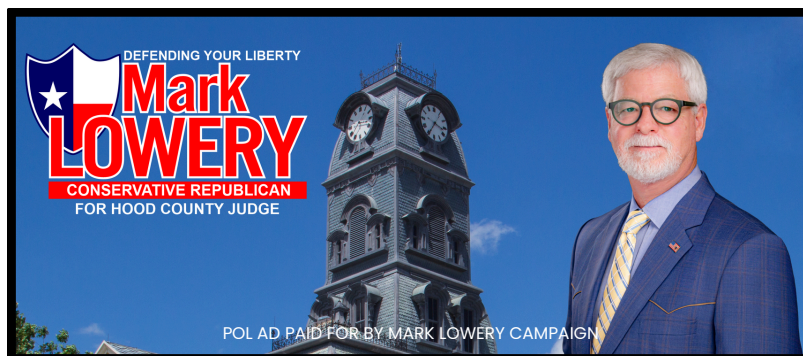
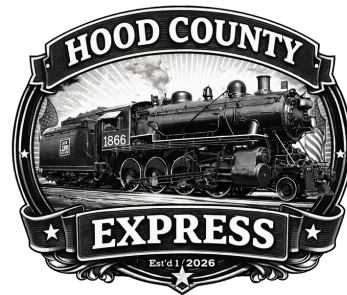


Hood County Express

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 28TH, 2026



THE GATEWAY TO THE SILICON HILL COUNTRY



Matt Long
Hood County Development Commission
@DATABAD on Facebook
RejectBigTech.com

In an age where public officials are clamoring at the opportunity to replace natural beauty with promises of technological utopia, Hood County finds itself at an inflection point. Do we jump at the chance to scalp our land and cover it from corner to corner with data centers, power plants and whatever else becomes "critical" or trendy in the days to come? Do we embrace the short-term mentality of more is always better? Do we encourage the construction of our own human enslavement through digital storage? And do we do all of this at the promise of lower taxes? Or, under the guise that we are in a race against communism? Haven't we seen all this before?

Obviously, anyone who has not been pricked by the needle of financial enticement would choose to remain steadfast in the protection of our land as a sanctuary county and not offer it up to the internet gods as a sacrificial zone, or a technological gateway to the Silicone Hill Country. Unfortunately, the City of Granbury has chosen a path of secrecy and deceit, by hiding their plans from the public to aggressively pursue and incentivize the developers of Project Patriot. This is a plan to build a Data Center on 2,090 acres of land that the city annexed on January 6th of this year (see full details at RejectAnnex.com).

And while the City of Granbury has a potential data center problem the size of 100 Walmart Super Centers, less than 1 mile from four different schools, a hospital and a nursing home, the county has a problem almost three times that size. Yet rather than continue down the path of confidentiality and deception, the County Commissioners and County Judge have decided to bring all things to the surface including:

- Removing an offer of tax abatements to Project Spectrum,
- Hosting a special public meeting to discuss data centers and allow public interaction,
- Hiring a law firm that specializes in negotiations between government and private businesses,
- Reinstating the Hood County Development Commission, to advise the Commissioners on this very topic,
- Passing a motion to have a public hearing on a moratorium on February 10th,
- Adding an agenda item for January 29th to repeal a letter of support for Project Patriot,
- And they have repeatedly suspended their maximum public comment time limits to allow everyone to speak on data center related items.

It is plain to see that it is the County that truly hears the cries of the people and respects the concerns that so many have voiced, such as loss of property value, irreversible effects on water supply, extreme health concerns, constant noise, and poor air quality to name a few.

Sometimes I find myself getting so lost in the intricacies of how to stop these developments, I lose focus on the fact that we simply do not want them here on principle. Hood county does not want to participate in the building of infrastructure that sacrifices irreplaceable beauty and natural resources and ushers in an age of maximum oppression.

In my first speech to the County Commissioners, I asked three questions:

1. Do we think taking thousands of acres of raw land and turning that land into Industrial Ai Data Centers is moving us closer to the original creation or farther away?

UNDERSTANDING THE HOOD CO JUDGE RACE

- While he held the office of Secretary
- With his recorded participation in board governance

The Dollar Amounts Involved

During Sutton’s tenure:

- Fiscal Year 2022: \$937,761 redirected
- Fiscal Year 2023: \$547,928 redirected

Total during Sutton’s time in office:

\$1,485,689

Prior years (before Sutton): \$1,815,137

Combined total since 2016:

\$3,300,826

These funds would otherwise have been allocated proportionally to:

- Granbury ISD
- Hood County
- City of Granbury
- Tolar ISD
- Lipan ISD

The Legal Issue

Texas Tax Code §6.06(j) states that if payments from taxing units exceed actual expenditures, the Chief Appraiser:

- Shall credit the excess against the next year’s allocation, or
- Shall refund the taxing unit its proportionate share

The statute uses mandatory language: shall.

