

MINUTES OF THE

COMMISSIONERS' COURT

WORKSHOP MEETING - JUNE 22, 2020

On the 22nd day of June, 2020, there was a Workshop Meeting of the Commissioners' Court in the Commissioners' Courtroom, 2840 Hwy 35 N, Rockport, Aransas County, Texas, with the following members present: **C. H. "Burt" Mills, Jr.**, County Judge; **Jack Chaney**, Commissioner, Precinct 1; **Leslie "Bubba" Casterline**, Commissioner, Precinct 2; **Charles Smith**, Commissioner, Precinct 3; **Wendy Laubach**, Commissioner, Precinct 4; and **Valerie K. Amason**, County Clerk.

Other County Officers present in person, via Youtube, or via ZOOM were **Jerry Brundrett**, County Surveyor; **Kristen Barnebey**, County District Attorney; **Alma Cartwright**, Treasurer; **Pam Heard**, District Clerk; **Bill Mills**, Sheriff; **Tracy Orr**, Administrative Assistant to the County Judge; **Jacky Cockerham**, Interim County Auditor; **Tana Taylor**; First Assistant County Auditor; **David Reid**, Road Administrator/Drainage Engineer/Stormwater Management Engineer; **Michael Geer**, Airport Manager; **John Strothman**, Pathways Project Manager; **Collin Jackson**, IT Director;

**Michele Carew**, Elections Administrator; **John Gutierrez**, Chief Deputy Sheriff;

Long-Term Recovery Specialists: **Kim Foutz**;

Members of Local City Government, Community Groups and other Interested Parties present:

Aransas County Citizens: **Mark Wagnon**, Attorney at Law; **Pat Rousseau**, Aransas County Commissioner Elect, Pct. 3; **Robert Scott**;

Economic Development Corporation: Neill Amsler, President/CEO;

Town of Fulton: Rick McLester, Fulton Police Chief and Aransas County Emergency Management Coordinator/Fire Marshall;

Rockport-Fulton Chamber of Commerce: Diane Probst, President/CEO;

Rockport Center for the Arts: Luis Puron, Executive Director;

The Rockport Pilot Newspaper: Mike Probst, Editor and Publisher;

Del Mar College: Lenora Keas, Executive Vice President of Workforce Development and Strategic Initiatives;

The Rockport Group at Morgan Stanley: John Jackson, Certified Investment Management Analyst/Senior Vice President;

J. Schwarz & Associates, Inc.: Brandi Karl, Project Engineer;

Quick Ventures LLC: Jatin Patel, President/Director;

Coastal Bend Business Innovation Center: Russell Franques, Director;

The Meeting was convened at **8:30 a.m.** at which time a quorum was declared by Judge Mills, WHEREUPON, the following proceedings were had and done to wit:

ITEMS FOR DELIBERATION AND/OR ACTION

1. Presentation - Leveraging Aransas County Airport, Mitigation, and Economic Development Opportunities. (See Power Point attached)

**Kim Foutz** gave a Power Point Presentation along with introducing four people to speak on various update on topics which seem to

converge with one another, they include Economic Development, Mitigation (including things such as the Hurricane Dome), Airport Master Plan, and trends of what we anticipate doing in the future.

**Mike Geer** spoke about the Updated Master Plan that he urges the Court to implement which includes possibly leasing some of the non-aeronautic property at the airport to a compatible business, such as the TEAM Center, on the five acres fronting the highway and later on, maybe another portion of land leased for a business park. This will bring in additional revenue, provide economic drive, and also eliminate the need for Aransas County to maintain said property. The release of this property will have to be approved by the Commissioners Court, the Texas Department of Transportation - Aviation Division, and the Federal Aviation Administration. It will also require an environmental assessment, a survey of the land, and an appraisal to insure that the airport is getting fair market value.

**Russel Franques** introduced the concept of the TEAM Center project, a workforce development initiative created by the Local Government Corporation in coordination with the Economic Development Corporation. If approved this will be the first one in the Coastal Bend with collaborative ideas for Aransas County such as Business Incubation, Entrepreneurship, Industry, Technology, Arts/Makers Space, Workforce Development, etc.

