

MAYOR CITY COUNCIL CITY ATTORNEY CRIM HENNIG MCKAMIE RIDGWAY(2) BOYETT  
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**BUDGETING**

# Public hearings set on proposed Euless tax rate

■ Some council members believe that the tax rate could be even lower.

By **TERRY LEE GOODRICH**  
 STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

**EULESS** — The City Council has scheduled public hearings on a proposed property tax rate that would be slightly lower for Aug. 24 and Aug. 29 at City Hall.

The recommended drop would be from 49.18 cents to 48.95 cents per \$100 of assessed value, but three council members voted against the proposed rate, saying it could be dropped to 47.2131 cents without any adverse effects.

Voting against the public-hearing date were Carl Tyson, Charlie Miller and Glenn Porterfield.

City Manager Joe Hennig said the proposed drop would be possible mainly because of increased revenue from commercial and industrial growth and increased sales tax revenue.

He also said the assessed value of rental cars at Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, which falls into the city's tax rolls, has increased from last year. The city's proposed budget estimates expenditures of \$80.1 million and revenue of \$84 million.

The city's public-hearing notice said taxes on the average-priced home in Euless, now \$132,567, would rise from an estimated \$509.85 a year to \$519.13, which includes a 20 percent homestead exemption. It did not include special exemptions for people who are 65 or older or disabled.

But a city survey of 100 homeowners showed that 91 of them would see either a decrease or no change in their

**IN THE KNOW**

## Euless proposed budget

	Adopted 2005-06 budget	Proposed 2006-07 budget	Percent change
Total budget revenue	\$76.8 million	\$83.7 million	9%
Total budget expenditures	\$73.8 million	\$80.1 million	8.5%
General fund revenue	\$24.7 million	\$28.7 million	16%
General fund expenditures	\$24.7 million	\$28.6 million	15.7%

**Proposed new 2006-07 budget items**

3 firefighters/paramedics	\$190,208
3 public safety dispatchers	\$144,935
Court clerk	\$38,680
Juvenile case manager	\$43,480
Parks field tech	\$34,820

**What it means to you**

The budget is based on a proposed tax rate of 48.95 cents per \$100 of assessed property value. That's a decrease from the current tax rate of 49.17 cents. The tax bill for the owner of an average-priced house would be \$519.13, up from \$509.85 last year. The calculations include a 20% homestead exemption. The average value of a house in Euless increased to \$132,567 from \$129,595 last year.

SOURCE: City of Euless

STAR-TELEGRAM

## If you go

**What:** Public hearings on proposed Euless property tax rate

**When:** 7 p.m. Aug. 24 and 29

**Where:** Euless City Hall, 201 N. Ector Drive

SOURCE: City of Euless

taxes with the proposed rate, Hennig said.

The remaining nine would pay more taxes for various reasons, among them buying a new home or making home improvements, he said. The total assessed value of property in the city went up, according to figures from the Tarrant Appraisal District.

But Tyson said an even lower rate of 47.2131 cents would cover proposed expenditures and the traditional 60-day reserve the city sets aside for unexpected expenses or loss of

revenue.

Anything higher than that rate would mean additional reserves the city does not need, he said.

Hennig said the 48.95-cent rate is "just a more cautious approach."

"You've got to have enough fund balance if we have a major economical downturn" or other crisis, he said.

The proposed budget would include money for three additional firefighters, raising the number to 62; three public-safety dispatchers, raising the number to 15; and a court clerk, raising the number to 10.

Additionally, the city is proposing \$1.3 million in capital expenses, such as park improvements and fire safety equipment, Assistant City Manager Loretta Getchell said.

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SENTENCE

# Man gets 50 years in 2005 murder of wife

■ The 46-year-old Eules man pleads guilty to killing his wife by hitting her in the head with a hammer.

By MELISSA SANCHEZ  
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

A Eules man who bludgeoned his wife to death with a hammer last year was sentenced Friday to 50 years in prison, officials said.

Johnny Omorogieva, 46, pleaded guilty before a state district court judge to the murder of his 36-year-old wife, Isatu.

The victim's sister, Uma Gallah, read a letter to Omorogieva from his two children during the sentencing. She stared at him square in the eyes, she said. Both wept, she said.

"I talked to him and it made me feel a lot better," said Gallah, who is now caring for the children.

Eules police say Omorogieva lured his estranged wife to his apartment Aug. 10, 2005, under the pretext of buying school clothes for their daughter, then bashed his wife in the head 20 times with a hammer. Their daughter witnessed at least part of the attack, police said.