The dispute centers on whether HCAD complied with that statute when the funds were retained and placed into retirement accounts instead of being refunded or credited.

Additionally, §6.06(c) requires that proposed budget amendments be formally delivered in writing to participating taxing units 30 days before board action.

As Board Secretary at the time, Sutton was the officer designated by statute to ensure that requirement was fulfilled.

The Audit Dispute

Supporters of Sutton have cited the HCAD “Forensic Audit Report Summary” as evidence that no wrongdoing occurred.

However:

- The summary was drafted internally by the Chief Appraiser.
- The independent audit firm issued a full forensic audit report.
- The firm’s General Counsel reportedly disavowed the internal summary characterization.

The full audit discusses:

- Required approvals not obtained
 - Retention of \$1.08 million in previously unspent funds
 - \$397,000 spent on building planning.
- The central question is not whether funds were physically missing, but whether funds that the statute required to be refunded were instead retained.

The Core Issue for Voters

Ron Sutton has argued that he was not the Treasurer. Correct.

He was the Secretary.

The statute assigns the notification duty to the Secretary. The fund reallocations occurred during his tenure. The votes were taken while he was in office. The amounts were substantial. The legal compliance is disputed. That is the record voters must evaluate.

-HCE STAFF WRITER

Hood County Patriots

2026 Republican Primary Recommendations:

US Senate	Ken Paxton	County Judge	Mark Lowery
US Congress	Roger Williams	District Clerk	Melanie Graft
Governor	Greg Abbott	Comm. Pct. 4	Dave Eagle
Lt. Gov.	Dan Patrick	County Chair	Greg Harrell
Atty. Gen.	Middleton or Reitz	PC 101	Terry McNew
Comptroller	Don Huffines	PC 202	Carolyn Reeves
Ag. Comm.	Nate Sheets	PC 313	Stephen Erickson
RR Comm.	Bo French	PC 314	James Wall
CCA Place 3	Thomas Smith	PC 317	Cathy Hays
CCA Place 9	John Messinger	PC 409	Fred Santiago
State Senate	David Cook	PC 415	James Williamson

POL AD PAID FOR BY HCPATRIOTS

EARLY VOTING: Feb 17th - Feb 27th | ELECTION DAY: Tuesday, March 3rd



**YOU CAN CUT THIS
OUT AND TAKE IT
INTO THE VOTING
BOOTH!**



★ TOLAR TEEN CLAIMS 2026 ★ GRAND CHAMPION STEER TITLE



CONGRATULATIONS, CAIMAN CODY

A Hood County hometown win just stole the spotlight on one of Texas' biggest stages.

13-year-old Caiman Cody of Tolar captured the Grand Champion Steer title at the 2026 Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo, beating out more than 1,500 competitors from across Texas — no small feat at one of the most prestigious livestock shows in the nation.

His steer, "White Castle," rose to the top inside the historic Will Rogers Coliseum, earning the highest honor in the Junior Steer Show and drawing applause from judges, fellow exhibitors, and spectators alike.

Cody is a proud Tolar FFA member and has spent years putting in the early mornings, late nights, and steady work that define Texas youth agriculture. Those efforts paid off in a big way — not just with a banner, but with statewide recognition for both himself and his community.

What's next?

White Castle now heads to the Junior Sale of Champions, where top-tier steers are auctioned to buyers from across the state — often raising significant funds that help young exhibitors continue their agricultural education.

From Tolar to Fort Worth — this is Texas grit, discipline, and tradition on full display. — HCE STAFF WRITER

NATION'S BEST — VERIFIED 2026 RESULTS

1st Place Overall Team — National Champions

Viola Allen — 2nd Overall Nationally

National Record Holder — Precision Standing Air Rifle

Mataya Turner — Individual Service Champion

Renee Sermarini — 8th Overall Nationally

Earned Distinguished Marksmanship Badge

Ainsley Milligan — Championship Team Scoring Member

Depth matters too:

Corbin Wilson competed on a second Granbury nationals team

Emma Wipff key roster contributor for 2025–26 season

WHAT THIS MEANS

These cadets compete in Three-Position Precision Air Rifle — one of the most technically demanding youth sports in America, where matches are decided by fractions of millimeters.

This win sends Granbury to the All-Service JROTC National Championship at Camp Perry, Ohio — the top stage in scholastic military marksmanship.

SMALL TOWN. NATIONAL POWERHOUSE.

Nine straight national titles doesn't happen by accident.

It takes discipline.

It takes coaching excellence.

It takes Texas grit.

And Granbury has all three.