**Kim Foust** explained that this TEAM Center is a result of a study done by the Texas A&M University Business Department as well as IC<sup>2</sup> out of the University of Texas and we received this report about Workforce Development, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship,

and this was presented to your Local Government Corporation, the new Economic Development Arm that you have created that is multi-jurisdictional. They asked the Economic Development Committee to go out and research this concept and there is an Economic Development Administration grant that can be up for 100% and they like to fund these types of projects and so the Local Government Corporation asked the Economic Development Corporation to form an Exploratory Committee and so I'm going to ask John Jackson, the Chairman on this committee, to give you some more information about the research that they've been doing.

**John Jackson** announced that at the last meeting of the Local Government Corporation the board accepted and authorized the appointment of this committee to provide research and information needed to satisfy the requirements for the application. In order to do that I wanted the ability to be able to recruit subject matter experts that are seasoned and have a high level of personal interest in this community, every one of these people were chosen with that in mind and I'm calling them the A-Team. First we have Russell Franques, whom we have already heard from, how all of this came about and his colleagues at the University and IC<sup>2</sup> and all of this has led to our decision to pursue an EDA grant. If we go forward Aransas County (Rockport-Fulton) will be the first of others so we will become the model for this type of initiative to support our community's future and our workforce development opportunities. We believe this center will have a major positive impact on Economic Development in Aransas County. Next we have Lenora Keas. She is the Vice President, Chief Operating Officer at Del Mar College, she is one of our own in that she grew up here, attended our

schools, and her family was active in this community for over 80 years, so she too has a personal stake in standing to leverage that influence and play a major role in collaborating with the county and the EDC in training opportunities and spacing the programming needs for first-class workup for a Development Center. Last Wednesday five of us sub-committee visited the Del Mar West Campus for almost three hours and saw first-hand the depth, the breadth, and the quality of the programs and the dedicated faculty providing multiple workforce opportunities for the Coastal Bend. They've offered to work closely with us to develop a first-class center that we envision. Kim Foust, obviously on the committee, not only has she been with the LTR Group since Harvey she's also had the personal experience in her recent past successful Art Center City of Rockport EDA grant. She will be writing the grant proposal but we will need to have it submitted in July, so we are very hard pressed to move as quickly as possible to be an early applicant, which improves our chances before the funds are depleted. Next is Jerry Brundrett, Jerry is from a multi-generational family with deep roots and has been County Surveyor for 42 years, he will be particularly helpful in site selection and assessment. Brandi Karl, the next generation of the Brundrett family and 24 years as a Civil Engineer, much of it here in Aransas County. Mike Geer, manager at the Aransas County Airport, he's the custodian of several hundred acres of available land with the highest elevation in the county, which is an advantage for something like a TEAM Center, a Hurricane Preparedness Dome, or a Business Park. John Strothman leads the local LTR team here and he has over 40 years of real estate development experience

as well. Rick McLester, Emergency Management Director. One of our ancillary goals is to assist Aransas County in planning for a Hurricane Preparedness Dome like so many other coastal communities already have, with the priority location being the Aransas County Airport due to its elevation. Rick is fully engaged in the early stages of evaluation and assessment of this opportunity from a different funding source and hopefully to make this happen before we have another hurricane. Richard Dias, 40 years plus in commercial and residential construction in this community as well as involvement in multiple community activities over the years. Luis Peron, Executive Director of Rockport Center for the Arts, one of the letters in team is Arts and we see a definite collaboration in the area of Arts that will compliment and not duplicate programs and opportunities at the Art Center. Keith Barrett, Harbor Master of the Navigation District, another local who grew up here and has lots of experience in marine construction including needs here in Aransas County. He has a sincere interest in helping this community improve education and workforce development training opportunities. James Creekmore, local CPA and Treasurer of the EDC, he will be providing guidance and fiscal advice from the financial aspects of the TEAM Center concept. Steve Haynes, Port Fabrication and D offered his design capabilities esigning, part of a multi- generation Rockport family who has offered his design capabilities for the grant application. Barbara Gurtner, local businesswoman and former City Council person is an EDC Advisory Director and has volunteered for the committee and has already contributed in our early brainstorming ideas during our Del Mar visit last week. Joey Patek,

