



MINUTES

Aransas County Commissioners Court

9:00 AM – Monday, December 12, 2022

The Aransas County Commissioners Court met in **Regular Session** on Monday, December 12, 2022, at 9:00 AM, in the Aransas County Courthouse, 2840 Hwy 35 N, Rockport, Texas.

Present: **C. H. "Burt" Mills, Jr.**, County Judge
Jack Chaney, Commissioner Precinct 1-1A
Leslie Casterline, Commissioner, Precinct 2
Pat Rousseau, Commissioner, Precinct 3
Wendy Laubach, Commissioner, Precinct 4

Absent:

I. Call to Order & Pledges

The meeting convened at 9:00 AM, followed by pledges to the American and Texas flags.

II. The Invocation was given by County Surveyor Jerry Brundrett.

III. Roll Call was taken. A Quorum was declared, and the following proceedings were had and done, to wit:

IV. Citizens to be Heard –

Kay Adams, Wings Rescue, talked about an urgent situation in Aransas County: avian flu. She asked to get with the appropriate people to come up with a plan to address it (maybe Ray Garza). It's becoming very serious and we need to work together to help prevent the spread of it. Avian flu—or bird flu—is sort of like COVID for birds and we all need to know the protocols and do what we can. And, sadly, on top of the avian flu, there's another thing that's hurting a lot of the pelicans—although we don't quite know what it is.

I've been deeply involved with this, right up to the head people at Texas Parks and Wildlife, and USDA, and the labs around the country. Anyway, the main thing is for me to get an appointment with the appropriate people so we can work together to get this stopped.

Adams also thanked Judge Mills, wished him the best, and stated, "We are going to miss you."

Jeff Hutt, citizen, wished Judge Mills a happy retirement and stated, "We will miss you a lot. We think of you as the quintessential Rockport-i-an and we hope that you'll be around to give Mr. Garza your advice and wisdom. We also hope that Mr. Garza will be willing to come to you and ask you for it."

He then went on to talk about a concern he has with something going on in the City (Rockport). He said that at Tuesday's Rockport City Council meeting, the Chief of Police is

requesting permission to install six pole-mounted automatic license plate cameras in and around the City, that it's a Consent Item on their agenda.

The information captured by the readers—including license plate number, date, time, and location—of every scan is being collected and sometimes put into regional sharing. These enormous data bases hold innocent motorists' locations for years on end and there's no oversight to it.

He said that he is HIGHLY OPPOSED to the tracking of people's locations. It is a significant invasion of privacy, which can reveal many things about their lives—such as who their friends and doctors are, what things they protest, which political events they attend, and which churches they may visit.

He continued by saying that we have learned from Snowden—that you cannot give power like this to the government without it being abused. He stated that he spent three years in Romania and traveled extensively throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Bloc and the one thing that he was told repeatedly didn't involve lack of choices—it involved the surveillance apparatus and how it destroyed the very fabric of society. It created a society where people were afraid to speak their mind, afraid to go places, afraid to tell things to your neighbor or even to your family members.

In Rockport, we already have a police department that is politicized. Two years ago, during the budget hearings, the City Manager—and maybe the Mayor—along with the Police Chief had four police officers show up at the budget hearings to intimidate those taxpayers who were coming to ask for the no new revenue rate. We know where this leads.

Please contact your local City Councilman, please contact the Mayor, and tell them that this is not China, this is not Singapore, this is not some socialist fascist country where we're going to monitor where everybody goes. They're going to tell you that it's for protection but it won't end up that way.

When Mr. Garza was on the school board, he told me that Aransas County needs to be a leader, too many times we follow. Let's be a leader when it comes to freedom and transparency and do what's best for our citizens. Let's not follow these other places. I can't help what Houston does when I travel through their community, I can't help what happens when I'm on the interstate, but we do have the power to decide what goes on here. Please tell our City Council that, no, Rockport is not the place for this type of surveillance, this is not something we want. Thank you.

