

It is tax season, the busiest time of the year at the Treasury. In addition to that, I also feel it prudent to address the political drama that has been perpetuated by two separate entities over the week of October 8. The Clerk, the County Administrator, and the Commissioners have all come together to unite against me, the Treasurer. In the interest of transparency and factuality, I will address, in a series of three articles, the security cameras, the break space for my staff, and Clerk's and commissioners' commentary. The articles will be posted on the Treasury website and will appear in whole on Hays Post and in three sections of the Hays Daily News.

Firstly, many people have expressed disappointment at the way the commissioners have attempted to smear my name. I want to thank them, my supporters, for rallying behind me. They have also expressed pity at the county officials' refusal to acknowledge any of my accomplishments and lie about me on top of that. I seek no pity, for this drama finds people, unavoidably, in political positions, especially those who don't compromise their duty. It is however, my hope we can have a peace-filled county, and by extension, world. Did I expect our small county to have such blind partisanship and corruption? I didn't. It has reared its ugly head at me, but I will not be bullied or intimidated, and these attacks and the people who made them will be answered. I want those attackers, bullies to know that at the end of the day they can wash their hands as much as they want, but it will not remove what haunts their conscience.

For the last several months I have been targeted by Ellis County's group of what I call "political elites." Frankly, I am flattered they have already seen that I am an uncompromising threat to those who do not have the best interest of the citizens at heart, but instead enact their political positions from a place of bruised-ego and greed, with goals of power, popularity and self interest.

To illustrate the work I do as your Treasurer, I write newsletters on a semi-annual basis, which are published on the Treasury website and available in our office. I work; I enjoy it; I do it well by every standard of measure I apply to myself. The work itself is the reward. I earn a nice salary, and I am honored the voters trust me to uphold the duties of Treasurer. I am proud of all I have accomplished in my first year. The investments and changes I have made have already more than paid for my four years' salary several times over.

It is you the voter who decides if I am the kind of person you want as your Treasurer; that power lies in your hands. I like it that way. You will not hear me speak as I have heard others say "no one cares; no one votes." That is what these "political elites" bank on. And when they speak to the voters it is by way of baseless and false statements aimed to create a cloud of suspicion, working to distract you from what is really going on.

I am here to bring a value for voters, and work together with others to keep our county strong and make it stronger. I find the single most important quality a person needs as a Treasurer (and there are many qualities) is the ability to stand steady under immense

pressure and manipulation, and to keep focused on *working for the people*. You do not want a person in this office that will succumb. It is a huge responsibility, not limited to supervising a staff of 9, accounting for county money, and most importantly, maintaining the State-sanctioned autonomy the Treasury was designed to have, many decades ago, when the Kansas constitution was written.

Managing my own office, maintaining that state-sanctioned autonomy, is not “uncooperative,” as the commissioners paint it to be. It is not “prickly” or untrustworthy to keep a healthy distance between Treasurers and Commissioners. It is not required, furthermore, or standard to have Treasurers attend commission meetings. Many times there is tension among three big county entities: Commissioners, Treasurers, and County Administrators (CA). Commissioners and the CA have taken issue with me, in the attempt, not to seek answers as they innocently said, but to create suspicion, stating concerns and accusations that they fully understand and know the answers to, citing false information and intentionally omitting information that would elucidate their concerns. Even going so low as to insinuate a lack of cooperation and transparency about these concerns on my part. This will all be explained, the details of their “concerns” and the why behind it all, in articles to come.

In the meantime, here are the big reasons. It comes down to Commissioners wanting to control and micromanage me, the treasurer, while at the same time taking the focus off their failed duty to uphold the Kansas Constitution for the past 5 years. In addition, the Democratic Party, embittered by the end of a 40 year run in the Treasurers office, did what this party does best, create a “situation” that doesn’t exist with the hopes that a panicked commissioner would reprimand the Treasurer, distancing themselves from their accountability over this elected office. Thereby driving home their, the commissioners, selfish, perceived necessity for an appointed treasurer. Ah politics. Stranger than fiction.

