

# MINUTES

## Aransas County Commissioners Court Budget Workshop



9:01 AM – Tuesday, June 13, 2023

The Aransas County Commissioners Court met on Monday, June 13, 2023, at 11:20 AM, 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 \(aransascountytx.gov\)](#), 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

*Called to order at 9:01 AM*  
*Roll Call we have a Quorum*

**Pam Heard – District Clerk**

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- I have asked for anything else, I know this is going to be a tight year
- I hope there will be enough money for step increases or a COLA, everyone working for the county is going through the same thing everyone else is.
- I don't know how to budget for next year. Moving into the new courthouse, I don't know what all we need. I asked the Judge about how we are going to get our stuff into the new courthouse. I guess there is going to have be budgeting for moving?
- No shelving was budgeted. When they built the courthouse it never occurred to me that they wouldn't include the shelving. I told them how many records I have, that they could go into a High Density Shelving area, it never occurred that they would allocate the area but not include the shelves that make it work.
- For 2024 I don't know how this is going to work, we have not pretty shelving at the storage building assuming they can get the area prepared to be there statutorily then we can use the old shelves for now.
- Everything else I'm just going to let it ride. This is a best guess, I always try to the county back a little money every year.
- I don't know of anything I can cut.

Commissioner Chaney – you and the County Clerk both are going to have similar issues. Do you think we are going to have to get another space? The District and County Clerk's job is to keep records.

Pam Heard – We are not sure what happened. The architects knew, if they have done courthouses in the past they should know the statutes. Even if they didn't I had it on my original questioner. Besides this, the courtrooms are an issue. There was no plan for seating in the courtrooms, I've heard they are going to use stackable chairs and these will have to be moved every time. The county is going to have to pay for somebody to do that.

Commissioner Casterline – if you have stackable chairs why do they have to be moved? If there are fixed chairs they can't be moved. So why do you have to move the others? Stackable chairs just give the benefit to use the room for something else.

Pam Heard – But unfortunately when you go to court and you have a jury trial the chairs have to be in a certain place because you have to do a seating chart for the attorneys and judge. If the room is used for anything else then the chairs are going to be moved around and they get moved all the time. I used to do it, move the chairs to match the seating chart, but I'm getting too old for it. The District Courtroom is very small, maybe we can do half of the juries we have to do Voir Dire in there. Otherwise we are going to have to go to someplace bigger. When we do that it is going to be another expenses, the Sheriff will probably talk to you about that because any time you move defendants that aren't in a temporary facility there are different rules.

Commissioner Chaney – how does the courtroom compare to this room?

Pam Heard – much smaller. The bar is way farther back, the jury box comes back into the gallery. They are estimating 80 seats, I don't think there is any possible way it can be 80 seats. The seats they are planning are 18" and my shoulders are a lot bigger than that. We just don't know. Until we get in there I don't know how many people I can cram into that room. I will say this on the record. The courtrooms and jury are important. It's the one place the public has to come, and are required to come. I think it is horrible if we have them so uncomfortable that they can't stand it that is not what this system is for. We are going to do the best we can, and we will make it work somehow.

Commissioner Dupnik – I know you and your staff have spent years and most of your time in District Court. Is there money that comes to your group for this, or is this one of the unfunded mandates?

Pam Heard – that's correct, it's just part of our job. Frankly we do a lot of things that aren't our job, but if we didn't do them someone else would have to and it would cost a lot more. I have the best deputies in the world. They all care and are so good. I couldn't do this by myself.

Judge Garza – comment: we were talking, and I was asking about moving expenses. Where do we put that budget? Will it be under my budget or somewhere else?

Jacky Cockerham – it will be under non-departmental.

Judge Garza – OK, I'll get with John to get an estimate, we are going to need it next year.

Jacky Cockerham – I know he at least has the name of the people that moved us into this building. I don't know if he has a price on it yet.

Judge Garza – ok, we've got to be sure to budget that.

## **Blake Brown – Fleet Maintenance**

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Commissioner Rousseau – 331 Gas, Oil & Lubricants: I notice you dropped that amount by \$30,000

Blake Brown – We did not use as much as we estimated for this year. So I dropped it based on usage, and with a little bit of room in case of unexpected surprises.

Commissioner Chaney - \$10,000 is all you expect to use this year?

Blake Brown – yes sir, with only 2 vehicles that stay in the county mostly. We go to Corpus Christi to pick up parts but that's really it.

Commissioner Rousseau – so year to date is showing \$8,200

Blake Brown – yes ma'am, so when we get a fuel order in everything goes through that account, then at the end of the month once everyone's fuel charges are in it is then charged out accordingly to each department.

Commissioner Casterline – do we still have other people that aren't with the county using your services?

Blake Brown – yes, the Lamar Fire Department, and they do get charged for that and it is in our system.

Tana Taylor – also the Council on Aging, Meals on Wheels, and we do bill them for that.

Commissioner Rousseau – 455 Misc. Repairs and Maintenance is that the same that you found you didn't need as much?

Blake Brown – yes ma'am, last year we budgeted to add an awning for the garage so that is difference, so it dropped because we don't need that much.

Commissioner Dupnik – your 2022 actuals is more than your requested 2024 budget, so I'm wondering if that number is high enough.

Blake Brown – the majority of my focus is on my repair parts and automotive supplies as that is where most of my purchases are. So there is an increase there but I was able to cut in different areas.

Commissioner Casterline – when you work on something other than let's say the Sheriff's cars, are the parts a pass through there as well?

Blake Brown – some departments do use the 353 fund and other departments like the Sheriff's office has their own line item for repair and maintenance.

Blake Brown – I charge it back to them. Mostly this is Road and Bridge but there are some departments that don't have a repair line so I charge it.

Commissioner Casterline – are there any other things you besides these that you take care of

Blake Brown – we help out the Airport from time to time. Out parts and time do get charged out to them.

Commissioner Chaney – what's the state of the fleet?

Blake Brown – things do break down and we do our best to get the running as fast as possible. Fleet wise I would have to get with David to see what his plans are and his needs.

Commissioner Chaney – as you are operating now are you seeing more than you expect?

Blake Brown – where we have had issues is the vehicles we got after Harvey, the Chargers. We have a lot of coolant issues and it is costing a lot of money. As those new vehicles come in I can see that their maintenance budget will go down.

Commissioner Chaney – do you think in the future to help to better adjust your budget to do a report at least once a year on the life of vehicles?

Blake Brown – that would be a good idea, we could actually look at year to date the maintenance cost for the individual vehicle, plus the age of the vehicle and get a market value to see if it is worth repairing compared to what we may be able to get for trade in.

Commissioner Chaney – the Sheriff has said several times that we need to put vehicles on rotation, but I've never seen anything in writing what we may be looking at 3 years from now. Right now it is 3 this year, 4 that year but in the past we have taken vehicles way beyond feasibility. And others that could have gone a year or two longer. The key is safe and dependable, if not we need a way to put in the budget to be prepared to buy/replace them. No matter a certain number of years or miles no matter what. And no matter what passed a certain amount of maintenance.

Blake Brown – I think that is a great idea.

Commissioner Casterline – I think is trying to micro manage a department head. David Reid and the Sheriff have been doing that for years and they have a system including looking at miles and age of the vehicle.

Blake Brown – I think I can help with is showing the maintenance costs and year to date per vehicle. I would just be sharing information to help them make the decision.

Commissioner Chaney – any time any one comes to us to replace a vehicle there are good reasons. They manage their fleet well. But for managing finances and budgets you are the one who keeps those records.

Commissioner Dupnik – question about fund 410. Professional Services, that's out sourcing?

Blake Brown – yes sir, we've got some older heavy equipment.

We are doing a lot better this year, fuel is about a \$1 per gallon cheaper, and I'm hoping that the economy gets better and the prices will come down on stuff.

**Recess 9:21 AM**

**Reconvene 9:28 AM**

**Virginia Smith – AgriLife Extension**

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- \$200 increase on travel prices are going up

- \$7,000 is our total increase request

Commissioner Rousseau – Patrick Cruse – travel expenses

Tana Taylor – he does receive reimbursement out of 488 fund.

Virginia Smith – in his first month or two he was getting a monthly allowance, that was not how it was intended so now the money is in the account and he is getting reimbursed for his travel.

Commissioner Rousseau – when we say his “travel moneys”, he doesn’t live in Rockport?

Virginia Smith – He doesn’t live in Rockport but we are only talking about travel from our office.

Tana Taylor – He was receiving a travel allowance.