V. Presentations – there were none

VI. Consent Agenda

1. Minutes from the November 28, 2022 Regular Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Chaney to approve the Consent Item; seconded by Commissioner Casterline.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

VII. County Reports

2. Rockport Center for the Arts “Summer Showers” Presentation

Motion by Commissioner Rousseau to accept the installation of Rockport Center for the Arts “Summer Showers” sculpture at the new Aransas County Courthouse as presented; seconded by Commissioner Casterline.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

VIII. County Roads and Floodplain

3. 60’ Wide Public Road Easement and Right-of-Way (from Multiple Property Owners) for Lara Garza Road, Whispering Woods, Road, and Bernardy Road

Motion by Commissioner Casterline to approve a Permanent Sixty Foot (60’) Wide Public Road Easement and Right-of-Way for Lara Garza Road, Whispering Woods Road, and Bernardy Road to be accomplished via easement agreements with each of the following property owners: Alan and Paula Barre (300 Whispering Woods Road), Jerry Hawes, Jr. (322 Whispering Woods Road and 342 Whispering Woods Road), Crescencio and Ermelinda Oliveira (121 Lara Garza Road), Kyle and Janine Loney (101 Lara Garza Road), Mandy Knighton (102 Lara Garza Road), Floyd and Brenda Clark (142 Bernardy Road), Serapio and Ruth Garza (141 Bernardy Road), Joshua Macklin (129 Bernardy Road), Jimmy and Patricia Garza (121 Bernardy Road and 124 Lara Garza Road), William, Jr. and Anne Page (138 Phillip Lane), Melvin and Jan Wimberly (324 Whispering Woods Road), and Brinidad Brown (120 Lara Garza Road); to update the County Road Map to include this easement as an unpaved public road; to authorize the County Judge to execute necessary documents; and to direct that conveyance documents be recorded in the office of the Aransas County Clerk; seconded by Commissioner Rousseau.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

IX. Contracts, Agreements, Grants, and Leases

4. GovOS Seamless Docs Contract Renewal

Motion by Commissioner Rousseau to approve authorizing the County Judge to sign necessary documents to renew our GovOS Seamless Docs Contract for another one (1) year term, no new monies; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

5. Interlocal Agreement for Medical Examiner Services

Motion by Commissioner Casterline to approve authorizing the County Judge to sign an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between Fort Bend County and Aransas County for Medical Examiner Services; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

6. Amendment #1 to Mott MacDonald Engineering Contract

Motion by Commissioner Casterline to approve the proposed amendment #1 to the Mott MacDonald Engineering contract for the shoreline restoration project along Bay Shore Drive. No new money. The amendment is to shift money from construction administration task to permitting and design task; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

7. Intoxilyzer Interlocal Agreement Renewal

Motion by Commissioner Chaney to approve renewing an Interlocal Agreement with San Patricio County for it to provide a Technical Supervisor to inspect and service the County's Intoxilyzer equipment and to be available to testify as a witness, if necessary, for the cost of \$13,000 for one (1) year, beginning on January 1, 2023; seconded by Commissioner Casterline.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

X. Planning and Budget

8. Indigent Health Care Report

Motion by Commissioner Rousseau to approve the November 2022 Indigent Health Care Report; seconded by Commissioner Casterline.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

9. Job Descriptions – Human Resources

Motion by Commissioner Casterline to approve the updated job description for Human Resources Assistant and the new job description for Human Resources Generalist; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

10. Job Description and Posting – Part-Time Elections Coordinator

Motion by Commissioner Casterline to approve the Part-Time Elections Coordinator Job Description and posting the position now with a start date in January 2023; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

11. Employee Handbook Revision Regarding Rubber Steel-Toed Boots

Motion by Commissioner Chaney to approve excluding rubber steel-toed boots from Aransas County's Employee Handbook 2B-10 Reimbursement Policy – Steel-Toes Boots, which sets a maximum reimbursement for steel-toed boots at \$175.00 per twelve-month period; seconded by Commissioner Casterline.

