

10-18-17 County Judge's Article

AMAZON HQ2 PROJECT PROPOSAL

Tuesday's news release announcing the county's submission of a proposal to Amazon in response to their RFP for a second corporate headquarters (HQ2) truly marks the beginning of the future of Milam County, sooner if we are successful in attracting this huge project to the county, but delayed only until some other large company or combination of smaller entities or commercial/residential developments come to this area. Let me explain.

First of all, I am positive about our chances regarding Amazon. The reason is because our proposal is going to be very unique. All of the others I've heard about (even the nature of the RFP itself invites them) are large cities, heavily populated areas. Well, we're not that at all, yet we have most of what is necessary to accommodate this facility. True, most of it will need to be built, but that can happen, so we'll see. In my opinion, it was worth a serious shot.

Second, we think we're going to get lots of visibility as a result of submitting this proposal and therefore our chances of getting additional prospects interested in Milam County in the future will be greatly enhanced. Also in our talks with Alcoa we are greatly encouraged that their property is going to be sold soon (if not to Amazon) to buyers that will convert the property to uses that will greatly enhance Milam County's economy and tax base.

This should be very encouraging to all of us, particularly considering the difficult times we've been through these past few years with our declining tax base, loss of jobs, increasing tax rates, and struggles with county and Rockdale school budget. Now the announcement of the closing of the Luminant power plants next January is adding even more stress to our situation.

Working nonstop to get the proposal ready to submit to Amazon has been a great team of citizens led by Kara Clore director of the Rockdale Municipal Development District and Ginger Watkins Director of the Cameron Industrial Foundation and Cameron Economic Development Corporation. Bob McClaren of 44 Farms is going to be very upset with me for mentioning his name, but we could not have got this together without his leadership and expertise. He also helped in acquiring the services of Populous, the consulting firm that provided the professional services we needed. The county, the Milam County Industrial Foundation, the Rockdale MDD, the Cameron EDC/Industrial Foundation, and several private institutions and individuals joined forces to finance the project. For this joint effort I am very proud as well as very thankful.