Commissioner Dupnik – that explains that 332 for this year.

Tana Taylor – yes sir, then Virginia reached out that it was not the way they, Virginia and Patrick, intended to handle the travel. So we transferred in to the 488 fund and paying that as a reimbursement.

Commissioner Rousseau – that’s if he submits out of pocket for county miles, so if he is going to a conference or training

Jacky Cockerham – he only gets mileage if he is using his own vehicle.

Virginia Smith – today he is in Galveston and has the county vehicle. He only takes his vehicle if the county vehicle is being used.

Commissioner Rousseau – there is an increase in telephone

Virginia Smith – I talked to Collin about our utilities to see if we can get a line removed but that we already removed all the lines we could.

Commissioner Rousseau – Collin do you know why it went up \$4,100?

Collin Jackson – Part of that is the pass through for the AT&T circuit that got installed out there.

Commissioner Dupnik – is some of that a 1 time charge?

Collin Jackson – those are going to be monthly fees, for connectivity to the internet and phones

Jacky Cockerham – do they get Spectrum also?

Collin Jackson – Spectrum is their back up connection. In light of the recent outages if is safer to keep them both. We can remove the Spectrum line but I wouldn’t recommend it. If AT&T goes down we would have to wait until they got up and running again.

Commissioner Casterline – can you use both of them at the same time?

Collin Jackson – they operate as long as we are paying for them.

Commissioner Dupnik – does the county have mobile hotspots for them?

Collin Jackson – the hotspots would not operate their computers.

Judge Garza – how often is one service down compared to the other and for how long?

Collin Jackson – Spectrum was down for a week.

Judge Garza – that was a freak thing.

Collin Jackson – it’s great to talk about not paying for both, but until you need it. It’s like car insurance.

Commissioner Casterline – over the last year or two they have both had outages for days

Judge Garza – could you still operate without telephones for a couple of days?

Virginia Smith – we could without telephone but of course our computer internet is hooked up with that. We have wondered why our utilities are so high.

Jacky Cockerham – they utilities are separate from your phone, and they are high because of the Master Gardner’s that water, and when there are leaks out there that are not found it does run high.

Judge Garza – I can see why EOC or Airport has a back-up but the AgriLife Extension is not used for emergencies.

Virginia Smith – I understand totally

Collin Jackson – their connectivity comes off of Environmental Health, Animal Control, Transfer Station, and AgriLife all us the same connection. And they all split that cost.

Virginia Smith – we asked for \$1,400 more for fund 425 Conference & Assoc. Dues. The big increase is the phone bill.

Collin Jackson – I have the numbers for that back-up connection. For AgriLife it is \$254 per month.

The AT&T cost will be about \$300 per month.

Commissioner Dupnik – this fee is shared as well?

Collin Jackson – that is correct, it will be split three ways.

Commissioner Casterline – maybe we need to talk to all three of the to see if they really need a back-up  
Virginia Smith – we could probably do without it.

Collin Jackson – without back up Animal Control and Environmental Health would be non-functioning. No permits or anything. Their software and everything they utilize would not able to be accessed without a back-up.

Commissioner Casterline – I don't understand how they would be.

Collin Jackson – if they lose their primary connection, without back-up they would be completely inoperable. They will not be able to function. NO phone calls,

Judge Garza – if it went down for a day, could they let's say come into my office and use my computer?

Collin Jackson – theoretically

Talk by many about Star Link but our area does not have access yet and it would be more expensive than what we are currently paying.

### **Mike Geer – Airport**

- Fund 500 page 146
- Revenues first
  - Fuel sales is our #1 source of revenues
  - Hanger rent
  - Land lease
  - Grants – depending on our eligibility, some years it's a big lump sum and some years it's very little. But they all require a match.

Commissioner Casterline – you've stated that since so much has been done that maybe you won't qualify for some.

Mike Geer – we won't be eligible for any big ticket items until 2025.

Commissioner Casterline – is our insurance company doing anything at all? Or have the people left because they didn't get paid. Western Steel is off the job, but I think they completed everything they were tasked with. But if we need let's say to adjust a door, we would just have to pay for it. The electrical contractor is off, but I used them to come back a fix a door.

Commissioner Casterline – what is the status of what was built? Is it completed?

Mike Geer – no

Commissioner Casterline – are there things that are not built?

Mike Geer – I have 1 one unit that has been returned. It's a 12 unit T-Hanger.

Commissioner Dupnik – is that why you have an increase in your hanger rental?

Mike Geer – I'm being optimistic on projected revenues. Fund 860. If we have everything that we are supposed to that is what we should make. A lot of things can happen between now and the end of the year, if they have come back on the job and finish the two hangers that are substantially complete, they are not ready for people to move in yet. There is a trench around them where the pavement has been torn up. The pavement has to be tied back in, to be able to roll the planes in and out of the hangers. They are about 90% complete on the electrical. Keep in mind we are still three hangers short of where we were pre Harvey. I don't know how the insurance company or lawsuit intends to settle all of that. If all things were back to normal that is what we would make.

Commissioner Dupnik – so that \$25,000 is questionable right now

Mike Geer – yes sir

Commissioner Casterline – the ones that you say are about 90% complete

Mike Geer – these are rectangle 6 unit hangers. They used the existing slab and re-engineered it so they had to saw cut a skirt around the building to install the new beams. When they did that they had to excavate part of the ramp in and out of the hanger. It is a 12-14 inch gap all the way around.

Commissioner Casterline – why don't you try to come up with a number of what it might cost to finish those two.

Commissioner Dupnik – I think that is a good idea.

Mike Geer – I may have to Lionel or somebody to come take a look at that. Then I could talk to the electrician to see where he is at, I've got a good report with him. What is the airport reserve right now?

Jacky Cockerham – not much.

Commissioner Casterline – if it's not a big number maybe we can find it somewhere to get them finished right and get them back online.

Mike Geer – as a business manager the glaring thing is the insurance premiums, utilities, the phone, in 2017 these were small numbers. Now they are big bills to pay. We are close to having that bond paid off, \$86,000 per year and we only have 4-5 more years on that and it will help our cash flow positive earlier in the year. I try to build the budget that at least on paper we will be cash flow positive but at some point it will take not spending RAMP grant money for us to come in to positive. Last year was tough, because of grant projects that required attention. If fuel prices fall next year, we won't make as much money. At some point we are going to have to get creative at how to keep the airport self-sufficient. The commissioner may have to pay the insurance premiums to keep the doors open.

Commissioner Dupnik – about that premium. It's up over 200%, what is driving that? Is that the market?

Mike Geer – in 2017 we had more buildings and paid less money.

Jacky Cockerham – but we've got new hangers with new values that's what has driven the cost up. And going with Windstorm and not RPA.

Commissioner Casterline – we had an insurance that wouldn't pay out, so this is a better deal.

Commissioner Dupnik – newer buildings have mover value

Commissioner Rousseau – Why is the telephone so high? What happened between 2020 and 2021 that shot that amount up?

Collin Jackson – after Harvey the airport had an emergency AT&T fiber line installed to their building. That service continued at that current contract rate is about \$2,800 per month. That contract is expected to renew and drop that price to \$800-\$900 per month in Feb. 2024.

Commissioner Rousseau – so shouldn't that bring the budget down?

Collin Jackson – since it takes action from you, the Commissioners Court, I am not going to lower it until it is approved because that price is not set in stone.

Commissioner Rousseau – you said we could anticipate about \$1,900 - \$2,000 saving per month

Collin Jackson – we can, but I can't guarantee that so I can't put it in the budget. That will be the same for the courthouse as well, because both of those are on the same term/contract.

Commissioner Casterline – is that because we had to pay for putting the line in?

Collin Jackson – we had to pay for all of the construction, and that is put into the cost of and term of that cable. Once that expires those costs will come way down.

Commissioner Dupnik – Mike what I am hearing you say is that you may need help from the General Fund this year?

Mike Geer – yes that is how I see it. I don't know exactly what it will be. Jacky what was it last year, about \$10,000-\$13,000?

On Utilities as we upgrade to LED we will start saving some money at the airport. We're noticing that we are saving 10-15% on hangers that have LED. Runway lights is what really gets us. They stay on all night long and the beacon, but it is LED now. As we upgrade the airfield to LED it will save some. The incandescent lights have gone way up over the last several years because it's not industry standard anymore.

Commissioner Dupnik – I'm curious if through AEP they could help with this.

