

MINUTES OF THE ARANSAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT

PUBLIC HEARING with SPECIAL MEETING - OCTOBER 19, 2020

Community Development Block Grant - Mitigation Program Projects

On the 19th day of October, 2020, there was a Public Hearing with Special Meeting of the Commissioners' Court in the Commissioners' Courtroom, 2840 Hwy 35 N, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas, with the following members present in person, via ZOOM, or via YouTube: C. H. "Burt" Mills, Jr., County Judge; Jack Chaney, Commissioner, Precinct 1; Leslie Casterline, Commissioner, Precinct 2; Charles Smith, Commissioner, Precinct 3; Wendy Laubach, Commissioner, Precinct 4; and Carrie Arrington, County Clerk.

Other County Officers present in person, via YouTube, or via Zoom, were: Bill Mills, Sheriff; Tracy Orr, Administrative Assistant to the County Judge; Tana Taylor; First Assistant County Auditor; David Reid, County Engineer; Rene Butler, Facilities Director; Collin Jackson, IT Director; Kim Foutz, Long-Term Recovery; Jennifer Heard, Long-Term Recovery; and William Whitson, Long-Term Recovery.

Members of Local City Government, Community Groups, and other Interested Parties present in person, via YouTube, or via Zoom, were: Gina Behnfeldt, Vice President, Economic Development Services, Tetra Tech/Northeast Operations; Randall Freeze, Program Specialist & Legislative Liaison, Texas General Land Office; and Mike Probst, Editor and Publisher, The Rockport Pilot.

Aransas County Citizens present in person, via YouTube, or via Zoom, were: Pat Rousseau, Commissioner-Elect, Pct. 3; John Jackson; Jeff Hutt; Katy Jackson; Anita Scroggins; Ron Martin; Ricky Gomales; and Daryl Stimson.

In addition to the county's normal sign-in sheet for meeting attendees, attendees were also asked to complete and return "I Speak" sheets to Long-Term Recovery staff, to indicate the language/s they speak.

The Public Hearing with Special 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:**

Kim Foutz, Long-Term Recovery staff member, began by checking to see if anyone in the audience needed or wanted Spanish translation for the meeting. No one did.

She then **gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Hurricane Harvey State Competition for Community Development Block Grant Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) Program funds and the projects for which the county is seeking funding:**

1. **Fiber Optic Loop Communication System,**
2. **Newcomb Point Shoreline Preservation,**
3. **Fulton Beach Road Elevation and Beach Nourishment, and**
4. **Ruby Allen Street, Drainage and Utilities**

The slides for her presentation can be found on the Aransas County website in the CDBG Hazard Mitigation Grant Info tab under the Public Notices & Press tab or by following this link: <https://www.aransascountytexas.gov/main/docs/cdbg/CDBG%20-%20Mitigation%20Program%20Public%20Hearing%20presentation%2010.19.20.pdf>

County Commissioners asked various questions regarding the individual projects throughout the presentation, then the Judge opened up the meeting to receive public comments. **The following individuals provided feedback.**

Katherine Kane: Commissioner Laubach read the following statement into record for Katherine Kane.

"I would like to first speak to the Fulton Beach Road Elevation and Beach Nourishment project. This is for the northern section of FBR. I've read the package provided on the web page. There are several statements which are very concerning to me.

- The 3rd paragraph states 14,360 cars travel this road every day. That's 10 cars every minute of the day. That is just not true. This is a small scenic byway that is mostly used by residents along FBR, fishermen, tourists hoping to catch a great photo of dolphins and birds, walkers, runners, cyclists and golf carts. As someone who walks this road, I can testify we don't get that kind of traffic.
- The 3rd paragraph also states this is the only evacuation route for businesses and properties on FBR. In most cases, Highway 35 is available as a primary route. For Hurricane Harvey I believe residents took alternate routes to leave the County.

Given two such obvious mistakes, I have to question the validity of this information. I also question the type of construction that is proposed. It sounds like this is very similar to the project that the County abandoned after several citizens voiced their concerns. If this grant application ties us to the breakwaters as designed for the southern end of FBR, I am against it.

FBR is used by fishermen who fish the shores to put supper on their family tables. Creating marshland will impede wade fishers and potentially create a trap for debris and garbage. This is a scenic road. It is not a major thoroughfare or evacuation route. It is a meandering trail that hugs the shoreline. The mitigation for this road should honor that history and preserve it. Please bring options to the Citizens which preserve the uniqueness of Aransas County.

With the time I have left, I would like to touch on Newcomb Point Shoreline Preservation. It is also a breakwater solution. I am opposed to this solution as the only one presented to us. At a meeting, the Navigational District offered several other solutions. One brought the beach and sand back to the shoreline. Please go back to the drawing board and find solutions that work for our County and not just the flavor of the month offered by one engineering firm. Thanks for your time this morning.

Katherine L. Kane
109 Boardwalk, Rockport
Cell: 972-989-3207"

Pat Rousseau: Expressed that she liked the questions and answers at the public hearing and learned quite a bit about the projects. She is looking for an answer on how low and moderate income (LMI) percentages are determined and who has determined those figures.

Answer - Gina Behnfeltdt, with Tetra Tech (grant administrator) responded with the following information: LMI data is provided by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). LMI percentages are calculated based on Census Block Groups and Census Tracts. HUD has a very stringent set of rules on determining the beneficiaries of a project. The requirement is that if there is a census tract that benefits, the entire census tract is included. We are following HUD guidelines and rules on how to reflect beneficiaries of projects. Data provided by HUD is available to the public on the web. Commissioner Chaney asked for the web link to the LMI data.

Answer - The HUD link for LMI data and information is <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/acs-low-mod-summary-data/>.

John Jackson: Mr. Jackson voiced support of the fiber optic loop, indicating that the project benefits health and safety and

differentiates us for economic growth. He noted it is a "no brainer opportunity" that will benefit all of us in our recovery.

Jeff Hutt: Mr. Hutt spoke regarding the fiber optic loop, saying he has a hard time paying for something with tax dollars that he is going to pay for a second time through a provider.

Aransas County Sheriff: Sheriff Bill Mills was called to the podium by a Commissioner and was asked to address the project and benefits to the community. He spoke favorably and indicated the project saves lives and properties.

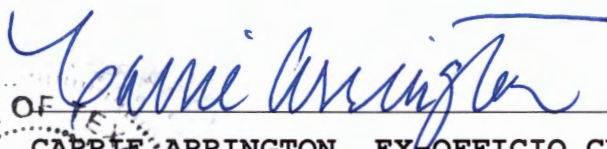
With no further public comments on the mitigation program projects, the meeting shifted to the Item for Deliberation and/or Action:

A motion was made by Commissioner Chaney and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve a donation of 650 gallons of bleach to Hands of Hope, who will transport it to Louisiana to assist citizens there with Hurricane clean-up efforts. This is the same bleach Aransas County received at no cost from Formosa Plastics Corporation in April 2020. Question. Motion carried unanimously. It is so ordered.

No further business presenting, the Court adjourned at 10:02 a.m. on a motion duly made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Casterline.



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



CARRIE ARRINGTON, EX-OFFICIO CLERK
OF THE COMMISSIONERS' COURT

