

MINUTES OF THE
COMMISSIONERS' COURT
WORKSHOP MEETING - AUGUST 3, 2016

On the 3rd day of August, 2016, there was a Workshop Meeting of the Commissioners' Court in the Courthouse, 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; **Betty Stiles**, Commissioner, Precinct 4; and **Valerie K. Amason**, County Clerk.

Other County Officers present were **Kristen Barnebey**, County Attorney; **Alma Cartwright**, Treasurer; **Richard Bianchi**, County Court at Law Judge; **Bill Mills**, Sheriff; **Diane Dupnik**, Justice of the Peace, Pct. 1; **Diana McGinnis**, Justice of the Peace, Pct. 2; **Lezlie Kirk**, County Auditor; **Rene Butler**, Public Facilities Director; **Michele Bennett**, Elections Administrator; **Linda Garcia**, Executive Assistant to the County Judge; **Carrie Arrington**, Office & Contracts Manager for the County Attorney's Office; **Michael Geer**, Airport Manager; **John Strothman**, Pathways Project Manager; **Roman Cortez**, Deputy Chief/Jail Operations and Grievance Officer; **Ronell Burke**, Chief Animal Control Officer; **Harry "Doc" Thomas**, Constable, Pct. 1;

Members of Local City Government, Community Groups and other Interested Parties present were **C. J. Wax**, Mayor, City of Rockport; Manager; **Brian Olsen**, Unopposed Candidate for Precinct 3 Commissioner in upcoming 2016 General Election;

The Meeting was convened at 9:00 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. Report on Calculation of 2016 Effective & Rollback Tax. .

Jeri Cox was re-set for Workshop Meeting on August 4, 2016.

2. General Discussion of the 2017 Budget with elected officials and department heads as scheduled.

Kristen Barnebey, County/District Attorney

Kristen asked the court for an additional Assistant County/District Attorney and to make permanent an hourly, temporary, CJIS clerk (which was previously authorized for 60 days). She has kept her on past the 60 days and has been paying her out of the Professional Services Line Item, which had been set aside to pay an additional outside attorney for services in the event that they should have a murder trial or an officer involved shooting case. The court suggested that Kristen come back to the court on an Agenda to extend this temporary position. Kristen stated that the need for an additional assistant attorney for Felony Prosecution stems from the District Judges having transferred the duty of preparing Judgment paperwork (Order Revoking and Order Continuing Defendants on Probation) from the Adult and Juvenile Probation offices over to the County /District Attorney's offices in each of the five counties in their jurisdictions and Motions to Revoke are set to double this year. Brian Olsen questioned the current overtime budget of \$500 and the projected figure of \$7,500 for 2017 on top of the additional employees being

requested. Kristen said that is just a precautionary, in case they need it. She explained that she needed this extra wiggle room because they are currently waiting on the Police Department to submit 6,000 - 12,000 misdemeanors and felonies that have not been filed due to an unfortunate software problem in their department. Commissioner Smith said if every department did this, 15,000 here and there, that adds up and we are taxing people based on these numbers. Commissioner Smith questioned comp time currently being earned by her department and the request to pay out. Alma Cartwright stated that the County Policy states that the employee has to take their comp time within 120 days or the county is to pay it out, but this policy is not being followed.

Valerie Amason, County Clerk

Commissioner's Stiles and Smith expressed how well the handout provided was prepared. Valerie suggested to the court that this budget does not reflect figures for the improvements requested and Commissioner Casterline stated that this money might need to be included in the CO's.

Misty Kimbrough, Collections

When asked how much revenue has been collected, Misty reported that the County Court at Law Criminal cases as of June 3rd or 4th, since she started from that date till now is about \$87,000 more. Commissioner Stiles asked what I-Plow cost and Misty responded about \$5,200 and the Accurint is \$98 a month and if we did not have that contract, we would probably be spending about \$270 a month for what I use. Alma added that the drop box is working out well also.

Diane Dupnik, Justice of the Peace, Pct. #1

Diane stated that the only thing extra that she might need in 2017 budget is a new chair. Commissioner Chaney inquired how many cases have been filed this year compared to 2015 and Judge Dupnik stated that there has been an increase in truancy and civil cases, but the criminal volume has dropped, due to the lack of license and weight citations, therefore revenue is way down. Brian Olsen questioned the court costs figure for 2017 at \$19,450 vs. \$10,000 in the 2016 budget. Judge Dupnik explained that the court costs reference is for autopsies/inquests and there is no way to determine how many they are going to have. Commissioner Smith pointed out that in the past few years \$20,000 was budgeted between the two JP offices and the expense has been \$40,000.