HOOD COUNTY PROUD

From the classroom to the firing line, these cadets represent the very best of Texas youth — leadership, accountability, and relentless work ethic.

Texas Strong

Precision Wins

Granbury Delivers — AGAIN

HCE STAFF WRITER





WE THE PEOPLE ARE PISSSED OFF!!!

LIVE FROM COMMISSIONERS COURT — DATA CENTER
SHOWDOWN

Standing room only.

Emotions high.

Community voices loud and unified.

More than 20 speakers addressed Commissioners Court today — and every single speaker-at-large spoke IN OPPOSITION to data centers, urging the court to pass a moratorium to protect Hood County's rural character, infrastructure capacity, and quality of life.

The packed courtroom responded with loud approval throughout the public comment period.

Multiple speakers received standing ovations, including:

- Community Activist [Matt Long](#)
- Hood County Republican Chairman Greg Harrell

Election Cycle Moment That Turned Heads:

During public comment, Precinct 4 Commissioners Court candidate Kenneth Copeland remained seated and was not observed applauding speakers opposing data centers. For many attendees, today wasn't just about development — it was about the future identity of Hood County.

This story is still developing.

Hood County Express will continue tracking the moratorium discussion and any action taken by Commissioners Court.

HCE STAFF WRITER

With data centers being the largest issue facing Hood County this cycle, I wanted to make a post on why I am supporting Mark Lowery for Judge. Not judicial judge, but the CEO of the county.

As soon as people in our community, Pecan Plantation, were made aware of this data center infestation, Mark Lowery was there with a firm stance of "Not in Hood County!"

Since that day, I've seen him attend:

Every Commissioner's Court meeting

Every AMUD meeting

Every City Council meeting

Every Development Commission meeting

Even a data center prayer meeting hosted at our home.

Mark not only attended these meetings but was a key contributor, making his position known from the beginning.

Beyond the data center issue, we need a man who is going to run the county like a well-oiled machine, striving for maximum efficiency and getting rid of any corruption that may lie beneath the surface.

Mark had an impeccable 30+ year career in law enforcement, including 24 years with the Secret Service, where he served on presidential detail for Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush.

He is accustomed to managing hundreds of people during day-to-day operations and in crisis situations like the Oklahoma City bombing and the Atlanta Olympics bombing.

These events are especially relevant as the County Judge is responsible for managing emergency operations and we need a man with firsthand crisis management experience.

With the Moratorium vote in February and the primary election in March, the next two months may prove to be the most important in our county's history.

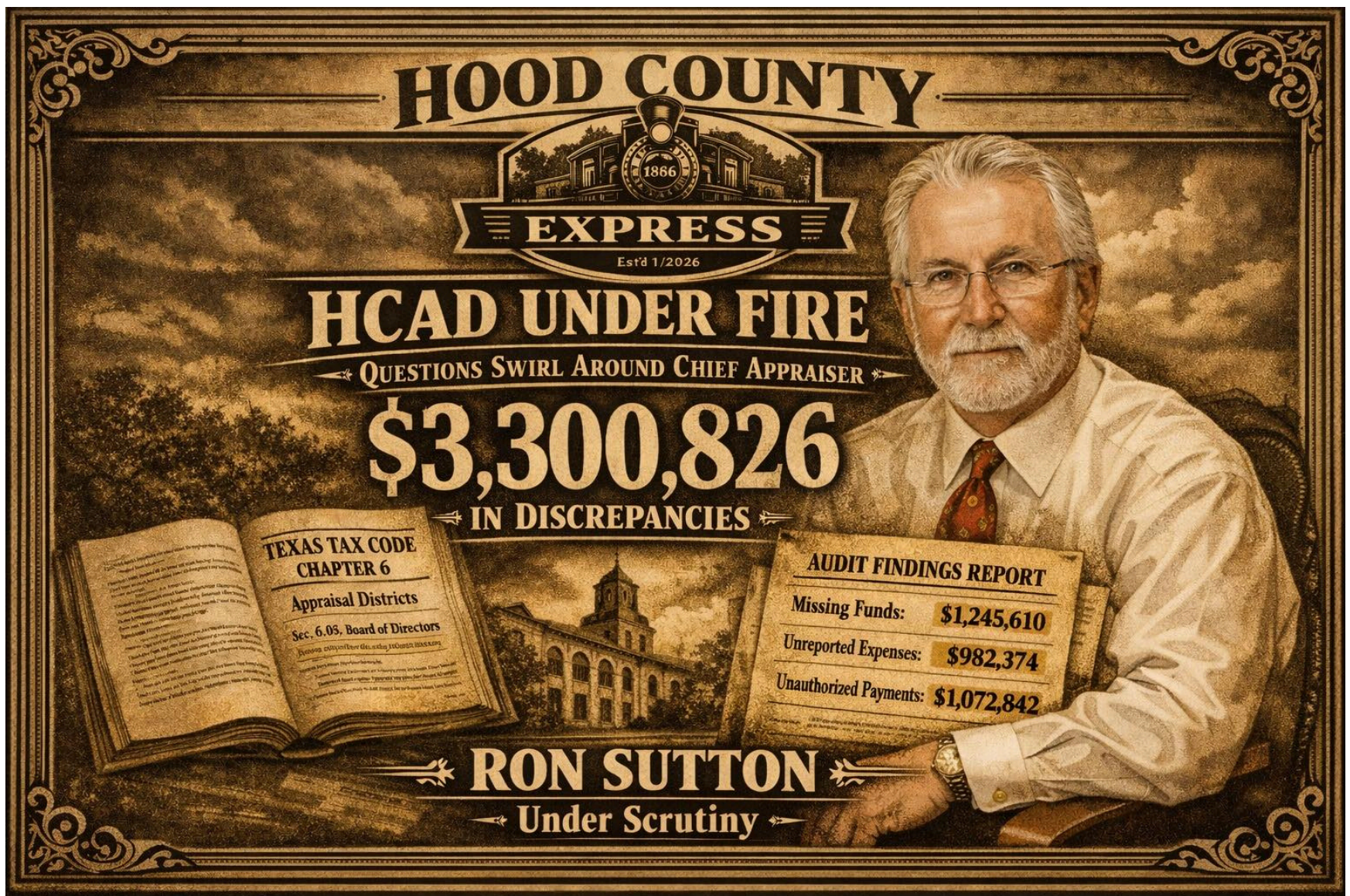
I believe we need to elect a man that will deal strictly with outside threats and internal corruption without compromise.

