

The Burton Bulletin

“The Best Kept Secret in Texas”

September 2026



Carl John Luning

October 11, 1968 – August 6, 2026

Carl John Luning, beloved husband, father, grandfather, and friend went home to Jesus on August 6th, 2026 at the age of 57.

Carl was born to parents Johnny and Gay Luning on October 11, 1968, in Waco, Texas. As a child, he was curious about the world around him and how things worked. Between the backyard garden and family land, Carl always found himself an adventure.

He married Rosemary, the love of his life and high school sweetheart, on December 23, 1989, who survives him. He is also survived by daughter, Analisa Victoria Goldblatt (and husband Nathaniel); grandchildren, James and Daniel; parents, Johnny and Gay Luning; brother, Kenneth Luning (and wife Jennifer); mother-in-law, Faye Neale; brother-in-law, Shannon Neale; and countless other family members and friends who deeply loved him.

Carl earned a Laser Electro-Optics degree from Texas State Technical College and spent his career doing what he loved most—helping the people around him. His success was built on hard work and a passion for making things better than they were before.

An outdoorsman through and through, Carl loved hunting, fishing, fixing things, and spending time at his family’s land in Crawford and Hearne, Texas. His happy place was in an outdoor reclining chair in the middle of the woods with his brother, Kenneth, and cousin, Michael Luning. Carl loved good coffee and dreamed of running a roastery. This dream came true in 2020 when he and Rosemary opened Neon Moon Coffee Roasters in Burton, Texas.

Carl will be remembered for his generous heart, welcoming spirit, and ability to make friends in any room he entered. While his absence leaves an immeasurable void in his family and community, we find comfort in the hope of Christ’s resurrection and the assurance that we will one day be reunited in God’s eternal kingdom.

His memorial service was held on Saturday, August 29, 2026, at 11 a.m. at Bethany Christian Church in Burton, Texas.

**The Burton Bulletin is a monthly publication
For the Burton Texas area.**

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Life in Burton, Texas

I've been reflecting on this small, cherished place we call home for quite some time now—on how we arrived here, got married amidst its familiar surroundings, settled into its comforting embrace, and bought an abandoned farm, added a wise little Pitbull, and transformed it into our home. Most of you know the history here. The families who settled the region and their ancestors, who continue to call it home, predominate the population, with a small percentage of newer settlers, such as my family. For those unfamiliar, I went to my buddy Grok and got a little background, which I then edited.

In the rolling hills of western Washington County, roughly midway between Houston and Austin along U.S. Highway 290, sits the small town of Burton. With a population of roughly 200 to 300 people, it rests in a landscape of farms, ranches, open pastures, and the broader reach of the Brazos River Valley. A few thousand heads of cattle graze the land. Oil and gas activity connected to the Eagle Ford formation and related plays appear in the surrounding countryside. Yet the dominant impression is not industry or haste. It is quiet. The pace is deliberate. Neighbors know one another. Weekly gatherings and annual celebrations stitch the community together. In this setting, tranquility, love, and gratitude take root and flourish.

Burton was established in 1870 by German immigrant families on land associated with early settler John M. Burton. The post office opened that same year. The railroad soon arrived, turning the place into a stop between Brenham and Austin, and cotton farming shaped the local economy for decades. The 1914 Burton Farmers Gin, now the centerpiece of the Texas Cotton Gin Museum, stands as the oldest operating cotton gin in the United States. Its restored 1925 Bessemer engine—the “Lady B”—still runs. Downtown is listed on the National Register as a Commercial Historic District and lies on the Texas Independence Trail. Nearby Washington-on-the-Brazos marks the birthplace of the Texas Republic. These layers of history are not museum pieces alone; they form the shared memory that residents protect and pass on.