Jacky Cockerham – AEP has looked at some of the lights out there, could help with a little bit of a rebate. The lights have to qualify by their energy star ratings.

Mike Geer – in regards to putting money out to finish the hangers. As far as I am aware the insurance claim is not closed.

Commissioner Casterline – none of them are closed.

Mike Geer – it may be that at some point FPS back on the job and finishes these projects.

Jacky Cockerham – not unless we are paying for it.

Mike Geer – if we finish the hangers I've got enough people on the waiting list to fill them up so it's revenue sitting on the table.

Judge Garza – the next budget

## Mike Geer - Emergency Management

- Page 12

Mike Geer – I expect a lot of money to be left over this year, it will be up to the Commissioners if we leave the same amount of money in the 2024 budget.

Commissioner Rousseau – are we leaving \$62,000 in there?

Tana Taylor – he (Mike Geer) is receiving the stipend that is not near what is budgeted. For the 2023 budget we were expecting to hire a full-time employee into that position with insurance, retirement, etc.

Commissioner Rousseau – isn't the stipend \$20,000 per year

Jacky Cockerham, Auditor – yes ma'am.

Commissioner Rousseau – so we are leaving an additional \$42,000 in there?

Mike Geer – think about it in these terms, I am appointed for 1 year. That term ends in March 2024 and if you decide to hire a full-time employee it won't be in the budget. But, if you re-appoint it will be fine. Same thing is true for the \$50,000 for equipment, there is no reason to buy a vehicle when we have a county vehicle that is available to me.

Commissioner Casterline – if we don't use it every year it rolls back into the General Fund.

Jacky Cockerham, Auditor – it just go into the fund balance

Mike Geer – the thing is with the \$20,000 for the stipend and the travel, conference association and dues. The Emergency Management Community like to have conferences and meetings, so there is some travel involved.

Judge Garza – you need to keep those connections

Mike Geer – we have to have them, coordinator is the operative word. The Emergency Management Coordinator means you have to coordinate and maintain positive relationships.

Commissioner Rousseau – TDEM service representative, Jim Hollister, introduced himself to me at an event and we had a nice conversation.

Mike Geer – the face of Emergency Management has changed dramatically in the last 5 months. Ever since TDEM gave us a CLO (County Liaison Officer). In the past we would have been reliant on a phone call or email, The TDEM CLO is connected by satellite, star link, everything he needs to communicate with the DCC in Corpus Christ.

Commissioner Casterline – my concern in using him is that you will connection with the big guys. You might not have as personal connection as Ricky did with the main guys.

Mike Geer – I've got Chief Nim Kid phone number and he has personally told me that I can call him day or night for anything. I've Cowboy #2 I can contact as well. TDEM has re-organized, there have been some watershed moments that have caused TDEM to re-organize. Harvey was the last one we will likely not see FEMA here in the capacity that they were in previous events. TDEM is going to be our first line of communication going forward. It will start with that County Liaison Representative. Honestly you can play skip a boss with at any time but TDEM is really trying to lay it out that they want things to go through that CLO. Then to the DCC and then to the region and then SOC (State Operations Center) in Austin. But again I call always pick up the phone and call Chief Nim Kid but he will look at that as a breakdown in communication and chain of command, and there is no reason to do that to Jim. I nominated him for an award at the banquet, he is a really good asset for us.

Jacky Cockerham, Auditor – he has been in our office and visited with me and is setting up some training for us on the financial side of things, making sure we meet all of our financial requirements for FEMA and TDEM.

Commissioner Dupnik – page 12, fund 580, what is the capital outlay for \$50,000, what is that for?

Mike Geer – that would be for a vehicle, but again we have county vehicles that I have access too. If one day you decide to give the Emergency Manager a vehicle a retired Sheriff vehicle would probably work for local travel. But need something dependable to get to the Dallas – Fort Worth area where they have some conferences.

Judge Garza – would the commissioners mind taking this out of the budget for 2024?

Multiple Commissioners – it was agreed to strike it out of the budget

Mike Geer – you're walking away with some money today, all right guys.

Commissioner Chaney – how much time is Emergency Management taking out of your normal hours

Mike Geer – it's been a pretty big bite of my time, initially there is some startup training that I've had to have.

Commissioner Chaney – how much for the coming year do you think maybe 30%.

Mike Geer – to this point it's been about 50%, but a lot of that is just the initial training. Next week I've got training and then in Corpus Christ for 3-4 days

Commissioner Chaney – I think that's about what we anticipated.

Mike Geer – yes but these are one time classes and then the heavy conference period for even aviation is at the beginning of the year so June and beyond I don't have any other conferences scheduled for the rest of the year.

Commissioner Chaney – but you're going to continue to have training.

Mike Geer – it'll be on going it's just so much of it's on online and then once you have the initial classroom training out the way everything after that's just CE and maintenance.

Judge Garza – all right thank you.

### **David Reid – Road Administrator, R&B Fund, Flood Control Fund, 2011 CIP Fund**

- Fund 200, page 51

Commissioner Rousseau – question about Road Improvements ACISD, I'm thinking that might be a big contract with us to do work for them, but we don't show that we anticipate any this year, 2024 it doesn't look like we've done anything?

David Reid – right, we don't do work for them every year. It's as needed. They haven't told me anything about next year.

Commissioner Casterline – why would we have the City of Ingleside?

David Reid – well they came to us one time wanting something, years ago, it came to court and we had an agreement with them.

Commissioner Casterline – can we do an Interlocal, apparently we could to it, with somebody outside the county

David Reid – apparently I'm not saying that's legal, I have no idea.

Commissioner Rousseau – We have a different County Attorney

David Reid – we do, if they ask I'll check with Jennifer O'Steen about that.

Commissioner Rousseau – so had the school district talked with you about the project and that is why the \$50,000 is in here

David Reid – right, last year we put it in because we thought we might get something but it wasn't for sure.

Commissioner Casterline – how long ago has it been since you did their parking lot?

David Reid – a couple of years ago probably

Jacky Cockerham, Auditor – probably 2020 because we had an expense of \$147,000

David Reid – yeah, it was about 5-6 parking lots.

Judge Garza – you may want to reach out to them because now it's like everybody's new, they don't know

David Reid – yeah, well yes but we deal with Norm and he's still there and he is our contact.

Commissioner Dupnik – he's retiring

Judge Garza – yeah, he just retired

David Reid – did he really?

Discussion of many people.

Commissioner Casterline – One of the City Councilman from Aransas Pass, said David does this for Aransas.

He said he was trying to figure out if they could secede from San Patricio County and be taken into this County, because they don't do anything like that for them.

Commissioner Dupnik – they have their own Emergency Management, they have everything theirs is separate entity

Judge Garza – That's a good idea Commissioner.

Discussion of many people.

Commissioner Casterline – they are already thinking about it, but I don't know if it was just or not.

Commissioner Chaney – I don't think it's a joke, they've asked me about that several times.

Commissioner Casterline – I don't know

David Reid – Let's hope it's a joke.

Commissioner Rousseau – under Road & Bridge services



David Reid – let me explain this. We've had this R&B services, we're taking some money from flood control and giving it to R&B to do some projects we want because it's different personnel and equipment. It seemed kind of silly to grab from one hand to put it in the others so, I just took it out. We can put it back if you want.  
Commissioner Casterline – Did you budget that money in flood then?

David Reid – Yeah

Commissioner Dupnik – So what you're saying is if you get a right of way or easement to cut a ditch for drainage your guys are doing it internally, using this money?

David Reid – yeah

Commissioner Casterline – Flood doesn't own any equipment?

David Reid – right

Commissioner Casterline – just R&B

David Reid – right, as far as people in the field they don't know where the money comes from. They just know someone says to go do it and they go do it.

Commissioner Dupnik – So you took this \$60,000 and put it over there?

David Reid – right, or left it over there.

Commissioner Rousseau – moving on to page 52, so you've figured in some increases on the gas, oil, lubricants, and road materials

David Reid – it's a guess, I've talked to Blake about it and this the number we came up with. The things I have control over cost wise is raw materials, professional services, equipment, and I have tried to reduce those things. Keep in mind when I reduce especially materials then we do less work. So do you want me to spend less money or want to get more roads built?

Commissioner Rousseau – roads

David Reid – let's raise that up again.

Commissioner Rousseau – Professional Services – is if you have to hire some other?

David Reid – if I have to get a surveyor to stake some right-of-ways or an engineer to do some plans, things like that.

Commissioner Rousseau – you used to have to get a back truck sometime but that wouldn't have been under professional services.

