

MINUTES OF THE

COMMISSIONERS' COURT

BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING - JUNE 29, 2020

On the 29th day of June, 2020, there was a Budget Workshop Meeting of the Commissioners' Court in the Commissioners' Courtroom, 2840 Hwy 35 N, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas, with the following members present: **C. H. "Burt" Mills, Jr.**, County Judge; **Jack Chaney**, Commissioner, Precinct 1; **Leslie "Bubba" Casterline**, Commissioner, Precinct 2; **Charles Smith**, Commissioner, Precinct 3; **Wendy Laubach**, Commissioner, Precinct 4; and **Valerie K. Amason**, County Clerk.

Other County Officers present were **Alma Cartwright**, Treasurer; **Pam Heard**, District Clerk; **Bill Mills**, Sheriff; **Diane Dupnik**, Justice of the Peace, Precinct 1; **Diana McGinnis**, Justice of the Peace, Precinct 2; **Jacky Cockerham**, Interim County Auditor; **Tana Taylor**, First Assistant County Auditor; **Valerie Gonzalez**, Environmental Health Director; **John Strothman**, Pathways Project Manager; **Rene Butler**, Facilities Director; **Collin Jackson**, IT Director; **Linda Doane**, Human Resources Director; **Iris Sanchez**, County Librarian; **Lori Cesar**, Animal Control Director; **Doc Thomas**, Constable, Pct. 1;

The Meeting was convened at **9:00 a.m.** at which time a quorum was declared by Judge Mills, WHEREUPON, the following proceedings were had and done to wit:

**Commissioner Smith:** Jacky, I noticed here that our proposed 2021 has some increases for salary?

**Jacky:** Yes sir, this does include an extra pay period. This happens every 10 years where we have 27 pay periods instead of 26 so we have budgeted for that.

**District Clerk**

**Pam Heard:** So my budget is the same as last year. I need another person but I'm not asking for one this year, we are going to make it work with what we've got. The other thing that is not on these line items is the storage building that Valerie and I have for our records. I've talked to Jacky about it and I think we are just splitting the charge, I'm not sure what line item it is but I think it is about \$1,000 a month apiece. That's another one of those things that you can't do anything about it. The only other thing that I did not account for is face masks and I hope the county is going to be able to supply them.

**Judge Mills:** No problem.

**Commissioner Smith:** So you don't know where that storage cost is on here?

**Jacky:** It's not on there yet, I feel like I need to add another line for rents, or something like that.

**Commissioner Smith:** Isn't there a fund for District Clerk Records?

**Pam:** Yes, there is and we can use some of it.

**Jacky:** And the County Clerk does also, so we can use some of that and put the expense in that fund.

**Library**

**Iris Sanchez:** My budget is basically the same, I'm looking at doing more on-line e-books so I asked for a little bit extra in my

Books line item. The reason I don't ask for very much is because I do go out for grants. (No questions for Iris) Thank you.

Maintenance and Parks

**Rene Butler:** \_ No questions on the Maintenance Budget.

**Jacky:** The City did ask for more than \$30,000 in the Parks Budget, but in visiting with the Judge we did put \$30,000.

County Clerk - Office Fund

**Commissioner Chaney:** I have one question and it really goes to every department, are we still doing that the same as we did last year on all of the Maintenance Agreements?

**Jacky:** Yes, Collin gives me a list of who needs which ones and we are putting them where they need to go.

**Commissioner Chaney:** My second question is, has the phone gone down that much, a \$2,300 decrease?

**Valerie Amason:** I was just looking at the previous years and we really had not been spending that much.

**Jacky:** We are still trying to get it adjusted, to which department has phones because it is by the number of phones and we have done a lot better job of getting everything cleaned up on that. Collin has been working with the phone company on it.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Has the total phone bill gone down?

**Jacky:** Total, probably not, it's just in the allocations.

**Valerie:** I wasn't the one that put that \$4,700 there, was it you?

**Jacky:** Yes, that was a projection and a lot of those I projected to spend what we had budgeted and I'll go in and clean those up

before the next workshop, make sure that we have a little bit better number.

County Clerk's Record Archive Fee

**Commissioner Smith:** We have a fund balance of \$370,000, do you have any plans to use some of that?

**Valerie:** I think you can only use it for records before 1951, I had sent an e-mail to Will Whitson because he was supposed to be looking into getting grant money for work to be done on old records and indexing them. Most of them are digitized but some of the micro-filmed records are not of very good quality. I was talking to Catherine, from Kofile, and they can take the records and clean the images up.

**Judge Mills:** Can you use that money for that?

**Valerie:** I think so, she acted like we could.

**Commissioner Smith:** Is this where you could charge the storage fees?

**Jacky:** No sir, I don't believe this is where this money can be used. There are some other departments that they have that could possibly pay for storage.

**Commissioner Smith:** Which ones are they?

**Valerie:** I thought you were using all of our Records Management on Gayle's salary.

**Jacky:** I think there is another one that we could possibly use, I would have to double check and look into the use of it. She has several funds.

**Commissioner Smith:** Well you have County/District Clerk Contingency Fund account.

**Jacky:** I'm not sure what the use is on that one, I'd have to check. They are regulated by statute on what they can be used for.

**Commissioner Casterline:** We just need to be using as many of them as we possibly can.

**Commissioner Smith:** What about the Records Management and Preservation Fund?

**Jacky:** We have an employee who is paid out of that fund, Gayle Otto, and that pretty much takes care of that fund.

**Commissioner Smith:** So you can't say right now if we can use the Contingency fund?

**Jacky:** I can't, I'll have to look at the statute.

**Commissioner Smith:** Well find a home for that \$2,000 a month.

**Jacky:** We will find a home for it.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Valerie, you said that fund is only for records prior to 1951?

