



MINUTES

Aransas County Commissioners Court Budget Workshop

11:20 AM – Monday, July 31, 2023

The Aransas County Commissioners Court met on Monday, July 31, 2023, at 9:00 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 \(aransascountytx.gov\)](https://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 9:01AM All 4 Commissioner and Judge Garza present.

County Judge – Ray Garza

- **Pages 9 & 13**

- Increase of \$3,500 in total
- Requested step increases shown in the budget
- Public Information Officer position \$36,900 this is an open position that I do not plan on filling, Emily is doing a good job, so we can take it out of the budget
- This led to a discussion about step increases, Commissioner Rousseau wants a discussion on how this is going to be handled in the future. The \$50,000 set aside for step increases is going away to be handled in the individual departments. The way it is set up now has led to some abuse.
- Judge Garza agrees that the process for step increases needs to be revamped.
- Another increase is Attorney Fees, this is due to litigation. The amount is unknown due to paying by the hour.

County Clerk – Misty Kimbrough

- **Pages 10, 20, 77, 97, & 109**

- The major increase is for furniture and majority of that is for shelving.
 - The shelving company **Southwest Filing & Storage** representative stated that we could order shelving for what is currently needed and then order more at a later date. But should the manufacturing change we could run the risk of the carriage systems no longer working on our track system. We understand the concern of not purchasing all the shelving but feel we should buy what we need for the immediate future. Then purchase more in the future when it is needed. Is the company on a "buy board" or "co-op?" I will follow-up for a bid of only current needs for the shelving and verify if the company is part of the "co-op."
- Judge Garza – Commissioners do you know if any of these items were budgeted?
 - All affirmed did not think they were.
- 350 Records Archive Fund & 450 Records Management and Preservation Fund
 - ❖ 2023 Budget of \$250,000, year to date with no expenditures, is this a concern or does it get spent at the end of the year? This fund is driven by records filed in the office. Our

housing sales in this county dropped dramatically this year, therefore the revenue has dropped. This is designated for Kofile Part 2 & annual payment for Tyler Eagle our software for our Official Public Records. Is the anticipated \$61,000 a realistic number? Probably a realist number, and also this is the fund that the new Kofile contract will be paid out of, both the 350 & 450 funds. Our current fund balance is \$312,000. When Kofile picks up the next set of records we have to pay them \$201,968.64. Kofile “Part 1” final payment will be invoiced soon after they pick up “Part 2.” The payment of \$39,900 for Tyler Eagle will come out of fund 450 in December. Part of this project was ARPA funds and the remaining is out of funds 350 & 450

- Judge Garza – did you budget step increases for you salaries?
 - I will add for the new employees so if they are excelling I have the ability to reward them
 - Tana Taylor – they are in the budget for next year.

Veteran’s Services – Ruben Garcia

- **Page 11**

- He was not present and Jacky Cockerham stated that there were no changes to his presented budget

IT Director – Collin Jackson

- **Page 14**

- Requesting the potential for a 2 step increase for my people
- Travel allowance there is about a 50% increase that is adding the other IT employee, this department does not have county vehicles so we use our personal vehicles to go all over the county to meet everyone’s IT needs.
- Judge Garza – statement for the public. If a comparison is made to other county’s budgets ours look a lot higher. That is due to everyone’s IT budget is listed here in the IT budget.
- Collin Jackson – we do carry all departments in our budget. This allows for more standardization. There are very few small counties that even have an IT, and have to contract with other entities to get it done. Things that are specific to a department we are getting those back in the individual departments. We are trying to keep things that are county wide in the IT budget for better standardization, this process has brought the IT numbers down.
- Judge Garza – You have some systems that are redundant/backups and we had questions about that in a past meeting. Didn’t something just recently happen that proved the need for redundancy?
- Collin Jackson – We have 2 connections on 2 different types of AT&T services and 1 on Spectrum. Both of the AT&T services were affected and without the Spectrum connection we would have been down all day, this would have been county wide including phones and internet services. The backup system is basically an insurance policy. No one likes paying insurance but you have to have it.