As voters it is in your best interest to examine and demand to know more about the people you elect, and run for office yourself if you have the stomach for it and the right motives. That is why I have spent so much time writing to you from the beginning, so you can know more about me, the *person* and me, the *Treasurer*. State Treasurer, Jake LaTurner said in an interview on October 11, 2018: “The primary reason people should care about the treasurer’s office is to be a check on the administration. You should want someone independent of them looking at the books.” He was addressing the State Treasury position, and it carries over similarly to county government. It is in this hopeful frame of mind I share my perspective and hope you take the time to read between the lines and see what is really happening here in Ellis County.

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In their meeting the commissioners and county administrator (CA) addressed “security cameras” in the Treasury. Almost a year ago, yes, almost one year ago, Commissioner Wasinger invited me to lunch with her and the (CA) where they asked about office cameras. I explained my examination of varying procurement contracts in the Treasury, and that the first contract due for renewal was for our camera system. I explained how I

selected a 14-channel (versus a 21 channel) system of cameras. It is a better cost-value, frees up server storage space, and covers all cash-handling sites in the Treasury. It is fully under Treasury purveyance, and is more than sufficient to protect all county interests.

During this meeting with Wasinger, The Deputy Treasurer and I invited Wasinger to come in to the office to take a look at our cameras' locations at any time. Wasinger communicated to both of us she was satisfied with what we explained and has since never asked me about the cameras. Since that time none of the commissioners have expressed any security issue with our cameras. That is because there is no issue.

Now that I have explained that, I have a question. Why is this topic brought up now, especially since Commissioner Haselhorst has declined several invitations to meet with me and to tour my office? Nor has he ever asked me about the cameras. When McClelland did come into the office, she didn't ask for or look at the cameras. It is because this is not about cameras.

I invited Haselhorst to the office and to have coffee on at least four occasions during my first year in office, and he either said he did not have the time or in two cases, did not respond at all to my invitations. One of my three main goals upon taking office was to have a good relationship with the Commissioners, but it is true that for that to work, *both* parties must share that desire. It is not I that is avoiding dialogue, and I find it disturbing he describes me as refusing to meet when it is he that has not once taken time to meet with me.

Furthermore, when I asked to talk with Commissioner Wasinger, she gave me an ultimatum that if I did not meet her on a certain day at a certain time, that it was then or never... "your choice," she demanded. This is not how you communicate with a fellow elected official. I am frankly befuddled by the odd behavior from all three of them from the beginning. From the first month I started working at the Treasury, I have been spoken to in this disrespectful way by Commissioner Wasinger, and either ignored or put-off by Commissioner Haselhorst. The only Commissioner to take up my invitation to come tour the Treasury and talk with my staff was McClelland, who under the guises of accepting my invitation instead spent that time yelling at me for "attacking" Clerk Maskus. I have never attacked anyone, not then or now.

It is I who am being attacked in an orchestrated political stunt by Deputy Clerk Dreiling, Clerk Maskus, all three commissioners, and the county administrator. After several months of intimidation, veiled threats, and open hostility from commissioners and from the county counselor who told me "things can go downhill really fast" if I don't go along to get along, I am not surprised to see these "concerns" used as a diversion tactic obscured beneath the mists of outright lies, lies by omission, twisted facts, and rumors.

To clarify, Mr. Haselhorst, these cameras that you framed as "a public safety issue, an employee issue, a staff issue" as you stated Monday, still remain unseen by you, by choice. Why have you never addressed your concerns to me? Why have these "concerns" been allowed by you to "slip through the cracks" as you said it, for a *whole year*? The

answer is that this is not about “concern.” It is about creating drama and attempting to discredit me. Weak attempt. Why?

To address the next issue of the “structure” that was “going up” in the Treasury. During a period of two days in April, three tall, wooden cubicle walls were sat onto the floor in place of furniture I sold for \$1000 to another county department, in November of 2017. There was no “construction.” I sought a break space, and had two offers in November and December, one man who said the project was too small to be worth the time, and another bid that was, in my opinion, prohibitively expensive. So in January, with no offers on the table, an offer from “a contractor with the last name of Schlegel” was accepted. He offered to do the best job for the best price, and the offer was gladly accepted. The break space was brought in and paid for 6 months ago for \$1089, with a check signed by all three commissioners. My budget for office furniture was thousands of dollars “in the black”, so I felt \$89 was a great deal in exchange for another department to get a desk that retailed currently for \$1800, for \$1000.

