

**...Jurassic Era**

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In 2015, Mays and other paleontologists from UT and SMU went out prospecting together in the area, getting permission to collect on both private and state-owned land. During their initial trip—conducted over a few days—they picked up a few bone fragments. When they returned in 2016, they invited along a paleontologist from UT, Lisa Boucher, to collect some of the fossilized driftwood and spiral-shelled ammonites they'd found. While Boucher specializes in non-vertebrate paleontology, she made an exception on the trip, picking up the vertebra of a marine reptile. Some of the other bone fragments proved to belong to the remains of a limb bone.

The vertebra suggests that the Malone Mountain plesiosaur belonged to one of the short-necked lineages, Mays says. But more finds are needed to pin down a species or other aspects of its life history. For now, it's enough to confirm that Texas has a Jurassic landscape of its very own.

"Hopefully other paleontologists with the right permits will get out that way," Mays says. "There's got to be more out there."

**Charming the Alamo**

By Lori Grossman

Her full name is Miss Isabella Francisca Veramendi de Valero, but visitors to the Alamo just call her Bella. She's the Texas shrine's official meet/greeter and is quite the local celebrity with her own Twitter and Instagram accounts, plus her own Fiesta San Antonio medal.

Want to meet her? Go to the Alamo and look for a large calico cat. That's Bella.

The Alamo feline's story begins in Goliad on the grounds of Presidio La Bahía, the Spanish fort about 90 miles southeast of San Antonio. Josephine McMahan, the young daughter of Presidio director Scott McMahan, found a kitten there in early 2015.

"Bella was found in the middle room of the museum," recalls Josephine's mom, Monica McMahan. "I posted on Facebook asking if anyone wanted to adopt her. Sherri Driscoll from the [Daughters of the Republic of Texas] library contacted me. She said they were interested because their previous cat had recently passed away."

The previous Alamo cat was Clara Carmack—aka Miss C.C. She was named in honor of Alamo preservationist Clara Driscoll and Alamo committee Chair Mary Carmack, and Miss C.C. reigned (roamed?) from 1996 to 2014. Her predecessor, Ruby LeGato, was the first official Alamo cat in the 1980s. She was immortalized in a children's book, *The Alamo Cat*, by San Antonio author Rita Kerr.

Ruby and Miss C.C. had captured the hearts of Alamo

staff and visitors. Bella had big paw prints to fill. But the McMahons had brought her to the Alamo on an auspicious day.

"March 6, 2015—that day was the 179th anniversary of the fall of the Alamo," says Ernesto Rodriguez, the Alamo's senior curator and historian (and Bella's caretaker). "It was one of those interesting coincidences because she was the only 'aid' to come to the Alamo—but many, many years later."

The Texas General Land Office is the Alamo's custodian. It gave permission for Bella to stay if Alamo staff would provide for her. She succeeded Miss C.C. as the Alamo cat and moved—with her food bowl, water dish and litter box—into Rodriguez's office.

Bella quickly adapted to her new home. "She's been around crowds since she was 6 weeks old," Rodriguez says. "At first, she was part indoors and part

outdoors. We'd bring her in for the night. Right now, she's indoors because of ongoing construction here."

Rodriguez laughingly calls Bella a "cat-dog" because she's so good with young children and because she occasionally goes for walks on a harness. Yes—a harness. "When we first got her, we took her out on a harness so she could get accustomed to the property," he says. "She's used to wearing it because she has

since she was a kitten."

With construction temporarily curtailing her movements, what's a typical day like for the Alamo cat? She eats. She checks on other Alamo staffers. She takes a nap. She plays with her toys then takes another nap. Rodriguez reports that she likes to sit in on meetings, too. "She likes to be involved with meetings and phone calls," he says.

"When I'm in a meeting, she'll sit and stare at me. Sometimes,

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON TAX RATE

A tax rate of \$0.234 per \$100 valuation has been proposed by the governing body of WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT.

PROPOSED TAX RATE	\$0.234 per \$100
NO-NEW REVENUE TAX RATE	\$0.227101 per \$100
VOTER APPROVAL TAX RATE	\$0.235077 per \$100
DE MINIMIS RATE	\$0.370466 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, unless the de minimis rate for WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT exceeds the voter-approval tax rate for WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT.

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 29, 2023, at 9 AM at WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT BOARD ROOM, 722 WASHINGTON ST., ROBERT LEE, TEXAS.

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 the BOARD OF DIRECTORS 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:**

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

**The members of the governing body voted on the proposed tax increase as follows:**

**FOR:** PAT STEPHENS, BETTY LEWIS, ROMA McCURLEY, NOEL TINKLER, BEVERLY BURDETT

**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.

For assistance with tax calculations, please contact the tax assessor for WEST COKE COUNTY HOSPITAL DISTRICT at (325) 453-2614 or [COKECOTAX@YAHOO.COM](mailto:COKECOTAX@YAHOO.COM).