County Court at Law – Judge Bianchi

- **Page 15**

- Nothing dramatic, it’s about \$15,000 less than last year. Primarily from the Indigent Defense expenses, this is always just a guess. This is a mandate by the State so we don’t have a choice. We have been trying to deal with the expected comeback from the COVID downturn and now we are seeing it. Last year we budgeted higher than needed but we were expecting the COVID last year, now it’s happened.
- I came to you earlier this year for approval for a change in the jurisdiction of the court and kudos to Senator Kolkhorst and Representative Todd Hunter. They did what they always do and took care of business and got that passed. So effective September 1st, for Civil Cases Judge Bianchi will have the same jurisdiction as our District Court cases. We already have the same system on family law cases with the same jurisdiction between District Court and County Court at Law. If we have 25 cases

from their workload we should be able to absorb it, if it's 125 cases maybe not. When the case is filed they'll have a choice which court they want to hear the case. We don't have an industrial base here that results in significant numbers of big civil cases. We won't see 300 cases, but these cases are more time intense, they have more discovery battles, court appearances and the trials tend to be longer. I don't think we will get into the trial level until sometime next year. A concerns was that it would have an impact on your budget and you're staffing needs and my recall is you did not see that happening. I don't. If we get a title wave of cases that I don't expect then I would have to come back and say I guessed wrong. My guess at this time is that we will not need extra funds or staff.

9:42 AM 5 minute break

9:53 AM Back in open session

JP 1 - Judge Dupnik

- **Page 18**

- Commissioner Rousseau - Have you started using the new county for inquests?
- Judge Dupnik – I have not.
- Fort Bend County
- No questions were asked

JP 2 - Judge McGinnis

- **Page 19 & 129**

- Discussion about inquest funding, with the new county we believe that is a realistic number.
Question on fund 670 page 128. We are more than 50% through this year and Fulton has paid 30% of theirs, School District has paid about 20%. Do we contact those entities about their contributions? The Treasurer's Office does the invoices. They are paid through the 2nd quarter, through June.
- Discussion about numbers presented.
- Jacky Cockerham - these are billed by actual expense per quarter. They allocate in their budget a certain amount but we bill actuals.
- The budget is an up to, not guaranteed amounts, it's what we anticipate
- They are paying a percentage of the expense it doesn't matter if it's for the City or the School. It's based on the departments expenses. Not a case-by-case.

Elections – Kevin Stroud

- **Page 22**

- At conference

Auditor – Jacky Cockerham

- **Page 23**

- No changes since our last meeting, this includes the 5% the District Judges requested for step increase that is 2 steps
- **Question from Commissioner Rousseau about page 114 Long Term Recovery Fund**
 - There was a negative balance in that account for a few years that was going to be cleared out. It is in process of being cleared but by statute we have to carry it for 3 years before clearing it.
 - **Page 164 fund 360 – 2016 LTRs** you were going to talk to Alma about the interest projection, it seems a little low. Year to date is \$3,300 and next year is projected at \$1,000.3 payments come out of this fund that is why the projection looks low. **LTR 2012s** – the February payment is the last payment to pay off the Public Safety Center.

Human Resources – not discussed

- **Page 24**

Tax Assessor Collector – Anna Marshall

• Page 26

- No changes since the June meeting
- Appraisal District – their budget shows that our amount due to them is about \$70,000 higher than the \$300,000. They send that information goes straight to Auditor's. They have not received it to date.