**Valerie:** Yes, I believe so.

**Commissioner Smith:** So Jacky, while you are looking for that, if you come up with some requirements or some restrictions on some of those funds that don't make sense, that might be a legislative issue that we can get with Texas Association of Counties about. Because it's kind of ridiculous that we have funds sitting there that we don't have access to.

**Jacky:** Right.

**Valerie:** The funds are not for the county, they are for the Clerk's records.

**Commissioner Smith:** I'm talking about "for records", if in fact we are having to store records and we've got all of these funds and none of them will let you use those monies to pay storage for them. It seems to me that we need to go to the legislature and get some of those "laws changed".

**Valerie:** Right. A lot of those records are the older ones.

**County and District Clerks Special Contingency Fund**

**Jacky:** That's the contingency fund that we were talking about.

**Commissioner Smith:** Special Contingency Fund.

**Judge Mills:** Ok, let's go to the next one.

**County Clerk's Records Management Fund**

**Jacky:** Yes. This is the Records Management and this is the one that does include Gayle's salary. There is some fund balance in there, that may be where we can put the storage and use some of the fund balance instead of it just continuing to sit there. It's just a thought.

**Valerie:** How much money is in there?

**Jacky:** It looks like you've got about \$90,000.

**Valerie:** I want to say when I was reading that statute that it was only for indexing property records, we can read that one again.

**Jacky:** We will have to look at it and make sure.

**Judge Mills:** No more questions, thank you.

Long Term Recovery

**Commissioner Smith:** The revenues there that you are showing on page 118, those are projected revenues based on what?

**Jacky:** They are based on our administration fees that we will be collecting from each one of the grants. We've got up to 2% on most of the grants that have been authorized for admin fees. In fact, we are working on reimbursement for some of that right now.

**Commissioner Smith:** So when we end up with an ending of unreserved fund balance, negative \$140,000, that will be because of the period in billing?

**Jacky:** Yes sir.

**Commissioner Smith:** Ok, fair enough.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Has anybody done projecting on the grants? Do you think we will be getting them, the jobs will be finished?

**Jacky:** I have not really run that yet because we have so many that are running and it will be several years. So I haven't really looked at when things will be winding down to where we won't have any of that.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Well, I'd like to be able to get some kind of an idea, at what point in time we will be able to at least start phasing out Long Term Recovery. I'm not convinced that we need the two top people that we have and again I would like to get an idea of how long you think that we will need them. Because we are budgeting a year ahead of time.

**Jacky:** Right, this is through the end of December 2021.

**Commissioner Casterline:** I think we need some kind of briefing that lets us all get a handle on, or feel confident that we really need them and for how long.

**Commissioner Smith:** You might want to ask that question to John. John, based on your knowledge of the grants that we are working on, we are on the hook to get updated reports as we progress. Is that handled by Long Term Recovery Team or Jacky's office?

**John Strothman:** The Long Term Recovery Team will come in and update progress, where we are at.

**Commissioner Smith:** Ok, so we have a continuing, monitoring requirement?

**John:** Sure, they come in two or three times a year.

**Commissioner Smith:** I'm talking about the granting agencies.

**John:** Oh, the granting agencies, we can do that more often. We been doing that.

**Judge Mills:** But not before the Commissioners Court.

**Commissioner Smith:** I'm talking about things that you need to continue to report to the granting agencies as these projects are put into motion.

**Commissioner Chaney:** What we need is a list of all of the grants that we have and where they are in the stages. I think that's what you are asking?

**Commissioner Smith:** Yes, I think we have time requirements on some of them, we have to spend the money in so many years?

**John:** Yes, like the Hazardous Mitigation and the CDBG-DR funds.



**Commissioner Chaney:** I'd like to see all of the grants that we have, what the funding is, where we are on the funding, and what our projected total costs are. Some of that, I know it's real ambiguous right now but, one of the things that nobody has asked me, but is probably going to ask me, is how many grants do we have outstanding. I don't have any idea, but if we could get that, at least maybe quarterly, it would sure help us know, well we are getting close to the end of this so in next year's budget, we won't need this money, or we have to put this money in for maintenance, or whatever.

**John:** We have a matrix that spells out where we are at, where the projects are, and I can get Kim to update that quarterly.

**Commissioner Smith:** Some of these grants are in phases, such as the grant that we are funding for Navigation District, that's Phase One is all?

**John:** That's Phase one, Phase One is engineering only.

**Commissioner Smith:** And based on the result of Phase One, there might be a Phase Two? But we don't know that for sure.

**John:** Correct, the money has been set there but we haven't passed the BCA, we have to provide them the final engineering, the final budget, and a BCA.

**Commissioner Chaney:** You know if we could it separated between, these are grants that we have, these are grants that we will probably get, and these are grants that we've requested.

**Commissioner Smith:** Some of the ambiguity is built into the process and we don't have any control over the process.

**John:** No, we don't, it takes forever.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Well I know that basically, anything that comes up, that they are possibly applying for, I think most of these money streams have some date that they are going to run out. I think that we should have a better knowledge of that.

**John:** The CDBG runs out in two years, so the project has to be procured, engineered...

**Commissioner Smith:** That starts with the date that you sign the contracts?

**John:** So that was last week, so the clock is running on those. So the team has to keep pushing to get to that two year mark and finish the project or we will request extensions.

**Jacky:** And with the FEMA PA projects, we've got two PA's, or Public Assistance, that's the Courthouse and Cedar Bayou. These are the two projects that are still working. With insurance we've got the Aquarium and the Hangars, so there's a lot of moving parts.

**John:** I'll get Kim to take a matrix and make it where it's easy for everybody to read and understand with start dates, termination dates, and basically a line that tells you what we are doing and where we are at.

**Commissioner Smith:** Before we get off of this, if you go to the detail, Long Term Recovery which is on page 121, we show actual amounts for 2019 on various expense categories. The revenues in 2019 are only \$40,000?