David Reid – no

Commissioner Casterline – We don't have yet? Did we get that?

David Reid – no, I think its December is what they're talking about. Sometimes we work out a deal with Rockport or Fulton we will do some work for them and they'll loan us their back truck

Commissioner Dupnik – you and I had a good conversation about the St. Charles Bay boat ramp about maybe having to getting a core sampling because there's been some cave in with maybe washed out from underneath the scouring.

David Reid – that would be professional services.

Commissioner Dupnik – you would have money in the budget for that right now?

David Reid – I have money in the budget, this is anticipated that I have no idea what will come up, things come up. Doing cores for that parking lot would be something that just comes up. I don't know what it would cost but a few thousand dollars probably maybe 5.

Commissioner Chaney – yeah, I think it is under washing.

David Reid – I think so yeah.

Commissioner Chaney – so in order to stop that you're going to have to bulk head it.

David Reid – yes, I'm not sure what has caused the problem, may be that the sheeting is to low, I don't know. Maybe some core samples will help us figure it out. Anyway we will spend money often it's something that comes up that we can't anticipate, so we have to plan for it but things happen. We get floods and hurricanes and tornadoes.

Commissioner Rousseau – your motor vehicle repairs maintenance went down significantly. Is that because a lot of the equipment is new?

David Reid – yes, and I did reduce a little bit the new equipment for next year. Equipment is expensive.

Judge Garza – when you have to buy easements where is that in the budget?

David Reid – sometimes it's special projects, hopefully we find grant money for it. But I do often get easements for free. Yesterday's easement was a \$10 easement.

Commissioner Casterline – I was a little bit worried about that one.

### **Flood Control**

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Commissioner Casterline – so the easement from yesterday does it go all the way from Copano Heights property line?

David Reid – it does not. There is a property owner between McLester and Copano Height and I have that easement as well but I didn't get in time for this agenda. It will be on the next agenda. So, flood control is an interesting department. It is part of the R&B acts and originally it was made for me, my one man department as the drainage engineer for the county, 15 years ago. And around 2016 the court appointed me the flood plain administrator, that used to be done out of Environmental Health Department. They didn't give more funding for that, but back in 2016 there wasn't a lot to do. There wasn't a lot of development. There wasn't a lot of houses going up. So, it wasn't a big deal to use R&B money for the little expenses that we had or use Flood Control. Since Harvey we've seen a big increase in development. Lots of permits and subdivisions and that money is still being spent out of Flood Control. That's the only place I had to get money. Now, I don't know that that's necessarily the best place to do it, or the legal place to do it. But, it's what we have. Our criteria we have for develop it is based on what FEMA says we need to do. So, that makes me feel like drainage and flood control is part of that. The department has grown, it's not a one man department any more it has several people. I don't know if that trend of new development is going to continue. It's probably slowed down significantly the last few years. But it's still more than it was 8-10 years ago. I'm not asking you to do anything, I'm just bringing this to your attention.

Commissioner Casterline – David if you're using labor you still doing a job order and moving the money from 1 fund to the other.

David Reid – yeah

Commissioner Casterline – there's people in your office every day that work on something to do with flood control, how do you pay them just R&B

David Reid – I have several people in the office that are paid partly through R&B and partly through Flood Control. I don't that it's the exact percentage but its close.

Commissioner Rousseau – so the new people that were added like a new crew, did they go to Flood Control?

David Reid – they did.

Commissioner Rousseau – are they in Flood Control 100% or a portion?

David Reid – 100%, but Megan and Elle before her are paid through both fund because they dealt with both.

Commissioner Rousseau – and you a little bit?

David Reid – yes I deal with both.

Tana Taylor – paid out of R&B not Flood Control

Discussion and banter by many

David Reid – so, one thing I have talked about with the Judge and with Vanessa at the City is the way we do drainage in this community should be looked at more carefully. We have the County doing the County stuff and City doing the City stuff and Fulton doing whatever they can do. I think they consolidated the drainage department of some sort, some way to be structured. I think it's a good thing for the community. To consolidate them somehow. Whether it's a Drainage District or different department that answers to all the entities. But something that everybody's doing the same thing and maybe you have a department that deals with the designs of new projects, deals with the construction of projects, with the maintenance of projects we already have. It's ambitious to do and whether we can get all the entities on board to do this but I think it's worth a shot. I think when the storm water fund was created there was that vision of being a group that takes care of everything. Is that right Commissioner?

Commissioner Casterline – in the past we always had a struggle trying to get Rockport to adopt, like when we raised the height required for slabs, and they didn't. It seems like we're in a much better climate for cooperation than we have been in the past.

David Reid – I agree with that.

Commissioner Chaney – there was also a significant concern of who's under what law, drainage is different. The County has a certain amount of authority, the City has considerably more authority. If I remember correctly the question was about who would be in charge if something like that happened? You think it'd be the County because it has more drainage if we took all that on. But, the City has more authority and would be a much better funding source.

David Reid – there certainly are details to figure out. I think conceptually it's a good idea. Rockport is probably more on board with something like that than they've ever been.

Commissioner Casterline – David have you talked with Vanessa much about the deal we have with ETJ?

David Reid – yeah.

Commissioner Casterline –that was one of those things that we never could get working just right.

David Reid – that problem has gone away since Vanessa came in. They're looking at that, they don't do anything in the ETJ except when their utilities are serving

Commissioner Casterline –since they can't annex anymore why is there even an ETJ?

David Reid – I will point out that becoming part of the City is not necessarily a bad thing for the community. This does give more building codes that have to be followed, that the County can't require. Let's let the City annex more property and let the City instill their building codes, and get better development.

Commissioner Casterline – a lot of people that live out there don't want to be annexed, more than you think.

David Reid – I get that and I'm not suggesting that we uniformly say it's all the City now. But it does have some benefits.

Commissioner Chaney – it goes back to having the whole County under one Police system, some places it has worked and some places it hasn't.

Commissioner Dupnik – were you thinking of a “district” flood control department for the County would work similar to the R&B, you have basically operate independently in some manners. Is that what you are envisioning?

David Reid – right, I would envision it to be a lot like the R&B in that they are there to implement the policies that the various entities want to put in place.

Commissioner Casterline – we very well could take the Flood District that we have right now and just restructure it to do that.

Commissioner Dupnik – That's what I was wondering.

Commissioner Casterline – in the meeting Vanessa talked about putting it in an LLC or something/ LGC and just restructure what we have. Just by changing the people that are on the board.

Judge Garza – almost like a Flood Authority/Drain Authority

Commissioner Casterline – something that you mentioned, when the Flood Control was created and we had an election to do it we didn't create a tax we just moved it from R&B to there. There was not a new tax created and the Commissioner's Court has control over what that tax rate is.

David Reid – it's not something that we independently decide to raise taxes.

Commissioner Chaney – I remember that it stated that we could never go above “X” but I have never seen that.

Commissioner Dupnik – Jacky do you know what that is?

Jacky Cockerham – I would have to look and make sure, it's never been an issue because they've never gone to that point. But I will verify that. I know we look at the expenditures for Flood Control and that is how we determine how much has to come out of R&B.

Commissioner Chaney – When we talked about adding the department at the time we didn't have an indicator of how much time that department was going to out of R&B and put in drainage. This whole thing needs to be looked at under David's guidance so we can get a better idea. Everywhere you go you see them out working on drainage.

Jacky Cockerham – We did include a new crew, I don't believe it was last budget but he does have a four-man crew on drainage.

Commissioner Dupnik – if we created a drainage department, how much would it grow the government? I know you have people right now that are dedicated that so you'd be shifting some people right? You wouldn't have enough people, you would need an engineer focused strictly on that.

David Reid – right

Commissioner Dupnik – not to hold you to it, just trying to get a rough idea what you think personnel-wise?

David Reid – I don't know. I'm thinking of this as not a "County" per se department but a multi-jurisdictional department and so you have Rockport & Fulton and the Navigation District picking up part of this cost. Maybe they have personnel that moves over. This is just ideas. We've had some discussions in Storm Water about having a workshop specifically to get on the same page as far as drainage criteria. I think we're looking at August. This could be a good opportunity to talk more about drainage.

Commissioner Casterline – Getting the regulations the same in every jurisdiction to me is the first big step.

Commissioner Chaney – really identifying what that's going to take care of? Collection boxes, off of the streets or just open spaces. A lot needs to be decided.

David Reid – is it roadside ditches or cross-country ditches? Yeah.