When his wife of 14 years lay still, Omorogieva drove the child to her grandmother's home and then returned to the family's apartment on El Camino Real, police said.

When he returned home, Johnny Omorogieva stabbed himself with the butcher knife, police said.

In the meantime, the children's grandmother called 911 and sent officers to the apartment to check on her daughter. Omorogieva begged the officers to let him die.

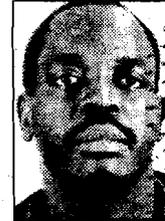
Officers retrieved another large kitchen knife within Omorogieva's reach and a smaller knife with blood on it on the coffee table.

This report includes material from the Star-Telegram archives.

Melissa Sanchez, 817-685-3888  
msanchez@star-telegram.com



ISATU  
OMOROGIEVA



JOHNNY  
OMOROGIEVA

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# Cheers & Jeers

**Cheers:** To the city of Eules for installing more water fountains along the bike trail between McCormick and Bob Eden parks. It really makes a difference to runners like me and my father in this heat!

**Kathy Krell, Eules**

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**EULESS**

# City events still raking in recognition

The city of Euless may have discontinued its longtime award-winning Arbor Daze festival, but its other special events and promotions have earned kudos from the Texas Festivals & Events As-



**Terry Lee Goodrich**

sociation, City Council members learned last week. The Fredericksburg-based association, which has 350 member cities, ranked Euless' Arbor Day Poe Tree Contest in April the best educational program. Euless' promotional poster for its Christmas Parade was named best promotional poster, and the best event photograph was of Euless' Easter Egg Scramble. The city's *Euless Today* magazine

was named best event/organizational newsletter. The council decided in 2005 to cancel Arbor Daze, held annually for 17 years, because of rising costs and financial risks. It attracted crowds of more than 200,000 and won four awards from the Texas Festivals & Events Association in 2004.

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## INSIDE THE POLICE SCANNER

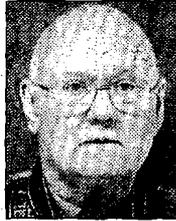
# Ex-pastor's trial set for next month

STAR-TELEGRAM

EULESS — The trial of a former Methodist pastor accused of molesting a 21-year-old man has been tentatively scheduled for next month in Fort Worth.

The public-lewdness trial is set for Sept. 29 in County Criminal Court No. 1.

James Finley, who had been pastor of First United Methodist Church of Euless, is accused of molesting the "immature"



FINLEY

man at a north Euless apartment where the 21-year-old lived with his mother, police said.

Investigators said the man and Finley met in July 2005 at a Euless store where the man worked.

Finley befriended the man for the next several months, police said.

The pastor was arrested in December after the man called police to report that he had been molested.

The man went to the police station, and investigators urged him to call Finley and talk to him about what had happened. Police recorded the conversation, during which Finley offered

to perform additional sex acts on the man, police have said.

After the man returned home, Finley, 69, showed up at the man's apartment and the man called police, officials said. Officers arrested Finley about a block from the apartment.

Finley remains free on \$1,000 bail.

If convicted of the Class A misdemeanor, Finley faces up to a year in jail and a \$4,000 fine.

Finley, who lives in Euless, resigned from the United Methodist Church ministry.

— Domingo Ramirez Jr.

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THE WATCHDOG



Dave Lieber

# Opinion by Texas attorney general clarifies disclosure law

■ The law, which took effect Jan. 1, requires vendors and public officials to disclose potential conflicts of interest.

A tool that helps reveal financial relationships between public officials and vendors who do government business in Texas was reinforced this month.

Texas Attorney General Greg

Abbott released an opinion that gives public officials more direction on how to handle the requirements of the state's disclosure law, which has met with spotty compliance since taking effect, on Jan. 1.

The opinion helps spell out exactly who must comply and, in a few cases, who is exempted.

Among those who asked Abbott to help clarify the law was its author, state Rep. Beverly Woolley, a Houston Republican.

"The law doesn't say you can't do business with someone," Wool-

ley told me in a telephone interview last week. "It just says the relationships have to be disclosed.

"It's designed to give the citizens and taxpayers the information, so they can make the decision on whether they want it to happen or not. If they don't mind that, say, a

City Council person has a business that does business with the city, well, so be it. At least it should be disclosed. That is the intent."

The law requires many government officials to report when they or relatives receive gifts or taxable income worth more than \$250 from anyone who does or



WOOLLEY

wants to do business with the government.