**Jacky:** Yes sir, that was the Red Cross grant, up until November of 2019 William and Kim were still under the other grant. Jennifer's was the Red Cross grant and that was the only one that we actually were having to pay so part of that that you are seeing

as far as fund balance being a negative is because we did pay them two months. Those will be some of the funds that we will be requesting this year and the expenditures you will see are more than Jennifer's salary but that was the two months that the two went on as of November 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Commissioner Smith:** Looking at the hospitalization insurance, I guess we have three employees that we are charging for that?

**Jacky:** All three are on there, yes sir.

**Commissioner Chaney:** All three are on our group insurance?

**Jacky:** Yes sir.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Are they considered to be county employees?  
Short term county employees?

**Jacky:** Yes sir.

**John:** That's the only way we can get reimbursed.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Is Jennifer going to stay on, is she a permanent employee?

**Jacky:** They are all permanent employees at this time.

Justice of the Peace, Pct. 2

**Commissioner Smith:** I have one question, office supplies?

**Diana McGinnis:** There is a problem with the office supplies because we had storage and we were supposed to put it under either Juvenile Case Manager or under my office but it didn't matter because it was somewhat the same. So, one year I think they put it under my office, I think that's how we started it, and if you look at the case manager they didn't put anything under hers. But

there is a notation that the storage should be under either one of ours, so we've just been flexing in our budgets to make sure we don't go over and we pay for the storage.

**Commissioner Laubach:** You're saying you alternate it between instead of splitting it 50/50?

**Diana:** Yes, it should be under the Juvenile Case Manager, I just told them to leave it under my budget because I could flex in my budget instead of doing an increase. Other than that I didn't do much to the budget at all.

**Judge Mills:** Good.

**Diana:** But I would like to see an increase in our salaries because I know myself and Judge Mills have been working our tails off, not this year or last year, but 2017.

**Judge Mills:** You need to tell that to the Legislature.

**Diana:** Oh no, I don't do anything with the Legislature on salaries.

**Commissioner Laubach:** We have a 3½% cap now so if the extra payroll period is going to eat that up or exceed it we have to look for cuts someplace else.

**Diana:** I'd still like to ask formally for a pay raise and I'll even ask for Judge Mills if he doesn't ask for himself, we've really been working hard.

**County Treasurer's Office**

**Alma:** For the Treasurer's Office I have no changes whatsoever.

**Commissioner Smith:** Jacky, on Page 31, I see the insurance premiums line 460 has been eliminated, when did we decide to change where we are charging this?

**Jacky:** That's the bonds, what we did was we separated it and instead of charging all of the bonds to the insurance and we created a line item that says bonds.

**Commissioner Smith:** But we don't have anything listed in insurance premiums.

**Alma:** I don't have any insurance.

**Jacky:** That would be listed under facilities or buildings, we don't split that out to each department.

**Commissioner Laubach:** How come the amount is less in bonds, it looks like it's about half the amount?

**Alma:** It's \$260 a year per person. I don't know why the \$1,800 was there because when we pay the Treasurer's bond we pay it for the whole four years. It could be that they didn't have it in the Assistance Department, no it was in there also, I don't know.

**Jacky:** It was probably just carried over from a prior year.

**Assistance Department**

**Alma:** The employees in this department run the indigent healthcare. On the salaries, because I had a person that was here for 29 years and because of tenure the wage had gotten on up there. The position that I'm replacing it with is \$10,000 less, but the sad part about that is the money does not go back into the general fund because it's paid with Health Care Sales Tax. No more changes in this department.

**Commissioner Smith:** Refresh my memory, we have \$116,000 in Assistance for full-time employees.

**Alma:** Which is now about \$105,000, I gave Jacky the change.

**Jacky:** Right, we've got a change that's not in this budget yet, I just got the change.

**Alma:** That is three employees that do the Indigent Health Care Program.

**Commissioner Smith:** So that's where we are funding the Indigent Health Care out of this Assistance Fund, why don't we just put it Indigent Healthcare?

**Alma:** Because there are rules and regulations on what you spend Health Care Sales Tax on, so we use part of it to provide the Indigent Health Care. Whether the Health Care Sales Tax Fund can have a Salary Line Item? We would have to check the statutes.

#### Health Care Sales Tax

**Alma:** The items that we pay for out of this fund, like I say, is \$10,000 less to the Assistance Department for the salaries. I personally would recommend that the employee that we brought in, who gets paid out of this fund, if you look on Transfer to General Fund, that \$306,000, possibly could be paid out of the general fund now that the health issues are not as crucial as they were after the storm, that's completely here nor there. Trying to leave more money in this fund I foresee even though grant money is going to pay for the micro-hospital, I feel like in the future we are going to have to have it.

**Commissioner Smith:** Based on the last Treasurer's Report we've got 2 million between the two funds.

**Alma:** Right, but looking at the micro-hospital in the future I don't know if we want to take some of the things like the....

**Commissioner Smith:** If we took it from the general fund we would have to raise taxes on the people.

**Hotel/Motel Tax**

**Alma:** The Hotel/Motel clerk position that I have open right now, one of my deputies is doing it part-time. I do want to leave that there if the Hotel/Motel funds can support it.

**Commissioner Smith:** If you go to page 70, if you look at the lead sheet on the previous page it's showing the projected beginning balance of \$330,000 and the ending balance being \$517,000, the way that we are getting there, restoring revenues, is probably a decent situation if we get through this pandemic. But if you look down under uses I see that we've increased the Rockport Center for the Arts and the Maritime Museum, and we seem to have increased the Aquarium but then down below we haven't made any other increases there. So we are going to have more funds and I'm just wondering if keeping all of that in there why are we having such a huge proposed increase in our fund balance?

**Alma:** Well for starters the Maritime Museum, the Rockport Center for the Arts, and the Aquarium are a percentage of the revenues so the higher the revenues the more they are projected to get. I don't know about the fund balance, Jacky?