For me and my family, that man is Mark Lowery.

-Matt Long (op/ed)



POLAR PAID FOR BY HCFPATRIOTS



HOOD COUNTY JUDGE RACE HEATS UP!

The Question: What Was Ron Sutton's Role at HCAD?

Ron Sutton has publicly stated that certain controversial actions at the Hood Central Appraisal District (HCAD) began before he joined the Board.

That may be true regarding earlier land dealings in 2021.

However, the financial decisions discussed below occurred during his tenure — and while he held a formal leadership position on the Board.

Sutton's Official Role at HCAD

Ron Sutton served on the HCAD Board of Directors and publicly confirmed that he held the position of Board Secretary.

Under Texas Tax Code §6.06(c), the Secretary of the Board has specific statutory responsibilities, including delivering written notice of proposed budget amendments to each

participating taxing entity at least 30 days before board action.

Sutton has emphasized publicly:

"I was the Secretary."

That distinction matters.

What Happened During Sutton's Tenure

According to HCAD Board meeting minutes dated:

- July 14, 2022
- July 19, 2023

The Board voted to move large sums from Fund Balance into an internally labeled account referred to as "Excess Funds," and ultimately directed those funds into HCAD retirement accounts.

These actions occurred:

- While Ron Sutton was serving on the Board



Here are the Republican ballot propositions for the Texas March 3, 2026 primary election:

Ballot Propositions

Greg S. Harrell

Proposition 1

Texas property taxes should be assessed at the purchase price and phased out entirely over the next six years through spending reductions.

Proposition 2

Texas should require any local government budget that raises property taxes to be approved by voters at a November general election.

Proposition 3

Texas should prohibit denial of healthcare or any medical service based solely on the patient's vaccination status.

Proposition 4

Texas should require its public schools to teach that life begins at fertilization.

Proposition 5

Texas should ban gender, sexuality, and reproductive clinics and services in K-12 schools.

Proposition 6

Texas should enact term limits on all elected officials.

Proposition 7

Texas should ban the large-scale export or sale of our groundwater and surface water to any single private or public entity.

Proposition 8

The Texas Legislature should reduce the burden of illegal immigration on taxpayers by ending public services for illegal aliens.

Proposition 9

The Republican-controlled Texas Legislature should stop awarding leadership positions, including committee and subcommittee chairmanships and vice chairmanships, to Democrats.

Proposition 10

Texas should prohibit Sharia Law.

March Primary Election Calendar

First Day of Early Voting Tuesday, February 17, 2026

Last Day to Apply for Ballot by
Mail (Received, not Postmarked)
Friday, February 20, 2026

Last Day of Early Voting Friday, February 27, 2026
Last day to Receive Ballot by
Mail*
Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Election Day
Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Primary Runoff Election
Tuesday, May 26, 2026

*7:00 PM if carrier envelope is not postmarked, OR Wednesday, March 4, 2026 (next business day after Election Day) at 5:00 PM if carrier envelope is postmarked by 7:00 PM at the location of the election on Election Day (unless overseas or military voter deadlines apply)

