

Dear Editor,

Llano citizens should be very concerned about the ballooning cost of the mayor's pipe dream out on Riley Mountain. On Saturday, I drove out to Stillwaters Ranch, the proposed site for the wells. It's 8 miles from town and 8.7 to the water plant, not the 6 mile distance we've been told. One of the city's engineering firms, Halff Associates, estimated that laying pipe to import well water will cost about \$1,500,000 a mile. The terrain in the Riley Mountain area is rough and rocky, so the cost will be high. There's a minimum depth for water mains, so once you hit rock the cost goes way up. Add \$1,000,000 for the wells and you're up to \$13,000,000.

Then there's \$2,317,000 for financing at 3.35% interest. That takes the cost to \$15,317,000. That will add \$100 a MONTH to each water customer's bill. Using a conservative estimate of \$1,000,000 a mile for the pipeline, the project is still completely cost prohibitive. That scenario adds \$50 a month to every bill. That's \$600 a year extra on your utility bill. Can you afford that on top of electric, garbage, and waste water? Sewer fees will soon go up too.

Hickory Aquifer water usually contains radium, which will add substantial additional costs to remove. Figure \$1,000,000 for that. There are pump stations and ongoing maintenance to consider. The city would also have to buy the water from the landowner, who just happens to be a business associate of the mayor. That's quite a coincidence, if you believe in coincidences.

You're getting the picture. These figures are verifiable, not conjecture or anecdotal. I urge anyone interested to drive out to Stillwaters to verify the distance. It's a scenic drive, and you can call me if you need directions. The Riley Mountain project has all the earmarks of a very expensive boondoggle that could choke the local economy for years and put an intolerable financial burden on Llano residents. The city may never even need this water.

Many Llano residents are just getting by. In 2012, the median household income in Llano was \$29,654. That's actually down 6.5% from 2000. In other words, 31.5% of local residents live below the poverty line. The big rush to spend big money on a flawed project will raise the cost of living in Llano for everyone, and these households could find themselves in dire economic straits.

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