

**Subject:** Fwd: Bat Op-Ed

**From:** "George H. Russell" <ghr@cyberclone.net>

**Date:** 5/25/2022, 3:29 PM

**To:** "Lankenau, Regina" <Regina.Lankenau@chron.com>, George Russell <ghr@cyberclone.net>

SORRY: I found a couple of typos in my Op-Ed piece and they are corrected in this version.

Also: I forgot to sign as George H. Russell, Huntsville  
936-581-4302



----- Forwarded Message -----

**Subject:** Bat Op-Ed

**Date:** Wed, 25 May 2022 13:44:46 -0500

**From:** George H. Russell <ghr@cyberclone.net>

**To:** Lankenau, Regina <Regina.Lankenau@chron.com>, George Russell <ghr@cyberclone.net>

25 May 2022

To: Regina Landenau

Subject: PIR to TDCJ dated 23 March 2022 and received TWO MONTHS LATER on 23 May 2022

THE OP ED YOU REQUESTED: SAVE OUR BATS AND SAVE OUR TAX DOLLARS

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice's obsession with destroying a million bats has already cost taxpayers at least a million dollars, and eventually an estimated three million tax dollars before the planned eradication program is completed.

Our Texas "Prison Industrial Complex" is obsessed with destroying the homes of our amazing bat colony residing in a taxpayer owned historic building and has spent well over a million dollars so far for no legitimate reason other than the obvious personal hatred of bats by someone high in the TDCJ chain of command.

As a theologian, I recall that some extreme Christian fundamentalists still believe that bats represent Satan and death and are thus evil. Since there is no reason not to protect our bats and their habitat except fear and superstition, there must be at least one person with authority at TDCJ with the power to call for the destruction of the bat's homes.

On March 23, 2022 I submitted a Public Information Request under the Texas Open Records Act that by law should have been completed no later than April 6, 2022. Rather than quickly submit a paltry bit of the information requested in defiance of the Public Information Act, TDCJ delayed until May 23, 2022 to provide only a small part of the requested public information.

Of the 19 requests for information I submitted, TDCJ only provided complete information on 4 and proved to be in serious violation of the Public Information Act. I have complained to the TDCJ "Open Records" division but no doubt will have to file a formal complaint with the Attorney General of Texas.

Some of the costs associated with the demolition of the north bat building are shocking to the point of absurdity and should be the subject of a serious investigation by our Attorney General.

TDCJ included an "engineering report" that the building is "NOT currently habitable", meaning for humans as it is the perfect home for our bats. The report also dishonestly states that "based on the photographic evidence, the building is structurally unsound and should be demolished." There were no photographs included and there were two bat buildings and any photo taken in the north bat building should not show any cause for alarm.

The building already demolished was so structurally sound that it was a major undertaking with heavy equipment to destroy it. There were allegedly only four bats in the building and the taxpayers spent \$6,225 per bat to remove them for a total of \$24,900. Four bat exclusion devices were bought for \$14,050, when they can be purchased on line for \$29.99 for a pack of four.

Over \$10,000 was spent on "pest control". The only purpose for using dangerous pesticides in the bat building was obviously to kill as many bats as possible as bats are extremely sensitive to pesticide poisoning. Killing bats is a crime in Texas and thus exposing our bats to chemicals that could kill them should be a criminal offense as there was absolutely no need to spend \$10,850 for "pest control", except the bat haters at TDCJ that obviously consider our bats to be "pests".

On the other hand bats consume pests that harm crops in Texas and one study concluded that bats saved farmers \$74 an acre by destroying crop damaging insects and making it unnecessary to use chemical pesticides resulting in healthier crops not doused with harmful pesticides.

The contracted price for the demolition of the north bat building was \$198,880 but did not include many other costs like asbestos abatement, disposal of the debris, importing dozens of truck loads of fill dirt and who knows how many other costs.

It was known from day one that the new bat houses painted black to "cook" any baby bats that might be born in them would not safely house a million bats, but were built anyway at a cost of \$157,902. I call those absurd houses "bat ovens." Yet, knowing that the first four "bat ovens" would be of no use to the bats except to cook them, TDCJ recently built four more of the "bat ovens", no doubt costing another \$157,000. To add insult to injury a couple of dump truck loads of debris from the demolition was dumped in front of the "bat ovens".

What I did receive was a "smoking gun" that sheds light on the mystery as to County Judge Danny Pierce's promotion of the destruction of the bat buildings. The letter is chock full of downright lies, that Pierce never bothered to vet before he signed the letter supporting the TDCJ's obsession with ridding Huntsville of a huge tourist attraction like the bat colonies in Houston and Austin that bring at least \$6 million each to their communities in tourist revenue.

