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By: Brown of Brazos (Senate Sponsor - Ogden)

(In the Senate - Received from the House May 20, 2005;
May 20, 2005, read first time and referred to Committee on Intergovernmental Relations; May 21, 2005, reported favorably by the following vote: Yeas 5, Nays 0; May 21, 2005, sent to
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         printer.)
                                         A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
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                                                   AN ACT
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         relating to the creation of the Research Valley Innovation
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         District.
                  BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:
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         SECTION 1. Subtitle C, Title 4, Special District Local Laws Code, is amended by adding Chapter 3854 to read as follows:
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                     CHAPTER 3854. RESEARCH VALLEY INNOVATION DISTRICT
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                         SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS 3854.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapt
                                                           In this chapter:
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                         (1)
                                "Board" means the board of directors of the
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         district.
                         <u>(</u>2)
                                "Commissioners court" means the governing body of
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         Brazos County. (3)
                                "Director" means a board member.
"District" means the Research Valley Innovation
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                         (4)
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         District.
                          (5)
                                "Obligation" means an interest-bearing obligation
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                               district under this chapter, including a te, or other evidence of indebtedness.
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          issued by
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         certificate, note,
                          (6) "Project" means a project established under
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                     3854.111 and includes the land, buildings, equipment,
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         facilities, infrastructure, improvements, and other property
         necessary to accomplish the purposes of the project. Sec. 3854.002. PURPOSE; DECLARATION OF
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                                                                            OF
                                                                                     LEGISLATIVE
                         (a) The creation of the district is essential to
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         FINDINGS.
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         accomplish the purposes of Section 52-a, Article III, and Section
         59, Article XVI, Texas Constitution, and to accomplish other public purposes stated in this chapter.

(b) This chapter is enabling legislation enacted to further
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                public purposes under Section 52-a, Article III, Texas
         Constitution.
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         (c) The creation of the district is necessary to further the public purpose of improving the economy of this state and of Brazos County by providing for projects.
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                       The district serves the public purposes stated in this
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                  (d)
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         section.
         Sec. 3854.003. NATURE OF DISTRICT. The district is a special district and a political subdivision of this state under Section 59, Article XVI, Texas Constitution.

Sec. 3854.004. DISTRICT TERRITORY. The district boundaries
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         are coextensive with the boundaries of Brazos County.
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                  Sec. 3854.005. APPLICABILITY OF OTHER WATER DISTRICTS LAW.
         Chapter 49, Water Code, does not apply to the district.

Sec. 3854.006. LIBERAL CONSTRUCTION OF CHAPTER.
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                                                                                               This
         chapter shall be construed liberally in conformity with the
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         legislative findings and purposes stated in this chapter.
                    [Sections 3854.007-3854.050 reserved for expansion]
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                        SUBCHAPTER B. BOARD OF DIRECTORS
3854.051. GOVERNING BODY. The district is governed by
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             board of seven directors appointed as provided by this
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         subchapter.
Sec. 3854.052. TERMS.
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                                                    (a)
                                                             Directors serve staggered
         three-year terms that expire on June 1.
(b) A director may not serve more than two consecutive
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         ter<u>ms.</u>
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                  Sec. 3854.053. APPOINTMENT. The commissioners court shall
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appoint the directors.

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Sec. 3854.054. QUALIFICATIONS. A director:

must be a registered voter of Brazos County; and (1)

may not:

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2-68 2-69 (A) be an elected official; or

be employed by the district or Brazos County. (B)

Sec. 3854.055. VACANCY. The remaining directors shall fill a vacancy in the office of director for the unexpired term.

Sec. 3854.056. DIRECTOR'S BOND; OATH OR AFFIRMATION. soon as practicable after a director is appointed, the director shall execute a bond for \$10,000 payable to the district and conditioned on the faithful performance of the director's duties.

(b) The bond must be approved by the board.

- The bond and the director's constitutional oath affirmation of office shall be filed with the district and the district shall retain the bond and the oath or affirmation in the district's records.

  Sec. 3854.057. OFFICERS. (a) The board shall elect from
- among the directors a presiding officer, a secretary, and any other officers the board considers necessary.

(b) The board by resolution shall establish the powers and

duties of the officers, consistent with this chapter.

Sec. 3854.058. COMPENSATION; EXPENSES. A director serves without compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses approved by the board.

