JULY 27, 2026

WISE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT MEETING

On this the 27th day of July A.D., 2026 at 8:30 A.M. came on to be had a Public Hearing of the Commissioners' Court of Wise County, Texas held in the County Courthouse – 3rd Floor Courtroom, 101 North Trinity St, Decatur, TX of said County in the town of Decatur with the following members present and presiding:

J.D. Clark	County Judge
John "Biff" Hayes	Commissioner, Precinct No. 1
Kevin Burns	Commissioner, Precinct No. 2
Danny Lambert	Commissioner, Precinct No. 3
Colby Shawn	Commissioner, Precinct No. 4

Blanca Tuma, County Clerk and Ex-Officio Clerk of Commissioners' Court when and where the following proceedings were had, to-wit:

All attachments referred to in the minutes of the Wise County Commissioners' Court are designated original or copy and are provided at the time of action by the Court unless otherwise indicated by provider.

County Judge Clark votes aye on all agenda items unless otherwise indicated.

1. Clark opens the public hearing at 8:30 a.m. All court members were present.

2. Clark announces the purpose of this public hearing is to discuss and receive public comments regarding the proposed creation of Wise County Emergency Services District No. 5.

3. He reads that the proposed district will be created and operate under Article III, Section 48-e of the Texas Constitution as proposed by S.J.R. No. 27, Acts of the 70th Legislation, Regular Session, 1987, and adopted by voters on Election held on Nov. 3rd of 1987 and Chapter 775 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

4. Proposed district boundaries were attached to this notice, and that Fire Chief Jerry Taylor of Newark will be providing maps during his presentation.

5. Clark requests public comments be specifically related to the proposed creation of Wise County ESD No. 5 and acknowledges that other members of the public might make their comments during the Community Forum of the Regular Commissioners' Court at 9 AM or whenever the public hearing concludes.

****** Clark assures the Court that comments will be allowed even if the hearing goes beyond the scheduled end time of 9 AM. ******

6. Clark explains that if after the hearing, the Commissioners' Court finds the creation of the District is feasible, the Commissioners' Court will grant the petition to fix the boundaries which will appear on the November ballot.

7. Clark instructs the speakers to state their first and last names for public record, and to keep their comments to three (3) minutes.

8. Newark Fire Chief Jerry Taylor states that the initiative to create ESD No. 5 was developed in order to provide a stable, long term funding source for fire protection in a rapidly growing area southern and southeastern section of Wise County which includes the City of Newark and its Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), the City of Aurora and its ETJ, and unincorporated areas near Rome and New Fairview, extending east to the county line.

9. Taylor assures the Court that the proposed boundaries were determined as a result of meticulous planning utilizing Google Maps and basing them on emergency response times from existing fire stations locations.

10. He intends to use the funds to preserve current service levels and provide efficient emergency response by replacing the declining volunteer numbers; thus, creating a practical and sustainable districting for the future.

11. With the rising equipment costs of fire engines (exceeding $800,000) and turnout gear ($3,500 per person), Taylor proposes a maximum tax rate of $0.10 per $100 of property valuation and states. He reiterates that creating ESD No. 5 is all about reliability, and to meet the growing needs of the district.

12. Taylor states he is awaiting a decision from the City of Fort Worth regarding its ETJ participation when they meet in August, while Newark and Aurora City Councils voted to include their municipal limits and its ETJs in the district. Rome, New Fairview, and Decatur opted out of including their ETJs.

13. Clark clarifies that the proposed tax rate increase of ***up to*** $0.10 per $100 of property valuation will be approved by a five-member board members who will be appointed by the Commissioners' Court to oversee the district. The Court will develop a screening and interview process, and coordinate with participating cities for appointing ESD board members to include local representatives, if the district is approved by voters.

14. According to Taylor, Newark Fire Department planned a $10.5 million project for a new city hall and fire station that includes eight bedrooms and six bays to support 24/7 staffing; Newark currently maintains a contract for two personnel on duty per day.

15. The following people spoke during the hearing:

- Fire Chief Deroy Bennett - City of Decatur
- Fire Chief Jason Paradise – City of Boyd, ESD No. 1
- Mayor Bryan Dolan – City of Aurora
- Fire Chief J.D. Goodwin – City of Boonsville, ESD No. 2
- Sam Eason – City of Rhome
- Steve Knight – City of Rhome, Planning and Zoning Commission
- Fire Chief Scott Estes – City of Rhome
- City Administrator Amanda DeGan – City of Rhome, Precinct No. 3

Comments of opponents of the Proposed ESD No. 5:

- Characterize the proposal as an aggressive "land grab" for tax revenue
- Claim the ESD duplicates services already provided by Rome's professional department which employs two paid firefighters 24/7, and they often arrive at calls in Newark and New Fairview faster than local volunteers
- Cite potential legal conflicts with existing development agreements which has been in place since 1999
- Express concern that an additional taxing entity would burden residents without providing immediate service improvements
- Question the lack of specific training and certification milestones for the proposed ESD departments

Comments of proponent of the Proposed ESD No. 5:

- Argue that volunteerism is failing to keep pace with rapid residential and commercial growth
- State that ESDs provide the only state-sanctioned tool for funding fire protection in unincorporated areas; they can enter interlocal agreements to pay neighboring professional departments for coverage
- Emphasize that the county and state have no legal obligation to provide fire protection, making the ESD necessary for long-term safety
- The City of Aurora request a dedicated fire station within its limits and a representative seat on the ESD Board

16. The proposed changes will be considered for adoption by the Commissioners Court during the regular scheduled meeting which is being held on July 27, 2025 at 9:00 A.M.

17. Clark closes the public hearing at 9:13 AM, seeing and hearing that there are no further public comments made to the Court.

Minutes approved this 24 day of August, 2026, as printed.

J.D. Clark, County Judge, Wise County

John "Biff" Hayes, Commr. Pct. No. 1

Kevin Burns, Commr. Pct. No. 2

Danny Lambert, Commr. Pct. No. 3

Colby Shawn, Commr. Pct. No. 4

ATTEST:

Blanca Tuma, County Clerk and Ex-Officio Clerk of Commissioners' Court, Wise County, Texas.

COMMISSIONERS COURT COUNTY OF WISE, TX

The Wise County Commissioners' Court adopted revised Rules ***of Procedures, Conduct & Decorum at Meetings of Wise County Commissioners' Court*** on March 25, 2019.