The letter that Pierce signed was written by TDCJ's "Chief of Staff". The letter falsely states that there have been "numerous complaints from homeowners and businesses." My investigation revealed that I could not find any nearby home owner or business that complained of the alleged smell of "bat feces and urine."

More absurd is the statement that "a large amount of bat droppings could present a health danger...", when in fact the bat guano falls to the floor of the remaining bat building and no one comes in contact with it, whereas the bat guano falls to the ground onto open air concrete pads under the "bat ovens" where it could actually present a public health hazard.

The letter further states that "...The Texas Department of Criminal Justice cannot make significant improvements to the structure", which is total nonsense in that the now demolished north bat building was in excellent structural condition while it is true that the south bat building does have some issues that could easily be solved with the estimated two million or more tax dollars needed to demolish the south bat building.

The letter, blindly signed by Judge Pierce, that the building "has fallen into disrepair" which is true due to what I believe to have been criminal neglect of a valuable state asset through intentional neglect, hoping that the structure would eventually reach the point of no return.

Even more insane is the statement in Pierce's letter (written by whoever the Chief Counsel is) that "it is an unwelcome distraction in our beautiful downtown area."

If anyone has driven around Huntsville recently and witnessed the wholesale destruction of mature shade trees and the construction of hideously ugly metal and other buildings, the bat building is still far more beautiful than much of the unsightly new construction.

Even a casual observer driving around the "Walls Unit" and its "death house" can count at least 100 or more steel plates bolted into the cracked walls to keep them from falling, whereas neither bat building has even one exterior crack in the facade.

As the south bat building is twice as large as the demolished north bat building, then in my opinion, it will cost the taxpayers at least two million dollars to demolish it.

Two million dollars should very easily address and cure any structural or other issues with the building.

Perhaps more disconcerting than TDCJ's obvious hatred of bats, is the fact that I had I personally offered the sum of \$10,000 to Bat Conservation International, headquartered in Austin, to file a lawsuit against TDCJ to prevent the demolition of the two bat buildings without response, yet the organization is constantly begging for money to protect bats around the world.

The Bat Conservation International website has a map on line showing "bat viewing sites" in Texas and around the world but Huntsville's significant bat colony is conveniently left off of the map.

Something sure don't smell right in Texas but it ain't the smell of bat guano. SAVE OUR BATS!!!

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-----Original Message-----

From: George H. Russell <[ghr@cyberclone.net](mailto:ghr@cyberclone.net)>

Sent: Wednesday, March 23, 2022 12:58 PM

To: PIA <[PIA@tdcj.texas.gov](mailto:PIA@tdcj.texas.gov)>; George Russell <[ghr@cyberclone.net](mailto:ghr@cyberclone.net)>; Jake Mienk <[jmienk@palestineherald.com](mailto:jmienk@palestineherald.com)>; Bruce Moore <[bwmphoto1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bwmphoto1@sbcglobal.net)>; Andrew Russell <[gar@cyberclone.net](mailto:gar@cyberclone.net)>; moo <[sue@cyberclone.net](mailto:sue@cyberclone.net)>

Subject: PUBLIC INFORMATION REQUEST

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23 March 2022

Please submit all files, notes, records, logs and other evidence in the files of TDCJ in regard to the following:

1. The alleged engineering report that states that the north Bat Building (currently being demolished) is "in danger of collapsing".
2. The number and species of bats that were removed from the north Bat Building before demolition.
3. The company or person who removed the bats and the cost of removal and placing in the south Bat Building.
4. The number of bats and species that were injured or killed during the removal.
5. A copy of the contract with the demolition company.
6. A copy of the asbestos inspection report.
7. The cost of asbestos abatement if any.
8. The cost of disposing of the debris and the location of the place where the debris was or is being dumped.
9. The amount that has already been spent on the black painted alleged new bat houses.

10. Reports from Texas Parks and Wildlife, Bat Conservation International or any other organization that concluded that the new black bat houses could safely house a million bats and that the young could survive in black painted virtual ovens.
11. Reports from any third party that concluded that the new black bat houses were not suitable to house 1,000,000 bats.
12. All records and communications to and from third parties, such as TPWD in regard to approving the demolition of the north Bat Building.
13. All records of communications to and from County Judge Danny Pierce.
14. The records of all complaints from downtown merchants, any local store owner, any nearby resident or anyone else that has complained about the bats.
15. The estimated cost of the demolition of the south Bat Building.
16. Contingency costs that may come from complaints, and lawsuits against TDCJ for purposefully allowing the bats to try to find new homes upon the demolition of the south Bat Building.
17. Report from The Texas Historical Commission that the Bat Buildings are less than 50 years of age and are unworthy of being considered as Texas Historical Landmarks or other designations and are ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
18. Copies of any and all communications to and from TDCJ and the offices of Senator Whitmire in regard to the bats and their habitat.
19. Copies of any and all communications to and from TDCJ and the Texas Attorney General in regard to the legality or illegality of endangering the bats due to demolition of their Bat Buildings.

