

The citizens of Llano:

I grew up in a family that understood risk. Some risk brought rewards. Growing up in a water well drilling family, other risk brought dry holes. I do understand the risk of trying to drill a successful water well into the Riley Mountain area, for the sake of finding secondary water for the City.

Last week Linda Gammage wrote that I only wanted to leave a legacy of being “the mayor that saved Llano”. I hope you believe me when I tell you this is certainly not a motive for me to risk everything. The reward does not outweigh the risk. Any business person in this town weighs that in every decision they make with their business.

Will we be successful at Riley Mountain? We place the odds at 60-40 in favor of success. This is with information from the best hydrologist and geologist that your money can buy. That is with the best engineers that your money can buy. John Burke is the best water consultant in Texas. We are not taking advice from unprincipled, deceitful and uninformed sources that neither have the best interest of all of the citizens of Llano, nor from hopeful engineers wanting a job from the city.

To continue to deny that there is a serious water problem in Llano is spoken like someone with no business experience... But to say repeatedly that I have “made up this crisis” (Glen Conner) is as irresponsible as anything I have ever heard. And as those words are read by you, over and over and over, you may even be thinking that is true. That is their plan... “if you tell a big enough lie and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed”. Adolph Hitler

This group of people in Llano have now started going into businesses to bully store owners. One store owner said they felt harassed and has had to instruct employees in ways to protect themselves from bullying tactics.

Their hate towards me is not about secondary water... not about smart meters, not about blue lids on water meters... it is about control... it is about taking control of this town. Two of this group, John Ferguson and Marion Bishop as business partners have suggested that the City install a \$12 million solar system in the City. Control?

Few of these people participate in anything. They do not go to the anti-drug rallies. They are not involved in the Main Street programs and events. They are not part of the Chamber of Commerce and active in their events. They are not part of Llano Economic Development of our new \$3 million dollar facility. And worse in my eyes, they have no idea of who we are in Llano, and how we got here. They are not involved in our young people. We have in my opinion, the most successful high school band program in the State. If you have never seen the Llano Yellowjackets play football, most often over matched and outnumbered, and have a reputation of being Giant Killers, you are missing something so very special. State Champion girls programs, a great baseball program. They are not part of this.

Not one is a participant in our parks committees. Few are not involved in the new Christmas lighting program and efforts. Few step up to help the Lan Tex, or the Red Top Jail. When John Ferguson was elected by you, he was asked to serve on the first City Insurance Task Force Committee to help search for lower rates so our City employees could keep health insurance. He said he was too busy and would not serve, but yet he has time to spend hours upon hours ranting on Facebook and sending letters to the editors.

And this group wants to run your city.

I have weighed everything since I pledged to you when I ran for mayor 16 months ago to find another source of water so that we might not have to continue being in stage 3 or 4 every summer. Maybe a new business might actually open here and be very successful. Two more businesses are closing in Llano this month. And our High school enrollment has dropped 12% over the past few years. Few new jobs, few new construction permits, no hope for more sales tax dollars to try someday to

offset your high utility bills. To continue to do nothing is why we are in the shape we are in.

I must try. But like me, Councilmen Todd Keller, Alan Hopson and Mayor Pro-Tem Bryan Miiller need to know you are still behind our efforts. In my Mayor's Breakfast meeting last month I likened this effort to one of a sports team.

When you win, everyone gets to celebrate. But when you lose, a team comes together and does not point fingers, or say I told you so, or goes and forms its own team. Llano has been given so much. Together we can accomplish anything. Divided, will see a town never grow, never be successful and never be all that it can be.

On a lighter note, someone once said that it is hard to steal second base and keep one foot on first. Yes, there will be risk in going to Riley Mountain, but just to find the water will not increase your property taxes, or put you or the City in jeopardy in any way. The Cost is already figured in the next year's balanced budget. This is the first step of a long term plan to insure our citizens have a backup source of water.

Your Mayor, Mikel Virdell