

MINUTES OF THE ARANSAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

REGULAR MEETING - JUNE 28, 2021

BE IT REMEMBERED that on the 28th day of June, 2021, the Honorable Commissioners Court of Aransas County, Texas, met in Regular Session, at the Aransas County Courthouse, 2840 Hwy 35 N, Rockport, Texas, with the following members present in person, via Zoom, or via YouTube: C. H. "Burt" Mills, Jr., County Judge; Jack Chaney, Commissioner Precinct 1-1A; Leslie Casterline, Commissioner, Precinct 2; Pat Rousseau, Commissioner, Precinct 3; Wendy Laubach, Commissioner, Precinct 4; and Carrie Arrington, County Clerk.

Other County Officials/Department Heads/Staff Members present in person or via Zoom were: Alma Cartwright, Treasurer; Patricia Randall, Chief Deputy Treasurer; Pam Heard, District Clerk; Jaime Blackburn, Executive Assistant to County Judge; Tracy Orr, Administrative Assistant to County Judge; Jennifer O'Steen, Assistant County Attorney; Jacky Cockerham, County Auditor; Latisha Murphy, Assistant Auditor; Lara Kirchens, Assistant Auditor; Linda Doane, HR Director; Elizabeth Guerra, HR Assistant; Bill Mills, Sheriff; Rhonda Konieczny, Executive Assistant to the Sheriff; Collin Jackson, IT Director; Jerry Brundrett, County Surveyor; David Reid, County Engineer; Katherine Comeaux, Development Services Coordinator; Valerie Gonzalez, Environmental Health Director; Mike Geer, Airport Manager; Rene Butler, Facilities Director; John Strothman, Project Manager; Lori Cesar, Animal Control Director; Kim Foutz, Long-Term Recovery; and Misty Kimbrough, Collections Specialist.

Members of Other Governmental Entities or Community Groups and Interested Parties present in person or via Zoom were: Christopher Mace, The Aquarium at Rockport Harbor, Inc., Board President; Luis

**Puron**, Rockport Center for the Arts, Executive Director; **Brandi Karl**, J. Schwarz & Associates, Inc., Project Engineer; and **Kiki DeAyala**, Islands of Rockport, Developer.

**Aransas County Citizens present** in person or via Zoom were: **Carolyn Smith**.

**The Meeting was duly convened at 9:00 a.m.**, followed by pledges to the American and Texas flags and an invocation given by County Surveyor Jerry Brundrett. Roll call was taken and a quorum was declared by Judge Mills, WHEREUPON, the following proceedings were had and done, to wit:

**CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

**Dr. Christopher Mace**, as President of the Aquarium at Rockport Harbor's Board of Directors, spoke in favor of the lease agreement between the Aransas County Navigation District and Aransas County for the land the Aquarium will occupy once rebuilt. He referenced the Aquarium's mission statement: To provide an educational and entertaining visitor experience that promotes understanding, conservatism, and stewardship of marine resources and environments. He cited the record-breaking numbers of visitors to the Aquarium in 2016, its destruction by Harvey in 2017, the award of a FEMA grant to replace the contents of the Aquarium, and the need for the land lease to demonstrate the County's support of the Aquarium and show evidence of project progress to FEMA in order to receive an extension on the grant proceeds now needed because of reconstruction delays.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

There were four items under the Consent Agenda:

1. Minutes from the June 14, 2021 Regular Meeting.

2. Minutes from the June 14, 2021 Workshop Meeting.
3. State of Texas Western Surety Bond for Collections Specialist Misty R. F. Kimbrough.
4. State of Texas Western Surety Bond for Fire Marshal Matthew A. Grimes.

A motion was made by Commissioner Chaney and seconded by Commissioner Chaney to approve the Consent Agenda items. Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

#### COUNTY REPORTS

5. A motion was made by Commissioner Chaney and seconded by Commissioner Rousseau to approve establishing a steering committee and appointing members to 1) recommend a project or projects to be pursued and funded utilizing the American Rescue Plan Act funding (\$4.5M) and other funding sources, and 2) review and recommend any other projects to pursue in the competitive funding category of the Act. After some discussion, Commissioners Chaney and Rousseau amended their motion and second to name Commissioners Rousseau and Casterline as co-chairs of the steering committee and Kim Foutz, Jacky Cockerham, and John Strothman as members. Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.
- It is so ordered.