Treasurer – Alma Cartwright

• Pages 25, 63, 66, 112, 119, & 142

- Alma Cartwright – nothing has changed since the last meeting for the Treasurer's department.
- **Page 142 Assistance Department Fund 530** – nothing has changed since our last meeting, this is the department that the salaries are paid from.
- **Page 112 Indigent Health Care Fund 520** – until the tax levy is determined I can't determine the 8% of that goes into medical services, so currently it shows what was budgeted for last year.
 - Commissioner Rousseau – since we approved adjusting the qualification percentages are you going to adjust these figures?
- Alma Cartwright – No. When I get the figures for the 8% it gets allocated accordingly, the higher percentage will not change the money that is coming in. It could increase how much we spend.
- **Page 119 Health Care Sales Tax Fund 550** – Jacky Cockerham get and pays the invoices, but revenue estimated here at \$2,575,260, but I had figured a little less, \$2,490,000.
 - We give a percentage to the entities? No they make requests through the Auditor's. The ambulance service is asking for \$100,000 more? Jen O'Steen is working on new agreements with these entities, so until we get the new agreements we are showing what the last agreement stated. Are we paying by the number of calls? No the current agreement is a flat rate. Judge Garza, Jacky Cockerham, and Tana Taylor all verified that they have not received a request to date.
 - What is the transfer to the General Fund used for? Part of it is for the Nurses at the Jail and other medical costs at the Jail, anything that is not covered under Indigent Health Care for the Jail we transfer to the General Fund to cover those expenses out of the Health Care Sales Tax, these transfers are based on actual expense, The Jail budget pays for it, then this fund reimburses for those costs for medical services.
- **Page 63 – Hotel/Motel Occupancy Tax Fund 280**
 - This year are up 17% year to date. Budgeted \$800,000 I think this is good estimate but we could be overstating it. We only spend what is available. Our distribution is based on actual expenses.
 - When will we look at the entities requests? Everything we have is already plugged into the budget.
 - When will they present their requests? Tracy Orr Smith reached out to them and no one responded to coming in to present. We did receive requests and all were asking for more. I did not plug those numbers in because they are calculated at 4% or 10%. Are we going to discuss this at another time? We can do it now unless you are wanting representative from the entities to come in. ROCA is asking for \$8,000 above the 4%. We can have a list of all the requests for tomorrow's budget workshop.
 - Are HOT fund collections up year to date? This month we are up 17%. Historically August is pretty hefty as well.
 - Biggest increase for Hotel/Motel and Venue for some type of collection/web payment, I have to find something. **Page 66 Venue Tax Fund 290-** I put it in at \$20,000 in the 470 Miscellaneous but I expect it to cost more than that. Have you done an evaluation of the Program the City uses? They don't use it anymore. I'm considering GovOS and I think that is what the City is using now.
 - Have you considered an Interlocal agreement to collect for City as well? I could help Fulton because they are small and don't have as many properties. I'm doing most of the process anyway, so it would just be them paying us for everything and then cutting them a check. If I had a proper

software for collections and online payments it would go a lot smoother and would be any more work. Instead of collecting the 2%, I would be collecting the 9% and then pay them their part.

Plant Maintenance & Aransas Pathways – Rene Butler

- **Pages 27, 46, & 70**

- Facilities – basically the same.
- Requesting the ability after reviews to be able to give a 1 – 2 step increase, that is already reflected in the budget. We are seriously looking at addressing how the employee manual written, its fine to put it in there but things may change. Did you add a full-time person? We have a landscape person. 20% Rene’s salary is going to Pathways, and though this person’s home department is Facilities the majority of the salary is charged to Pathways. While working for different departments such as SO, Jail, Airport, Pathways, R&B, City of Rockport, we charge for the staff’s time to that department. When it’s reimbursed is it an offset against the salary line item? Should there be another column in there that reflects the reimbursements and makes it easier to understand and show the different departments and what was paid. It’s on the monthly report but it would make sense to have it here to actual costs. About 25 – 30% of work hours goes to other departments. We work hard to keep numbers low. We have made a change to the Jail’s line items to be able to distinguish how much is spent for each department.
- The biggest expense for us is insurance premiums.

- **Parks page 46**

- Constituents inquired about **Howard Murph Park**, this is maintained by the Navigation District Discussion followed– it is our park but maintained by the Navigation District. The only parks we have in the budget is Lewis & Tiger Fields
- **Swimming pool**, we have for years given funds to help run the pool I have thought that maybe we need to give more. I think we could increase what we give to the pool as it is critical to our community. Much discussion on the pool. Propose to increase the allocation this year to \$40,000 for the Rockport Swimming pool. Judge Garza & Commissioner Casterline agreed to add the increase to the budget. Requested to have information on who and how often is using the pool
- **Tiger Field** – much discussion on the problems with having a volunteer organization maintaining the fields and concession stand. Several have heard that the City might be interested in taking it over. As of now we only take care of the right of way and the outer property line. If they have an irrigation, electrical or plumbing we get called by the organization and we go and fix it. Utilities costs around \$12,000 for electric and water and it’s not even used that much to justify the cost. What are the professional services listed? The alarm company, possibly an electrician, and the charge for the County staff time for the mowing. Can we check with Jennifer O’Steen to see if might transfer that over to the City? Judge Garza – I haven’t even talked to the City.