**Jacky:** It's just running from year to year on that. Actually, I'm showing the fund balance going down. I'm sorry Hotel/Motel I

do show as going up. Well I don't know other than it may be some of these percentages need to be corrected based on what we know Hotel/Motel is going to be.

**Alma:** The revenues, I think, were projected at level 6% of a 2019 collections kind of comparison, which I think is conservative unless we have more stuff goes on around here.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Why are we anticipating an additional \$125,000 in revenues for Hotel/Motel Tax?

**Alma:** Because we are already down, like I say we took 2019 and kind of based it on that.

**Commissioner Chaney:** 2019 was a banner year.

**Commissioner Smith:** Not really, if you go back to 2016 we had more.

**Alma:** That's actually the year that we all look at and the Chamber looks at, and that's where we want to get back to, that's where our possibilities are, plus some because since the storm we've added so many rental houses it's ridiculous.

**Jacky:** The projection of \$260,000 is probably low, I'm looking at the \$114,000 and we are just now getting into our peak seasons.

**Commissioner Smith:** The estimate of \$387,000 is a pretty fair estimate if you go back and look at pre-storm and pre-COVID.

**Commissioner Casterline:** The expenditures from Hotel/Motel are relative to what comes in, so what goes out is only a percentage of what comes in and that's all they are going to get. It's not like it's going into our general fund.

**Alma:** Only on those three entities, the others are set amounts.



**Commissioner Smith:** If you will recall the Commissioners Court, about 4 or 5 years ago, adopted a policy to maintain at least one year's worth of potential commitments within that fund. So we are probably looking at being able to, I wouldn't suggest this year until everything is cleared up, but being able to spend more money on advertising and some other things if this thing materializes as it's being shown here.

**Alma:** And keep in mind, the \$38,500 for the Aquarium is not going to be spent until it is built back.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Will we accrue that or we just won't pay it?

**Jacky:** We haven't been accruing it.

**Alma:** So that money is still sitting there, so say if they were to open tomorrow it's there.

#### Venue Tax

**Commissioner Smith:** Along that same line, we've got a new Aquarium and Education building and we were pledging \$40,000. Now it jumps up to \$79,600, what is this?

**Jacky:** Yes sir, our 10 year lease is up, we have to pay our lease again to the Navigation District again in 2021 and that is \$39,600.

**Commissioner Smith:** I noticed that our Venue Tax Projects account we have been running along there thinly, yet we have been sitting there with over \$760,000 in the maintenance account and projecting \$768,000 at the end of 2021. It would seem that we could maybe transfer some of those funds back out, I don't know, unless we've got some big need for these funds.

**Commissioner Casterline:** John, do you have maintenance on a project that you haven't been doing?

**John:** We are running on a minimum budget but we are doing what we have to do. Right now we are working repairs on the bridge, but yes, we are keeping up with it.

**Alma:** Jacky, that is the fund that we had talked about because you have on here "transfer out of the Venue Tax account to the Venue Projects", that's the one that we always discuss. Whether we will need to keep funding the venue projects or not?

**Jacky:** Yes.

**Alma:** So that's \$149,000.

**Commissioner Smith:** Well you could always reverse the flow of funds in order to have debt if it became necessary. I was just wondering if we wanted to go ahead and do that ahead of time?

**Jacky:** We could always eliminate the transfer this year, 2021, to insure that we equalize it out a little bit. The fund balance that is in, no that's not, it's in the CIP that includes the reserves. It's not in the 295, it's in 310.

**John:** I'll give you the list of what I need for the Southern Trail Project.

**Jacky:** But we do have to keep the, we've got \$217,000 in reserves and that needs to stay in for the bond issue.

**Indigent Health Care**

Right now we have the same expenditures as we did last year in this department until the Tax Assessor gives us numbers, so we don't know what that's going to be, because it will be based off of 8% of our Tax Levy. Jeri doesn't give me those numbers until July, basically it will be the same mandated percent of our Tax Levy.

**Jacky:** I think right now we just put what was already in there.

**Alma:** One other item that I wanted to bring up is what I passed out to you, Human Resources and the Judge both had asked me, because of issues with employees, possible law suits, or whatnot, is to look at the Electronic Time Clock System one more time. We are looking at \$17,000 to \$19,000 for implementation and training. We are looking at \$10,000 or better in annual costs, \$12,000 or \$13,000 for clocks to punch in. I am not personally recommending this but I did want to bring the numbers because I was asked to revisit this situation. I just don't see where it is worth the money, we are working on a little bit better time sheets, instead of them saying they worked 8 hours we will have the in and out, the in and out, but it gets complicated with the 15 minutes for breaks. Employees are probably not going to like the change but we are going to throw it out to a couple of departments and see how it works and then eventually implement it across the board.

**Commissioner Smith:** Who are we with on time keeping?

**Alma:** We are not with anyone, they have their own time sheets, simply because of what it costs. These all would integrate with our accounting system, but like I say, it's just not worth the expense.

**Commissioner Smith:** So if we got the time clocks, it would save on payroll.

**Alma:** No, I don't see where it would save on anything. The payroll person would probably have to do just as much work and the Auditors would have to do just as much work, I don't see where it would save any time.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Say you had, when each person came in the building, your badge would key the clock.

**Alma:** That's what these are doing. (Indicating the badges that we currently have) But the units themselves, we've estimated it to be five proximity readers and that is \$12,000 to \$13,000 just to buy the units.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Well, the thing that might justify it, I think you would have to have somebody independent to audit these time sheets. The way it is currently being done, there are instances when people aren't there, basically keeping their own time sheet.

**Alma:** And if you have a swiper, a thumbprint, log on with your computer, trust me, employees or department heads will find a way to cheat, if you want to call it, just as well. This isn't going to protect against what is turned in to my department to run as payroll, they can tweak the system just as well.

**Commissioner Smith:** In our current system, doesn't the department head or elected official sign off on the time sheet?