#### COUNTY ROADS

6. A motion was made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Rousseau to approve Order #0-08-2021, regarding the petition of Michael Heathington to close, abandon, and vacate the

20-foot alleyway called in Block 259, Manning Addition, recorded in Vol. 1, Pg. 7 of the Plat Records of Aransas County, Texas, and being more particularly described by metes and bounds on Exhibits "A" and "B" attached to the petition. Commissioner Casterline added that this is a standard alleyway closing and that they own the whole block.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

7. A motion was made by Commissioner Rousseau and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve the Conceptual Plan proposed by Rockport Islands, LP and Bluestem Equities for the Islands of Rockport, Planned Unit Development (PUD) Unit 2. Kat Comeaux explained that the subdivision began back in 2008. Phase 1 was platted in 2014 and now the developer is ready to finish out the subdivision. Before the final plat is approved, the final drainage plans will also need to be approved. The developer will use City of Rockport water and extend City of Rockport sewage to the subdivision, so there won't be the impediment of having individual septic systems on-site.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

It is so ordered.

**CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, GRANTS & LEASES**

8. A motion was made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Rousseau to approve entering into a Lease Agreement with the Aransas County Navigation District at 706 Navigation Circle, Rockport, Texas, for the Site of the Aquarium and Aquarium Education Center, for a term of up to 30 years.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

It is so ordered.

9. A motion was made by Commissioner Rousseau and seconded by Commissioner Chaney to approve the Rockport Center for the Arts Parking Lot Project which will involve engineering, acquiring property, and constructing a parking lot by utilizing Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) #20-065-098-C270 grant funds allocated to Aransas County by the General Land Office.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

10. A motion was made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Laubach to approve authorizing County Judge to sign an Interlocal Agreement between Aransas County and City of Rockport for the RCA (Rockport Center for the Arts) Parking Lot Project which will utilize Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Grant #20-065-098-C270.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

It is so ordered.

11. A motion was made by Commissioner Rousseau and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve the Emergency Radio Tower Improvements Project which will involve the construction of an emergency services radio tower, support structures, gate, and an access road on City of Rockport property, by utilizing Community Develop Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) #20-065-098-C270 grant funds allocated to Aransas County by the General Land Office.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

It is so ordered.

12. A motion was made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Rousseau to approve authorizing County Judge to sign an Interlocal Agreement between Aransas County and City of Rockport for the Emergency Radio Tower Improvements Project which will utilize Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Grant #20-065-098-C270.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

It is so ordered.

**PLANNING & BUDGET OFFICE**

13. A motion was made by Commissioner Rousseau and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve the May 2021 Treasurer's Report.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

It is so ordered.

14. A motion was made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Chaney to approve authorizing the County Judge to enter into and sign the Renewal Agreement with Texas Association of Counties (TAC) for Employee Health Insurance for the 2021-2022 Plan Year. Aided by the committee recommendation of Option A, which was shared by HR Director Linda Doane, wherein the County retains our current Blue Cross Blue Shield health benefits and picks up the entire \$155K rate increase for the 2021-2022 plan year while keeping employee costs as they are now, Commissioners asked about the budget for the increase, whether there was money

for it. Auditor Jacky Cockerham stated that that increase was already reflected in the budget numbers they received from her last month. Commissioners Casterline and Chaney then amended their motion and second to specify that the approval was for Option A.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

It is so ordered.

15. A motion was made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Chaney to approve Sheriff Mills' request for the creation of one additional full-time position or up to three part time positions to ensure proper staffing for the security of the Courthouse. Sheriff Mills discussed the situation with the Court and Commissioners Casterline and Chaney amended their motion and second (twice) to clarify that the new courthouse position would a full-time position, that the possibility of three part-time positions would be eliminated, that the new full-time courthouse security position would be funded by the elimination of an accumulated unutilized patrol position that has been vacant for seven years, and that the job description for the new position would also include patrol duties, as needed, such as during holidays or weather events.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