- **Pathways page 70**

- We did increase the advertising and promotional activities budget. We are getting measurements for all the trails to be resurfaced, with the preliminary numbers we can get 5 of our sites with this year’s budget not changing or asking for additional money. We are looking at using decomposed Granite. We are going to do an aerial mapping and then get some pricing. \$20,000 we talked about it in the steering committee meeting, but we are leaving an additional \$20,000 under promotional and I know they just ordered a large supply of maps. Is leaving those amounts in there realistic? After the next Pathways meeting we are having our first steering committee meeting for promotional and marketing activities. We will be getting additional ideas and I don’t think that \$40,000 is a lot. Some people would say it’s not enough. I think starting out it can be enough for us to get going.
- Discussion about what line items Rene and the assistant’s salary is paid from
- Discussion about the parks that the Navigation District manages, that do or can meet the Pathways criteria, possibly looking at moving them to the Pathways control and what it might take to do so. It

would allow those parks to be funded by HOT funds rather than the General Fund. We need to get opinions and possibly legal advice to see if these parks meet the Pathway criteria and if so what would be needed to put them under the Pathways umbrella.

- **West Thule Kiosk and Bridge** – Question, \$42,000 for repairs and maintenance what is going to be done on that? Last year work was done it looks as if that was carried over in anticipation of other work. We do have Signage, fence and gardens that to be repaired still and some kiosks that have to be replaced to do fading or vandalism. Discussions of other Kiosks in the area
- **Aquarium Education Center** – that \$35,000 is that for the new stairs? Yes, and part of the decking on the back side.

District Clerk – Pam Heard

- **Page 17 & 80**

- Same as last year with a 1 step increase for staff next year. Merit increases will be under review due to abuse, question on budget.
- 450 on the last discussion you stated that it did not include the cost for shelving, are you anticipating putting money in for shelving? No ma'am in being fiscally conservative and not wanting to put pressure on the county, I'm going to use the old equipment for the vault space, that is the historical records that need to be digitized but preserved too and when they are they will come back in different form and will need different shelving at a later date. What I have now will work for next year. The high density storage area I think we will have to split it, so there is no need to order those shelves that will not hold that weight. I have shelves that aren't pretty that the records are on right now that take up about 1200 square feet from floor to ceiling. A lot of those have gone to Edoc for digitizing, the Civil files can be destroyed the criminal files have to come back. We will just have to see where they are going to fit. I'm not going to ask for money this year we'll use what we've got.
- District Clerk Records Management Fund for fees of office you budgeted \$2,100 but year to date it shows \$100 received and for next year you are proposing \$2,100 is that realistic? I think that it is, it sounds like something is not in the right spot and I'll check on that. It is a filing fee and that is where that comes from.

Constable 2 – Gavin Harrison

- **Page 30**

- Travel allowance 130 line item- is flat amount paid over 26 pay periods – there is no requirement for paperwork to be turned in for expenditures. Constable 1 has a county vehicle so there is not 130 line item.

Sheriff & Detention Center – Sheriff Mills on Zoom, Michael Brooks and Armando Chapa

- **31-35 & 136**

- Overtime – some is reimbursed through Stone Garden and/or programs like that. A new program, Lone Star, will be available starting in January that is to increase salaries to meet the minimum or equipment or vehicles, it is through the Comptroller's office but we do have to apply. We do meet the requirements. The June payment from Stone Garden for overtime is \$33,107.
- 310 Line Item – Office Supplies request for additional funds to cover primarily burning video disks for the prosecutor's office and the defense. These can be video from the jail, body cameras or car dashboard cameras. There has been a huge demand for case preparation.
- Small Equipment 575 - \$60,000 was allocated but to date only \$8,000 spent. \$60,000 for 2024. For last year was planned to get the ticket writers, but were unable to make an agreement with Tyler to get them. We would still like to get ticket writers if we can get a contract with Tyler, but there is other equipment we need as well like more body cameras most are about 5 years old now. We are looking about \$1,200 per body camera. Question if you will try to get ticket writers this year. Yes, if

we can get a contract. The cost is actually over \$60,000, I would be asking the JP offices to donate ½ the cost out of their Tech Fund since it benefits their courts as well.