**Alma:** Yes, it is considered a legal document. In my position and the Auditor's also, we can question time sheets as to the clarification of what they are trying to tell us but we are not time clock police. If I know personally that someone was not in the office and they turn in a straight 8 hours there is not really much I can do about it.

**Judge Mills:** And that happens.

**Alma:** It happens every day. So would you save enough money for a few hours here and there? It's there for you to look at.

**Commissioner Smith:** Do all of these systems have the same characteristic to where only the employee can be the one to punch in?

**Alma:** Some are set up with a swiper, some when you long on to the computer, some are mobile apps, say like the Sheriff's Department, where if they start their day from their house and they log in there? There are different means, I think most of them do give the department head the ability to adjust.

**Project Management**

**John Strothman:** The venue tax is the same as it was last year. Once we had the pandemic I just pulled it back and we are going to operate on basically the minimum, keeping things maintained and no major improvements. That's how we've operated the last three years.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Your saying this stuff you are able to maintain it?

**John:** Yes. We just finished repainting the History Center, it needed it after the storm but we held off and we started it last year. We did an inspection on the bridge and there are some planks that are starting to rot so we are replacing them and staining them. We have the Southern Trail Project but that's funded through the bond and a grant.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Did we ever come up with a way to monitor the sites and see the activity of them?

**John:** I don't know how we would do that, our biggest challenge right now with Pathways is volunteers. With the storm we lost our volunteer base and we have yet to be able to track a reasonable

base of new volunteers. I think we have a fair amount of visitors, our website gets a lot of hits, sometimes 1,000 a month and that is mostly people looking for places to go and bird watch. During migration we had a pile of people at the venues and it was a great year for it.

**Judge Mills:** Thank you John.

**Constable, Precinct 1**

**Doc Thomas:** No changes this year.

**Judge Mills:** Can you give an update on Charlie Phillips?

**Doc:** I have had very little information.

**Commissioner Chaney:** If you have to continue handling both precincts between now and the end of the year...

**Doc:** The Sheriff's Office has been doing a lot of his paperwork, I'm ready to do some if they need me and I may be getting some at the beginning of the year. I've done a few that have come in the mail instead of sending them to the Sheriff.

**Judge Mills:** Thank you Doc.

**Animal Control**

**Judge Mills:** Things are going good out at your place, I already know that.

**Lori Cesar:** They are. On my budget I looked at where money was not being spent and to move it to where it would be most cost effective. I did think that we needed \$1,000 more in food, but looking at chemical, I think I can move \$1,000 from there because we've switched cleaners to a more productive, non-corrosive cleaner. So it that will save our building, in essence, and it's

running about \$1,000 per year, this is a guess estimate. I've just taken over this position so I'm trying to figure where we can do better, cut costs, and turn it over, but I do know if we want to stay at the 90% life and release rate means we have to feed them and take care of them longer.

**Commissioner Chaney:** I noticed on line item 470, that's a huge increase.

**Lori:** That money has been there, I don't know what it was for. I split it up, I believe I moved it.

**Jacky:** Yes, it's been taken out of there and split between conference and building repairs. That \$4,600 that you're looking at is a decrease.

**Lori:** In conference there was not enough to even maintain the certifications. My total certification alone, by the time it is complete, will be right at \$1,000.

**Commissioner Chaney:** On your Office Equipment, you're not adding anything?

**Lori:** Our biggest thing right now is, we've got to get something on the Wi-Fi. Dispatch calls me on my cell phone, they very seldom call me on my office phone. If anybody gets hurt they can't call us, it's very difficult out there with the cell service and everybody calls me on my cell phone.

**Commissioner Smith:** Jacky, I keep looking at the numbers here, but I'm having trouble, Animal Control pays \$51,000. The proposed for 2021 is \$315,799 and projected variance is a \$37,918 decrease?

**Tana Taylor:** What we did is, since the position changed and Lori is appointed, we had to create that 102 Line Item, so we moved some of the full-time salary into the appointed salary.

**Commissioner Smith:** What number is right though?

**Commissioner Laubach:** The total is still down \$38,000.

**Commissioner Smith:** Well projected for 2020 is \$375,000, is that number correct? It shows it's going down by \$38,918 but down at the bottom it shows an increase of \$1,000, I'm just questioning whether these numbers are correct or not.

**Jacky:** We will check on those numbers.

**Judge Mills:** Ok, the only other problem that I know that you had is, your truck died, right?

**Lori:** Yes it did, it went to the shop and it did not come back.

**Judge Mills:** So you're down a vehicle and nothings coming out of the Sheriff's Office? I think we are working on something.

**Lori:** I don't care, I just don't want to spend a lot of money on anything, I'm a penny pincher, I'm sorry I don't like waste. So if I can get a used something I'm fine with that because it's just mostly for me to run errands and things. My food gets delivered since I switched to "More Than Feed", to support a local business instead of "Chewy", I feel strongly about that. I did spend quite a bit of money on equipment, my girls had to have new catch poles, the other ones weren't working and that is a safety issue. I've got a lot of catching up to do in making it safe for our people, when you go out in the field you have to have good working equipment.



**Judge Mills:** I agree. How many animals are you currently housing?

**Lori:** Today, we have 25 cats and 15 dogs, I believe. I did switch software, we did have Shelter Pro, which is a totally redundant program. We now have Shelter Manager, which now all of our pets that are ready for adoption go out nation-wide on the Adopt a Pet, Pet Finder. I do have a Mini Australian Shephard male dog who is going to Rhode Island because of this. So Tawna is instrumental in getting all of that ready, we have people now looking from Corpus Christi, Sinton, all around.

**Commissioner Chaney:** How do we get a dog from here to Rhode Island?

**Lori:** We do the neuter and the customer has already paid the adoption fee. I believe he is going to go out on "Rescue Road Trips" because if you follow any animal industry, this individual has a new semi with an air conditioned tractor/trailer and is the biggest transportation provider for animals. He hits New Jersey, Connecticut, and makes a loop down south, I think he charges about \$165 but the person pays that.

