

News Release

NO COVERT CAMERAS AT THE COURTHOUSE

Tammy Cantrell, Texas County Collector-Treasurer recently discovered her office security system had become disabled and cameras removed. Upon further investigation it was discovered Presiding Commissioner Fred W. Stenger, members of the Texas County Sheriff's Office and maintenance personnel had removed them. The locations of the cameras would have led most people to realize who they belonged to. No one contacted the Collector-Treasurer or her deputies regarding the removal of all the cameras, leaving her office, the tax payers, and the tax funds with less than the best security possible. The Collector-Treasurer questioned the County Clerk if the placement and/or removal of her security system had been discussed at an open meeting of the County Commission, to which the Clerk replied "NO". A short time later Cantrell found out that the gossip website "TOPIX" had a post entitled "Covert Cameras Found at the Courthouse." There are no "COVERT" cameras at the courthouse. There were security cameras similar to those in place at the Justice Center. It makes one wonder how ethical is it that this information is in the hands of the general public before elected officials are contacted.

Since the remodeling of the old county courthouse and the placement of the Collector-Treasurer's office in the basement of the Administrative Center the Collector-Treasurer has been concerned about security of the facility. She suggested to the County Commission a security system be installed similar to the one in operation at Justice Center as the offices in the Administrative Center are those that collect the majority of the revenues that operate the county. The Collector-Treasurer is charged to collect taxes for all sub-divisions in the county with the exception of municipal government who collect their own tax levies. As the County Treasurer the Collector-Treasurer is also responsible for all incoming and outgoing funds to operate the county. Many unsuccessful conversations were had with the County Commission requesting this situation be addressed during the remodeling. Commissioner Stenger suggested the Collector-Treasurer contact two vendors he knew. The Collector-Treasurer did make contact with the vendors, however neither vendor was interested. Commissioner Garrett wanted the Collector-Treasurer to use her Tax Maintenance Fund to pay for a security system for the entire Administrative Center of which the Collector-Treasurer declined. When the only male employee left the office of Collector-Treasurer the officer holder took action on her own with personal funds to make her offices more secure.

The law changed a few years ago whereby the County Collector-Treasurer was charged to collect all taxes in the county with the exception of cities. The Collector-Treasurer was ready to take on these additional duties. The law provided sufficient funding so that this new law would not be an unfunded state mandate. The County Commission has tried to halt any effort to modernize the office of County Collector-Treasurer. While the Collector-Treasurer deposits over \$260,000.00 in fees collected into the County Revenue Fund and over \$130,000.00 in fees collected into the Assessment Fund the County Commission only approved a budget for the Collector-Treasurer for 2013 of \$113,000.00. With the increase in postage and printing supplies the Collector-Treasurer requested additional funds for postage and supplies of which the County Commission refused. This after the Collector-Treasurer had collected over \$35,000.00 in postage fees that was deposited into the County Revenue Fund. The law states funds shall be budgeted for the operations of the office of Collector-Treasurer yet the County Commission has refused to approve numerous requests.

Tammy Cantrell, Texas County Collector-Treasurer stated she is very appreciative of county voters recently reelecting her as the County's Collector-Treasurer. She would appreciate the County Commission stop harassing her and simply allow her decent funding for employees' wages along with the equipment, supplies and postage to do her job. The three commissioners remain a major obstacle in the Collector-Treasurer running her office in the most cost effective, safe, and expedient manner possible.