### **Bill Mills – Sheriff**

- Unfunded Mandate, Page 31

Judge Garza – received your email about the Bailiffs, and you wanting to add another part-time Bailiff.

Sheriff Mills – We are having trouble finding applicants for part-time. In 2009-2010 we went to that we had 2 or 3 part-time Bailiffs that were working 15 hours a week. Michael pulled a report that the County Court meets on the average this year 4 days a week. Bianchi is in session for from 2 hours to 6 or 7 hours. That is the busiest court with the number of days and that's going to change because on Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> the jurisdictional limit in County Court becomes unlimited for civil cases. He will civil load that the District Judges haven't got to. You heard Judge Bauer yesterday talking about just the criminal docket is backed up and has hindered their ability to even move on the civil. Bianchi is going to get even busier than he has been and they're going to be for duration cases that I think will last longer than the typical 4 out of 5 days this year. On top of the deal with Bianchi the most time consuming is going to be the District Court. If you have been here on a Wednesday, I took Commissioner Rousseau outside to the parking lot a month ago we had 3 jail vans with 3 Detention Officers watching the 3 vans. We had 28 inmates that were here for the docket call and announcements. That has become the standard at least every other Wednesday. Come back tomorrow when there will be 2 District Judges aside from the murder trial. Judge Bauer touched surface yesterday afternoon talking about an arraignment last week where nearly 80 cases were heard with 1 plea entered. Everybody in the jail seems to be content to sit and wait because they know we are not getting to them, and that's not even touching the civil cases. She talked about the bond cases, the oldest murder case that we have that gentleman is out on bond. I don't know under the current system when we are going to get to that? On Wednesdays we have 5 or 6 officers in the courthouse, with the Bailiffs we can muster together. The 5-6 Detention Officers are taken out of the jail or called in. I've got a report about the transports that the jail has done this year. I'm throwing this in now because it all adds to the whole deal to the Bailiffs and the staffing between the Detention Officers and the Bailiffs and what we have available. Through April of this year we have logged 6,300 miles for the Detention Officers for transports. Today we have 2 Detention Officers in Arkansas picking up an inmate on a bench warrant.

Commissioner Chaney – You have to have two to transfer

Sheriff Mills – If we are moving somebody out of state, 1 of the Detention Officers who is certified as a gun totter, we prefer two going but sometimes it will be 1 armed and 1 unarmed. We need two so when you are fueling a vehicle, somebody's going to the bathroom or staying overnight. We went to Puerto Rico last month with two officers to extradite a gentleman back here to stand trial for a case that was 20 years old. We are running everywhere picking people up but within Detention Center alone and the last two weeks with the trial we did bench warrants on two different people. We drove over 600 miles to pick up one of them and we've got to take him back. This is what's going on with what Judge Bauer and Oscar talked about yesterday, the backlog and trying to get it resolved. The applicants we are getting for Bailiffs, we brought one on 2-3 weeks ago who retired from the Sheriff's Office a month ago. She worked 29 hours week before last and she didn't want it. She said "I didn't sign up for this". She thought it would be 10-12 hours a week. Her husband wants to travel in July. Mic a retired officer who has been in the County Court for a couple of years has decided to do the reverse Snowbird routine and during the summer he goes back north and he'll come back in the winter. And with Charlie Phillips retirement is out. The applicants we're getting right now with us asking to work 29-30 hours a week, they are looking for a full-time job. The guy with that license wants a full-time job with benefits. We are not getting people for the 10-12 hours because the court has grown into, we can't find enough part time

people to fill out a calendar for the demand that we're seeing in County and District Courts. The District Judges like she said have given us additional jury docket days this year as well as next year. The will hinge on Amanda's caseload and her ability to get prepared. We can bring in all the visiting Judges we want but the rub's going to be whether or not her the two felony prosecutors can have cases ready to prosecute. At this time counting the guy that's on trial next door, 5 people are in the Detention Center on murder warrants in Aransas County.

Commissioner Chaney – this is the tip of the iceberg, it's going to get worse because of the way Aransas County is growing. We are not always getting the cream of the crop. There is no reason to believe that this is not going to continue. Requiring the Sheriff's Department to do things way beyond their manpower. So along with needing Bailiffs, long-term your staffing is really going to take a hit if you don't get some help.

Sheriff Mills – We're already involved and engaged in the last year, by looking at receipts, the transfer station called and wanted an office sent out in the afternoon at 4:15 to stand by while they move the money from the booth to the office. I thought that was odd but they want to find out how much money they're taking in out there. Typically on Tuesdays there is a huge load and Saturdays everybody's out there. So we have picked that up as a routine, 15-20 minutes out there, as time allows. And, the elections, the Tax Collections, and Live Oak Elementary traffic mess hasn't got any better over the years, So we're pulled away but this deal with courts has added to it. We're to the point now that if we can't get the applicants for part-time we're going to have to use off-duty deputies and pay them overtime to bailiff.

Commissioner Dupnik – how many part-time Bailiffs do you have right now? I talked to the one, she's putting a lot more hours in than she intended. If you hire a full time Bailiff how much is that going to change the need for part-timers?

Michael Brooks, Chief Deputy – We just have three part-time Bailiffs right now. Two for the District and Sharon for County Court at Law. There are four open, and Mic is gone up north, but those four can't even manage. Tomorrow we will have two District Judges here and County Court going.

Commissioner Dupnik – You will still need the number part-timers you have, but an additional full-time Bailiff that will take some of the stress off of trying to fill the vacancies.

Commissioner Casterline – if you had a full-time maybe you could cut down on the part-time?

Michael Brooks – The full-time Bailiff would be for County Court. In District we don't really have an issue right now as long as those two guys stay in District. The County Court is harder to cover, it's more time we need someone that's available. Both courts want 2 Bailiffs at all times.

Commissioner Dupnik – Right now you're part-time Bailiff in County Court is putting in 30 plus hours right?

Michael Brooks – 29 hours last week, and it's growing everywhere

Sheriff Mills – With Mic back north, but he'll come back in the winter but that's a few months away. But we need 6 people here on Wednesdays and that's become routine. We are bringing deputies off the street to do this. While they're in here they are not doing what we hired them to do. Patrol and respond to calls and take reports. That's what we are doing to try to make sure the courts are protected.

Commissioner Dupnik – One day I think I counted 8 deputies in there. The District Court was going on, County Court at Law

Sheriff Mills – we are overflowing to different rooms and County Court in session

Commissioner Dupnik – so instead of them being out on the street they're having to be supplementing the Bailiff work.

Sheriff Mills – True and the expectation of the District Judges to have Detention Officers in the courtroom. This takes them out of the Detention Center where we're staffed at a level to provide services in there. There is always something going on in there. We're running 6 vans now and some days there won't be a van in the parking lot. We'll be hauling to Federal Court, to the hospital, to the doctor's office, or doing transports. In-state transports for the bench warrants because of the backlog. We are providing the people, bringing them so the courts aren't going to say "we couldn't get a witness" that was in Arkansas or wherever. Then we have to take them back. This has been the most trying deal, that's affected both the Detention Center and the staffing of Patrol Deputies and carry the court system.

Commissioner Casterline – are these the cases that we're doing right now, are they mostly that backlog that built up a few years ago? Has it never been worked down or are the becoming more current cases

Sheriff Mills – Some of it is the backlog, some of it started with the storm. Then the pandemic shutting down and everything going virtual didn't help. I think the type of cases has changed more than anything else. 15 years ago I ran on the deal "it's about drugs" and drugs were driving the burglaries and some of the assaults. The Grand Jury indictments now we are seeing a lot of sexual assault and family violence. Back then we had murders but had people using the castle doctrine, but to have 5 people in our Detention Center in Aransas County on murder warrants that go back two years and we can't get them to the top of the list because the law requires the sexual assaults get preferential settings in the District Court. We're having some of the newer cases that occurred in the last six to nine months but because the law requires the preferential setting. But because we bump these murder cases back they're still sitting there costing us money.

Commissioner Dupnik – How much is a Bailiff position loaded?

Tana Taylor – I did run the numbers. For an entry level at Sheriff's Office with the benefits it comes to \$73,429.00

Sheriff Mills – that would be one aspect, if we assigned him to County and court is not going he'd be available to step into District. That just takes some of the burden off, because we'll know we are going to have somebody in that court. If keep the four part-time, Andy left today for a vacation and will be out for over a week. So we will have an investigator in there

Commissioner Casterline – I know Charlie Phillips did a lot.

Sheriff Mills – Charlie did a lot.