It covers city and county elected officials, city managers, school board members, superintendents and government board and commission members. Transportation, food, entertainment and lodging expenses are exempt.

Additionally, the law requires all vendors who signed contracts to do business after Jan. 1 or who want to do business with a government to file conflict-of-interest questionnaires detailing family or business relationships with anyone in the government.

The law could ultimately shake up the so-called good ol' boy network, in which some government officials do business with their friends, relatives or even one another.

"When I asked Woolley how she got her bill passed on votes of 131-0 in the House and 31-0 in the Senate, she chuckled and replied, "It may have something to do with the position in the House that I hold."

What position? I asked.

She is chairwoman of the House Calendars Committee. It schedules every bill that goes to the House floor for a final vote. Without committee approval, a legislator can't get a bill passed.

The disclosure law has confused vendors and public officials. Although all vendors who sign contracts with or want to do business with a government are supposed to file the disclosure forms, a check of some municipal Web site shows that few have done so.

Only 17 city vendors in Fort Worth and three in Arlington are listed as having filed, according to those cities' Web

The forms that are filed must be made available to the public at government offices or, for governments that serve

**IN THE KNOW**

**Disclosure law**

Here are some of the important points in Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott's opinion on the new vendor disclosure law:

■ Professional services contracts, such as no-bid contracts with lawyers, financial consultants, insurance brokers and engineers, are subject to disclosure.

■ Besides individual vendors, business partnerships and corporations must also file.

■ A local government is not required to force vendors to comply or even notify vendors of the requirements. A local government can cancel a contract with a vendor who did not file.

■ All vendors must file a disclosure statement even if there are no personal relationships with government officials. Local governments must post the information on their Web sites if they have them.

■ Vendors with contracts signed before Jan. 1 are not required to file, but any contract changes after that are subject to disclosure requirements.

■ The law does not apply to charter schools or regional education service centers.

■ The law applies even when the vendor is related to a local government official.

**ONLINE EXCLUSIVE**

To read previous stories or to contact Dave Lieber, go to [www.star-telegram.com](http://www.star-telegram.com) and click on "Columnists."

large populations, on the Internet.

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Governments can void any contract if a vendor or official required to file did not do so. Governments can also reprimand, suspend or terminate public officials who do not comply.

Vendors and officials who don't file could be fined up to \$500, but the law allows a grace period for them to avoid prosecution if they quickly file after being told they have not.

The Texas Municipal League, which trains officials and lobbies on behalf of cities, is holding a full-day workshop on the new law Monday in Austin.

Woolley said that because of confusion surrounding the law, she expected low compliance initially. She called the law a "work in progress" that may be altered during the 2007 legislative session to address concerns that have arisen, such as confusion over who has to file and which volunteer boards must comply. But she said she hopes the law will not be weakened. Enforcement measures could be added later, but for now, taxpayers and reporters should help police the law, she said.

She is an adamant believer in the need for the law: "We have seen problems in different governmental entities, and the more information we can give taxpayers and citizens to make judgments, the more open our government will be. It shouldn't be a problem for anyone that's not doing anything wrong."

Dave Lieber's Watchdog column appears  
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## INTERSTATE BATTERIES

## A new charge is in the air

■ Interstate Batteries' energized approach is meant to appeal to women and younger buyers.

By **ANDREA JARES**  
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

**EULESS** — Interstate Batteries officials are charged up about a new store plan that they unveiled last week.

The store at the southwest corner of Glade Road and Texas 121 is the first in Texas to offer what the company calls an "animated experience" of colorful graphics, wood floors, flat-panel televisions and track lighting. Besides batteries, the store sells related items such as battery-operated bicycles, crank emergency radios, iPod covers and jumper cables.

The new store is a dramatic change from its predecessor, which displayed batteries and a few accessories on spare, white shelving.

The finishing touches on the 1,600-square-foot outlet were added last week.

The energized approach is

meant to appeal to women and younger buyers, as well as battery users who are increasingly more tech-savvy. It's also turning heads of prospective franchise owners.

"The franchisees are going bonkers over it," said Mickey Elam, company vice president.

The company plans to have 400 locations by 2010, growing through new franchisees. Now there are 61 Interstate Batteries stores in 26 states.

The new format debuted two weeks ago in Des Moines, Iowa, at a high-performing store. Terry Schulze, director of operations, said buyers there are spending more than the typical \$20 to \$50.

"We have two weeks of data, but it has, without a doubt, exceeded our expectations," he said.