So to Commissioners, why sign a check for something you do not approve of and then pretend not to know about it, and then publicly tout disapproval of it? Why did County Administrator, Phil Smith-Hanes, ask the Register of Deeds last Friday, October 5, how much she “...bought the desk for from Lisa about a year ago?” On camera, in a recorded commission meeting just three days later, why did you pretend not to know where that furniture went, Phil? Why make an effort to make something innocent and prudent look suspicious, Phil? When Dean Haselhorst expressed not knowing where that furniture went you sat silent, but you knew full well that a \$1000 operational transfer from the Deed’s office to the Treasury occurred in November 2017. Becky Herzog told you that, then notified me on Friday afternoon of your inquiries before I left work after 5 pm. But I bet Councilor Jeter loves the billable hours he’ll earn by “attempting to look into micromanagement of the Treasury, which as Haselhorst said, is not permissible by statute anyway. Over a matter of \$89? I don’t think so.

As a taxpayer and as your Treasurer, I do not endorse using taxpayer dollars to pay a lawyer to look into issues commissioners already know the answer to. I’d be curious to see, (as the one elected to see where money is going), how much money Jeter has gotten for digging up this information over the last year for the purpose of a political smear campaign, and a weak attempt at that. Perhaps this is where the \$130,000 in Capital Outlay Funds are going that you took from the Treasury, Phil? Well, Commissioners, and CA, Phil Smith Hanes? Imagine, in Ellis County, tax dollars are being wielded by politicians to instigate a smear campaign. Do we get to know how much money, Commissioners? Or is that going to be saved and used against me several years from now as though it’s my fault you used money to investigate things you already knew the answers to? A lot of tax dollars are going to lawyers lately, and I am not okay with that. More billable hours, please, since now the county is finally out of the lawsuit that was kept as “quiet” as possible. Not going to be so easy to quiet the Treasurer though. But you all already know that, hence, your different approach: a smear campaign. The Hays Daily titled an article that interviewed the Clerk “Treasurer Scolds Clerk”---I never did

scold Donna, but in this case commissioners, if you were standing in front of me today I would say “Shame on you.”

So to recap the reason you all are giving more billable hours to Jeter Law Firm: Another department saved money by buying the Treasury’s furniture; I was able to get rid of items the Treasury didn’t use and get some money to buy something useful; and my 9 employees got a space to take a break. Again, I guess it doesn’t sound too bad when you put it that way, when you tell the truth.

Part 3 of 3

In my final response article to the Commissioners, I want to address why they were so concerned, so “worried” that none of them asked me about cameras since last November. They signed a check for a break space with no inquiry as to what it was for. They kept this all close to the vest as they quietly hinted to me that at any time they could reveal “things” about me if I did not keep silent about my concerns with the Clerk. Why did they spin, omit, and outright lie about these issues they came up with to discuss in their meeting all about me? About my communications with them, the cameras, the break space? Why create a cloud of suspicion (though baseless and full of generalizations) around the Treasury and me? Why feign concern in your public forum? In a planned commission meeting/ “gang-smear campaign” they knew I could not attend, that they did not even invite me to until less than 24 hours before it occurred. 2 simple reasons: Tax Deadline and a threatened “political elite.” As Confucius said: “Life is simple, but we insist on complicating it.” Why complicate things? Deceitful people like to complicate. I like to keep things simple. I like facts. We currently have 3 commissioners and a county administrator that like spinning, strategizing, omitting facts, and frankly, manipulating information to make things appear in a certain way. Why do they do these things? How do they have the time?