Thank you for your kind consideration to this very serious apparent attempt to destroy our bat colony and thus its economic and ecological benefits.

George H. Russell

These records should be found for the year 2019 to date.

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**Subject:** Re: PIR - George Russell - PIA No. 1593-03-2022

**From:** "George H. Russell" <ghr@cyberclone.net>

**Date:** 5/24/2022, 5:06 PM

**To:** OGC Open Records <ogcopenrecords@tdcj.texas.gov>, George Russell <ghr@cyberclone.net>

Thanks for sending documents in reference to some of my Open Records Act requests. Missing however are full documentation in regard to the following in my original PIR of 23 March 2022 which was not even partially answered until TWO MONTHS LATER!!!

1. There was no evidence that the north bat building (now demolished) had received an engineering report and there were none of the mentioned photographs of the interior of the south bat building that should have been included as a part of the report submitted. Please provide the photos that might prove up some of the statements in the report.
2. Strange that for \$6,225 per bat removed from the north bat building the "bat" removers could not even identify the species.
3. received
4. received
5. received
6. received
7. Not received. Certainly there was an accounting of the costs of asbestos inspection and removal. Please submit.
8. Certainly there are records associated with the removal and dumping of the debris. Please submit including records of the debris dumped in front of the BAT OVENS.
9. I only received the costs of 4 BAT OVENS. I think that there are more than four. Please correct me if I am wrong and submit the costs of any BAT OVENS beyond the four listed.
10. Not received.
11. Not received.
12. Not received.
13. Not received. Surely there are more records of communication other than the draft letter, (filled with lies) sent to Danny Pierce by TDCJ Counsel).
14. Not received. We believe that the "complaints" were made up by TDCJ Counsel. If not lies submitted to Danny Pierce then please provide all documentation requested.
15. Not received. Surely TDCJ would not destroy the south bat building without even estimating how much money would have to be set aside for the demolition costs
16. Not received. Surely TDCJ has considered the costs of mitigating damages caused by releasing a million bats into Huntsville.
17. Not received. Surely The Texas Historical Commission was contacted as I believe that is State Law in regard to taxpayer owned historic buildings 50 years of age or older.
18. Not received. Senator Whitmire's secretary told me that she would have her staff communicate with TDCJ about the efforts to destroy the bat habitat and thus endanger the bats.
19. Not received. Certainly TDCJ would not blindly harm a protected species without consultation with the AG.

The records received should not have taken more than an hour or two during one day to prepare. I can find zero excuse for delaying the response for TWO SOLID MONTHS.!!!

I believe that the evidence will prove that TDCJ is in VIOLATION OF THE PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT.

George H. Russell

On 5/23/2022 9:27 AM, OGC Open Records wrote:

Mr. Russell,

Attached are the requested records. Please note in response to item #2, there were six bats remaining in the building. They were retrieved safely and relocated to the south end. The species of bats was not tracked and is therefore unknown. In response to item #4, no bats were harmed. In response to item #7, the asbestos abatement was conducted through work orders in 2002, and the records are no longer available due to records retention.

We now consider your request closed.

Thank you,

**Office of the General Counsel**  
**Texas Department of Criminal Justice**  
**936-437-6700**

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**Subject:** PIR TO TDCJ ABOUT BATS ON 23 MARCH 2022 AND RECEIVED TWO MONTHS LATER ON 23 MAY 2022

**From:** "George H. Russell" <ghr@cyberclone.net>

**Date:** 5/24/2022, 1:53 PM

**To:** George Russell <ghr@cyberclone.net>, Anne Russell <anneonvacation@yahoo.com>

Just a brief overview of the materials requested under the Texas Open Records Act

TDCJ is in non-compliance and I will no doubt have to file a formal complaint to receive the requested public information.

- 1. Pest Control: Could poison the bats. \$975
  - 2. Excluding bats from the north bat house \$14,050
  - 4. More pest control and termite inspection \$9,875 I don't recall any wood in the north bat building. Too many dangerous chemical that could kill bats.
  - 5. Bat removal of 4 bats \$24,900 or \$6,225 per bat!!!
  - 6. Demolition of north bat house \$198,880
  - 7. Asbestos abatement easily be more no record of cost I estimate \$50,000 but could
  - 8. 4 Bat Ovens \$157,902
- TOTAL SO FAR \$406,582 Does not include asbestos abatement

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\$406,582  
~~\$157,902~~  


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\$564,484

4 more bat ovens

\$9,875  
~~\$975~~  


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\$10,850