The town's physical scale reinforces its character. Main Street is walkable. Historic buildings house antique shops, a coffee house in a circa-1900 structure, the White Horse Tavern (serving since 1922), and other modest businesses. A resident peacock named Percy wanders the streets, a small living emblem of the place's unhurried eccentricity. Just outside town, regenerative farms and ranches emphasize soil health, local food, and education. Places such as Deeply Rooted Ranch offer community events, farm days, and meals that reconnect people to the land. Alpacas can be visited by appointment. Lake Somerville and nearby state park lands provide quiet water and open space. The surrounding countryside remains agricultural and pastoral, with enough oil and gas wells to mark the region's energy presence without dominating daily life.

Community life revolves around gathering. The White Horse Tavern functions as an informal hub, offering lunch several days a week and live music on weekends. The Neon Moon offers artisan quality coffees, and a meeting place on Thursday Mornings for the Roosters (an adhoc group of folks that sit and discuss the world “Cracker Barrel” style, Orvie's Hall and the historic La Bahia Hall (established 1879) host dances, birthday celebrations, and community events under wooden rafters that

have heard generations of music and conversation. The Burton Short Stop which once served as a keystone in the city, as a restaurant, convenience store, and music venue is gone, leaving only great memories. The Burton Heritage Society maintains the railroad depot museum and organizes events that keep local stories alive. These are not occasional tourist attractions; they are the regular fabric of neighborly life, and part of the core that makes Burton so family-like.

Annual events amplify the same spirit. The Cotton Gin Festival, held each April since 1990, draws thousands yet remains free and rooted in local heritage. Visitors watch the gin process cotton, listen to music, examine antique engines and tractors, and share food while residents demonstrate traditional skills. Texas Ranger Day in March features reenactments, a cook-off, folklife demonstrations, and tours of the depot, honoring figures such as Leander H. McNelly, Texas Ranger, buried nearby. Big Star Texas Night, Christmas markets on Main Street, antique shows, and smaller weekly gatherings at halls and taverns fill the calendar. These occasions are less about spectacle than about presence—people showing up for one another, for the land, and for the continuity of place.

Tranquility here is not emptiness. It is the absence of constant noise and the presence of space in which attention can settle. Open skies, mature oaks, rolling pastures, and the quiet of a town where train whistles have long since fallen silent create room for reflection and simple daily rhythms. Love appears in the practical forms of neighborliness: volunteer fire service dating to 1897, preservation work by the Heritage Society, shared meals, music that invites dancing, and the willingness to keep old buildings and stories intact. Gratitude surfaces in the repeated choice to celebrate what remains—the gin that still works, the halls that still host dances, the land that still supports cattle and crops, and the people who still gather. Residents and visitors alike speak of a tightly knit, hospitable character. The small scale makes mutual recognition possible; the shared history makes mutual care natural.

In a broader American landscape often marked by speed, isolation, and disposability, Burton offers a different measure. Life between the farms, the ranches, the occasional well, and the few hundred residents proceeds at the tempo of the valley itself. Weekly activities and seasonal festivals do not merely fill time; they renew the bonds that make the place feel like home. The result is a quiet abundance: enough solitude for peace of mind, enough connection for belonging, and enough continuity to inspire gratitude for both. In the serenity of this little corner of the Brazos River Valley, where three qualities: tranquility, reverence, and gratitude—continue to grow.

Article by Pete Horn

When life gives you melons, you may be dyslexic.

Advice to husbands: Try praising your wife now and then, even if it startles her at first.

Maybe if we start telling people that their brain is an app, they'll start using it.

TRY THAT IN A SMALL TOWN – A Series Highlighting Burton Blessings

What's Great About Our Town: People Deeply Care About Our Tiny Community – and Frown Upon Missteps

By Ned Ross, contributing writer

The Burton Bulletin's Facebook page has been a constant source of information for anyone wanting to keep up with the Burton community. People and businesses share events, needs and concerns. The last of these – concerns – is the subject of this article. I am deeply concerned with the direction of this tiny town after the last few City Council meetings.