Americans spent \$11.1 billion on batteries last year, according to market researcher Freedonia Group. Dallas-based Interstate Batteries also wants to take a large bite of that growing market with a



STAR-TELEGRAM/LAURIE L. WARD

Rick McClure shows fellow Interstate Batteries employee Stephen Peck an electric bicycle at the store's reopening Thursday in Euless.

guarantee that it can supply all batteries to all devices and an emphasis on customer service. The new store, for instance, has a massage chair that customers can use while they're getting their car bat-

teries changed (in a guaranteed 15 minutes).

"You hear about extreme sports," Schulze said. "This is extreme customer service."

Andrea Jares, 817-548-5522  
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## EULESS



STAR-TELEGRAM/M.L. GRAY

Jeff Benezue, a D/FW Airport firefighter and paramedic, watches from a distance as a fire is extinguished at the Collins Park at Bear Creek complex in Euless. No residents were injured, but a firefighter was taken to a hospital with heat exhaustion, a fire official says.

# More than 40 are displaced after 3-alarm apartment fire

■ A resident told investigators that a candle fell over and caught a mattress on fire, a fire official says.

By **MARK AGEE**  
 STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

EULESS — An accidental fire destroyed a 24-unit apartment building in Euless on Sunday evening, authorities said.

More than 40 people lost their homes in the three-alarm blaze, which started about 6 p.m. at the Collins Park

at Bear Creek apartments along Texas 360, south of Mid-Cities Boulevard, Assistant Fire Chief Robert Isbell said.

It took 50 firefighters to get the fire under control, Isbell said. No residents were injured, but one firefighter was taken to a hospital with heat exhaustion, he said.

Crews of firefighters were rotated in and out to try to combat the heat. They were also slowed by the location of the building, No. 6, in the back of the apartment complex.

"It was hard to get equipment back there, and we could only attack from the one side," Isbell said.

The fire appears to have spread quickly from a breezeway on the third floor through the attic, Isbell said.

A third-floor resident told investigators that a candle fell over and caught a mattress on fire, Isbell said. The resident said the mattress was dragged out of the apartment into the breezeway, and the fire spread from

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there.

A group of residents from the building gathered at the complex's entrance to meet with friends and family. The Red Cross was helping them find a place to stay the night.

They said the fire spread quickly. One man fled without a shirt and had to wear one from a neighbor.

Christine Bensen, 33, lives in building 7, but her parents lived in 6. When they saw the flames, they went from apart-

"It was hard to get equipment back there, and we could only attack from ... one side."

— Assistant Fire Chief Robert Isbell, on the fire's location

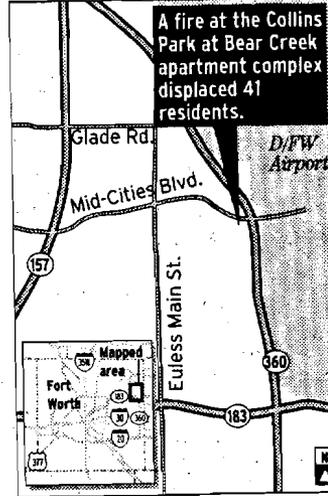
ment to apartment — with Bensen's son, 1-year-old Ryan, in tow — banging on doors, telling their neighbors to get out. She had burns on the back of her neck from falling embers.

"We had gotten half the people out before the smoke detectors went off," Bensen said. Ryan was all right but "a little shaken up from hearing his mom scream her head off," she said.

Division Chief and Fire Marshal Paul Smith said that because the fire spread through the breezeway and attic, it may have bypassed smoke detectors until it was already roaring. New apartment buildings are now required to have smoke detectors and sprinklers in their attics, he said.

Mark Agee, 817-685-3821  
 rmagee@star-telegram.com

### Apartment fire



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## NORTHEAST TARRANT BRIEFS

### Cost of Euless blaze totals \$1.5 million

**EULESS** - A fire that destroyed an apartment building.

Sunday evening caused about \$1.5 million in damage, a fire marshal said Monday. No residents were injured, but a Grapevine firefighter was hospitalized for heat exhaustion, authorities said. A candle that fell on a mattress started the blaze about 6 p.m. Sunday at the Collins Park at Bear Creek apartments, 2001 N. Texas 360, authorities said. A resident dragged the mattress out of the apartment into a breezeway, where the fire spread, authorities said. Firefighters from five cities and Dallas/Fort Worth Airport fought the fire for several hours before it was extinguished. The fire destroyed 24 apartments. About 40 residents were living in the building at the time of the blaze, authorities said. On Monday, apartment officials were attempting to help them relocate.

