

MINUTES

Aransas County Commissioners Court



3:00 PM –Tuesday, April 2, 2024

The Aransas County Commissioners Court met on Tuesday, April 2, 2024, at 3:00 PM, in the Aransas County Courthouse, 2840 Hwy 35 N, Rockport, Texas. Aransas County Commissioner’s Court meeting video recordings are available by following this link: [Commissioners Court Minutes and Agendas \(aransascountytx.gov\)](https://aransascourtminutesandagendas.aransascountytx.gov), then scroll to the bottom of the page and select the date you wish to view.

Present: **Ray A. Garza**, County Judge
Jack Chaney, Commissioner Precinct 1-1A
Leslie Casterline, Commissioner, Precinct 2
Pat Rousseau, Commissioner, Precinct 3
Robert Dupnik, Commissioner, Precinct 4-4A

- I. **CALL TO ORDER**
- II. **ROLL CALL**
- III. **DECLARE QUORUM**
- IV. **ITEMS FOR DELIBERATION AND/OR DISCUSSION**

1. Discuss the re-building of the Aquarium at Rockport Harbor – Elle Morales/Judge Garza

- Judge Garza- Workshop was called to speak about rebuilding the aquarium which will use hot funds. It is allowed under the statute. A couple of weeks ago I was looking at the plans and noticed I didn’t like the outside. That’s why I called this meeting. Commissioners are ya’ll happy with the way the outside looks? I would also like to introduce Adela Martinez. She will be working in the County Attorney’s Office and she will be our council.
- Elle Morales- We are going to speak about the aquarium. We have learned a lot of lessons in the last year. We have the architect here, Mark Verret, and Christopher Mace with the aquarium. He is on the board of directors, he’s the president.
- See attachment for further information
- Elle Morales- April of 2024 we’re going to finalize and approve our designs. We are going to get the packets ready to go out to bid which usually takes about 45 days. We have grant funding for our deck.
- Commissioner Dupnik- are the funds going to be adequate?
- Elle Morales- It may not be enough. We will not know until we start getting pricing and getting the contractor. It’s a hefty amount of money. If we do not have enough money then the county will have to make that up some way.
- Commissioner Chaney- Are we going to do any fundraisers?
- Elle Morales- That is something that the board would be working on. I don’t believe the county would be a part of that. We added two single occupancy restrooms on the slide show. There is a statue in there. As you can see our occupancy for the building is 89 people. One water closet for 125 people is great for men and one water closet for 65 women.
- Commissioner Rousseau- If people go to the restroom will there be some sort of dividing wall? You don’t want to have people back there.
- Mark Verret- We are thinking of some sort of block passageway to the rest of the back of the house.
- Elle Morales- We found out that we had not received the certificate of appropriateness permit from the City of Rockport. I was concerned if the building was going to pass. I was trying to

figure out if I take this issue to Commissioners or do I take it to the City of Rockport Heritage District.

- Mike Donoho, City of Rockport - This should not be a problem at all. You had a metal building there and you're putting a metal building there. The certificate of appropriateness is a two page form that you check and it's very easy. There should not be an issue at all. My thought is that we will take this to city council for approval so we can get a little bit more publicity for the project and show the community that we're all working together. We have the district, county and the city all supporting this project. This is just a formality.
- Commissioner Casterline- Do we have to put brick?
- Mike Donoho, City of Rockport - In the Heritage District overlay code calls for a three piece style façade on the front of the building. We can do a little variance for that and it will be approved.
- Elle Moralez- The other issue is the proposed signage plan. The signage for actually building is on the building. If we wanted to have any display marquee sign on the education center kind of similar to what they have on the Maritime Museum.
- Mike Donoho, City of Rockport - That should not be an issue - there is a sign permit that has to be done.
- Commissioner Rousseau- Having that big sign out there will make a difference. When we put it on the old one it helped because it used to be hard to find.
- Elle Moralez- (see slide show for the review checklist) the board needs to look at the plans and sign off on them. The question is for the board to let us know what they want in that building. Are we going to have the right kind of data in there? Are we going to have the right telephone systems in there? Those are the additional things we all need to think about right now as we are going thru the processes of approving the plans so that doesn't come back and we don't hear that word "change order." (See slide show for owner provided items) The list provided will be additional costs which are not included in the scope of work the contractor is going to do.
- Judge Garza- Do we need any special permits to run an aquarium or licenses or environmental sign offs?
- Mike Donoho, City of Rockport - There is going to be a TCEQ discharge permit and we will need a permit to house game fish.
- Keith Barrett- Chemical storage - you are going to need DS sheets and a plan with regard to your chemicals.
- Mark Verret- it's approximately 5,000 square feet.
- Commissioner Chaney- what kind of skin are we going to put on it?
- Mark Verret- Currently it is a metal building panels. The original building was contracted as a replacement by the insurance company so I was limited to a metal building versus other materials. I've attempted to dress it up as much as I can within those constraints. We are looking at horizontally applied reverse roll M panels in two different colors.
- Commissioner Chaney- What about the painting? Are the panels going to be treated against salty atmosphere?
- Mark Verret- Yes
- Commissioner Casterline- Is the framing going to be bolted together or welded?
- Commissioner Chaney- Are the parking spaces in the same area?
- Mark Verret- Yes
- Commissioner Chaney- Where are the security cameras going to be monitored?
- Mark Verret- It will be monitored by LC.