Sec. 3854.059. MEETINGS; NOTICE OF MEETINGS. (a) The board may establish regular meetings to conduct district business and may

hold special meetings at other times as necessary.

- (b) The board shall provide the notice prepared under Subchapter C, Chapter 551, Government Code, to the county clerk of Brazos County. In addition to the requirements imposed by that subchapter on the district, the county shall post the notice at the usual location at which notices of commissioners court meetings are posted.
- Sec. 3854.060. EMPLOYEES; PERSONS HIRED BY BOARD. (a) The board shall employ any person the board considers necessary to conduct district affairs, including:
  - engineers; (1)
  - attorneys; (2)
  - (3) certified public accountants;

  - economists;
    administrative assistants; (5)
  - bookkeepers; and (6) (7) clerical workers.
- (b) The board by resolution shall determine the compensation and terms of service of any person employed or hired by the district.

(c) The board may remove any employee.

- (d) The board may require an employee to execute a bond payable to the district and conditioned on the faithful performance of the person's duties.

  200 3854.061. INITIAL DIRECTORS.
- (a) After creation of the district under Subchapter F, the commissioners court shall by resolution appoint initial directors.
- (b) The commissioners court shall stagger the directors' terms to expire on June 1, with:
  (1) two directors serving as near as possible to a
- one-year term;
- (2) two directors serving as near as possible to a two-year term; and
- three directors serving as near as possible to a three-year term.

[Sections 3854.062-3854.100 reserved for expansion]

SUBCHAPTER C. POWERS AND DUTIES
Sec. 3854.101. GENERAL POWERS. The district has all powers necessary or convenient to carry out and effect the purposes and provisions of this chapter.

Sec. 3854.102. RULES. The board may adopt rules to govern district, including rules governing district operations, employees, and property.

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                          DISTRICT OFFICE. The board shall designate
                3854.103.
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     and establish a district office in Brazos County.
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            Sec. 3854.104. PROPERTY.
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                                       The district may exercise any
          of property right, including the power to acquire, sell, or
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      lease as lessee or lessor, regarding any type of property interest
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      in the district or for use in the district under terms determined by
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Sec. 3854.105. AGREEMENTS. The district may make agreement with any person for any district project.

contract to manage or maintain a district project.

The district may agreement with any person for any district purpose, including a

Sec. 3854.106. GIFTS, GRANTS, AND LOANS. The district may accept a gift, grant, or loan from any person for any district purpose.

Sec. 3854.107. COMPETITIVE BIDDING. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), Section 375.221, Local Government Code, applies to the district.

(b) Section 375.221, Local Government Code, does not apply to a contract between the district and:

(1) another governmental entity;

(2) a nonprofit corporation, including a scientific research corporation; or

(3) a corporation created under the Development Corporation Act of 1979.

Sec. 3854.108. RELATION TO OTHER LAW ON CONTRACTS. chapter states the procedures necessary to award contracts and supersedes any law or other requirement otherwise applicable to the district regarding the award of contracts.

Sec. 3854.109. FEES FOR USE OF DISTRICT IMPROVEMENTS. may establish and maintain reasonable and district nondiscriminatory rates, fares, charges, rents, or other fees or compensation for the use of the improvements constructed, operated, or maintained by the district.

Sec. 3854.110. PROGRAMS. The district may establish (a) and provide for the administration of one or more programs to:

(1) promote state or local economic development; and(2) stimulate business and commercial activity in the

district that relates to a project.

the board.

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(b) As part of a program, the district may make loans or grants of public money for a public purpose as provided by Section

52-a, Article III, Texas Constitution. Sec. 3854.111. PROJECTS. (a) The district may establish projects for:

 $\overline{(1)}$ research and development activities, including initiatives to prove the feasibility of an idea;

commercialization of the results of research;

(3) the incubation of new business or the expansion of existing business;

(4) the promotion of innovations or discoveries;

(5) the production and manufacturing of goods and products;

day-to-day business operations or services; and (7) education provided in affiliation with an institution of higher education, including job training οr vocational education.

must be related to the following areas of (b) project technology or industry:

(1) energy, including manufactured energy systems or the development of alternative energy sources;

(2) biotechnology;

medicine or pharmaceuticals;

(4) life sciences;

defense or homeland security; (5)

(6) information, computer, or software technology, including semiconductor technology;

engineering; or

(8) micro-electromechanical systems.

