
**FINDINGS OF THE
ERA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
UNDER THE
TEXAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACT
ON THE APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY
BT COOKE SOLAR, LLC (#1372)**

OCTOBER 21, 2019

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DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES UNDER THE
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STATE OF TEXAS §

COUNTY OF COOKE §

On October 21, 2019, a public meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Era Independent School District (“District”) was held. The meeting was duly posted in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Texas Government Code. At the meeting, the Board of Trustees took up and considered the application of BT Cooke Solar, LLC (“Applicant”) for an Appraised Value Limitation on Qualified Property, pursuant to Chapter 313 of the Texas Tax Code. The Board of Trustees solicited input into its deliberations on the Application from interested parties within the District. The Board of Trustees has considered the economic impact analysis and the project certification issued by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. After hearing presentations from the District’s administrative staff, and from consultants retained by the District to advise the Board in this matter, and after considering the relevant documentary evidence, the Board of Trustees makes the following findings with respect to application from Applicant, and the economic impact of that application:

On January 24, 2019, the Superintendent of the District, acting as agent of the Board of Trustees, and the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (“Comptroller”) received an Application from Applicant for an Appraised Value Limitation on Qualified Property, pursuant to Chapter 313 of the Texas Tax Code. The Application was determined to be complete as of April 17, 2019. A copy of the Application is attached as **Attachment A**.

The Applicant, (Texas Taxpayer Id. 32066430417), is an entity subject to Chapter 171, Texas Tax Code, and is certified to be an active franchise taxpayer by the Comptroller. See **Attachment B**.

The Board of Trustees acknowledged receipt of the Application, along with the requisite application fee, established pursuant to Texas Tax Code § 313.025(a)(1) and Local District Policy.

The Application was delivered to the Comptroller for review pursuant to Texas Tax Code § 313.025(d). A copy of the Application was delivered to the Cooke County Appraisal District for review pursuant to 34 Tex. Admin. Code § 9.1054.

The Application was reviewed by the Comptroller pursuant to Texas Tax Code §313.026, and a Comptroller Certificate was issued on July 12, 2019, in which the Comptroller has determined, inter alia, that: 1) Application is subject to the provisions of Chapter 171, Texas Tax Code; 2) the property meets the requirements of Section 313.024 for eligibility for a limitation on appraised values; 3) the proposed project is reasonably likely to generate tax revenue in an amount sufficient to offset the school district maintenance and operations ad valorem tax revenue lost as a result of the agreement before the 25th anniversary of the beginning of the limitation period; and, 4) the limitation on appraised value is a determining factor in the applicant's decision to invest capital and construct the project in this state. A copy of the Certificate is attached to the findings as **Attachment C**.

The Board of Trustees has previously directed that a specific financial analysis be conducted concerning the impact of the proposed value limitation on the finances of District. A copy of the report prepared by Moak, Casey & Associates, Inc., is attached to these findings as **Attachment D**.

The Board of Trustees has confirmed that the taxable value of property in the District for the preceding tax year, as determined under Subchapter M, Chapter 403, Government Code, is as stated in **Attachment E**.

The Texas Education Agency has evaluated the impact of the project on the District's facilities. TEA's determination is to be attached to these findings as **Attachment F**.

The Board has adopted the Texas Economic Development Agreement (Form 50-826) as promulgated by the Comptroller's Office. Form 50-826 has been altered only in accordance only the provisions of the template that the Comptroller permitted. The proposed Agreement is attached to these findings as **Attachment G**.

After review of the Comptroller's Certificate and economic analysis, and in consideration of its own studies the Board finds:

Board Finding Number 1.

The Board finds that the property described in the Application meets the requirements of Tex. Tax Code §313.024 for eligibility for a limitation on appraised value.

In support of Finding 1, the Application indicates that:

BT Cooke Solar, LLC (BT Cooke Solar) is requesting an appraised value limitation from ERA Independent School District (ISD) for the BT Cooke Solar Project (the “Project”), a proposed solar powered electric generating facility in Cooke County. The proposed Era ISD Project (this application) will be constructed within a Reinvestment Zone that will be established by Era County.