In July, the mayor proposed, and council passed, an ordinance that formalizes restrictions on public communication with Council during meetings. This was laughable if only because the room usually has less than 5 people who wish to speak. Most are over 50, and all calmly lay out their messages. We now must limit our messages to three minutes in every instance, and the ordinance encourages residents to coordinate comments to avoid duplication. How do you coordinate a message when you don't know what the issue is? The mayor seems to think that residents are wasting her precious time. This ordinance was entirely unnecessary, and the messages from residents are often more detailed and informed than any discussion at Council meetings. In fact, another concern is that Council rarely questions anything the mayor proposes, including this ordinance AND a 24.8% tax increase.

That's right, Burton just jacked up the city property tax rate by 24.8%. How many questions were asked by Council about this increase before they unanimously voted for it? Zero. How much information was distributed to the taxpayers of the city prior to this increase? Zero. In response to this outcome, I posted on the BB Facebook page a "Top Ten Questions Nobody on Council Asked Before Raising Taxes 25%." I share it here:

10. If we raise taxes by this amount, how does it impact different socioeconomic groups in our city?

9. Ned mentioned in his comments that many low income people could not pay their electric bills when a bill was \$5 higher. How much will the average tax bill for a resident increase each month if they own a \$100,000 home [taking food off the table of lower income households]?

8. How does this impact renters? There are no exemptions for seniors who do not live in their primary residence, and a rental home is not owned by the renter.

7. Have we studied how this might impact younger people who are thinking about moving into Burton?

6. Have we studied how this might discourage new businesses from locating in Burton? Wouldn't this make the city less competitive for a business to locate here? [Oh yeah, the mayor doesn't want that.]

5. If we added some new businesses by being competitive, say along Hwy 290 where values could be much higher with the traffic that rolls by, could we avoid tax increases?

4. Did our tax rates in any way contribute to the closure of the Short Stop, or did the uncertainty created by the 13% increase last year cause concern? [Enter 25% increase]

3. How many items on the mayor's Parade of Horribles List (she read through a long list of infrastructure improvements that the city needs) can be handled with this tax increase?

2. What enforceable assurance was given by the mayor that these extra funds will be accrued to deal with the Parade of Horribles in future years?

1. Was Percy consulted about this?

Having given this more than an hour of thought, I have additional questions that should have been asked:

How much actual revenue will this tax increase generate, and how many years must it be collected to pay for just one of the top five items on the mayor's Parade of Horribles List?

How much more debt can the city service to pay for any infrastructure improvements? If none, what can be done to pay for needed improvements?

Most of these questions are Economics 101 inquiries. That is, for those who have not taken an economics course, these fundamental questions must be asked and answered before proceeding with a financial decision. Council never asked these basic questions. Instead, Council forged ahead with a vote.

Where does this lead? Well, all taxpayers – homeowners, businesses – exist in a competitive environment where purchasing decisions are usually focused on the cost of ownership. When these costs increase, the ability or desire of prospective buyers to purchase property in that area diminishes. This causes a cascade of negative events:

Potential buyers may choose to buy property elsewhere – maybe outside city limits or in another town.

Fewer buyers for property results in lower prices for ALL properties.

Lower prices for properties equates to lower appraisals, and that means less tax revenue for the city. So – a tax INCREASE can actually DECREASE tax collections over time.

Anyone who believes that a city can tax its way into prosperity has ignored numerous history lessons, including the American Revolutionary War. More recently, witness the exodus of prosperous people from NYC to escape Mamdani's socialist policies. Higher taxes erode quality of life. Any governmental body taking more of your resources is taking your freedom with it. Burton residents should never again have a tax increase without significant research and verification in advance – and perhaps after a vote.

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What is the solution for Burton's financial needs? There is only one: More taxpayers and higher property values in the city limits. There is no other solution. Instead of driving out residents and businesses with higher costs (don't get me started on the costs of construction and land ownership with the anti-growth ordinance the mayor and council also passed the same night), Burton should be focused on smart planning to attract new businesses and family homes to be built in town. We need to start today. And the same involved, smart neighbors who follow these proceedings need to lock arms, grab other neighbors, and tell our elected leaders that this must begin in earnest now.