3854.112. SUITS. (a) The district may sue and be Sec. sued.

(b) Service of process in a suit may be made by serving any

two directors. 4-1 4-2

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(c) The district may not be required to give security for and may appeal from a judgment without giving a supersedeas bond or cost bond. Sec. 3854.113.

SEAL. The district may adopt a seal.

Sec. 3854.114. NONPROFIT CORPORATION; JOINT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. The district shall contract with:

(1) a nonprofit corporation that receives money from Brazos County and the cities of Bryan and College Station to promote joint economic development for those governmental entities; or

(2) another entity associated or affiliated with corporation to initiate, promote, facilitate, or nonprofit administer the development of, or to serve or assist the district to implement, a project or program under this chapter.

[Sections 3854.115-3854.150 reserved for expansion]

SUBCHAPTER D. GENERAL FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

ec. 3854.151. USE OF DISTRICT MONEY. The district may use district money for any district purpose, including:

(1) to pay for projects; and

to pay district obligations.

3854.152. INVESTMENTS. (a) The district may invest Sec money the district receives under this chapter.

(b) The district may hire a person to invest district money

on terms the board considers advisable.

Sec. 3854.153. DISBURSEMENTS OR TRANSFERS OF MONEY. The board by resolution shall establish the number of directors' signatures and the procedure required for a disbursement or transfer of district money.

Sec. 3854.154. DEPOSITORY INSTITUTION. The district may one or more financial institutions to serve as a depository bank for the district.

Sec. <u>3</u>854.155. ACCOUNTS; FISCAL YEAR. (a) The district may establish an accounting system for the district for each year.

(b) The district may establish a fiscal year for the d<u>istrict.</u>

Sec. 3854.156. PROJECT FUND. (a) The district by resolution shall establish a project fund.

(b) The district may establish separate accounts in the project fund.

The district shall deposit into the project fund all (c) money acquired or received by the district, including:

(1) the proceeds from an ad valorem tax imposed by the district; and

Sec. 3854.157. AUDIT. (a) The district obligations written contract with an independent certified public accountant or

a certified public accounting firm for an annual audit of the district's affairs and financial records.

(b) The district shall make the audit available for inspection by the public and Brazos County.

Sec. 3854.158. ASSESSMENTS. The district may impose

assessment on property in the district, including an assessment on

a leasehold interest, by agreement with the property owner.

Sec. 3854.159. LIABILITIES. The district may incur
liabilities, including a liability incurred by:

(1) borrowing money on terms the board determines; and incur

(2) issuing obligations under Section 3854.160.

3854.160. OBLIGATIONS. (a) The district may obligations, including revenue bonds, to pay the costs of a project

note, certificate of participation or other instrument evidencing a proportionate interest in payments to be made by the district, or other type of obligation.

[Sections 3854.161-3854.200 reserved for expansion]

SUBCHAPTER E. AD VALOREM TAX

3854.201. IMPOSITION OF AD VALOREM TAX. If authorized at an election held under Subchapter F, the district:

(1) may by order impose an annual ad valorem tax on

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taxable property in the district to pay for projects; and
(2) shall by order impose an ad valorem tax to pay for obligations that are payable wholly or partly from ad valorem taxes.

Sec. 3854.202. TAX RATE. (a) The board shall recommend a

tax rate to the commissioners court.

(b) The commissioners court shall set the tax rate. The tax may not exceed 10 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation of taxable property in the district.

Sec. 3854.203. TAX ASSESSOR-COLLECTOR. The board may:

(1) appoint a district tax assessor-collector; or

- (2) contract for the assessment and collection taxes as provided by the Tax Code.

[Sections 3854.204-3854.250 reserved for expansion] SUBCHAPTER F. PETITION AND ELECTION TO ALLOW CREATION, TAXING, OR RELATED OBLIGATION AUTHORITY

Sec. 3854.251. APPLICATION FOR PETITION TO CREATE DISTRICT. If 10 or more registered voters of Brazos County file a written application with the county, the county shall issue to the applicants a petition to be circulated among the registered voters of the county for the signatures of voters who want an election to be called in the county to determine whether to create the district:

(1) with the power to impose an ad valorem tax not to exceed 10 cents per \$100 valuation of all taxable property in the district; or

(2) without the power to impose an ad valorem tax.