The proposed Project is anticipated to have a capacity of approximately 50 MW located in Era ISD. The exact number and location of panels and inverters will vary depending upon ongoing siting analysis, manufacturer’s availability, prices, and the megawatt generating capacity of the Project when completed. Current estimated plans are to install approximately 172,000 PV modules and 20 inverters with all improvements located in Era ISD.

Property used for renewable electric energy generation is eligible for a limitation under §313.024(b) (5).

Board Finding Number 2.

The project proposed by the applicant is reasonably likely to generate, before the 25th anniversary of the beginning of the limitation period, tax revenue, including state tax revenue, school district maintenance and operations ad valorem tax revenue attributable to the project, and any other tax revenue attributable to the effect of the project on the economy of the state, in an amount sufficient to offset the school district maintenance and operations ad valorem tax revenue lost as a result of the agreement (as detailed in Attachment B of the Comptroller’s Certification).

Board Finding Number 3.

Based on the information certified by the Comptroller, the limitation on appraised value is a determining factor in the applicant's decision to invest capital and construct the project in this state (as detailed in Attachment C of the Comptroller’s Certification).

Board Finding Number 4.

The Board finds that the Application Fee received was reasonable and only in such an amount as was necessary to cover the District’s costs of processing the Application under consideration.

In support of Finding 4, the Board reviewed the Application Fee payment included in the Application at Attachment A, the contract with the District's consultants and the internal costs for processing the application, if any.

Board Finding Number 5.

Based upon the Application and in the Comptroller's Economic Impact Evaluation and Certification, Attachment A, the Board finds that the number of jobs to be created and the wages to be paid comply with the requirements of statute; and, the Board further finds that the Chapter 313 Tax Limitation Agreement (Attachment G) contains all required provisions and information related to job creation requirements, to wit: the provisions set forth in Subsections 9.1C&D of such Agreement.

In its Application, the Applicant has committed to creating one (1) new qualifying job. The average salary level of qualifying jobs must be at least \$48,500 per year. The review of the application by the Comptroller's Office indicated that this amount—based on Texas Workforce Commission data—complies with current Tex. Tax Code §313.021(5)(B) requirement that qualifying jobs must pay 110 percent of the county average manufacturing wage. As defined in Section 313.021 of the Tax Code, "Qualifying Job" means a permanent full-time job that:

- (A) requires at least 1,600 hours of work a year;
- (B) is not transferred from one area in this state to another area in this state;
- (C) is not created to replace a previous employee;
- (D) is covered by a group health benefit plan for which the business offers to pay at least 80 percent of the premiums or other charges assessed for employee-only coverage under the plan, regardless of whether an employee may voluntarily waive the coverage; and
- (E) pays at least 110 percent of the county average weekly wage for manufacturing jobs in the county where the job is located.

Board Finding Number 6.

Based upon the information provided to the District with regard to the industry standard for staffing ratios of similar projects in the State of Texas, the District has determined that if the job creation requirement set

forth in Texas Tax Code § 313.021(2)(A)(iv)(b) was applied, for the size and scope of the project described in the Application, the required number of jobs meets or exceeds the industry standard for the number of employees reasonably necessary for the operation of the facility.

Board Finding Number 7.

The Applicant does not intend to create any non-qualifying jobs.

In its Application, Applicant has indicated that it does not intend to create any non-qualifying jobs. For any non-qualifying jobs the Applicant should create, the Applicant will be required to pay at least the county average wage of \$46,046 for all jobs in the county in accordance with the provisions of Tex. Tax Code §313.024(d).

Board Finding Number 8.

The revenue gains that will be realized by the school district if the Application is approved will be significant in the long-term, with special reference to revenues used for supporting school district debt.

In support of this finding, the analysis prepared by Moak, Casey & Associates projects that the project would initially add \$39.3 million to the tax base that would be available for debt service purposes at the peak investment level for the 2021-22 school year. An expansion of the I&S tax base creates the potential of a benefit for the District and its taxpayers in addressing its debt service needs, at least in the early years of the project.

