



The Del City North Neighborhood Watch Community Bulletin No. 17 REMINDER TO VOTE FEB 11



In our January 16 Meeting, **Sara Bana, candidate for County Commissioner**, spoke to us about her ideas for a smaller new jail and multiple mental health facilities. Her candidacy is endorsed by all Midwest City and Del City Councilmen. In the opinion of the Del City North Watch Officers her approach to this issue is a new and viable direction. Given that the country has already begun construction on a mental health facility at 1901 Grande Blvd we asked her to clarify her ideas about how she would proceed with her ideas if elected. We believe her response is worthy of your consideration and vote.

Comments from Sara Bana:

Oklahoma has one of the highest rates of mental illness and substance abuse but we are ranked as one of the poorest when it comes to investment in addressing the epidemic. Many Oklahomans self-treat mental illness by abusing drugs and alcohol which only compounds the problem. The DOJ Civil Rights office just found our state and county to be in violation of Title II of the ADA for failure to provide adequate community based mental health services and instead institutionalizing Oklahomans post a mental health crisis. I believe we should expand community based mental health care and clinical drug/alcohol treatment services throughout our county in a proactive effort to be preventative. This does not necessarily mean we have to build new buildings. I would first prioritize public-private partnerships, where existing real estate which belongs to municipalities or the county that are not in use are revamped to serve this purpose. Private and professional service providers such as RedRock, NorthCare, Hope, or St. Anthony's would then provide services in those buildings. There is so much opportunity for federal grants in this area through public-private partnerships to fund the operations and services. This would reduce the cost of construction and operations, and allow existing buildings not in use which eventually become eyesores to be utilized in a constructive fashion. It will also create accessibility to care so people in the Eastern parts of the county can access care in their own communities instead of transporting to Oklahoma City. As you know many struggling with serious mental health conditions may not have adequate transportation.

The Behavioral Health facility being constructed at 1901 E. Grand is being funded through the ARPA funds. The Final Rule on ARPA requires that the construction be completed and that the services are accessible by Dec. 31 of 2026. If the county fails to meet that deadline, the county will have to refund the federal government the \$44 million. It is also important to note the Commissioners want this center to be within immediate vicinity of the jail. At this time they are

lacking \$500 million for the construction of the jail. If our Moody rating goes down, and we are currently at serious risk for that, then the cost will even be higher. At this time they are heading towards a ballot question which would add a countywide sales tax, and may even consider increasing property taxes. I think there is a serious likelihood they will not have the money needed to construct the new proposed jail. The county is broke, they have already taken a \$30 million dollar bond against county properties and have spent much of it. They struggle to balance the budget annually. I will oppose any new taxation and as commissioner will work to educate the public about our county's financial mismanagement so that taxpayers do not hand them any more of their hard earned money. And if they can actually finish the behavioral health center with the \$44 million of ARPA funds, then I would redirect our county to open its doors as a stand-alone mental health care center open to the general public. This facility could provide services to the Mid-Del, and residents in OKC on the other side of Grand. I know and believe if the sales tax question fails at the ballot box, I can garner Commissioner Maughn's support on this. He will not want a \$44 million debt to the federal government, and he will appreciate the positive outcome of accessible care in Eastern OK County.

There are other candidates running for the commissioner office. Each member of the Del City North Watch should make every effort to become informed, and investigate the platforms of all candidate and then turn out to vote"