

J.G. Wentworth. If you were receiving a series of payments over a long period of time (insurance settlement, lottery award, etc.), you could sell those to J.G. Wentworth and receive an immediate lump sum. Of course, they would take a significant cut as part of the deal. Their ads memorably/infamously included people shouting out their window, "I want my money and I want it now!" They were catchy ads. They were also quite a fitting cultural statement.

Have you ever lived without a microwave? Many older readers likely have, but many younger folks in America have not. I have. For two years in college, I lived in a travel trailer. It had a microwave, but if you ran the microwave, air conditioner, and television simultaneously, it would blow a fuse in the trailer. I discovered this the hard way. It took me a while to get the fuse replaced. Afterwards, I rarely used the microwave, to not inadvertently cause another outage. This experience taught me two things:

1. Chef Boyardee and Wolf Brand Chili can be cornerstones of a balanced diet.

2. A microwave has a significant effect on our entire mentality about life.

I will leave the first point alone for now, but I reserve the right to address it in the future. The second point was jarring. Have you examined the directions on packaged food and compared the microwave cooking time to that of the oven or stovetop? It is a shocking time differential. Food almost always tastes better when choosing the slower option, but life's constraints/lack of patience push us to choose speed over taste. That's a lesson about life. When posed with a slower, higher quality option and a faster option of mediocre quality, how often do we choose convenience over quality?

Is that any way to live, to default to convenience as our overriding priority? I'm hardly a fan of making life intentionally hard for the sake of it, but as I get older, I see the damage of choosing convenience for the sake of it. We only get one life. Do we really want to speed through every meal, task, and experience, just to finish them and move on to the next one? I don't. I see how speeding through everything rewires our brain to demand convenience in everything.

Before microwaves, people thought nothing of waiting longer for a meal to be prepared. It was the only option. Now, life without a microwave is unimaginable for many. Succumbing to the pressures of convenience is easy to do. It is not always bad, either. Wendell Berry has a great rubric for determining whether a tool should be adopted. It is too long for an here and it deserves full-length

treatment one day, but the general idea is to ask whether the tool benefits us or if we're being used by the tool to benefit others. The latter is rampant in life and it all flows downhill.

A society rewired for convenience becomes accustomed to cheap goods, technological efficiency, and convenience above all else, even individual and collective happiness. Such a society is built around the J.G. Wentworth model: get your money and get it now, no matter the cut that the overlords take. This society fails to fully appreciate the value of work or the value of the workers who do good and meaningful work of all kinds. This society misses the precious moments of its children's lives in the name of being busy, while spending those days at the office longing for retirement. This society bankrupts its farmers and ranchers in the name of cheap food. This society undermines

rural prosperity and then criticizes rural communities for falling behind. This society is deeply unhappy and dissatisfied. It wants to get everywhere quickly, but no matter how quickly you get there, it will never be quick enough.

It is difficult to rewire society as a whole. That is too big for one person or even a group of people. It is not too difficult to choose a different path for ourselves and our families. Take a step back from the microwave. Use tools, but don't let them use you. Choose to savor life. Don't let convenience control you, even if the wider world thinks you are crazy.

*James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the West of 98 website and the Rural Church and State and West of 98 podcasts. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com and subscribe to him wherever podcasts are found.*

## RL City Council meeting minutes told

The Robert Lee City Council met in regular session on Thursday, September 14, at 6:30 pm at City Hall. Those in attendance included Mayor Jason Moran; Council Members Josh Tennison, Brantly Robertson, Mike Stephens, Jonathan Torres, and Tracy Grantham; and City Attorney Jeff Betty.

A quorum was determined and the meeting was declared open at 6:34 pm.

The City of Robert Lee will be proposing to increase the property tax rate by 1% at the rate of \$0.399988 on each \$100 valuation of property. No comments were made by citizens. A motion was made by Mike Stephens to accept the 1% increase and was seconded by Jonathan Torres. The motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

The City of Robert Lee presented the budget for fiscal year 2023-2024. The figures summarized below were

presented to the Council to be adopted for the new fiscal year.

Income	-	Revenue
\$1,735,339.00		
Expenses	-	Payroll
\$441,749.00,		M&O
\$1,293,590.00,		Debt \$0.00

A motion was made by Jonathan Torres to approve the proposed budget and was seconded by Josh Tennison. The motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

Leta Caston voiced her concerns with the barbecue pits behind her neighbor's property that were deemed a fire hazard by her insurance company. The insurance company will no longer provide her insurance due to the hazard on her neighbor's property.

The Consent Agenda (July 20, 2023, Minutes, Code Enforcement Report, Animal Control Report, Municipal Court Report, and Financial Report) was presented and a motion was made by Josh

Stephens to approve of the agenda. He was seconded by Mike Stephens and the motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

The Council exited into executive session with City Attorney Jeff Betty pertaining to topics on and off of the agenda at 6:58 pm. The Council returned from executive session at 8:26 pm.

The 1st reading of 22-23 Street Closure - Partial Closure of 14th Street on Childress was tabled pending further information.

A motion was made by Josh Tennison to approve of the Tax Deed 7405 and was seconded by Tracy Grantham. The motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

The current ordinance requires a committee to determine whether or not a vehicle is junked after the Code Enforcement presents it to them. A motion was made by Brantly Robertson to allow the office to rewrite the junked vehicle ordinance and remove the committee section. Josh Tennison seconded and the motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

City Hall is currently operating under an internet network as if it was a residential building rather than a business. A motion was made by Tracy Grantham to approve the quote and terms of the agreement from Snider Tech for the total amount of \$7,611.40 to overhaul the City Hall network. Brantly Robertson seconded and the motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

The personnel policy regarding parental leave was

tabled and discussed in executive session.

Clawson Mechanical submitted a Property Upgrade Grant application for their new business sign to EDC. A motion was made by Josh Tennison to approve the grant and was seconded by Tracy Grantham. The motion carried with a vote of 4 - 0, as Jonathan Torres abstained.

A motion was made by Mike Stephens to approve the demolition reimbursement for 310 W. 8th from the EDC to the City of Robert Lee. He was seconded by Tracy Grantham and the motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

A motion was made by Josh Tennison to approve of EDC Type A budget for FYE 23-24 and was seconded by Josh Tennison. The motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

A motion was made by Mike Stephens to approve of EDC Type B budget for FYE 23-24 and was seconded by Brantly Robertson. The motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

A motion was made by Jonathan Torres to approve the demolition project requested to EDC for 314 E. 3rd Street and was seconded by Josh Tennison. The motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

A motion was made by Tracy Grantham to approve the grant application submitted by Kuntry Boyz Kustomz Shop for the installation of their privacy fence with the conditions required by EDC. She was seconded by Mike Stephens and the motion carried with a vote of 5 - 0.

*(Continued on page 6)*



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