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**Saturday October 3, 2026
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Schedule of Events

4pm – 6pm Bingo
5pm – 6:30pm BBQ Chicken Dinner \$16 each
Desserts and Country Store provided by the
Ledbetter Homemakers Club
Live Auction at 6:30pm

I heard the word "icy" is easy to spell. Looking at it now –
I see why.

In wine there is wisdom. In beer there is strength. In water there
is bacteria. You decide!

There was a break in at the wig factory. Police are combing the
area.

I'm so far in debt, I could start a government.

The first bottle of *Coca Cola* from 1894 contained 3.5 grams of
cocaine. Explains why our parents & grandparents could walk
uphill both ways to school in the snow barefoot.

A Champagne Mayor for a Burger-n-Fries Town

by Susie Tommaney

While it is true that I have been critical about early versions of the subdivision ordinance, also known as a land use ordinance, my concerns were that those draft ordinances would have made it virtually impossible for existing land-owners to build on their small lots because of setback or other requirements. I am grateful to Council Member Paul McLaughlin for ensuring that – intentionally or unintentionally – the City of Burton has not disparately impacted the protected classes.

I knew Mayor Buck in her previous role as Intentional Interim Pastor for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America Gulf Coast Synod. That's a lot of big words, but she was basically a church fixer. When a Pastor departed she would come in and lead that church, but also right the ship. She was gifted in quickly finding what was broken, addressing those concerns, and getting the church ready for its new Pastor.

She does everything with excellence. Since taking office as Mayor of the City of Burton, she has devoted hundreds of hours in training, research, grant-writing and leadership. I don't believe that we would have Water Well No. 5 up and running so quickly had she not fast-tracked the project, and found ways to reduce the costs to the City taxpayers. She has the gift of long-range planning, perseverance, and tenacity. Coupled with her intellect, we are blessed that she is leading our City.

But where speed and rapidity were necessary to turn a church around, I am beginning to believe that a different method would work better for the City of Burton. The tax increase that will be voted in this month is scary as all get out. I'm afraid it will cause businesses to flee, which is problematic, because sales tax income is greater than property tax income.

Who Is Paying the City of Burton's Bills?					
	Franchise Tax	Mixed Beverage Tax	Sales Tax		Property Tax (Business and Residential Combined)
April '23-Mar. '24	\$ 12,337.00	\$ 3,301.16	\$ 139,606.25		\$ 137,190.57
April '24-Mar. '25	\$ 12,448.17	\$ 3,641.29	\$ 138,676.99		\$ 145,724.74
April '25-Mar. '26	\$ 12,437.61	\$ 3,954.13	\$ 194,445.12		\$ 160,911.31
April '26-Mar. '27	\$ 12,589.56	\$ 4,396.08	\$ 157,212.35		\$ 155,042.80

If we lose one or two businesses, then next year the City of Burton will have every right to raise our taxes to the voter-approved .50 cents per \$100 valuation. The thing is, when we gave the green light to that rate, we were only paying \$21,250 per acre south of the bridge and \$23,400 per acre north of the bridge. Today? We are paying \$97,130 and \$129,510 respectively.

Compounding the problem, our improvement values have skyrocketed. That's when the Washington County Appraisal District determines the fair market value for our homes and out buildings. This is really where discussions about 3 cents more or 8 cents more really come into focus. Look at just one house on Main Street, which was lovingly updated by the previous owner, and see how the WCAD has impacted its tax obligations.

Improvements (Tax Obligation, not including land)			
Example: 710 North Main Street			
	House value per WCAD	Tax Rate	Tax burden (City of Burton only)
2018	\$139,040	.500000	\$695
2024	\$478,040	.297267	\$1,421
2025	\$478,730	.336300	\$1,610
2026 (proposed)	\$472,540	.420000	\$1,985

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So, what am I asking? I am asking that each and every reader find the time to discuss the cost of our City government with your Burton City Council. They can govern us more efficiently, with fewer billable hours to out-of-town law firms.