- What is considered machinery and Equipment Line item 580 for \$300,000? That's for the cars that we are slowly trying to replace. 6 that we ordered this year including 1 for the jail. Question – does that include all the supplemental equipment, radios etc.? That includes lights, siren, and cages, but does not include out in-car video system, the radios can be installed in the new cars.
- The Sheriff's office is fully staffed but we will be looking for a full-time Bailiff, in addition to the 4 part-time Bailiff positions.
 - People are not applying for the part-time position, and the latest hire does not want to work as many hours as the position requires. If they are going to work 30ish hours a week they want benefits.
 - County Court at Law has court 4-5 days a week every week and will be adding more District Civil cases soon. And every Wednesday for months now we have 2 District Court in session at the same time. The judges prefer to have 2 Bailiffs for each court session, 1 at the front to keep that area safe and 1 at the back.
 - Question - Can you combine 2 part-time to the full-time and still have enough? The full-time Bailiff would be designated for County Court because it has more court days but could be utilized to cover Donnie's position and cover in the District Court when needed and available. When we move into the new courthouse that person could cover the 2nd floor on court days as Donnie cannot be in 2 places at 1 time. The courtroom activity has gone up and it's exhausting part-time Bailiffs and causing overtime when we have to pull officers in off of their own duties. With benefits the full-time Bailiff position would cost \$73,000 per year for a full-time Bailiff. Part-time Bailiffs hour wage is \$30.25 per hour. The court time has increased significantly over the years and it continues to grow. Commissioner Rousseau is not in favor of adding a full-time position and keeping all 4 part-time positions. Question - You mentioned overtime, and pulling deputies off their other duties, does this affect your overtime? Yes it does. This week covering Donnie's position while he takes vacation is being done with overtime hours. Is there a tangible way to know how much overtime is being used to cover the Bailiff and Donnie's position? It also affects the Jail. Tomorrow a District Court jury trial, and another District Court for regular Docket that we are calling a few extra officers to assist with 24 inmates. So there will be 2 Bailiffs in each courtroom and because we can't fit 24 inmates in the courtroom we have to position them in the van with 2 people and have 2 people moving them back and forth and that requires overtime a minimum of 3 addition officers. The crime rate has skyrocketed the courts are busier and more demands on the officers. Is there some way to account for the time they are working in the courts? Chief Brooks, will be a Bailiff tomorrow and will at one point have to testify on the stand as well so Officer Patterson will have to come help as well, this is an example of pulling people off the street to cover the courts. But is their time tracked while covering court? No. The backlog that is partially causing this is not getting any shorter and the trend is that the cases are more serious than they used to be. Due to the backlog we asked for more jury weeks last year, this year and next year. The jury trials are really starting to tax our resources when we are bringing between 20-30 inmates at a time on Wednesdays while a jury trial is going on. What we don't want is to hire a full-time Bailiff and then see overtime being used because it didn't solve our problem. Auditors stated they would work on getting numbers for hours spent in the courtroom. Use of the courtrooms is not going to go down. When the population goes up, crime goes up.

- **Detention Center**

- 451 New line item to show hours that facilities maintenance do in the jail.
- Discussion about utilities

Corrections for District Courts – Jacky Cockerham

- **Page 37**

- This is their salaries and for their admin. Staff, and our portion of what we split with San Patricio County as well as a Juvenile and Adult Probation. We pay when we have juveniles go into the Detention Center.

Airport and Emergency Management– Mike Geer

- **Page 146-147 Airport**

- Telephone/Data expense is our largest cost, connectivity and redundancy. Renews in February of 2024 and should go down as the construction costs will be paid off.
- Operating at no reserves, less than breaking even since Harvey. In 2025 we will be eligible for more grants with a match of 10%. Insurance and recovery of funds will greatly impact this.
- **2 Hangers that are not complete.** \$20,000 to fill in parameter to be able to use hangers that are not finished, this quote is using Road & Bridge. Mechanics Lien that is on file and tied to the 2 buildings, means we can't touch it. It can't be finished, or occupy it, the holder of the Mechanics Lien is more or less in possession of the building. It needs the trench filled, electrical finished that is about 90% complete and get a certificate of occupancy. Discussion about who holds the Lien and who didn't pay the contractors. Request Jen O'Steen to look into what are options are.
- Step increases – agrees it needs to be standardized – but I put it in the budget
- Insurance costs & inability to make money due to the hangers affects us most.

- **Page 12 Emergency Management**

- We are getting people the training for NIMS (National Incident Management System) and ICS (Incident Command System) that is the FEMA training that you need to have if you are going to work in emergency management. We are getting some industry and department training done those are the ones who will have the position as section chief if and when we activate the EOC. I encourage letting people go to training using the EMC budget rather than their department budgets. There is not a cost for the class just local travel and meals, most of these are in Corpus Christi or Victoria. The conference budget this year was depleted just for Mike Geer's required training. Would like to consider adding more money to the travel and meals line item to send department heads and elected officials, probably \$2,000 it bringing it to \$5,000.

Break for lunch at 12:11 AM

Resume Meeting at 1:30 PM – All 4 Commissioner and Judge Garza present.