**Judge Mills:** Good work.

**Lori:** Thank you.

#### **Human Resources**

**Linda Doane:** I'm not really asking for a lot of changes. The reason for the difference in Office Supplies is because currently when we order Lanyards or I.D. badge covers and things like that it's coming out of non-departmental and my department is usually the one that distributes these to the employees so it made more sense to put this in my budget. The postage, we have Texas

Association of Counties do our 1095 B's & C's for the Health Care that they have to send out every year. In the past we've been paying them and I believe we pay them \$2.95 per form and we can just have them send the pre-filled forms to us in a big package and then we in turn can mail them out using our postage machine and this will save us about \$191 if my office does it.

**Commissioner Smith:** Do you currently have the Floater in place?

**Linda:** We do, she has worked in seven different departments.

**Commissioner Smith:** Do you have a report that shows how much money we have saved?

**Linda:** I had hope to get those reports but with COVID and everything else that has happened my office has been overwhelmed so I have not, I'm sorry.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Do you feel confident that it has?

**Linda:** Yes, well I definitely feel confident that the job that she is able to do is far significant than anything that we would have gotten from Sterling. We have always had difficulty getting employees we used from Sterling. Now we don't have to deal with that when it comes to this type of a position, and this particular lady has a lot of business experience.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Well, one of the things that I see by doing this, that's kind of an unintended consequence is, whenever they go to like the County Clerk's office or wherever they go, the first time they go there they are newbies, the second time they go there they know a little bit about it, but after the third or fourth time they go there to relieve somebody they pretty much have a handle on it, there's not a lot of training.

**Linda:** Exactly.

**Commissioner Chaney:** That's the consistency of having a single person.

**Linda:** Yes, and because she is working in government, even though she hasn't worked in this particular office, she has a little better idea of what's going to happen and what's going to be required, than if she was someone coming in out of Corpus Christi. Usually our Sterling hires are fresh out of high school or rarely fresh out of college and they don't have a lot of experience.

**Commissioner Smith:** Line 115 was the actual experience on temporary help that we've gotten from agencies before?

**Linda:** I'm not sure what you are saying.

**Commissioner Smith:** Line 115, salary-temporary help.

**Linda:** Ok, that was my budget for temporary help that we had prior.

**Commissioner Smith:** Ok, but looking at the actuals there, I hate to rehash this, our worst year, budget wise, was in 2020 for \$7,995 even though we had never exceeded \$866 in any other year. So you think that having this full-time floater.....

**Linda:** The full-time floater is paid by every department that she goes to work in, not my department. That \$7,995 was money that I had requested right after Harvey so I could get a helper in to help us get our employee records, that have never been backed up, backed up onto some kind of form where we can save them in case we have another storm.

**Commissioner Smith:** Are we actually using that \$7,995?

**Linda:** I have not yet been able to get anybody in for the same reason that we were just discussing about Sterling. I have used the floater this year for 10 weeks because I lost my assistant due to COVID.

**Commissioner Laubach:** You have an increase in Total Personnel Services in the amount of \$37,???. Does that reflect additional personnel, for instance the floater or are we just talking about a pay period increase?

**Jacky:** That is the floater as well as the additional pay period because she is budgeted in the HR Department but each department reimburses HR when they use her.

**Judge Mills:** Thank you.

**Justice of the Peace, Pct. 1**

**Diane Dupnik:** The only thing different in my budget is \$200 in Office Supplies.

**Judge Mills:** Thank you, I don't think we have any questions.

**Environmental Health**

**Valerie Gonzales:** I don't have any changes in Environmental.

**Commissioner Smith:** Jacky, have you given anymore thought to doing an appreciation allocation between departments.

**Jacky:** I have been working on it, I have not got it ready to bring to you right now. There are some big numbers.

**Commissioner Smith:** Because it impacts each one of these budgets significantly.

**Jacky:** Valerie, you've got what, about three or four vehicles in Environmental Health?

**Valerie:** I've got five, some of them are mosquito control.

**Commissioner Smith:** Interesting enough, if you look going all the way back to 2015 there hasn't been any money flowing through in machinery and equipment, since last year.

**Jacky:** No, she just needs a new vehicle.

**Commissioner Smith:** Are we going to have to replace a whole bunch of stuff in one year?

**Valerie:** I think you are thinking about the Transfer Station where they have more equipment than in Environmental Health. Environmental Health only has vehicles.

**Jacky:** What we are looking at, Valerie, Charlie has asked me to look at, is to do a vehicle and equipment replacement fund where we fund appreciation. We take all of your vehicles through a 5-7 year life span and just transfer that much money, so based on the number of vehicles you have, if you've got seven it might be ....

**Commissioner Smith:** It would require the creation of another fund, an appreciation fund.

**Commissioner Casterline:** So that we don't have a big hit in one year.

**Commissioner Smith:** Exactly.

**Valerie:** Through the mosquito grant that we received, we replaced a lot of the trucks, so we shouldn't have but maybe one and it will be a while, the car.

**Jacky:** The transfer typically will be more than what we actually budget to purchase one. I just, off of the top of my head, kind

of did one for the Sheriff's office with all of their new vehicles and we are looking at maybe \$150,000 to \$170,000.

**Commissioner Smith:** Exactly, that and Road & Bridge, their budget for tomorrow, when they come in here, he's talking about spending a half a million dollars all in one area which impacts his fund balance. But this fund would smooth out these things.

**Jacky:** Right.

**Transfer Station**

**Commissioner Chaney:** How many full-time employees are at the Transfer Station?

**Valerie:** We have two truck drivers, three attendants, so five and one cashier. Six full-time, two part-time.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Who is your full-time cashier?