For example, when a resident had a complaint about the noise from a neighboring business, they discussed it and the problem was solved. But then City Council also drafted a noise ordinance, had it reviewed by attorneys, and passed it.

The same with Burton I.S.D.'s new fire suppression system. From the beginning, Burton I.S.D. offered to pay a fee annually so that they could purge the 30,000 gallons in the system as part of its regular maintenance. Now Burton City Council is hiring attorneys to craft a legal document that would result in the same outcome.

I don't think we can afford this management style in our City government. There are too many local businesses who call the City of Burton home, and these increases in our taxes are crippling.

I've been told in the past that, if taxpayers don't speak up, then Burton City Council will assume that the decisions they are making are favorable to all. But if you don't express your displeasure at the tax rate increases and ask for a management style that is more in accordance with what we can afford, then next year we'll be paying even more.

Taking it a step further, ask your Council Member to propose that we lower the voter-approved tax rate, thereby revoking the .05 cent rate hanging over our collective heads like the Sword of Damocles.

If you're not sure what you will owe this year, there is a website that will calculate the proposed taxes for each business or homeowner:

<https://washington.countytaxrates.com/tax>

Signs

On a shoe repair shop: We will heel you; we will save your sole; we will even dye for you.

On an eye clinic: If you don't see what you're looking for, you've come to the right place.

On the back of a septic tank truck: Caution – this truck is full of political promises.

On a restaurant window: Don't stand there and be hungry, come on in and get fed up.

On a plumber truck: We repair what your husband fixed.

Walter the Debonair Donkey (Continuing Saga)



Lucky needed some attention professionally at the very least, someone to look at his hooves. A farrier was called in and after working on Lucky, he suggested a veterinarian. After sharing with the vet Lucky's symptoms, he came out to the field prepared to take x-rays and draw blood. Unfortunately, the prognosis was not good. Lucky's hooves, tendons and muscles were in bad condition. After the blood test, it was discovered that his blood sugar was so high it was off the charts. He was immediately given the diagnosis of diabetes. Lucky wasn't so lucky. Stay tuned!

Article by Lynda Zajicek

City of Burton City Council Meeting

A regular meeting was held on Tuesday, August 11, 2026, at Burton City Hall.

The council approved and adopted the subdivision ordinance after much discussion from citizens and business owners. Some felt that the ordinance will limit what can be done with their own property and asked the council to delay passage of the ordinance for better clarification. Others felt it was time to adopt the subdivision before developers decided to invest in the area. You can obtain a copy of the ordinance for your reading pleasure. It's only 22 pages long.

The council approved a proposal to raise city property tax by 24.8%. This would generate approximately \$40,000 in additional tax income. With the sharp increase of value of property, business and citizens may feel a big pinch in their pocketbook. A public hearing for the proposed tax rate increase will be held on September 8, 2026, at council regular meeting at 5:30pm.

The council voted to approve the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Audit as presented by Medack & Oltmann LLP and authorize the mayor and city secretary to execute any necessary documents. The council authorized the city to enter into an agreement with the State of Texas to close a segment of the State Highway System in the downtown area for the Trick or Treat Trail scheduled for October 24, 2026

The council approved the replacement of the wastewater treatment plant pump for the cost of \$5,739.



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If ignorance is bliss, there should be more happy people.

My cousin Fred fell into an upholstery machine last week, He has recovered.

Is there ever a day that mattresses are not on sale?

I was kidnapped by mimes. They did unspeakable things to me.

Burton Special Called Meeting

The Burton City Council held a special called meeting on August 18, 2026.

The council approved accepting the final engineering report from AOKA regarding the City of Burton's water system capacity and capability to serve Burton ISD suppression line.

The council voted to postpone the legal agreement between the City of Burton and Burton ISD regarding the connection of the fire suppressor line to the City of Burton's water system and establishing related stipulations and requirements until completion of the city attorney's research.