Vote: Motion to TABLE carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

12. Budget Line Item Transfers

Motion by Commissioner Casterline to approve Budget Line Item Transfers; seconded by Commissioner Rousseau. (Per Auditor Cockerham, there were none.)

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

13. Accounts Payable and Payroll/Payroll Liabilities

Motion by Commissioner Chaney to approve Accounts Payable and Payroll/Payroll Liabilities; seconded by Commissioner Casterline.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

XI. Reports from Commissioners, Elected Officials & Department Heads – No action will be taken –

Airport Manager Mike Geer submitted the following report covering the County Airport's 3rd Annual Coastal Bend Holiday Fly-In held December 9-11:

Over the weekend, Aransas County Airport, along with event sponsors and partners, hosted the 3rd annual Coastal Bend Holiday Fly-In.

I want to take a moment to update the court on the successes and to publicly thank some people, including my staff Richard, Rocky, Karl and Blake who worked tirelessly to prepare the airport and are still working to return it back to normal. I want to thank the 30+ volunteers who worked as many hours as I did and came in from as far away as San Antonio and give a special thank you to Elle M who worked on the graphic arts to create the banner.

We don't have all the data yet but early estimates put our visitor count between two and three thousand for both days combined.

A demonstration was provided by the Coast Guard Helicopter Rescue team and that was a huge hit with the kids.

An Army Black Hawk helicopter made a low pass down the runway and that too was a big attention getter.

We had 19 Warbirds on the ramp and some sold rides. There was a P-51 Mustang, "Glamorous Glen III" and a B-25 Mitchell, "Yellow Rose" along with a number of T-6 Texans, BT 13s and a Stearman Bi-plane which happens to be the model of airplane to first ever land at Aransas County Airport after construction in 1943. That bit of nostalgia was not lost on me. The skies over Aransas County are no stranger to Warbirds as the Navy has trained here ever since it was built.

Saturday was capped by a touching playing of "Taps" as a T-6 missing-man formation flew over the crowd to honor the airmen who lost their lives at the Dallas Air Show in November.

Through our fundraising efforts we were able to provide introductory Young Eagle flights for 45 kids and another 25 Discovery Flights for adults.

In some cases, an Air Show or Fly-In is a child's only introduction to Aviation, which is sad because it's a rewarding and high-paying career field. Older pilots, mechanics and air traffic

controllers are retiring en masse daily. As a result, aviation is experiencing record shortages due to natural attrition without replenishing the ranks fast enough.

Aviation hasn't done itself any favors with its reputation of exclusivity. If mom, dad, grandma or grandpa didn't already have an aviation background, there's a very slim chance that their child or grandchild would ever be steered toward it.

We need a clearer entrance for kids to get into the pipeline. We need aviation taught in our schools, just like welding and instrumentation. There are many high paying aviation jobs right here in South Texas and there's no reason our kids shouldn't have the first shot at them, right out of high school.

In 2023, I and like-minded people will be asking for the court's support as we try to encourage our local ISD to adopt aviation curriculum at the high school level, or perhaps even earlier.

With the support of people like Jerry Brown and his wife Katrina, and Cody Stewart and his wife Megan, my wife Reagen and I will continue to raise awareness and money for Fly-Ins and Air Shows. And, with the support of the Commissioners Court, we can get aviation taught in our schools.