Commissioner Casterline – apparently Gavin doesn't want to do it

Sheriff Mills – He has not inquired about it, I don't know if Charlie in the last 2 years if he'd have been active if he would have been in the court much, due to trying to keep up with the load. Everything has changed with the limits going up, rental property has grown the need for the evictions has increased.

Commissioner Dupnik – I'm going to ask you about the gas and lubricants, you're putting a lot more travel expenses and that explains there's a big increase in your fuel expenses, right.

Sheriff Mills – We cut the budget some but last year we raised it because of the fear it would to \$5 a gallon, and that's what we would have needed.

Commissioner Dupnik – so that's why you're able, even with all the travel, to cut the fuel costs or it went down some.

Sheriff Mills – we cut some of that out because I thought looking at this year's run rate in last year's I thought we'll trim some out of there. I didn't want to get overly optimistic and cut its way down and then next year come back and say 450 I can't cover it.

Commissioner Chaney – how much is your mileage increase, the actual number of miles covered? That's a good measure if they increase that helps a little bit.

Sheriff Mills – I do not have a number for the mileage compared to last year. We should be able to get it through the pumps at R&B, I would imagine.

Commissioner Chaney – I'm sure the court would be interested to know the total miles the Sheriff's Department drives. I think we'll all be surprised at how many miles it is. We've got the 2<sup>nd</sup> smallest land county in Texas.

Sheriff Mills – as far as activity we're nowhere near the smallest.

Judge Garza – Sheriff before you answer that I want to remind the court and your staff if you're going to talk about like sensitive security information we'll have to go into closed session on Friday. We'll go through your budget now but if there's really areas of concern we'll have a closed session on Friday, so that we're not blasting our vulnerabilities to the world.

Commissioner Dupnik – I was looking at if you're asking for a Bailiff position you've cut your fuel quite a bit and you feel confident that your fuel costs and operations, so really you're asking for another \$16,000 over your actual budget from 2023 to fund the Bailiff.

Sheriff Mills – the Bailiff would come out of the courthouse security fund or would it come out of mine. Where does Donnie charge too?

Tana Taylor – Your department, but on the Bailiffs if you had a full-time with County Court that would come out of County Court at Law.

Multiple people said "Oh"

Commissioner Chaney – it's still and officer.

Tana Taylor – what we do currently have in place is any part-time Bailiffs, they log whatever court they work in and we charge it to that specific court. But there are days that they cover Donnie's position, if he is out on vacation so then that goes to the Sheriff's budget.

Sheriff Mills – Part of the discussion is about who's this part-time employee, will cover for Donnie step up at the desk and is in there for the day or week when he's on vacation.

Tana Taylor – if you do have a full-time Bailiff for County Court at Law that they are requesting. There could be a day that that person would fill in for Donnie and it would go to that budget. Or that person could fill in for District Court it would be charged to them.

Commissioner Casterline – I don't think we have a choice but to put one in there. If you did slow down, well you might just cut back on your part-time hours.

Tana Taylor – right

Commissioner Dupnik – yes I agree.

Sheriff Mills – in long-term if we get caught up in a year or two, everybody's already talked about the second floor of the new courthouse and asking if we are going to put a person on the second floor? This would be something that down the road with him being assigned to County Court which is upstairs and he can serve as your person on the second floor when he's not in the courtroom. There's a lot of benefits to it but it gives us a little relief while we're culling through applicants for the part-time and get the hours for the current part-time Bailiff back down to 10-12 hours a week, not something that's consuming 2/3 of her week.

Commissioner Dupnik – That part-time pay is going to offset the cost of a Bailiff also. With a full-time Bailiff she's cutting her hours down.

Tana Taylor – a lit bit right.

Michael Brooks – Right now we actually short in County Court because they want two Bailiffs and sometimes that's a requirement because we do have inmates or have

Commissioner Casterline – in County Court or District Court?

Sheriff Mills – we put two in all now. Bianchi has been more understanding but he realizes that vulnerability is the same in his court as in District. He sits on a committee with them and they meet in Sinton Monthly and he follows the guidelines that they set. But he is more forgiving if we got in court this afternoon and we only had 1 Bailiff. He may call it to my attention but he's not going to cancel court. I don't know what the District Judges will do, I know that they'll do without a Detention Office there.

Commissioner Dupnik – Didn't ya'll just recently have an incident where you needed a couple of

Michael Brooks – Yes we did have an incident in the District Court, luckily there were two Bailiffs at that time. But, we still myself and Donnie had to run into the front

Commissioner Dupnik – That's what I thought

Michael Brooks – because you can't leave the judge. The Judge has to be protected until that the Judge is escorted out and into her chambers or find a locked door so you got one person struggling with someone, and that's the case for County Court you could have the situation here and we only have one person right now. Sometimes I have to come over or someone else come to assist on some cases, parental cases where their child is being taken away. That's not taken lightly some people get very upset and with only one person here we having a hard time covering that by ourselves.

Sheriff Mills – the volatility of what is covered in County Court is probably greater than what we see in District Court. He (Judge Bianchi) is hearing more family stuff.

Commissioner Casterline – I know ya'll see it every day and that since Harvey and all the other deals the personality of people in general has gone downhill as far as their behavior. Elle told us yesterday that people almost getting in fights when they come to dump their trash. Anywhere you go you need to expect it because you're going to running into somebody that's bad, that you never had before Harvey, I know we had a lot of things and everything piled up. It's changed the personality of people in general drastically.

Commissioner Dupnik – I agree with that.

Tana Taylor – the pandemic did not help at all.

Commissioner Casterline – all of the combined have really pushed people over the top.

Sheriff Mills – Well, in a societal change, I saw a report three weeks ago talking about why crime has gotten worse. The number one response people said was there's no accountability. We are not getting to them, they are sitting in jail and if nothing's going to happen to me, who cares.

Commissioner Chaney – A lot of the Sheriff's time is spent in assisting the City Officers as needed as the City Officers come to the County to assist. Law enforcement is not a unit, it's a bunch of units.

Sheriff Mills – And in the public you'll see a lot of the Dual response and assistance. But you're not going to see it too much in the courtroom. My concern is will I even see them in the courthouse if we have an alarm on. My hope is that yes they would respond, even though it's a County property, we could use the assistance. It's the whole Dynamics of people have expanded Fulton's gone to two officers, the School District has gone to four, everybody has grown but the populations has grown. The rental properties, the trailer parks, people coming and going, the caseload has still remained pretty constant. We are still running 750-800 calls a month, those are public generated calls, not stuff that we initiate on traffic stops or investigations that we've going because of complaints and observations. It's bottlenecking at the court system. We have too many people that have been in that detention center for 450-500 days. At the same time we are holding on a state level for mental health commitments we've had 3-4 for most of the year, we had a lady that waited on a bed for over 700 days. We have no control over that but a lot of money was allocated to build a center in Victoria that may help but that's 2 years out. When it's all added up the court stuff and the mental health, I just need to get the deputies back on the street. I don't need to use them on overtime to Bailiff a courtroom if we can find a way to hire some of the people who are applying.

Commissioner Casterline – did the bill pass that was going to have the State reimburse us for time in excess that it took to get them to the prison system?

Sheriff Mills – there's always been there if it went over 40 days, that we were to be reimbursed. I don't have that problem now. TDCJ is responding pretty quickly once we get the paper ready.

Commissioner Casterline – I thought there was a new bill to deal with that or something

Sheriff Mills – I think they were wanting to raise the rate and there may be people that are having an issue but the issue is more with them not getting the packet ready, and they're counting that in their delays and she was just taking forever but we've gotten pretty good about getting the packets together. Once we get the packet submitted and approved they're picking them up in 8-10 days. I get that report monthly as part of the jail commission report it shows how many on any given day of the week were paper ready and how many were picked up. Those that have just sat here get credit for time served so get somebody that's sentenced to five years in the Texas Department of Corrections but he's been in my jail for two years waiting to get to court, they give him credit for the two years and they are eligible for parole at 25% of his sentence so in less than 2 years they are eligible. He gets there, gets processed and gets sent home, and we paid for that. The same as if he had gone to prison but we don't get to bill them for that because we couldn't get him to the courts. That's another reason to speed up the court because we are losing money on the front end of this, housing people that get credit for time served against their sentences and Texas Department of Corrections.

Commissioner Dupnik – Is you license and weight Deputy able to serve full-time in his main duty?