Board Finding Number 9.

The effect of the applicant's proposal, if approved, on the number or size of needed school district instructional facilities is not expected to increase the District's facility needs, with current trends suggest little underlying enrollment growth based on the impact of the project.

The summary of financial impact prepared by Moak, Casey & Associates, Inc., indicates that there will be little to no impact on school facilities created by the new project. This finding is confirmed by the TEA evaluation of this project's impact on the number and size of school facilities in the District as stated in **Attachment F**.

Board Finding Number 10.

The Board finds that with the adoption of District Policy CCGB (Local), implemented in conformance with both Comptroller and Texas Education Agency Rules governing Chapter 313 Agreements, it has developed a process to verify, either directly or through its consultants, the accuracy and completeness of information in annual eligibility reports and biennial progress reports regarding (1) the reported number of jobs created and (2) the reported amount invested in the property.

Board Finding Number 11.

The Board of Trustees hired consultants to review and verify the information in the Application. Based upon the consultants' review, the Board has determined that the information provided by the Applicant is true and correct.

The Board has developed a written policy CCGB (Local) which requires, upon the filing of an Application under Tax Code Chapter 313, the retention of consultants in order to verify: (1) that Applicant's information contained in the Application as to existing facts is true and correct; (2) that Applicant's information contained in the Application with respect to projections of future events are commercially reasonable and within the ability of Applicant to execute; (3) that information related to job creation is commercially reasonable and within the ability of Applicant to execute; (4) that Applicant's representations concerning and economic incentives being offered, if any, and (5) the proposed project meets eligibility requirements.

As a part of its verification process the Board notes that the Chapter 313 Application for which these Findings are being made has been submitted by the Applicant under oath. Chapter 313 Applications are governmental records under Tex. Penal Code §37.01(2)(A); as a result, all statements contained therein are representations of fact within the meaning of Tex. Penal Code § 37.01(3). Since Board action upon the adoption of these Findings and the approval of the Chapter 313 Tax Limitation Agreement (**Attachment G**) is an "official proceeding," a false statement on a Chapter 313 application constitutes perjury under Tex. Penal Code § 37.03.

The Board finds that sworn statements are routinely used as an acceptable verification method for reliance by fact finders in each of the three separate branches of government, including trials.

The consultants have prepared signed statements that the consultants have reviewed and verified the contents of the Application and have determined that the current statements of fact contained in the Application are true and correct. (**Attachment H**) The Board finds that reliance by the Board and its consultants upon verified statements of the Applicant, especially as to Applicant's future intentions which cannot be objectively verified is reasonable and within the intent of Chapter 313, Texas Tax Code.

Board Finding Number 12.

The Board of Trustees has determined that the Tax Limitation Amount requested by Applicant is currently Twenty Million Dollars, which is consistent with the minimum values currently set out by Tax Code, § 313.054(a).

The Board finds that the Chapter 313 Tax Limitation Agreement (**Attachment G**), in accordance with Comptroller's Form 50-826, contains all required provisions and information related to the required investment amount, to wit: the amount set forth in Section 2.5 of said Agreement. According to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts' School and Appraisal Districts' Property Value Study 2018 Final Findings made under Subchapter M, Chapter 403, Government Code for the preceding tax year (**Attachment E**). The total industrial value for the District is \$2,954,080. The District is categorized as Subchapter C, which applies only to a school district that has territory in a strategic investment area, as defined under Subchapter O, Chapter 171, Tax Code or in a county: (1) that has a population of less than 50,000 and (2) in which, from 1990 to 2000, according to the federal decennial census, the population: (A) remained the same; (B) decreased; or (C) increased, but at a rate of not more than three percent per annum. The District is classified as a "rural" district due to its demographic characteristics. Given that the value of industrial property is \$1 million or more but less than \$90 million, it is classified as a Category III district which can offer a minimum value limitation of \$20 million.

Board Finding Number 13.

The Board finds that the Chapter 313 Tax Limitation Agreement (Attachment G) contains all necessary provisions and information related to establishing the required investment amount, to wit: the amount set forth in Section 2.5 of said Agreement.