At this time, I'd like to thank our sponsors and partners:

Event Sponsor G Tek Internet

IBC Bank

FPS Recovery

Airplanes and Coffee, our 501c 3 Partner

Ron Hoover RV and Marine

Sterling Air

Richardson Aviation

Aransas County Commissioner Pct 3, Pat Rousseau

Griffith and Brundrett Surveying and Engineering

Pillar Engineering

Sky Rider Aviation

Erect-a-Tube Hangars

ACTS Aviation

ABC Pest Control

The First State Bank

Karen Mella, Real Estate Agent

Reagen Geer, Real Estate Agent

Along with organizations including:

Angel Flight

Corpus Christi Air Traffic Control

FAA Safety Team (FAAST)

Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) who sponsored the Young Eagle Flights

The Civil Air Patrol (CAP)

Commemorative Air Force (CAF)

County Judge Burt Mills then announced that this meeting was his last Commissioners' Court Meeting. He thanked his wife Penny for being here today and two of his three children—one son who is a busy dentist here in town and another son who is a busy pilot in Houston, and both of their wives, who all made the time and effort to be here today. *Thank*

you very much. Penny and I will be going to England this next weekend to spend Christmas and New Years—which is also my mother-in-law's 98th birthday—and we're going to have a good time.

It's been one hell of an adventure being the County Judge. And, what an honor it has been serving the people of Aransas County. As in everything, though, there's been a lot of ups and downs.

Downs: mostly since August 25, 2017, with Hurricane Harvey, then a couple of months later we had a snowstorm. We also had a couple of floods, one hell of a freeze, and a worldwide pandemic, but I truly believe we have come out it all sincerely better off than we were before.

I've been blessed to work with the finest team that anyone could possibly assemble. I would name them all but I'd leave out someone important and I don't want to do that. I've done that before. You all know who you are. We have worked close together for many years and you know how special you are to me and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Ups: I'd have to say Cedar Bayou. It's been in my family for, well, I can go back to when I was six years old—so that's been a while. It was closed in the early 70s by man--in fact by Governor Clements. Later, a 501c3 was formed and they worked hard at getting it open again for over seven years before they came to me and asked if the county would get involved. The Court agreed and after another six years, we opened it with a lot of help. And, one special helper is sitting here today: Representative Geanie Morrison. Thank you. We got it open in September 2014.

The effect on our ecosystem was unbelievable and fast. Juvenile redfish were found in Mesquite Bay in 10 days after it was open and they hadn't been there in years. And, the blue crab was plentiful within two months. This made everybody happy—especially the fishermen, the crabbers, and, of course, the whooping cranes. Then came Hurricane Harvey which closed Cedar Bayou again. That's when I met with my long-term recovery team and said to all of the things we have on our plate, I am going to add one more. And, they looked at me like I was crazy but we added that one more. Now, I have to mention someone—because without John Strothman's stubbornness, we might have missed out. John refused to take a no from FEMA and hammered at them continuously until they found a way to finance it this last time and, as you know, it re-opened recently and things are going well.

I believe good things are going to happen for the future of Aransas County. It's been through a lot and we have come out better and stronger. Now, that being said, we will see who the hypocrites are soon when they put their names on buildings being built that they were against from the beginning.

I believe Judge-elect Garza's heart is in the right place and I know he want to do good for the county. I just pray that he distances himself from some of the people who got him elected. With that being said, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, God bless you all, and thank you.

(The Judge received a standing ovation.)

XII. Adjournment

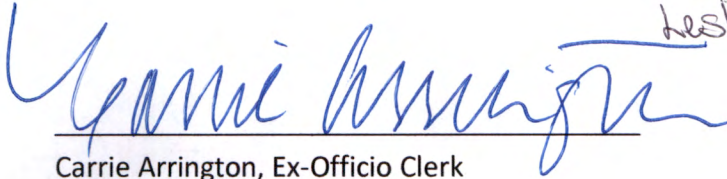
No further business presenting, the Court adjourned at 9:49 AM on a motion duly made by Commissioner Casterline, who, at the same time, invited everyone to stay for what he hoped

is a surprise retirement reception for Judge Mills. The motion (and invitation) was seconded by Commissioner Chaney.



~~C. H. "Burt" Mills, Jr., County Judge~~

Leslie Casterline, Judge Pro Tem



Carrie Arrington, Ex-Officio Clerk
of the Commissioners Court