Explain It: Why Do Cats Purr

A cat purrs mainly to communicate and regulate its own emotional state. Purring often accompanies comfort, but it can also occur when a cat is hungry, frightened, injured, or giving birth. Rather than translating directly as "I'm happy," a purr generally signals that the cat is managing an important social or physical moment.

Picture a cat settling onto a familiar lap. Its paws knead the blanket, its eyes narrow, and a low vibration begins. Here, the purr probably reflects safety and contentment. The cat may also be strengthening its connection with the person beneath it, much as friendly conversation helps two people feel close.

Now, move the same cat into a veterinary clinic. It may purr there too, even while tense or uncomfortable. In that setting, the sound could be a form of self-soothing or a peaceful signal. This is why body language matters: relaxed muscles and slow blinking tell a different story from flattened ears, a rigid posture, or rapid breathing.

Purring begins early in life. Kittens can purr when only a few days old, and mothers also purr around their litters. Those gentle vibrations may help maintain contact during nursing. As explained in this overview of how, one signal can carry different meanings depending on the situation.

Wanted:

The Burton Bulletin is looking for a reliable person who may be interested in reporting local news. This is a non-paying position as are all our news contributors.

If you are interested, please contact David Zajicek at (979)530-5210

Sign on church marquee: Pray like you do when you see a cop make a u-turn.

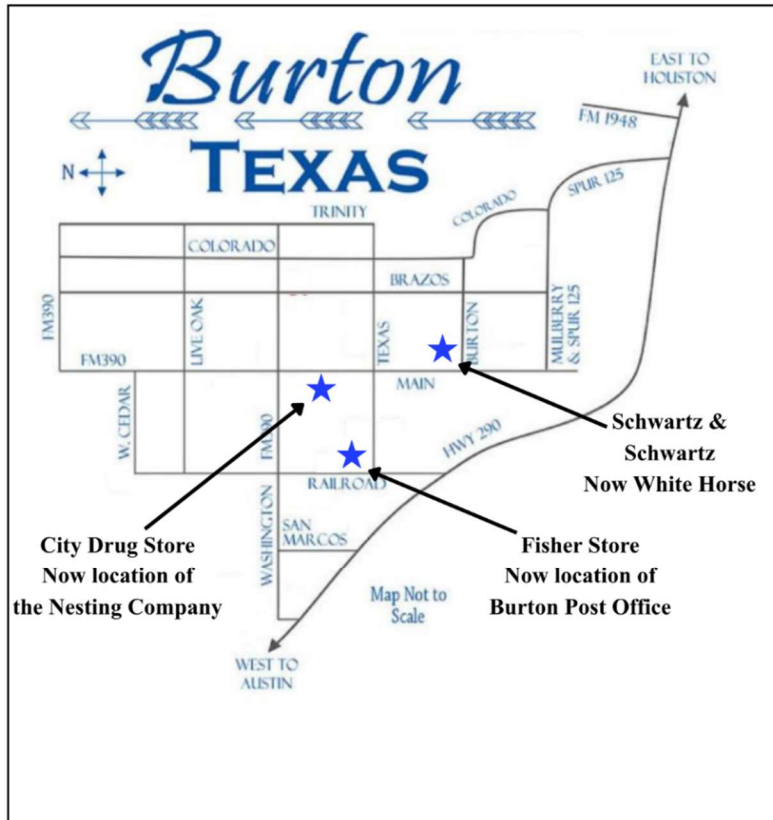
Road warning sign: Remove Dentures, Tighten Up Bras, Rough Road Next Five Miles.

Burton Bits of History

By the Burton Heritage Society roving reporters



Let's step back in time to September 8, 1926, Burton Texas. This spread of ads ran in the Brenham Banner Press. Check out the headline, "Mr. Farmer! Burton Merchants Bid for Your Products, Cotton, Eggs, Poultry, Etc. and Buy in Burton. Isn't it amazing to think about the variety of businesses operating at that time in Burton. I thought it might be fun to share a few photos of some of these businesses next to their advertisement as well as a map showing where they were each located. To better help orient everyone to the location, I will also note the most recent businesses located in the buildings.



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