- Commissioner Dupnik- Are there any plans to put a winch lift system for the storage area. You have stairs and you have storage, it's a safety issue carrying stuff up and down stairs. I think we should have some type of winch system.
- Mark Verret- We haven't discussed that.
- Commissioner Chaney- How are we going to handle handicap?
- Mark Verret- The building is fully accessible compliant.
- Commissioner Chaney- Is the deck going to be off the floor or the surface and if so how are the people going to get up there.
- Mark Verret- It's off the paving surface in order to have the deck match the elevation of the building slab which is set by the flood control district. There's an existing handicap accessible ramp which is not going to be adequate anymore. The plans call for that ramp to be demolished and a new ramp will be built. The plans have the design details for the new ramp.
- Elle Moralez- If we are all in agreement, we like the way that everything's looks, and no one has any feedback then we can get this on April 22, 2024 Commissioners Court for it to be approved. Then we can start moving forward. What are the hours for the aquarium?
- Mark Verret- That's all negotiable moving forward. Before we were open Wednesday through Sunday from 1 P.M. - 4 P.M. so part time five days a week, and we will also do extended hours during spring break and on long weekends.
- Commissioner Casterline- Last year were we at 30,000 visitors right?
- Mark Verret- In 2016 we set our visitation records to over 37,000 visitors, and in 2017 we were on pace to break that record until August.
- Kevin Barrett- The agreement we had to facilitate with parks and wildlife to carve out that piece of land so the county could lease it. Lots of people do not realize the building is moving 15 feet to the east. Lots of people don't realize Texas Parks & Wildlife has a big fuel tank in the back that they need to fill to service all of their boats. The way the aquarium was before parking always blocked the path to get behind there. When the fuel truck was there it would get blocked by cars. From an architectural standpoint, I think you need to look at how we are going to get into that tank to pump that wastewater into our lift station. We need to make sure that works well with sizing and pump sizes, and the distance we have to pump. We don't want to have a change order in the end.
- Judge Garza- I want to ask Chris to make sure you're looking at the plans, and make sure everything is there. Make sure the exterior access are there, I'm not sure if you need a garage type door. If there are plugs make sure they are in the right place.
- Commissioner Casterline- Is the floor in the building flat?
- Mark Verret- Yes
- Commissioner Chaney- On the electrical side I'm not sure if this has been considered for the plugs you need. Get with Carrie Dietrich so she can help you decide how high off the floor they need to be.
- Mark Verret- As directed by the owner all the plugs behind the aquarium are set up at the proper heights for access. Those plugs are not limited by the constraints of the ADA because of the servicing.
- Elle Moralez- There needs to be a mop sink near those restrooms so they can leave their cleaning supplies there, and to store toilet paper, it would be considered a janitor's closet.
- Mark Verret- We mentioned earlier about backup power. We have the backup power generator on site.
- Commissioner Dupnik- Has an electrical scheme for the generator been considered in the plans?

- Mark Verret- All we have is the generator sitting there, and it was strapped. What we need on the building is the transfer switch which needs to be automatic. It's not on the plans currently, but we can do it.
- Jacky Cockerham- We have 1.5 in the budget for construction. I'm not sure if that is enough or not.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn: by Commissioner Rousseau, motion was seconded by Commissioner Dupnik
Vote: Motion carried 5-0: it was so ordered
Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM

ARANSAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT

Ray A. Garza, County Judge

Date signed.

Misty Kimbrough,
Ex-Officio Clerk of the Commissioners Court

Date signed.