**Valerie:** Lizette.

**Commissioner Laubach:** Are you back to selling mulch or is that on hold?

**Valerie:** We probably will not mulch again until either the end of the year or the beginning of the year. We have to have enough to grind.

**Commissioner Laubach:** You're just not getting it in, people are not dropping off enough raw material?

**Valerie:** They are, it's just a smaller amount and we typically only grind once a year and we did that at the beginning of the year. We had people coming in and getting dump trucks full of mulch so I think we should consider raising the price to maybe keep them from coming with dump trucks.

**Commissioner Casterline:** What are we doing now on cards? We talked about trying to do something different.

**Valerie:** I know that we looked at some of the numbers and it was something like \$70,000 that we were essentially giving away.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Well, the cards stemmed from, at one point in time and we did in each precinct, annually we had a site where people could bring their stuff and the cards came from what our costs for doing all of that was. That's what determined, because we were having a lot of problems with adjoining property owners hollering about the traffic and the trash that was blowing onto their property and we moved it to there.

**Commissioner Chaney:** It ended up being about two employees the entire year just to handle the trash that accumulated. We would have one precinct do it for a couple of weeks, something like that.

**Commissioner Casterline:** I was concerned that, I hear a lot of feedback from the card deal, that maybe some of the same people are getting the cards over and over again.

**Valerie:** There's a few people that yes, they'll take advantage of the cards and some people sell them, they give them away, or they just drive off.

**Commissioner Casterline:** I would like to propose that we do away with it and basically whoever rolls in that we have a free day at the Transfer Station. Because I hear a lot of people complaining that go and there's not any there, so if we figure out how much money we are spending or giving out on those, we can do something that's less trouble than keeping up with.

**Valerie:** We know exactly how much was spent last year.

**Commissioner Smith:** It's just something to look at, use the same amount of money, try to make it easier and with less conflict.

**Valerie:** I agree, I think it does help with the illegal dumping, but we still have a lot of it going on.

**Commissioner Chaney:** If you had a free day once a month or maybe every three months.

**Valerie:** I have been talking to the people with Keep Aransas County Beautiful and they have been thinking about putting dumpsters in certain areas to help clean up and that is something that I am more than happy to work with them. They pay the cost associated with it and they do the clean-up.

**Commissioner Casterline:** I think that would be a good idea to work with them but also come up with something other than the cards.

**Jacky:** I pulled a spread sheet and between 2017 - 2019, it's been running between \$30,000 and \$45,000 a year, revenue that we have lost from the cards.

**Commissioner Casterline:** We haven't lost it because we were always spending it.

**Valerie:** Transfer Station, I don't think we had any changes there either.

**Mosquito Fund**

Nothing discussed.

**Judge Mills:** Ok, thank you Valerie.



Sheriff's Office

**Judge Mills:** I don't see anything under the Sheriff's department that we need to discuss.

**Commissioner Smith:** Just the standing capital on the salaries and we've also got about \$70,000 in Machinery and Equipment.

**Sheriff Mills:** Three years ago we were budgeting for replacement vehicles and we scaled that back, then we replaced 18 of them in that one year. To guard against this massive deal, if you want to have a plan, in this budget we were going to ask for three cars, we will replace one this year in the budget, that was just the last Impala that was still on. Next year we are asking for three, but we'll probably come back and ask for four or five because I don't want to get a few years out and ask for eighteen cars. The three next year will probably be some low-mileage vehicles but we're going to start a process of getting rid of some of them so we don't have that huge one-year impact.

**Commissioner Chaney:** So we probably need to put an additional \$70,000 to \$80,000 every year for new vehicles.

**Jacky:** Yes sir, I know when they purchased the vehicles they would purchase them out of the vehicle and equipment replacement fund and this would just be a transfer in for appreciation.

**Commissioner Smith:** I could envision where you would have a schedule, but not only for vehicles, but also computers, and other things like that. So every year we would fund it into the General Fund and then when these things came due it would come out of there.

**Jacky:** Yes sir, that's what I'm working on, the schedules and stuff now.

**Commissioner Smith:** I think that would be a good step forward right now.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Especially with the limits on increased taxes.

**Sheriff Mills:** The other thing that we've been doing for a few years is, we've tracked each vehicle independent for cost. If I've got a lemon in the group, I don't care what the mileage is, it may be time to dump it, if the cost is exceeding the others. We've caught one or two over the years. The only concern in law enforcement, as well as the vehicle change, was going to be in salaries starting out. While we have the discretionary fund for the step increases, we've fallen behind in the Step One, Off of the Street. We lost four individuals to Portland and one to Ingleside in the last year. We've fallen behind because of the storm and catching up and we haven't adjusted. That's why I raise the concern about a salaries study in the county, I know it's expensive to do that and I don't know if other departments are experiencing the same thing, but our starting salary is the tough part of it.

**Commissioner Chaney:** What is the starting salary?

**Sheriff Mills:** For a patrol deputy, about \$21.19 per hour. I guess the Law Enforcement Budget, there's not a whole lot of changes there, most of the changes that we have submitted is going to be in my Jail Budget.

License & Weight

Chris Hill has resigned and retired and I'm going to ask the Court to consider sending a letter to Austin and DPS will admit that they do not have a License and Weight officer to assign to Aransas County. I pulled a report and in six months there has probably been six offenders cited by DPS in the weigh station. We can't open the weigh station by statute now unless a License & Weight trooper is present. We own the stations but my officer cannot open them unless they send somebody over to turn the lights on and if they're not going to staff it and maintain the safety of the roads then they need to change the Legislation, or Memorandums of Understanding, and allow the local agencies to do so. Right now they don't have the statistics to show that they have been here actively participating, their argument is, gee whiz, we have higher volumes of traffic somewhere else. That doesn't mean the trucks are not coming through Aransas County and tearing up our roadways. We have the two functioning certified stations, well it doesn't matter how many officers I have, I can't turn them on and run the lights.