- An application for a petition to create the district the power to impose an ad valorem tax must be entitled: "Application for Local Option Election Petition to Create the Research Valley Innovation District with the Power to Impose an Ad Valorem Tax not to Exceed 10 Cents per \$100 Valuation of all Taxable Property in the District." The application must contain a statement immediately above the signatures of the applicants that reads substantially as follows: "The petitioners whose signatures appear on this petition intend that the Research Valley Innovation District referred to in the issue set out above be created." If the petition also seeks an election to authorize the issuance of bonds by the district payable in whole or in part from ad valorem taxes, the following statement must be appended to the end of the title specified in this subsection: "and to Issue Bonds Payable in Whole or in Part from the Ad Valorem Tax."

  (c) An application for a petition under this section to a petition of the district without the payable in the paya
- create the district without the power to impose the ad valorem tax must be entitled: "Application for Local Option Election Petition to Create the Research Valley Innovation District." The application must contain a statement immediately above the signatures of the applicants that reads substantially as follows: "The petitioners whose signatures appear on this petition intend that the Research Valley Innovation District referred to in the issue set out above be created."

  Sec. 3854.252. APPLICATION FOR PETITION TO CALL TAX OR BOND
- ELECTION. (a) If the district is created without the power to impose an ad valorem tax and 10 or more registered voters of Brazos County file a written application with the county for a petition to authorize the district to impose an ad valorem tax, the county shall issue to the applicants a petition to be circulated among the registered voters of the county for the signatures of voters who want to authorize the district to impose an ad valorem tax.
- (b) At the request of petitioners under this section, a petition for a local option election to determine whether the district may impose an ad valorem tax may also provide that at the same election the district is authorized to issue obligations payable wholly or partly from that ad valorem tax as permitted under Se<u>ction 385</u>4.160.
- (c) The application for the petition must be titled: "Application for Local Option Election Petition to Enable the Research Valley Innovation District to Impose an Ad Valorem Tax not to Exceed 10 Cents per \$100 Valuation of all Taxable Property in the District."

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(d) The application must contain a statement immediately above the signatures of the applicants that reads substantially as "The petitioners whose signatures appear on this petition follows: intend that the Research Valley Innovation District be enabled to impose an ad valorem tax not to exceed 10 cents per \$100 valuation of all taxable property in the district.

(e) If the petition also seeks an election to authorize the issuance of obligations by the district payable wholly or partly from ad valorem taxes, the following statement must be appended to the title specified by Subsection (c): "and to Issue Bonds Payable

in Whole or in Part from the Ad Valorem Tax."

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Sec. 3854.253. FORM AND COPIES OF PETITION. (a) petition issued under this subchapter must show the date it issued by Brazos County and be serially numbered. Each page of the petition must bear the same date and serial number.

(b) Brazos County shall supply as many copies οf petition as required by the applicants but not to exceed more than one page of the petition for every 10 registered voters in the county. Each copy shall bear the date, number, and seal on each page as required on the original petition.

(c) Brazos County shall keep a copy of each petition and a

record of the applicants for that petition.

Sec. 3854.254. FILING AND VERIFICATION OF PETITION. (a) The applicants requesting a petition under this subchapter may file a request with Brazos County for the petition to be verified. The applicants must file the request not later than the 120th day after the date the petition is issued by the county.

(b) If the applicants file a request for verification of the petition, Brazos County shall examine the names of the signers of petitions and determine whether the signers of the petition were registered voters of the county at the time the petition was issued.

(c) Brazos County shall certify to the commissioners court the number of registered voters signing the petition not later than the 15th day after the date the request for verification was filed.

(d) A signature may not be counted under this section there is good reason to believe that:

(1) the signature is not the actual signature of the

purported signer;

(2) the voter registration certificate number is not

correct;

(3) the signature duplicates a name or the handwriting used in any other signature on the petition; or

(4) the signer's residence address cannot be verified. Sec. 3854.255. ELECTION ORDER. (a) Not later than the date of the fourth regular session of the commissioners court convened after a petition has been verified under Section 3854.254, the commissioners court shall order an election to be held in the district on the proposition stated in the petition if the petition contains:

(1) the signatures of a number of registered voters of Brazos County equal to at least 10 percent of the registered voters of the county who voted in the most recent general election in the county;

a notation showing the residence address of each (2)

signer; (3) each signer's voter registration certificate number; and

(4)each signer's printed name.

following shall be entered in the commissioners (b) The court minutes:

(1) the dates a petition is presented to and verified by Brazos County;

the names of the signers; and (2)

the action taken on the petition.