Sheriff Mills – He stay s busy doing just what he does and you're going to see if you look at Judge Dupnik's report the citations revenue collected off the wear and tear on the roads has gone up. The prosecutor's office wrote a brief to submit for an AG opinion, to see if we really have to have a license and weight officer to turn the lights on at the weigh station. We were hopeful for legislation this last year but it didn't happen. If we are working with MOU with DPS and through their CVW group, we are licensed and certified, why can't we turn on the lights? We own the facility but can't turn the lights on and can't direct the traffic in for weight.

Commissioner Dupnik – You can't?

Sheriff Mills – No sir, you have to be a trooper that is licensed in commercial vehicle operation. That enforcement group and the one that lives here put in a lot of time over the last six months that has put a lot of time in the county has applied to join a new boat group performing. So we are going to lose the most productive licensed and weight officer with DPS we've had in the last six months. Ronnie has stepped in and done a good job, he is very well versed in what he does, knowledgeable.

Commissioner Casterline – he was good when he was here before

Sheriff Mills – yes sir, he actually wrote a brief we took it to the prosecutor and asked if she submit it for an AG opinion citing different statutes

Commissioner Casterline – the cases from out there, I know we are switching to one department to the other, when they get fined, we were budgeting the maximum penalty but we had the issue that the Judges were not fining anywhere near that.



Sheriff Mills – Judges and Attorneys, you had a turnover in different philosophies...

Commissioner Casterline – so what level is Judge Dupnik or whoever they go through fining the people that are found guilty

Sheriff Mills – She sent out a report, by officer how many citations down to the point of how much revenue has been paid.

Tana Taylor – I don't have it.

Sheriff Mills – she shows by officer the potential revenue what has been paid and what hasn't. Talking about Mr. Chris and looking at the report he had written more citations for license and weight than the entire DPS crew has in Aransas County.

Commissioner Casterline – it was like that when he worked here before. That was flaw that I saw in when we got a list that showed what the maximum fine was and we would budget that but reality was the Judge was going to fine them a fraction of that amount.

Tana Taylor – there were a lot of discrepancies, I think it is by statute that it is at the Judge's discretion on fines

Commissioner Casterline – But we just have to figure out what reality is, I don't like to see us budget above what the reality of what the Judge is going to do.

Tana Taylor – and then depending on the type of citation the State gets half of it.

Sheriff Mills – with a commercial vehicle a lot of it does go to the State. Dupnik has a report she keeps it and uses it. She issued it a month and a half ago and I didn't bring it.

Commissioner Casterline – does it all go to her?

Tana Taylor – yes sir.

Sheriff Mills – all license and weight. Years ago we'd gone over and experience a turnover not only with the Judges about with the prosecution and we saw this roller coaster on what was being cited, and we still occasionally some disagreement if the charge is legit. We had a sit down with the County Attorney's Office and showed them and he said "I didn't read on down there" Ronnie does have the authority to do that. There's a learning curve every time we change personnel. Ronnie stays busy on the road doing that. I don't think he has been in the courtroom as a Bailiff...

Michael Brooks – he has one time, because that's how short we run.

Commissioner Dupnik – That's what I was wondering

Commissioner Casterline – I don't really recognize him now, there's a difference size wise from when he was here before.

Commissioner Dupnik – It sounds like ya'll have to have all hands on deck because of that

Michael Brooks – sometimes like right now with this new murder trial is involved, about 6-7 of our deputies, I can't use them because they invoke the rule and they can't be in there. Unfortunately I have to use the investigator that's new, Margarita, she is a Bailiff right now because she wasn't involved in the case.

Sheriff Mills – Many others were involved I the case preparation and the investigation so we can't put them in there to Bailiff.

Commissioner Dupnik – I got you

Commissioner Casterline – I don't see that we really have any choice but to budget another Bailiff

Judge Garza – right

Commissioner Casterline – Full-time, I don't have an issue with that myself

Commissioner Dupnik – I think it's a need

Sheriff Mills – Sitting with Judge Bauer and Oscar yesterday, it's the same thing coming from us and we're in the middle of the deal trying to keep it together. Keep it a safe environment and provide the personnel, but it takes them off the road. Staffing for Bailiffs and Detention Officers trying to weight out the two we added last year to satisfy the court deal we were thinking 1 District Court and now that's turned into two trying to catch us up. We are just not getting pleas out of the guys sitting in jail. They seemed to be content to sit.

Commissioner Dupnik – you're telling the Court you are exhausting all of your resources.

Sheriff Mills – we are. The other deal that Bauer was talking about the attorney fees, I think she was asking to double. That's another compounded deal. If we could speed this process up there's a lot of opportunity for some savings from here and there. If we can get the attorneys off of the payroll a little bit, move some cases and get the out of the jail and cut down on some manpower issues but we have looked at applications for 3 months this has been going on and we didn't see it and it's not going to change with the new courthouse. It's

going to be more of an issue overflowing downstairs in the movement of people over there. We need to do something there but it affects both sides of the street. The rest of the budget I cut what I could where I could Judge Garza – on the overtime, does that include Stone Garden?

Tana Taylor – it does, so we are at the beginning of this grant period and we have not submitted for the reimbursement yet, that's probably three months' worth of Stone Garden time that we have not received the reimbursement for. So that will drop significantly.

Sheriff Mills – that number goes up and down.

Tana Taylor – we'll discuss that at the next Budget Workshop.

Commissioner Casterline – there was bill that had to do with grant, is that another version of Stone Garden?

Sheriff Mills – Operational Lone star. Is a State funded grant like Border Store?

Commissioner Casterline – has this been signed?

Tana Taylor – I think you have to apply for that?

Sheriff Mills – The grant period opened day before yesterday and we're submitting an application

Commissioner Casterline – But no I'm saying there was a new one that on our list serve or 22

Tana Taylor – yes sir

Sheriff Mills – It was a grant that raises the minimum salary for Sheriffs in the State of Texas and some Deputies. They're trying to establish a benchmark but money can be used also for equipment that's not a part of your budget.

Tana Taylor – but you do have to apply for it in January.

Commissioner Casterline – I'm just wondering if that was new or just an extension of what you've been getting?

Sheriff Mills – It's a brand new one. Two years ago the legislators made a run at it, the Sheriff ha introduce the deal trying to establish something \$70,000 as a minimum for Sheriffs in the State. There are some Sheriff's offices that have 4 employees

Commissioner Casterline – Another bill mandated schools to have a certain number of law enforcement

Sheriff Mills – there's going to continue to be efforts to bolster the schools. But I believe it's a local jurisdictional deal and even with the four officers a call at the school is going to see a response from every agency in this County. We have training coming up this summer as well as alerts coming back to conduct in cooperation with the school. They're making some the buildings available to us before they tear them down for remodeling for an active shooter response and we haven't done that with alert here in several years. It'll be refresher course for some and new for others but it's on the front focus for this whole County.

Commissioner Dupnik – on 418 on page 32, maintenance agreements and you've got \$55,000 and you've spent \$1,000 so far this year, and 2022 you had \$59,000 spent but the years prior is a very limited amount. I was wondering what the maintenance agreements were.

Sheriff Mills – these came up last year and the year before because of the warranty and the new radios after Harvey, they ran out at 3 & 4 years and so we signed a renewal on that it's \$32,000 and instructed Rhonda to go ahead and take that out. I don't want to make the monthly payments because we get an invoice and it's easier to just take the thing and pay it and be done with the annual maintenance on the radios. That's a big part of that.

Commissioner Dupnik – that's the Radio's

Sheriff Mills – yes sir, most of it. Agreement with Motorola equipment for the tower and the radios. That will be an annual deal because of the warranties.

Commissioner Chaney – if I remember correctly you did a lot of bargaining to get that down. It was \$75,000 originally wasn't it?

Sheriff Mills – it was, we started considerably higher than that. We took some stuff out because they had provision that they would respond in less than two hours and that they would keep an inventory of all the products and parts and have them here within eight hours. So, County would have theoretically been paying them to maintain an inventory of parts and if we could ever get to the point that I think we'd be in our best interest if we owned our own. Buy a combiner antenna and store it somewhere rather than pay them in an annual agreement and have it sitting in our back pocket. We have the GPS antenna don't we?

Michael Brooks – we do have some spare parts.

Sheriff Mills – Spare GPS antennas, but we don't have the combiner. The repeaters and that stuff we don't have yet and if get to the point that I think it would be in our best interest in the radio line to establish that

inventory and not pay Motorola to maintain an inventory. And yes we cut by \$20,000 something from the first year. But we have to have that expertise responding because when those go down, too many things depend on it and City has now expressed an interest in coming onto the system with us with the VHF.