- Domingo Ramirez Jr.

### EULESS

### BLAZE DESTROYS 24 APARTMENTS



STAR-TELEGRAM/KELLEY CHINN

**Euless Fire Lt. Jerry Sutton** helps a resident at Collins Park at Bear Creek apartments retrieve belongings Monday after a fire destroyed 24 apartments.

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## NORTHEAST & REGION BRIEFS

### **Fears of gas leak lead to school's evacuation**

**EULESS** - Students and staff at South Eules Elementary School were evacuated for 75 minutes Tuesday morning after a staff member reported the odor of natural gas. Representatives from Atmos Energy and the Eules Fire Department were called about 8:35 a.m. They investigated and determined that there was no gas in the building. Students returned to class at 9:50 a.m. "At no time were any students or staff in danger," Principal Carma Schellhorn wrote in a letter to parents. "All measures taken were precautionary." The gas was turned back on by the end of the day.

- Katherine Cromer Brock

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**EULESS**

# Celestial wonders await sky watchers

By **TERRY LEE GOODRICH**  
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

EULESS — About the time astronaut Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon in 1969, the light that we see coming from the giant sun Arcturus zoomed into space far faster than any

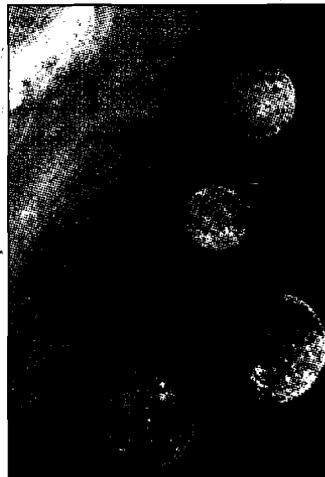
## Stars Over Eules

■ 9:30 to 10:30 p.m. Friday  
 ■ Bob Eden Park  
 ■ 901 W. Mid-Cities Blvd.

speeding bullet — 186,000 miles per second, to be exact. Thirty-seven

years later, locals who want to see Arcturus and other celestial wonders can do so through telescopes Friday night at Bob Eden Park during Stars Over Eules. They also can look at four of Jupiter's 63 known moons.

"The world's best rocket goes 10 miles a second, and it would take it two years to get to Jupiter at that speed," says Robert Bonadurer, director of the Planetarium at the University of Texas at Arlington.



NASA

If skies are clear Friday, telescopes will focus on Jupiter's four Galilean moons.

"It would take 500,000 years at that same speed to get to Arcturus."

Galileo discovered the four moons of Jupiter in 1610, he said.

The city of Eules is sponsoring the free event and will douse park lights.

In case of clouds, there will be a video tour of the sky.

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**EULESS**

# Size of cut in tax rate debated

**BY TERRY LEE GOODRICH**  
 STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

**EULESS** — Several Euless residents at a public hearing Thursday said that a proposed drop in the city property tax rate is not enough and that the city will end up with more reserves than it needs.

But others among the 50 or so people in the audience praised the city for a proposed rate they said would provide a cushion in case of economic turnaround or a crisis like 9-11.

The city staff is recommending that the property tax rate, now 49.17 cents per \$100 evaluation, be dropped to 48.95 cents.

Three of the seven council members have said the rate could go even lower, to 47.21 cents, a rate they said would leave the city with ample reserves, including enough to cover 60 days of standard operating costs.

A second hearing on the tax rate will be at 7 p.m. Tuesday at City Hall. The council will vote on the rate Sept. 12.

The proposed 2007 budget calls for \$80.1 million in expenditures. Last year's budget was \$73.8 million. The tax rate can be lowered, however, be-

**IN THE KNOW**

**Euless proposed budget**

	Adopted 2006 budget	Proposed 2007 budget	Percent change
Total budget revenue	\$76.7 million	\$83.7 million	9.0
Total budget expenditures	\$73.8 million	\$80.1 million	6.3
General fund revenue	\$24.7 million	\$28.7 million	4.0
General fund expenditures	\$24.7 million	\$28.6 million	4.0
General fund reserves			
<b>Proposed new 2006-07 budget items</b>			
3 Firefighters/Paramedics			\$190,208
3 public safety dispatchers			\$144,935
Court Clerk			\$38,680
Juvenile case manager			\$43,480
Parks field tech			\$34,820

**What it means to you**

The budget is based on a proposed tax rate of 48.95 cents per \$100 of assessed property value. That's a decrease from the current tax rate of 49.17 cents. The tax bill for the owner of an average-priced house would be \$519.13, up from \$509.85 last year. The calculations include a 20 percent homestead exemption. The average value of a house in Euless increased to \$132,567 from \$129,595 last year.

