

MINUTES OF THE ARANSAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

WORKSHOP MEETING - August 6, 2021

BE IT REMEMBERED that on the 6th day of August, 2021, the Honorable Commissioners Court of Aransas County, Texas, met for a Workshop Meeting, 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.

The Meeting was duly convened at 9:00 a.m. Roll call was taken and a quorum was declared by Judge Mills, WHEREUPON, discussion on the following subject was had and done, to wit:

General discussion of the 2022 Budget with elected officials and department heads.

- The Auditor showed the effect of different *Change in Unreserved Fund Balance* scenarios that would occur to the General Fund Summary when considering various cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) options (2%, 3%, 5%, 7.5%, and 10% for employees and elected officials) against the General Fund calculated at the No New Revenue Rate
- Commissioners were told how much they could go up on the No New Revenue Rate in the event they wanted to consider that action
- Commissioners discussed the pros and cons of the various COLA increases. Included in the discussion was:
 - COLAs missed in the past,


- the idea of "catching employees up" against the general inflation rate in the U.S. in the same period,
 - the idea of "catching employees up" against something comparable to neighboring counties,
 - the competitive market pressure we have when trying to hire people,
 - the fact that social security benefits are projected to increase by 5.8% this year,
 - the preference of hitting the reserve funds to hitting the tax rate,
 - the discomfort in raising the tax rate to cover pay increases,
 - the fact that we put money back into Fund Balance for the last three years even though we projected to go into Fund Balance by several hundred thousand dollars each of those years, and
 - the number of years in the past that the Court voted against elected officials receiving COLAs while voting for a COLA for employees and department heads.
- Commissioners also briefly discussed some of the other requests they were considering for next year's budget: a mechanic for Environmental Health (Mosquito Control and Transfer Station), a new drainage crew and new equipment for Road & Bridge, three-step increases for IT personnel, allocation increases to HOT Fund recipients, additional monies for Veterans Assistance, and step increase for full-time AgriLife personnel.
 - Finally, they discussed the tax rate. According to Auditor Cockerham, all said and done, a 7.5% COLA would hit the Fund

Balance at \$1.2 million. A 5% COLA would hit the Fund Balance at \$976,000. And, neither would do anything to the future year's tax rate if we stay at the No New Revenue Tax Rate, which is the 0.392 number, and don't go below it.

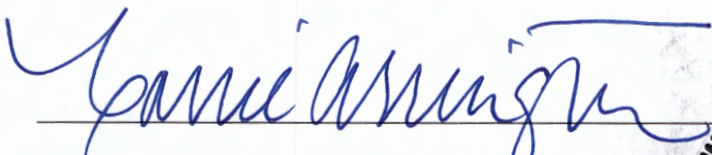
There was a question about the tax rate before Harvey and whether we would make it back to that point now. Cockerham looked up the rate for 2016 and reported that it was 0.385. In 2017, it was 0.404. In 2018, it was 0.403. In 2019, it was 0.479. (Laubach) So, if we went back to 0.392 - the No New Revenue Rate - we would not be quite where we were before Harvey but we'd be in shouting distance. (Cockerham) We would actually be right where we were because the budget for 2017, which would have been approved in the prior year prior to Harvey, had a tax rate of 0.404. She also stated that the 0.392 No New Revenue Rate would be a 4 cent decrease from our current year rate of 0.433.

The Court gave the Auditor direction to prepare for both a 5% COLA and a 7.5% COLA (for all employees and elected officials) for this Monday's Regular Meeting.

The Workshop was adjourned at 9:45 a.m. on a motion duly made by Commissioner Rousseau and seconded by Commissioner Laubach.



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



CARRIE ARRINGTON, EX-OFFICIO CLERK
OF THE COMMISSIONERS COURT