**Commissioner Smith:** We do have a DPS officer living in our county.

**Sheriff Mills:** Yes, he's a recruiter.

**Commissioner Smith:** This recruiter told me at one point that he pulled over a truck with 283 thousand pounds.

**Judge Mills:** Well lets write a letter to whomever you deem necessary.

**Sheriff Mills:** Backing up, I did miss two things in the Sheriff's office. For future concern and discussion I think we need, the little building that we have next to the radio tower is just about

maxed out. Any additional equipment or expansion that we do on the systems we are going to need to do something with that building, increase it or double it. Rene got in touch with Haynes Construction and he submitted a recommendation and the estimate was around \$67,000, building a light construction and twice that size, but I think we need to double the current building. His recommendation of cutting on and adding on to it was that he would have to cut out the blocks on the corner and we would be messing with the strength of it so his recommendation was to build a separate building close to that one and run out the ice rapture treys which is a doable deal and would probably control the costs.

**Commissioner Smith:** What would be the square footage of the new building you're talking about?

**Sheriff Mills:** Probably 120 square feet. The building that sits there now is 10' x 10'.

**Commissioner Smith:** 120 square feet and it's going to cost \$67,000?

**Sheriff Mills:** He was talking about doubling the size of the other one so it would be 10' x 20', but yeah, I was shocked. The other deal I was wanting to talk about was on radio equipment, I did ask for an increase from the normal or traditional \$3,000 to \$40,000. The Emergency Corp of Aransas County did get a grant, they are going to build a tower at 188 and 35 South and they are working on their plans now with the Engineer and Architects now, I think. Motorola gave me an estimate of \$40,000 to set up a microwave to send that signal south of that tower to where we could put an instrument on it as well. That would create a backbone for the emergency communications in the county from Holiday Beach all the way to 188 with three towers.

**Commissioner Casterline:** What is the one that is by 16<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> street on the bypass? I saw something that Willard...

**Sheriff Mills:** Oh, TxDOT is building a 300' tower for their regional signaling.

**Commissioner Smith:** Where do we stand with the U.S. Marshall?

**Sheriff Mills:** Week before last we called and spoke to the lady in Washington who had some revision questions and Jacky took care of those. She told me she was forwarding a report to her supervisor and it would be released probably within a week. Friday we got a call from Carlos Alvarado who is the Marshall in charge out of the San Antonio region. He was a little perplexed and disappointed and starting in on Mando about the fact that, gee whiz, we cost more than any other agency in the area and we can't test people, so did he needs to come get his inmates and take them somewhere where they can be tested. Whoa, whoa, we've ordered the kits and we are starting tomorrow. I called him back after Mando's conversation and wanted to clarify, because I thought he had us confused with somebody else because he said we were getting \$88, I said we're not getting \$88. What he had was a request, he has to write a letter of justification and he was using that figure and he said I was going to have a hard time justifying that figure if ya'll can't even test. He said that we have been a good facility but that we were going to go to the top of his list as far as cost, I guess. I told him that fee was a recommendation based on the costs, that it is a negotiable deal and I don't want to price us out of business but then he seemed to be content and happy to find out that we were set up to do the COVID testing and so we are able to provide anything that any of his other facilities are doing. He felt like that letter would be written sometime this week and

turned in. So, hopefully by the end of the week we are going to hear some discussion about us sitting down with them and talking about the fee.

**Commissioner Smith:** That's this week?

**Sheriff Mills:** Yes sir.

Training Academy Fund

No discussion.

Jail

**Sheriff Mills:** I didn't submit, I don't think that we asked for anything.

**Jacky:** No sir. He didn't have very many changes in the jail.

**Sheriff Mills:** The only thing there is the insurance premiums, but that had to do with the storm and Northstar stuff. Jail salaries, surprisingly, haven't created the same dilemma. We are holding ground with the surrounding facilities and doing well there. The only thing, really, in the jail was whether or not we can renegotiate a contract. I believe we will, I just today can't tell you whether we are going to, I'm not even sure what number was projected on there. He threw out 88, I'm not even sure it was that high, I think it was 83 or 85, and if we could come to an understanding with him, "gee whiz Carlos our issue is", as we back off of that I need some assurance or expectation that you're going to try to maintain some kind of a minimum population with us so we can have some consistency in our budget.

**Commissioner Smith:** If you're talking about an \$18 dollar a day difference on \$90, you're looking at \$1,600 or \$1,700 a day

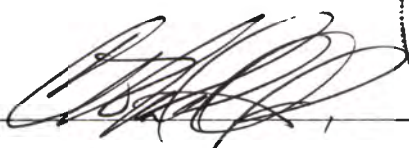
difference times 30 days, that's about \$600,000 a year and we could certainly use that.

**Judge Mills:** Ok, if nothing else Sheriff, I appreciate it.

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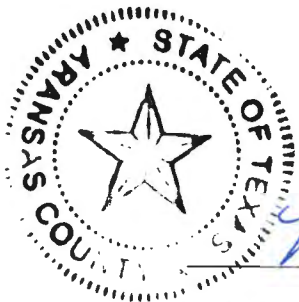
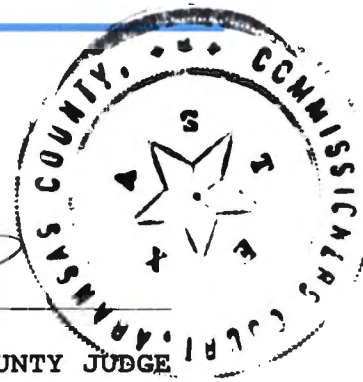
*No further business presenting, the Court adjourned at 11:15 a.m. on a motion made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Chaney.*

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C. H. "BURT" MILLS, JR., COUNTY JUDGE

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VALERIE K. AMASON,  
EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE  
COMMISSIONERS' COURT