SOURCE: City of Euless

STAR-TELEGRAM

cause the city anticipates more revenue from commercial and industrial growth, sales taxes and rental cars at Dallas/Fort Worth Airport.

If the 48.95-cent rate were adopted, the owner of an average-priced home would still pay more, from \$509.85 last year to \$519.13, because assessed values have gone up, city officials said.

Ray Kunze said the proposed 48.95 rate would be "overkill."

"We're functioning better than all our sister cities because you manage this city like a well-oiled machine," he said.

Others expressed confidence in the projections of city staffers.

Terry Lee Goodrich, 817-685-3812  
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## PROPERTY TAXES

# A tax gimmick at Rick's? We're shocked — shocked

■ Texas property appraisal figures are a lot more reasonable — and believable — than the governor's political rhetoric.

Richard Nixon's detractors dubbed him "Tricky Dick." We Texans have Tricky Rick. Gov. Rick Perry, in his latest poorly disguised act of cheap political gimmickry, has named a task force to study Texas' "skyrocketing" property appraisals — even though most are *not* skyrocketing.



Jack Z.  
Smith

But Perry doesn't want the truth getting in the way of a third-rate campaign stunt. He's up for re-election Nov. 7. Polls indicate that many Texans aren't exactly enamored of him, even if he is a well-coiffed, hip dude who spouts street language that rhymes with *mojo*.

So Perry is once again trotting out a favorite political bogeyman, the tax appraisal system.

If you think this is all about the governor wanting to lower your taxes ... well, that's exactly what he wants you to think. But it's really all about politics and the governor wanting to get re-elected.

That's why he has named his new task force, which will begin hearings on Sept. 15. It will be headed by former state Republican Party Chairman Tom Pauken, who already has declared the state's appraisal system "broken and badly in need of fixing," while lamenting a "stealth tax — a hidden tax as a result of rising property values."

It's baloney to say that Texas' appraisal system is "broken." Residential property valuations have risen considerably in the past decade, but that merely reflects the fact that homes are selling for more.

Many new homes have high appraised values because they are much bigger and fancier than residences built in earlier decades. Texas' residential valuations are still very low compared to those in other heavily urbanized

states, notably California.

But by naming the task force, Perry can appear to be mightily concerned about *your* taxes — just in advance of the election.

Never mind that one of the governor's pet appraisal proposals could, if adopted, actually result in many Texans paying *higher* property taxes or seeing local government services reduced.

Never mind that in many Texas counties — including fast-growing Tarrant County — overall increases in appraised values of homes have been very modest this year.

Perry has attempted unsuccessfully in recent years to get the Legislature to approve property appraisal caps that would further restrict the amount that taxes can be increased by rising valuations. Currently, there's a 10 percent cap on the annual valuation increase allowed for tax purposes. Perry has supported lowering the cap to as little as 3 percent.

That sounds enticing unless you stop to think about it.

Adoption of a markedly lower appraisal cap would be an unfair, foolish move that could result in many Texans actually facing higher tax rates and paying more taxes to local governments, or seeing services reduced.

Caps are unfair because they distort the fundamental principle of uniform appraisal and taxation based on fair market value. Caps shift a greater share of the tax burden to the many property owners who don't benefit from

the caps, leaving them with potentially higher tax bills.

Because caps reduce tax revenues, implementing them increases the chance that local governments will raise tax rates or cut services to offset the revenue loss. Caps don't reduce the cost of picking up trash or filling potholes by a single penny.

Let's look at those "skyrocketing" appraisals that Perry is yapping about.

Tarrant Appraisal District figures show that the net taxable value of all county property rose 9.2 percent this year, but 47 percent of that increase was from new construction. Values of previously existing properties rose a very modest 4.9 percent.

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In fact, 58 percent of single-family homes in Tarrant County showed no change in appraised value this year. Only 36.5 percent saw an increase. A scant 5.2 percent — only one in 20 homes — increased more than 10 percent in value. Approximately 5.5 percent declined in value.

The average appraised value for a home in Tarrant County is only \$136,728 — far lower than many U.S. metropolitan areas. In booming Fort Worth, the average home value is only \$108,256, which might buy you a nice outhouse in Southern California.

“Skyrocketing” appraisals? That’s what Tricky Rick would have you believe.

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