Judge Garza – let's move on to the Detention Center

Sheriff Mills – Detention Center

Commissioner Casterline – what are we doing on federal prisoners this year?

Sheriff Mills – begging

Commissioner Casterline – what are we budgeting for this year? Because we were way off

Armando Chapa, Chief Deputy – when I started there we usually ran 80 – 90, we were down to the teens, and the 4-5 months I have been begging to send up more people and two weeks ago that sent us 10. I heard yesterday that Nueces County is getting overcrowded again so we will be receiving I think 16 from them.

Sheriff Mills – we were housing 28 or 30 in Nueces County Prisoners for a while and they got caught up in their courts and they pulled everybody out about 2 weeks ago. We gained a few Feds but we have an agreement that's approved and will be on the 24th agenda for an agreement with Gonzales County. Commissioners we're reaching out trying to establish MOUs with anybody that has a crowding problem.

Armando Chapa – about 3 months ago I sent out an invite through our JOIC which is an Intel briefing that I do every Thursday and they put out a notice that we have available housing at our jail, hopefully to stimulate some interest. We did get a little bit of interest in it.

Commissioner Casterline – I'm seeing somebody from San Antonio

Judge Garza – I haven't heard back from them.

Commissioner Casterline – when we were at the COG the Judge from I think McMullen County, stated that he's going to look at just close our jail and ship them off somewhere else.

Sheriff Mills – if they don't have much population they may say it's easier to house them elsewhere. Not all Counties in the State of Texas has a jail. I think there's about 245. They have contract with other Counties.

Commissioner Casterline – I would like to see us get what we budget. Be realistic because I know last year's was a shocker.

Sheriff Mills – When we got resolved with Nueces County they didn't quite make up but for most of the year, we had more Nueces County prisoners than we had Feds.

Commissioner Casterline – not just Feds but whatever

Commissioner Dupnik – I saw what you feed the prisoners, you do a good job as far as managing costs, the prisoners eat well, the jail is well taken care of, I was really impressed .

Sheriff Mills – We are reaching out trying to establish MOUs with as many surrounding places s we can to try to make up for the down turn of the Fed deal but I talked to the Marshal for the Southern District and that at a national level the push is away from detaining anybody anywhere. He promised to try to do something to get us some inmates over here as well. The beds in that jail have an embedded cost regardless of whether I've got 160 or 190 inmates. We share the cost at 190 we are better off. I don't know of a case where we've turned anybody down. We'll try to get them on board and help them out but they're all paying the same rate that the Feds do and that's one thing we've remained consistent in our contracts and MOUs with Nueces and Gonzales Counties. The proposal is to keep it at the same level with Feds.

Commissioner Dupnik – what is the current rate?

Sheriff Mills - \$64 or \$70?

Jacky Cockerham - \$70 or \$73

Tana Taylor – \$76

Sheriff Mills – I think any part of the first day is \$64 or something, if they're there for a partial day we don't charge the full amount, after that we have a flat rate. All of them are structured where we're reimbursed for anything other than routine medical cost. If they go to the ER we will pay it, but we will bill the county and notify them as quick as possible to see if they want to make other arrangements to take them somewhere else. If it's life-threatening we're going to take care of them and then work the billing out later, it is in the contract.

Judge Garza – you've to \$30,000 projected for your overtime. But your year to date is \$74,000. Part of that is the courtroom stuff. Some is Mondo is working Stone Garden and his is going against the jail but it will be reimbursed.

Armando Chapa – we made some adjustments for our overtime. I've talked to the staff and now to minimize the overtime, now before they work overtime they have to get administrative approval. We have even asked someone to take comp-time as opposed to getting paid and it's working out. We're actually going to have a staff meeting on Thursday to discuss that, the overtime and accumulation of it. We're on it, we are trying to do everything that we can to try minimize the amount of overtime.

Judge Garza – I appreciate it thank you

Jacky Cockerham – were talking about just reminding them that about the comp-time. By statute and by our policy they can only earn 90 hours after that they do have to be paid.

Armando Chapa – I've also announced the officers we're working full staff and again just trying to be creative if we're at full staff and it's slow and an officer has accumulated comp-time, go home. We're already doing that.

Jack Cockerham – that's good.

Sheriff Mills – I wish there was more we could cut out. But the big target times in the budget center around fuel, food, I wish I could bring a solid number for housing revenue. A few years ago the Judges were working on bods to get people out because with the Feds there we were pushing at a max and we couldn't exceed that without getting in trouble with the Jail Commission.

Commissioner Dupnik – I was also impressed with your cafeteria manager. He was telling me he goes out shopping he'll find someone who has a quantity of food that they're trying to close out and this month over budget because he bought a lot of frozen food and his walk-in freezer allows this and it's going to save cost for the next few months.

Armando Chapa – he purchases as far away as California to get the best deals. He is very good at way he does.

Tana Taylor – a discussion that we had, and I don't know if you wanted to talk about that is the cell phone allowance for all of your deputies.

Sheriff Mills – we've got some that would use it, some would not. My understanding of policy doesn't allow it across the board within the Sheriff's Office. We do have a lot of other departments in the County that have a cell phone usage at the street level. If we open it up I don't know what the rate would be on it. Is it \$30 per month?

Tana Taylor – yes sir

Sheriff Mills – Is what the County pays

Tana Taylor – that is what our investigators are at

Sheriff Mills – we've had cases in some parts of the County that we didn't have good coverage and they are on a cell phone trying to call in because of radio issues. Or dead and weak on the handheld radio where we're out of the car. The project we are working on hopefully if we get it funded and pulled together to tie the towers together may slow some of that down and improve the coverage that we have. It looks like it will fund and hopefully it will. It would be no expense to the County and will improve the radio communications and not leave a safety issue for the officer that he's on his cell phone and enduring that cost. But there's school of thought in the legal group that if a deputy takes his phone out and takes pictures with it all of sudden this becomes subject to seizure by the court. Some will not do it for that reason, they don't want their personal cell phone up to scrutiny of attorney in the court.

Commissioner Dupnik – we actually had that happen at work. Employees had a personal phone and took some photos and for some reason something went to court and it becomes a big issue.

Commissioner Chaney – for a while people were carrying digital cameras, to be used only for company business

Sheriff Mills – Technology continues to evolve and change, we try to issue cameras to the investigators but I don't know that we have the inventory of cameras for patrol? Some of them are going to do what needs to be done at the time it needs to be done. But there are going to do it with reservations in the back of their mind know that the Court can say later that I want your phone, or I need to dump your phone because of case law with Brady and Morton, did we divulge everything? Some deputies may do this and some may not.

I know ya'll don't have a pot of money and it's going to be a rough year. For a lot of years we've held the line on staffing, and the demands on deputies being out there responding to things and annexation laws but the cities can't grow like they did at the rate in the past. These developments are occurring in the county and our calls for

service are going to reflect that. Our response time will start generating some calls and complaints if we're not there.

Commissioner Casterline – I think with this VRBO stuff the City regulations are going to push a lot of people that are wanting to get into that to do it in the County.

Sheriff Mills – you have some in the County now.

Commissioner Casterline – in Sunset Bay there might be 25-30 people there some nights.

Sheriff Mills – we had at City by the Sea a few years ago at the end of one of the streets. That what generated the whole cul-de-sac argument. Next door was a VRBO and people would come with 5-6 cars and didn't have room to park on their property.

Commissioner Chaney – One of the things we considered about those apartments between Palm Harbor and Bahia Bay that has turned into a real issue.

Sheriff Mills – It's just while we limited City growth and Taxation there, it dropped the burden on the County and we're going to assume more and more of it. And the development continues. We've got sewer that goes beyond the City and that's an opportunity

Commissioner Chaney – On the South side of 188 that's going to go crazy out there.

Judge Garza – Thank you Sheriff

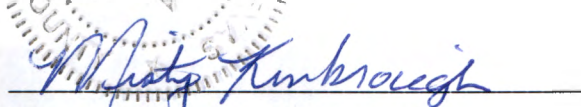
Commissioner Dupnik – Thank you for everything that you are doing

Judge Garza – do I have a motion?

Commissioner Dupnik – I make a motion to close our workshop

Roll Call – 4-0 we are adjourned, Commissioner Rousseau was not present.



  
Misty Kimbrough, Ex-Officio Clerk  
of the Commissioners Court

  
Ray A. Garza, County Judge