Superintendent of the Aransas County Independent School District. The high school already has programs like Welding and Culinary Arts but he is also working with Del Mar to provide Health Sciences in this coming year. ACISD stands to benefit tremendously due to dual credit classes and certifications in several fields. These opportunities will allow students to learn valuable life skills that will hopefully encourage them to stay in our community and be able to provide for their own families while here. Our first goal is site assessment and evaluation, that can go one of two different ways, new construction or an existing building. If we can find a suitable existing site, that could surely result in having more money for programming and equipment. We are definitely on the fast track and pushing hard to collect all of the information that we can for successful grant application and so now I would like to make an important announcement. I think this announcement will surely solidify and improve our chances to not only receive this grant but also secure the Centers successful operation once it becomes a reality. Last week a sub-committee of our Exploratory Committee including Joey Patek, Keith Barrett, Barbara Gurtner, Neill Amsler, and myself were privileged to visit the Del Mar West Campus Workforce Development Center as guests of Executive Vice President, Lenora Keas and several of her key faculty. Each one of us were very impressed with the quality, breadth, and depth of their educational and workforce programming being made available to students as well as continuing education for career advancement and as a direct result of that visit we received the following letter of

support and intent from Del Mar College. (See Letter attached)

**Lenora Keas** stated that it was a privilege and an honor to host the group last week. Del Mar is your Community College, you are part of our service area and we focus on delivering Workforce Development and Higher Education. We have two-year Associate Degrees in Transfer Programs and we also have Highly Technical Degrees. We are very proud of what we have been able to develop in our certificates for continuing education and corporate services. We have a division of Workforce Development that I have been privileged to lead for the last 10 years and we have developed the highest number of Texas Workforce Commission Grants throughout the state. We work directly with business and industry to customize programs to their needs and I think that what you're seeing on the West Campus is the result of that. We've been able to take programs and make them very current. We tie this to the in-demand job list put out by the Texas Workforce Commission and it's very localized. We know that you have a very active community and we purposely would want to engage and collaborate. Whatever we do would be customized to meet your needs and align those needs with higher education and through skills development training. We have the ability to do that through continuing education, which is what some people call non-credit. I don't use that term because everything gets some credit, either in the form of a transcript that is for continuing education or college credit in our college credit programs ladder to where we can work with dual credit programs, such as is going on right now at your high school, or in those transfer right into college credit into degrees and can go on to four year degrees. We focus on Allied



Health, Light Industrial Programs and Transfer Programs. We have one person whose job is to work with industrial certifications and accreditations, that's what NCC and NAFTA is. Most of you that work with light industry are familiar with how important those industrial certifications are, so we can layer college credit or continuing education along with these industrial certifications and customize the programs to meet the community needs. We work with numerous grants, we have National Science Foundation Grants and Texas Workforce Commission Grants, so we've led many initiatives with grants and we are ready to help everyone with that community effort with the TEAMS concept. We know what a maker space is and we've worked maker spaces. Also in our area is the Small Business Development Center that offers counseling and consulting needs for small business. Allied Health is where we have EMS, CNA, Pharmacy Technician, any of those programs that a community might need and we already have those up and running. In our Light Industrial Areas Instrumentation Process Technology, those jobs start between \$50,000 and \$60,000 a year here locally. Within the Ingleside or Portland area with industry, we have students who are making \$120,000 to \$125,000 a year after 2-3 years with these degrees. So what we could provide would be a comprehensive overall initiative to work with your community, to design the programs that you want to meet your needs, and then ladder those up and coordinate them to higher education and through your Workforce Center. We've been able to do this in other locations. We have Centers in Calallen, which has been in existence about 15 years, and then we also have the Center of Economic Development across from Ray High

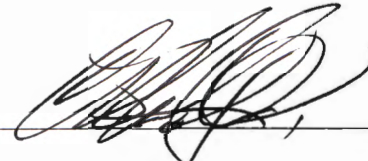
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School in Corpus Christi. I really appreciate the opportunity to be here today.

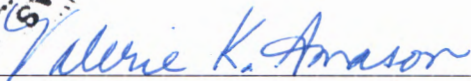
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*No further business presenting, the Court adjourned at 9:00 a.m. on a motion made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Casterline.*

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



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