



**County Judge B. Glen Whitley**

**Tarrant County Commissioners**

**RE: Agenda Item No. 4: “Texas Abatement Agreement with Rivian Automotive LLC”**

**Dear Judge Whitley and Commissioners:**

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club is the state chapter of the Sierra Club, the nation’s oldest and largest conservation organization. As an organization, both our state chapter, as well as our local Greater Fort Worth Sierra Club regional group have been very supportive of efforts to utilize new technologies that produce jobs and also have an environmental benefit such as electric storage and electric vehicles.

Nonetheless, we wanted to express our view that the Commission should delay making a decision for at least 30 days on any potential tax incentives or breaks for the proposed “Rivian” plant until more specific community agreements are made with Rivian on worker compensation and retention, safety and environmental stewardship. We join with our colleagues and brothers and sisters at UAW International, the Texas AFL-CIO, and the Tarrant County Central Labor Council in calling for Rivian to commit to more specific Community Assurances around job quality, retention and advancement. We believe, however, the most important of these demands is the first -- a longer process of at least 30 days to allow for community input and comment. On August 17, 2021 Tarrant County gave 30-day notice that the Commissioners Court will receive information on an estimated \$35.8 million tax abatement request with Rivian Automotive on September 21, 2021. However, Tarrant County only made the proposed tax abatement agreement publicly available for review on Friday afternoon and the agreement is short on details. Taxpayers deserve to understand the details of a request this size. We believe Tarrant County should:

- ❖ Delay the item for no less than an additional thirty days for the public to review and provide meaningful feedback;
- ❖ Publish the results of an annual audit (at no expense to taxpayers) determining whether all agreement requirements have been met.

Second, while we are supportive of these Community Assurances from our brothers and sisters in the labor community, we believe that Rivian must also be held to first-rate environmental stewardship goals.

Thus, we would like to suggest that among the “Environmental and Sustainability Assurances” we would like the County and other political subdivisions to explore before potentially offering tax incentives include:

1. A specific commitment to preserve up to a fourth of the ranch (approximately 500 acres) as native prairie and work with local conservation groups on a plan on how to keep the land preserved going forward and as appropriate any low-development recreation opportunities for the public;
2. A specific commitment to purchase and develop renewable energy to meet the annual and peak needs of the factory, through a combination of purchases with any PPAs or through a Retail Electric Provider, and onsite use of onsite solar, and electric and thermal energy storage as appropriate to reduce peak and overall energy consumption;
3. A specific commitment to building the physical factory in a way that exceeds the City of Fort Worth’s commercial building code (largely modeled on the 2015 IECC), while also considering efforts to meet above-code efforts such as the 2018 International Green Construction Code.
4. A specific plan on how to safely store and reduce any toxic or hazardous chemicals used in the production process, including ensuring worker safety.
5. A specific commitment to reducing physical waste and taking producer responsibility for any generated waste to avoid the need for the use of local landfills for the waste produced;
6. A specific commitment to water conservation technologies to reduce water use not just through the use of purple pipes, but other onsite and process changes to reduce the need for water supplies;
7. A commitment to paying the true cost of service for any overall electricity hookup and future use as well as the overall electricity demand, so that Oncor customers will not see increased bill because of any transmission build-out;
8. A review of any proposed wastewater discharge permits or air quality permits such that Best Available Control Technology and Maximum Available Control Technology is used.
9. If possible, no discharge permits such that no industrial wastewater flows off site is preferred subject to the needs of the industrial production process;
10. A specific commitment to support efforts in Tarrant County to utilize storage and electric vehicle technology , and apprenticeship programs to help workers move into clean energy technologies.

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Greater Fort Worth Group can not currently support the proposed incentive package being discussed without additional community and environmental assurances and without additional time for community input.

We hope you will not approve this agreement at present but work with labor, community and environmental stakeholders and Rivian on an effort that will truly be beneficial to the community. At the very least, we call on the Commissioners to commit to a public meeting in the near future with Rivian and representatives of the labor and environmental community to work on some community assurances. If Rivian is to receive such a large tax break, they should be held to high performance labor and environmental standards.

**Sincerely,**

**Cyrus Reed, PhD**

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