I will address reason one, “Tax Deadline” briefly, since that dead horse lies ready for examination in my article, published on 10/10, which I wrote on 10/7 (and notified the commissioners about via email before the Commission meeting occurred on 10/8). In it I notified citizens of a lack of action on the part of the Commission to address the failure of the Clerk to comply with state statute. To be clear, this was never me “ratting” anyone out, not in 2017, not now. In fact, for months in 2017, I talked with the Clerk, waiting patiently until she turned her numbers over 3 weeks late on November 21. I waited, and trusted her excuses were valid until I found out she had lied when our software programmer informed me a step she said she was “waiting on” had in fact been completed a week-and-a-half earlier. When that programmer informed me of this, 3 of my staff were in the room listening on speakerphone, two of whom went immediately after the phone call with me to tell the Clerk what we had found out. From that point, once she refused to admit to the lie, Clerk Maskus and Deputy Dreiling used the elections as an excuse, the new Cottonwood Extension district, and more. When one excuse was overcome, another arose, and so on. So I sought advice from Treasurers who mentored me before I took office. They said that though I was in a “lose-lose” situation, I needed to make this information public since it would ultimately be the 5th year in a row that the

Ellis County Commission would pressure the Treasury about why tax statements were mailed out so late. An elected official answers to the people, both of them said, and since the Clerk was uncooperative, the best choice was clear. I felt similarly, and so I informed the public. The County Administrator was aware of the situation for over a month by that time, and had implied the commission knew of the delinquency but had never addressed it since they have no power “over an elected official,” a phrase I have heard scores of times this past year. A phrase that is clearly misleading since look at what they are doing to me, though I have violated no statutes whatsoever. Why create a cloud of suspicion when there is no legitimate cause to do so around the Treasury when my office has broken no statutes? Why say nothing, not in 2013 or every year thereafter, when the Clerk constantly breaks the laws of the State of Kansas? Marcy McClelland said as she stormed out the door, at the end of her visit to my office last year, that I should sue Donna if I want things sooner. I said that was ridiculous and asked her to come back in and talk with me if she wanted the full story. She said she knew the full story and refused to speak to me, and has not spoken to me since. I do not even have access to her current email address. So much for collaboration and communication.

As for the two articles the Clerk wrote this week, firstly, I have never “blasted” that office. I am always calm and respectful. Ms. Maskus, your staff are cooperative, however your Deputy, Bobbi Dreiling is volatile and provoked me just this week when she sent an email on 10/10/18 that said “Funny,” after pacing past the windows in my office twice while staring at me. Considering the big news all this drama is around the County, is that the temperament of a next-in-line elected official? Is it professional? Cooperative? Dreiling has never sent me an email regarding anything other than work-related documentation, until that day. It is in such poor taste, and totally undeserved. If anything I try to constantly diffuse negative interactions, while your top officer inflames them.

Secondly, (if you are not bored to death hearing about something so simple as a statutory deadline not being met), the Commission meeting on 10/8/18 is an attack first and foremost on the autonomy of the Office of the Treasury. The Clerk drama is something the CA and the Commissioners have strategically linked together, which is why their huge “concerns” have fallen “through the cracks” for 11 months.

I believe citizens should elect the Treasurer, and that that person should be the one aware of all financial accounting. The “appointment” system, where Commissioners appoint an otherwise elected official, is a dangerous game, and hampers the checks and balances the Kansas Constitution affords. A county administrator (CA) is the commissioners’ answer to an “appointed Treasurer.”

Ellis County’s 29,000 residents don’t need a (CA). Riley County has over 70,000 residents yet has no CA. To put it plainly, the CA does the commissioners jobs for them. And our CA, in the face of a catastrophic budget situation, as the commission keeps describing it, just got a multi-year contract renewal with a nearly 20% raise. That is insane, to use a millennial term. The CA now makes far over \$100,000 annually. The three commissioners, for knowing a criminally small amount about how things are done at the county, considering their tenure, and doing even less, for which they absolve