The Board relies on the certifications of its consultants and the Comptroller's Approval of the Agreement form to make this Finding. (**Attachment I**)

Board Finding Number 14.

The Applicant (Taxpayer No. 32066430417) is eligible for the limitation on appraised value of qualified property as an active franchise-tax paying entity.

The Applicant, (Texas Taxpayer No. 32066430417), is an entity subject to Chapter 171, Texas Tax Code, and is certified to be an active franchise taxpayer by the Comptroller. See **Attachment B**. The Board also finds that the Chapter 313 Tax Limitation Agreement (**Attachment G**) contains all required provisions necessary for the Board to assess eligibility of any business to which an agreement is transferred.

Board Finding Number 15.

The project will be located within an area that is designated as a reinvestment zone, pursuant to Chapter 312 of the Texas Tax Code.

Board Finding Number 16.

The Agreement for an Appraised Value Limitation on Qualified Property, pursuant to Chapter 313 of the Texas Tax Code, attached hereto as Attachment G, includes adequate and appropriate revenue protection provisions for the District, and such provisions comply with the specific terms of Texas Tax Code, Chapter 313.

In support of this finding, the finance report prepared by Moak, Casey & Associates, Inc. shows that the District will incur revenue losses in the initial year that the value limitation is in effect without the proposed Agreement under current law. With this Agreement, the negative consequences of granting the value limitation are offset through the revenue protection provisions agreed to by the Applicant and the District. The Agreement contains

adequate revenue protection measures for the duration of the Agreement. In support of this Finding, the Board relies upon the recommendation of its consultants. (**Attachment H**)

Board Finding Number 17.

The Board finds that the Chapter 313 Tax Limitation Agreement (Attachment G) contains all required provisions necessary for the Board to assess performance standards and to require periodic deliverables that will enable it to hold businesses accountable for achieving desired results, to wit: the reporting requirements set forth in Article VIII of said Agreement.

Board Finding Number 18.

The Board finds that there are no conflicts of interest at the time of considering the agreement.

The Board finds that with the adoption of District Policies BBFA and BBFB, both (Legal) and (Local), set forth at <https://pol.tasb.org/Home/Index/340>, that it has taken appropriate action to ensure that all District Trustees and the Superintendent, have disclosed any potential conflicts of interest, and that such disclosures will be made if any conflict of interest arises in the future, in compliance with the requirements of Texas Local Gov't Code §171.004.

In addition, at the public hearing, the Board caused the statement set forth in **Attachment J** to be read into the public record and that only Board members audibly responding that no conflict of interest existed either deliberated or voted on the Tax Limitation Agreement, these Findings or any matter relating to the Application upon which these Findings have been premised.

The Board finds that with the adoption of District Policies DBD, DGA, DH, and BBFB, both (Legal) and (Local) that it has taken appropriate action to ensure that all District employees and/or consultants, have disclosed any potential conflicts of interest, and that such disclosures will be made if any conflict of interest arises in the future, in compliance with the requirements of Texas Local Gov't Code §171.004.

The Board finds that that no non-disclosed conflicts of interest exist as to the Application for which these Findings are being made, as of the time of action on these Findings.

Board Finding Number 19.

The Board directs that a link on its Website be established to the Comptroller's Office Website where appraisal-limitation-related documents are made available to the public.

Board Finding Number 20.

Considering the purpose and effect of the law and the terms of the Agreement, that it is in the best interest of the District and the State to enter into the attached Agreement for Limitation on Appraised Value of Property for School District Maintenance and Operations Taxes.

It is therefore ORDERED that the Agreement attached hereto as **Attachment G** is approved and hereby authorized to be executed and delivered by and on behalf of the District. It is further ORDERED that these findings and the Attachments referred to herein be attached to the Official Minutes of this meeting and maintained in the permanent records of the Board of Trustees of the District.

Dated the 21th day of October 2019.

ERA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

By: _____
Jeffrey Stevens
President, Board of Trustees

ATTEST:

By: _____
Jeff Brown
Secretary, Board of Trustees