The order issued under Subsection (a) must state that the district's boundaries are coextensive with the boundaries of Brazos County and that the election will be held within those boundaries.

Sec. 3854.256. NOTICE AND CONDUCT  $\mathsf{OF}$ ELECTION;

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(a) The commissioners court shall give notice of an election ordered under Section 3854.255 by publishing a substantial copy of the election order once a week for two consecutive weeks in a newspaper with general circulation in Brazos County.

The first publication of the notice must appear before (b) the 14th day before the date set for the election. If the election order includes the issue of whether the district may issue obligations, the first publication of the notice must appear before

the 31st day before the date set for the election.

The ballot for an election held under this section must (c) printed to permit voting for or against the following proposition, as appropriate according to the verified petition:

(1) "Authorizing the creation of the Research Valley

Innovation District and the imposition of an ad valorem tax not to exceed the rate of 10 cents per \$100 valuation of all taxable property in the district.";

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(2) "Authorizing the creation of the Research Valley Innovation District, the imposition of an ad valorem tax not to exceed the rate of 10 cents per \$100 valuation of all taxable property in the district, and the issuance of bonds payable in whole or in part from the ad valorem tax.";

(3) "Authorizing the creation of the Research Valley

Innovation District.";

(4) "Authorizing the imposition of an ad valorem tax not to exceed the rate of 10 cents per \$100 valuation of all taxable property in the district."; or

(5) "Authorizing the imposition of an ad valorem tax

not to exceed the rate of 10 cents per \$100 valuation of all taxable property in the district and the issuance of bonds payable wholly or partly from the ad valorem tax."

(d) The district is created if a majority of the voters

voting at the election favor creation.

(e) The district may impose an ad valorem tax if a majority of the district voters voting at the election favor the proposition

stated in Subsection (c)(1), (2), (4), or (5).

(f) The district may issue obligations payable wholly or partly from ad valorem taxes if a majority of the district voters voting at the election favor the proposition stated in Subsection (c)(2) or (5).

(g) If a majority of the district voters voting at the election vote against the proposition, another election on the proposition may not be held before the first anniversary of the date of the most recent election concerning the proposition.

(h) Brazos County shall hold an election provided under this section on the earliest uniform election date under Section 41.001, Election Code, that occurs after the commissioners court adopts the

order calling the election.

[Sections 3854.257-3854.300 reserved for expansion]

SUBCHAPTER G. DISSOLUTION OF DISTRICT 4.301. DISSOLUTION OF DISTRICT. The Sec. 3854.301. DISSOLUTION OF DISTRICT. be dissolved only as provided by this subchapter. The district may

Sec. 3854.302. DISSOLUTION BY ORDER OF COMMISSIONERS COURT. The board may petition the commissioners court to dissolve the district if the board finds that the district:

(1) has not issued obligations under Section 3854.160 the purposes of the district are impracticable, or that reasonably and economically cannot be successful or accomplished; οr

(2) has paid, or otherwise provided for payment of, all obligations issued under Section 3854.160 and that the district purposes have been accomplished.

(b) On receipt of the petition, the commissioners court shall hold a public hearing to determine whether the dissolution of the district serves the best interests of Brazos County and of the residents of the county.

After the hearing, the commissioners court shall:
(1) enter in the commissioners court records appropriate findings and an order dissolving the district if the commissioners court unanimously determines that the best interests

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8-1 of Brazos County and of the residents of the county will be served
8-2 by dissolving the district; or

(2) enter an order providing that the district is not dissolved if the commissioners court does not unanimously determine that the best interests of Brazos County and of the residents of the county will be served by dissolving the district.

(d) On dissolution of the district under this section:

(1) all money and other property of the district are transferred to Brazos County; and

(2) Brazos County shall assume any remaining district contracts or other district obligations.

Sec. 3854.303. DISSOLUTION OF DISTRICT ON AGREEMENT WITH BRAZOS COUNTY. (a) The district may be dissolved by agreement between the commissioners court and the board.

(b) On dissolution of the district under this section:

(1) all money and other property of the district are transferred to Brazos County; and

(2) Brazos County shall assume the district's responsibilities regarding all district contracts, debts, and

obligations.

Sec. 3854.304. EFFECT OF DISSOLUTION ON TAXES. On

dissolution of the district, any taxes imposed by the district are abolished.

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2005.

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