Environmental Health & Transfer Station – Elle Morales

- **Page 40, 84, & 151**

- **40** - Small increases here & there. Adding Uniforms for Mosquito Control and Code Enforcement. 1 camera with GPS, date and time, this is an unknown cost. Code Enforcement get a cell phone allowance.
- **84** – 103 re-arranged salaries, 1 employee is now charging hours to all 3 departments and also the mechanic while he is working on equipment from the other 2 departments, this is a guess as to how much for each because it's not a set percentage but just the hours worked and that is not a set amount of time either. They've been tracking that on their time sheets since April or May that is the \$3,400 in 2023. Just a reminder this is funded through Health Care Sales Tax and does not affect the General Fund.
 - Chemical Supplies, this number fluctuates by the cost of the chemicals and how much rain we have that would cause the need spray.

- 151 - Transfer Station is our largest dollar amount and it is supposed to be supporting itself. We are more than just a dump.
 - Went through a proposal presented to the Commissioner and Judge Garza. Property next to ours but has 3 owners, we could look at purchasing to expand, although no discussions have happened. Discussion about the property and cost to expansion. Or, we could buy bigger, better equipment to aid in getting the job done more efficiently.
 - Proposing to increase our fees: solid waste & brush would go up 1¢ per lb. The increase would help us purchase needed equipment and continue to save for the large purchases of loaders, trucks, trailers, dumpsters, etc. The expected fund balance at the end of the year is \$370,000. We had a recent quote for a loader at \$265,000.
 - We were able to get a mechanic but we don't have a building for him, he is working outside under a tarp. In the short term to build a "carport" for about \$15,000 that would come out of this year's budget, to give him better shade and protect him from rain until we can get the building. It would come out of the fund balance as there is no budget for it. Discussion about where the shop and generator would be on the property.
 - Mechanic's service truck – took an old mosquito truck with the sprayer off, revamped it to hold his tools and equipment but it is not safe to drive on the road. So if a truck breaks down going to or from Corpus Christi he cannot take it with his tools and equipment to work on our own trucks, we have to call Fleet Maintenance and ask them to help us.
 - Within the proposal given to the Commissioners and Judge Garza there was information on required safety rails by OSHA at the dumping area. We actually had an employee fall from there a few years ago. Looking at a rail system that sections could be lifted to adjust the opening as needed.
 - Information about how the liquids are being captured now. In 1994 there was a concrete slab but it is not there now and it is a requirement to have concrete in that area to keep liquid seepage from getting into the ground and contaminating it.
 - Our roll up truck and trailer is up and running for a few weeks and saving approximately \$100 a day in gas going to and from Corpus Christi, is about \$2,000 per month. The cost of fixing the trailer and other things cost about \$3,000 so it will take about 2 years to recoup that cost and be able to purchase another trailer.
 - We would like to purchase new walkie-talkies, currently we are borrowing them from the Airport. It is to aid in communicating which dumpster the weight is going into or if there is an emergency on site so they can get help quickly. This has not been added to the 2024 budget. The cost on those will be approximately \$1,600.
 - Abandoned vehicles on the roadways becomes a Transfer Station problem. Recently one couldn't be moved so we destroyed where it was and removed the debris, our cost to dump it was \$ 350. 2 more are sitting at the transfer station, 1 cost \$850 and 1 cost \$650 to tow to our location. There is a process to get the abandoned property titled to the County so we can destroy them. There is one left on the bypass currently that is in the City limits. The City contacted Elle and she told them they could do it but we would charge them all said and done approximately \$2,000, for towing, storing, paperwork of title, demolishing and dump fees. She has not heard back from them. We get boats but RVs are the most expensive.
 - Mac truck is at the shop again, recently paid \$30,000 to get it fixed. The current estimate is \$2,000 but this is a needed truck.
 - Mulch, we have a contract with a company to remove our mulch. Due to it being a fire hazard we can't store it on site, this regulated by TCEQ. Due to air pollution we only single grind now.
 - We accept tires and every 4-6 weeks that trailer gets full and it costs us \$2,300 from them to come get it and bring us a new trailer.
 - We have improved signage that is starting to help things move smoother.

- Discussion on how to pay for the new building without it hitting the General Fund.