themselves unabashedly, make 19,000 annually plus full health benefits, plus over \$50,000 in discretionary funds for attending conferences. From what I have learned statewide about other counties with CAs, and from what I have experienced, I have to ask you the voters: Do we need a CA in Ellis County? We don't. The Commissioner salary is more than sufficient for commissioners to actually do the work of communicating with department heads. I am not okay with the hundreds of thousands of dollars in interest income I have earned as Treasurer going to pay someone who clearly has no interest in transparency as evidenced by the information he, the CA, kept hidden in that commission meeting. I also find it disturbing how he keeps from me financial information about funds he manages outside Treasury knowledge. These Commissioners don't want to work; they just want the power, money, and health benefits. The CA works for the Commissioners, he says. Bill Jeter, the County Counselor, works for the commissioners, he says. No, Phil and Bill, you work for the taxpayers. And Commissioners, so do you. You do not work here to perpetuate your own existence, or to invite your best friends to be appointed by your fellow commissioners to your vacant seats when you predict you will win a seat in State government.

The office of the Treasurer is by far the highest preference nationwide among polled citizens to be "elected" versus "appointed," I recently learned. Almost 70% of people said we want to elect our Treasurer. The next highest was the Sheriff. Other offices were in the 20s and 30s. Why? Because if you the people are not watching and holding your money manager and your law enforcement directly accountable by observing the results of their work, you are not absorbing the power you have, and social stability is at risk.

This is why I communicate with you regularly via newsletters on the Treasury website, letters to the editor, and a newsletter in my tax mailings, so that you see factual proof of why you elected me. I have to make my case to you. I present to you what I am doing and you pick. It was intentionally designed that I be evaluated by you, not that I capitulate to pressures from commissioners to keep quiet so that they don't look bad for not sharing with the public such consistent violation of state statute by a long-standing elected official.

And so I write today of the events of late, to tell you "the rest of the story," as the late great Paul Harvey said. What is both freeing and uncertain, simultaneously, to me, is that it is all in your hands to figure out what is really going on here. It is my hope the majority of voters sees my intent, my results, and is proud of all I have done for the county. I conversely hope you all see through the baseless distractions meant to keep you from the truth. I also hope you elect new commissioners that want to work, and will not continue to employ a CA who takes a large piece of county pie without contributing, but who also detracts from, county wealth.

One of the biggest issues in society is lack of respect. Respect for common sense. Respect for job duties. Respect for law enforcement. Respect for the President. Respect for human life. Respect for animals. Pretty soon people get by with so much they feel totally unaccountable and further, even unashamed of their own ignorance. The truth becomes some idealistic theory lost in utopian clouds. Truth is replaced by what is

practical, i.e. what's best for them. I implore people who have the desire for the best interests of the county in their hearts: Run for office. It is the TYPE of person you are that matters more than popularity or wealth, or even experience to some degree. The time for those being the criterion is soon ending, and I see why that is scary for the political elite.

I honor the oath I took a year ago when I took office, the oath all elected officials take upon swearing in, to uphold and defend the laws of the state of Kansas, and perform my duties according to the law. I have and will continue to do so.

Can Haselhorst, Wasinger, McClelland, or Maskus say they have upheld their oath? At this point, no, they cannot. If you do not follow the law, you are breaking it. If you knowingly obscure and downplay that a law is being broken to your constituents for five years in a row, you also break your oath by not supporting the constitution.

In the meantime, I love this job. I entered local government because I love this Country. I love this County. The USA is the best country in the world and it can be better. In all the arenas in which I have been employed, when I look for answers, the situation is clarified when I hint to myself: "Follow the money." And so I am your Treasurer. I account for your tax dollars. I manage and invest them. I enjoy making investments with idle funds and increasing interest earnings. I have also saved over \$250,000 by re-assigning job duties, examining our procurement contracts, restructuring and cross-training my staff, among other things. It is just good business, and it utilizes my Leadership education. I believe in the system of checks and balances that prevents commissioners from being able to have too much power. Heck, even the challenge of political games and pressure is not enough to make me doubt I have found a place I can share my talents and do good work I enjoy. Until next time, still be proud of our county for it is strong, and with the right leadership, I think it can grow even stronger. I choose to hope. If I didn't have hope, if I didn't care, I would not explain what is happening. I believe in myself; I believe in the county; and I believe in you.