to write, report, or simply point us in the right direction, we're ready to listen.

Because at the end of the day, the truth belongs to all of us... and it's never for sale.

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