District Court – Judge Bauer was in court but there are no change since our last meeting

- **Page 16 & 125**

Fleet Maintenance – Blake Brown

- **Page 41**

- In 2023 budget we approved an awning for the Mechanics but it has not been implemented. We spoke with Elle on Friday about Vendors and if we can get some help from Facilities too that would help with the cost. It is something we would like to do, especially for rainy days. I hope to get it done this year but if not I would like that to carry over to 2024.

Animal Control – Lori Ceasar, Director & Wendy Laubach, Chair of the Committee for Animal Welfare

- **Page 44**

- Things have gotten critical in recent weeks. For many years we have had great success in keeping euthanasia very low and we don't want to see that change. A huge army of volunteers is how we have been able to do this.
 - What changed to cause the current crisis
 - ❖ Adoption pipeline dried up
 - ❖ The mauling event that led to public trapping and dropping off animals that were roaming the streets that exploded the number of animals in the shelter this has led to being critically overcrowded. The loss of some staff and some out on leave has added to the issues.
 - Solutions
 - ❖ Kill animals, but not sure that is what the public wants
 - ❖ Get more animals out the door
 - ❖ Fewer animals coming in
 - ❖ Neutering Programs with a focus on those that are roaming and high risk
- **2023 Budget \$471,000 Requesting 2024 Budget \$590,000**
 - Wish list inspired by the crisis, see attachment

❖ Rabies Program	\$20,000
❖ Vet Spay/Neuter	\$15,000
❖ Truck	\$17,000 above initial request for 2024 budget
❖ 4 th Animal Control Officer	\$34,000
❖ 3 rd Part-time Kennel Tech	\$12,000
❖ Food Upgrade	\$2,500
❖ Replace 2 Cat Kennel Units	\$8,000
❖ Industrial Shop Vac / Kennel	\$3,000
❖ Mini-Split AC Unit	\$6,000 above initial request for 2024 budget
❖ Safety Equipment Upgrade	\$1,500
❖ About \$120,000 more than used last year	
 - Radios are not in this budget, they are needed, talking with Chief Brooks with the SO about pricing, getting a channel and vendors. Getting the channel has been a challenge.
- Community members we in attendance in support of these requests, most volunteer at the shelter.
 - A better food grade helps with stress and sanitary/cleaning issues, we are working towards being part of the "Fear-Free Shelter"
 - Everyone will be getting certified with Animal Anxiety & Stress Training
 - Immediate work: 2 things to handle the overcrowding
 - ❖ Temporary space at a reasonable price and quickly
 - ❖ Adoption or Foster homes

- ❖ Adoption Event this Saturday, Aug. 5, 2023 and then have them more frequently
- Citizen to be heard
 - ❖ Jeff Hutt - Enforcement aspect
 - Code Violators are not being written up
 - The Code enforcement is not able and are scared to write up violations without a Sheriff's Officer
 - The same is true with animal control
 - ❖ Several citizens present stated that they are fostering up to 5 dogs to help with the overcrowding, they need help with the overcrowding issue

AgriLife Extension – Virginia Smith

- **Page 47**

- Requesting our cell phone allowance to go up \$200.00 that is not reflected yet
 - Is someone else being added? No prices are going up so \$100 per person
 - What about Patrick. It was never requested.
 - There is no standard allowance, it is different per department
- Question on conference
- Telephone costs are up due to the redundancy, this should be lower starting in February when we get a new contract.

Road & Bridge and Flood Control – David Reid

- **Pages 52 & 57**

- Feel like Road & Bridge is underpaid, with working in extreme weather and circumstances. Compared to other departments that is correct, and we hear a lot of praise for your team.
- Public has raised concerns about speed limits and speeding. In some locations it would take action from this court to add rumble strips, or other things. Law enforcement control is what is really needed. Emergency Response (ER) has always been against speed bumps, rumble strips are less invasive but we have not talked to E R about that. More discussion followed.
- Tried to keep budget under control. They things we must buy cost more than they did and will cost more in the future. Road materials was increased.
- Special Projects: projected to be only \$25,000 this year. Last year was \$50,000.
 - Special Projects are unplanned and unbudgeted things that need to get fixed in a timely manner. Example is a road way that is in danger of being washed out
 - Further discussion about specific roads and options for funding
- Line Item 580 has \$350,000 – We need a new water truck to replace the one we have it is needed when we build roads, mainly in the fall, but also to repair breakdowns of other equipment.
- The seal coater we got last year is great, it allows to do the road in 1 pass.

