

folks had the luxury of electricity.

Back then in rural America, those 4 1/2 miles might as well have been a million. Electricity stopped where the profits did, and in 1936, fewer than 3% of Texas farms had electricity.

But before long, farmers, ranchers and their neighbors pooled their money and worked together to build the electric cooperatives that lit up the countryside and brought a better quality of life.

Katie Phillips is among few living Americans who witnessed that important history. She had a front-row seat.

Katie turned 9 in 1936, the year her dad became a local leader in the cooperative movement that was in its early stages.

In those days, the town of Coleman had not only electricity but phone service too, and Pitts realized he needed that to keep up with milk orders. To get it, he paid to have a line strung from Coleman, across a creek, to the farm. Katie remembers their party line phone number: 4-0-0.

“I always wanted something better,” Pitts told the family.

Getting electricity to the farm was another matter.

Pitts traveled to Washington, D.C., to learn about the Rural Electrification Administration, which provided loans for the creation of cooperatives. He then visited neighboring farms, asking folks to contribute \$5 to help start a co-op.

Finally, in April 1937, the first Coleman County Electric Cooperative light bulb flickered on in the Pitts farmhouse—an honor befitting the co-op’s first board president.

“It was a great day for everybody because it was a completion of a long journey for Daddy,” Katie says. The Pitts kids had better lighting for their schoolwork, and Dad had a perfect place to read the Fort Worth newspaper he always had in the house.

Soon lines brought power to the dairy barn, where milking machines freed up farmhands.

Katie remembers the first appliance in the house—a two-door refrigerator picked up at Gray Mercantile in town. It meant no more lugging ice home. “I just know that it was one of the most wonderful feelings there was when we could go to that refrigerator and open both doors and look in there and see what was in it,” Katie says.

Decades later, Katie spends a lot of her days knitting under a lamp in a corner of her living room in a 100-year-old farmhouse 6 miles east of Coleman. Electricity is too commonplace to warrant much thought. It powers her iPhone, tablet, two TVs and brand-new Singer sewing machine.

She’s known around Coleman County EC for being there at the dawn of the co-op. When the co-op held its 85th annual meeting in July 2023, she was

there, and it was her 85th annual meeting too. She has attended every last one.

“The first light bulb was the beginning of an amazing future for all of us,” says Synda Smith,

the co-op’s CEO and general manager. “There are few businesses that have a past connection like this. It feels so good to know that Katie still feels like we are doing what our

earlier leaders wanted us to do by continuing to uphold the co-op business model.”

Katie has farmed most of her life around Coleman, except for two years in high school at Our

Lady of the Lake in San Antonio. She dated Harold Phillips for a little less than a year—sometimes on horseback—and they married in 1948 when she was 21.

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## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON TAX RATE

A tax rate of \$0.205000 per \$100 valuation has been proposed by the governing body of WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT.

PROPOSED TAX RATE	\$0.205000 per \$100
NO-NEW REVENUE TAX RATE	\$0.202806 per \$100
VOTER APPROVAL TAX RATE	\$0.212813 per \$100

The no-new-revenue tax rate is the tax rate for the 2024 tax year that will raise the same amount of property tax revenue for WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT from the same properties in both the 2023 tax year and the 2024 tax year.

The voter-approval tax rate is the highest tax rate that WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT may adopt without holding an election to seek voter approval of the rate.

The proposed tax rate is greater than the no-new-revenue tax rate. This means that WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT is proposing to increase property taxes for the 2024 tax year.

A public hearing on the proposed tax rate will be held on August 27, 2024, at 9:30 AM at West Coke County Hospital, 712 Washington St., Suite D, Robert Lee, TX 76945.

The proposed tax rate is not greater than the voter-approval tax rate. As a result, WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT is not required to hold an election at which voters may accept or reject the proposed tax rate. However, you may express your support for or opposition to the proposed tax rate by contacting the members of WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT at their offices or by attending the public meeting mentioned above.

**YOUR TAXES OWED UNDER ANY OF THE RATES MENTIONED ABOVE CAN BE CALCULATED AS FOLLOWS:**

$$\text{Property tax amount} = (\text{tax rate}) \times (\text{taxable value of your property}) / 100$$

**FOR the proposal:** Beverly Burdett, Pat Stephens, Betty Lewis, Noel Tinkler, Roma McCarley

**AGAINST the proposal:**

**ABSENT:**

The 86th Texas Legislature modified the manner in which the voter-approval tax rate is calculated to limit the rate of growth of property taxes in the state.

The following table compares the taxes imposed on the average residence homestead by WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT last year to the taxes proposed to be imposed on the average residence homestead by WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT this year.

	2023	2024	Change
<b>Total tax rate (per \$100 of value)</b>	\$0.234000	\$0.205000	decrease of -0.029000 per \$100, or -12.39%
<b>Average homestead taxable value</b>	\$83,452	\$83,785	increase of 0.40%
<b>Tax on average homestead</b>	\$195.28	\$171.76	decrease of -23.52, or -12.04%
<b>Total tax levy on all properties</b>	\$819,965	\$835,027	increase of 15,062, or 1.84%

For assistance with tax calculations, please contact the tax assessor for WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT at (325) 453-2614.