



MINUTES

Aransas County Commissioners Court

Tax Rate Public Hearing

9:22 AM – Monday, September 11, 2023

The Aransas County Commissioners Court met on Monday, September 11, 2023, at 9:22 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

I. Called to order at 9:22 AM

II. Roll Call & Declared a Quorum

III. Item for Deliberation and / or Action

1. Public comments on the proposed 2023 Tax rate used to fund the 2024 Budget – Judge Garza

Citizen to be heard –

- Kristi Rutledge – On the tax rate I just want to state for public record. The tax rate that's selected, yes it's last year's rate, it's also strategically getting as much of the tax increments that were left on the table in the prior three years without raising the tax rate. But it does raise the taxes, 23% more revenue. It's significant tax increase and as an earlier speaker said on your middle class, it's going to affect us the most. Your families and the people that have been here for years. I believe that this tax rate was selected to make up for past tax rates passed y Commissioner's Court. I think that is unfortunate. I've been at all of your meetings for the budget and the tax rate. Many recommendations have been made to lower that tax rate. While there have been some changes in how you allocate your money between fund balances there's been no cuts to significantly lower that tax rate in fact the compromise was made to just keep it level at this year's tax rate. I would like to not that the ACISD has passed the no new revenue rate, the Navigation District has kept their rate low and I believe you can too because I've presented you options to do that. I honestly believe that you're going to do what you're going to do, that you've chosen that tax rate because you want to make up more revenue. Its \$3,200,000 more revenue that you are gaining on this. I think that's an inappropriate way to select your tax rate. It really should be based on what the needs are and a lot of this information has given to you that there are things in the budget which build the tax rate that aren't needed, that aren't spent in past years. I've had a lot of criticism from Commissioners Court for things that I've recommended and I just want to say that the conferences and dues, I know that you all have some mandates and those should be things that stay in your budget. But, the recommendations that I made to reduce the tax rate were based on conferences and dues that are put into the budget that you are taxing us on for departments that don't go to conferences. For instance IT \$9,000 they don't go to conferences for years. They may be next year but they haven't this year or the prior 2-3 years. Collections Services, why do they have an amount for conferences and dues? Why when we are in a budget deficit do we increase anything to do with extracurricular things? All of those

budget line items equal a tax. It's going to take all of us to make some cuts. We are going to have to make cuts. What you are doing is going to require cuts on the families here. That maybe aren't as fortunate as some that travel here and have luxury vacation or second homes. You've been presented with opportunities. You ran on a tight conservative budget and keeping the tax rate low to keep people in their houses. Other testimony today has said this tax rate will produce the opposite of what you ran on. But, you are all responsible, it's not the prior judge that's responsible because you've been running this budget and you've been running this tax rate from the beginning. All of you are justifying it and nobody has stood and said we need to lower this tax rate. We need to get serious about how this is going to affect the citizens, and the working families of Aransas County. Thank you.

- Commissioner Rousseau – I would like to respond to the last comment. When the tax rate was initially produced and presented for discussion it was allowing us to charge the maximum amount and I requested that we at least go back to the amount that was in effect last year. I appreciate the fact that the Judge has honored that request and found a way to make cuts to get us there. So there has been a reduction in the initial tax rate that was proposed. Is it where some people would like it to be? No it is not. But, we have made a reduction and we have looked very seriously at some of the expenses. This court has also seen some expenses and you refer to insurance that we have had to cover and that requires funding. One of the initial things we were told that the Long-Term Recovery grant writer's salaries would be reimbursed by the grants that we received, well they were not. At least in the amount we were given to understand. In 2023 the county had a \$652,000 expense to cover Long-Term Recovery Grant expenses. That was something that initially we were all told would be covered FEMA and the granting association. There has been misinformation or false information that has been provided to this court and previous courts and we are dealing with those expenses now.
- Andrew Kane – it's nice to say we are keeping the tax rate the same. But when your property values go up keeping the tax rate the same is a huge tax increase. I don't want anyone to think when they hear the city, the county is keeping the tax rate the same that it's not a drastic tax increase. We'd have to have a much lower tax rate and count still have a tax increase.
- Jerry Cernosek – this is my second home here. It's only 500 sf, so it's not a mansion by any means. The tax affects me dramatically. My appraised value went up 50% which is outrageous so between the two you're going to force me to probably sell my condo that I've had for 10 years and have no say in anything you do with the money because I can't vote here. The people who do support the community by investing in buildings. We rebuild after Harvey and it was a struggle. We live in Grapevine so it's six and a half hours away. Now to be hit with this with no say in where the money is going. So for all of those people I wish you would reconsider how much you are taxing the people you're going to force somebody like me to probably sell my condo and not come down here. I've been doing that for 10 years, I'm from San Antonio so I've really been doing it all my life. Consider the people that don't have voting rights. But have to pay the high taxes.

IV. Adjournment

Commissioner Casterline I move to adjourn, Commissioner Rousseau seconded

Motion carried 5 -0

Meeting adjourned at 9:31 AM

ARANSAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT



Misty Kimbrough
Misty Kimbrough,
Ex-Officio Clerk of the Commissioners Court

Ray A. Garza
Ray A. Garza, County Judge

