By Stan Stamper
Publisher

HUGO — Faced with a Friday deadline in federal court in Oklahoma City, Tarrant County officials (Fort Worth, Texas) have begun negotiations with Irving, Texas and the city of Hugo, seeking to ink a memorandum of understanding in which they gain the right to buy water from Hugo under circumstances to be negotiated in the future.

Both the cities of Hugo and Irving have scheduled special council meetings for Thursday, with the subject of water on their respective agendas. Hugo's is at noon in the council chambers.

Faced with explosive growth with millions of additional residents projected over the next 40 years in Dallas and north Texas, Texas officials have said they would be more than happy to have an opportunity to purchase Oklahoma's leftover water.

Soon after Hugo and Irving completed their water contract negotiations and inked an agreement, more than a year ago Tarrant County termed Irving's action "reckless," for not seeking Oklahoma water through the Tarrant County-led consortium. Reportedly, Tarrant County has expended several million dollars in legal and consulting fees in their attempts to acquire Oklahoma water.

The city of Hugo continues to press its own federal lawsuit against the State of Oklahoma, in which it asserts the state has illegally prohibited it from selling water for which it holds a state permit and a corresponding storage contract with the federal government for water in Hugo Lake.

Hugo has argued that the State's water sale prohibition, is contrary to federal law and the U.S. Commerce Clause which prohibits states' restriction of the sale of goods in interstate commerce.

There has been no dispute that Hugo holds the permit for the water or that they owe the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers more than $2.4 million dollars for that storage and that their debt grows daily. Unfortunately for Hugo, no industry has stepped forward since the early '70s, and expressed any interest in its vast water holdings—until north Texas communities, including Irving, sought a formal contract in recent years.

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