16. A motion was made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Chaney to approve a new job description for Project Coordinator for Pathways at a pay group 12, which will replace the Administrative Assistant Long Term Recovery position. No new monies. John Strothman explained that Jennifer Heard would shift from Long Term Recovery to Pathways because his Long Term Recovery

workload has increased considerably and he doesn't have the time to oversee the maintenance of the Pathways projects. At the same time, Jennifer has the needed time and experience to handle Pathways now and her Long Term Recovery position is winding down. Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

17. A motion was made by Judge Mills and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve Budget Line Item Transfers and Amendments. Auditor Cockerham state that there were none.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

18. A motion was made by Commissioner Rousseau and seconded by Commissicner Casterline to approve the Accounts Payable and Payroll/Payroll Liabilities. When asked if there were any unusual payments, Auditor Cockerham stated that there were a few large payments for some of our projects and mentioned Cedar Bayou. She also mentioned that we would be receiving reimbursement from FEMA on them.

Question. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

**REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS, ELECTED OFFICIALS & DEPARTMENT HEADS**  
**WHEREIN NO ACTION WILL BE TAKEN**

Judge Mills called for reports from elected officials and department heads and acknowledged the fee reports that were sent out.



**Commissioner Casterline** relayed his experience as a lemonade stand judge on Saturday. **Judge Mills** shared that he and his wife Penny also served as lemonade judges. The two shared quips about their service and agreed, that overall, it was a good learning experience for the kids that was also fun. **Commissioner Chaney** told a story about his grandkids buying lemonade from a stand in Peninsula Oaks with his \$5 bill and letting the lemonade sellers keep the \$4 change.

**Jacky Cockerham** referenced that commissioners had both the April and May Fee Reports. She gave a correction on the May report: on the S.O. warrants, the JP1&2, the correct numbers are \$2,375 and \$950.25 respectively. Everything else is correct.

**Kim Foutz** had one item to report to the commissioners and community: As you all may recall, we put in some separate applications for Community Development Block Grant funds for the mitigation program. Those applications were for fiber optic, Ruby Allen, Newcomb Point, and Fulton Beach Road North. We received notification from the General Land Office that none of those projects were funded. There were two phases of the funding, a round one and a round two that they were supposed to conduct. What they have decided to do, though, is not have a round two process and, instead, they are going to provide funding through the Coastal Bend Council of Governments, much like how we received funding for our original Community Development Block Grants. So, this is actually very much in our favor. There will not be a competition. What they'll do is the GLO will repost their process in the federal register. Then they will send funding allocations to the individual council of governments (COGs) then they will use the process that they used last time for community development block funds as their method of distribution process. So what that means is that instead of having to go into a very large pool to compete for funding, we will receive our own allocation. Instead of putting out applications, we will qualify our projects

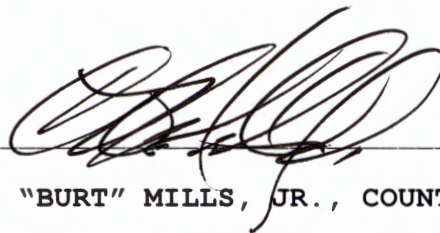
based on the allocation that we're going to receive. We don't know what that allocation amount is going to be yet but it looks like the total pot will be around \$150 million and we'll receive an allocation from that. So far, the projects that have been discussed for these funds have been airport projects (\$4 million) and then fiber optic.

**Commissioner Laubach:** So does that mean that the beach road project is probably out? **Kim Foutz:** Yes. The region has been working

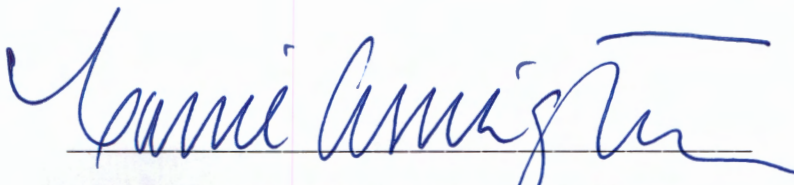
closely together on fiber optic and the COG is very interested in it because it meets a very significant need that the entire region has.

**Judge Mills:** Does anyone have anything else? If not, do I have a motion to adjourn?

**No further business presenting, the Court adjourned at 9:48 a.m.** on a motion duly made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Chaney.



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



CARRIE ARRINGTON, EX-OFFICIO CLERK  
OF THE COMMISSIONERS COURT