- **Flood Control of the County Club**

- David Reid – if the court wants to allocate money to the City who does the drainage and repairs in the Country Club that probably needs to come out the General Fund. Historically when we do work for the City they pay us to do it. If we can help facilitate I don't care where they are located.
- Special Projects in Flood Control budget – reduced from \$100,000 to \$50,000 in an effort to maintain the budget, we could easily spend \$200,000 in both R & B and Flood Control. Many projects waiting are worth doing, many wait until we can get a grant. This is not a reduction due to lack of projects but of lack of tax revenue.
- **Citizen to be heard** – Adelaide Marlott –
 - Very disappointed, is there a State regulation that monies collected for county tax cannot be used inside the City Limits? We have to have an Interlocal agreement to do it.

- There is work being done but it all seems to be directed at new development, ours if 40 year old drainage system. The City has spent money and worked on it but it is not done. Asking to think about this project to help our community. We are meeting with engineers for costs but not enough time to get it in the budget.
- Commissioner Rousseau believes that just because this is in the City Limits that the County should not do it. Believes we should connect with the new City Manager to look into special projects to see if we can help.
- Discussion of benefits to City vs County, the City gets benefits from the County Government but the County does not. The City does not fix County streets as an example.
- We are not against it. But we have to meet with the City. There is not a set project with a dollar amount set so we could reach an agreement. The City has not asked for help for this project.
- Special Drainage “District/Committee” to look at drainage problems within the City and throughout the County. Working together, Aransas County, Rockport, Fulton, Lamar, Key Allegro, Navigation District, etc. so projects being worked on will work together and have a unified flow and maybe even shared costs. Maybe it’s just an Interlocal agreement.
- David Reid is 66 not planning on retiring in the near future but we do need to consider getting another engineer to get up to speed and ready to take over.
- Judge Garza do support the idea of another engineer that could be a # 2 to be over/dealing with flooding issues, I believe it should be under the Road & Bridge Director

Break 3:30 PM

Back in session 3:37 PM

County Attorney – Amanda Oster

• **Pages 21, 100, 106, & 122**

- Proposed budget does include a new Attorney & 1 step increase for all employees
- You will see a variance in postage, we are trying to send things electronically to save time and money.
- Conferences, we do pay upfront but much of it does get reimbursed by the State, this does not get reflected in our budget as it goes into the general fund
- Travel costs for victims, much of that gets reimbursed as well
- Telephone is not a reimbursement for use of personal phones. We actually have separate work cell phones for a few of the attorney’s. Amanda’s can be closed, she only speaks to Sheriff & Police Officers on hers. That will be about \$20-\$30 a month or \$240-\$360 a year. But the Victim Assistance Coordinator still needs hers, she does not want victims to have her personal number for good reasons.
- Another Attorney, for felony cases. We are all working a lot trying to get caught up, including getting phone calls all times of the day & night, working long hours to prep cases.
- Our current case completeness percentage through 2021 is at 90%. Discussion on how we are handling the case load.
- Line item 100 – Subscription to Westlaw electronic subscription that gives computer access for the public. Our physical law books are out of date and too expensive to replace. At the new courthouse there is no space for a public computer, we will have to find a location. Possibly at the Library, if they may have space. Iris Sanchez stated that if they can also access the internet then she would be willing to look into this. If available at the Library it would make it more accessible and for more hours a day, and more days a week.

- Line item 106 – No changes – Car for our Investigator hopefully by the end of 2023, hopefully we will have enough to purchase a conference table and chairs for the new courthouse.
- Line 122 – all of this goes to Probation for Pre-Trial Diversions

Library – Iris Sanchez

• **Page 88**

- Major request is in step increases for staff
- \$1,000 for books
- Law Books to be retired by County Attorney, I have a form
- Willing to have the computer with access to the electronic Law Library if it also has internet access, that would include the same safety features of our current computers
- Parking is an issue – Code Enforcement Officers using our parking lot, recommended to talk to Chief Stevens, possibly adding signage

Constable 1 – Doc Thomas

• **Page 29**

- Same as last year and no changes since the June meeting

When will Kevin Stroud with Elections present his budget, he is out of town this week

Motion for adjournment by Commissioner Rousseau and seconded by Commissioner Dupnik.

Motion carried 5-0, it is so ordered

Adjourned at 4:09 PM

ARANSAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT



Misty Kimbrough

Misty Kimbrough,
Ex-Officio Clerk of the Commissioners Court

Ray A. Garza

Ray A. Garza, County Judge