Alma Cartwright, Treasurer

Alma stated that earlier this year she was allowed to hire an additional part-time person and she would request that this employee be made full time. The part-time employee has taken over the bank checks and jury payments, which has tripled and added that there are more duties that she could get her to help with if she was full time. When asked how much this would cost, she replied about \$15,000 without burdens. Commissioner Chaney asked about the employee's pay who will be taking over Chris Staley's position and Alma stated that the salary will remain the same, but the burdens will increase due to Chris not being on the County's insurance, whereas the new person will be. Commissioner Smith asked if that office could still function if that part-time person was not approved full time and Alma replied, yes, but making her full time would take a lot more burden off of me.

Commissioner Smith stated that the county is working towards having one entity, a Medical Facility, take over the Indigent program and inquired as to how this will affect her office. She replied that she would lose three employees and two of them are helping her with other things. Commissioner Smith stated that it would be a net loss of one person if you absorb the other two into the new entity. He added that the assistance program is still being funded by Health Care Sales Tax and we have 8% that we have to earmark out of Hotel/Motel Sales Tax. Commissioner Casterline questioned how the people will be approved in the new entity and it was agreed this needs to be figured out. Commissioner Smith suggested that Alma contact Nueces County and find out about their procedures. Alma stated that Nueces County is in a Hospital District, so it would be a little different.

Michele Bennett, Elections/Voter Registration

Commissioner Stiles inquired about the over-time pay in her budget and Michele stated that it is something that is reserved for Joy during an election because she is hourly, but the money is reimbursed by the entities that called for the election. In November, she anticipates Joy will be earning over-time and that she prefers to be paid for her comp instead of taking time off. Commissioner Casterline asked what the total was in reimbursements. Michele stated that the County received about \$16,000 for the primary and the same for the run-off. The total for the May 7th election was a little over \$25,000. The City of Aransas Pass and the Aransas Pass Independent School District each paid a little over \$8,000 and the Groundwater Conservation Election was written off because it was a county election. There was discussion on the request for a New Voting System "Verity", the exorbitant costs of the equipment and software

licensing and also why the County needs this equipment. The Court suggested Michele get a quote on what it would cost to have a nearby county do our elections, if possible, and get a figure on what it would cost to go back to paper ballots. They also requested that she get back with Felice Liston of Hart Intercivic and find out if she can get a better quote for the license and support fees. Michele pointed out that the county could use the old equipment as long as it lasts and as long as replacement parts were available, she just stressed that the buy-back option was only good until the end of December, 2016 and if the court should decide to purchase the new equipment, the first payment would not be due until September 2017.

Harry "Doc" Thomas, Constable, Pct. 1

Doc requested a new Body Camera and a Taser to help protect himself from dogs. After conversation with the Sheriff concerning the \$600 body camera, Commissioner Chaney suggested that Doc amend his budget to include the purchase of an \$800 camera as is used by the Sheriff's employees, keeping them consistent throughout the departments. There was discussion on creating a retention policy on the time to keep recordings from the cameras. The court also suggested that a record be kept on the amount of subpoenas, etc. that he serves by each department and that they require his signature when picked up. Kristen voiced her concern on the cost of out of county service if Doc was unable to serve her subpoenas. Commissioner Chaney suggested that Doc's salary should be raised due to the fact that serving all of this process was not in his job description. The court stated that salaries will not be discussed at this time.

Rene Butler, Public Facilities Discussion on this department included the increase in salaries for full time employees due to the court approving another employee earlier this year. The court also questioned the increase in cleaning & janitorial supplies. Lezlie explained that the sheriff requested that the his \$3,000 for cleaning and janitorial supplies be transferred to Rene's budget and his \$9,000 and the jails \$76,000 for repairs and maintenance also be moved to her budget, because since she has taken over as department head, those departments have been taken better care of, as it should be. There was also discussion on the request for an increase in Capital Needs. Rene explained that she has had a lot of problems with air conditioning units this year and lots of money being spent on repairs. She is guessing that they are probably all about the same age and expects a lot more repairs or replacements needed in the near future. Brian Olsen offered that if the units are replaced, with the new refrigerants being used, there will be a cost savings in the electricity bill. The court suggested that Rene get an assessment of the ages, the ones that are in the best shape, ones that need to be replaced and when, which ones are going to cost us the most if not replaced, etc. Rene stated that they have already started that process in the jail. The court then asked if she had someone on staff with air conditioning experience and she suggested that she would like to have an employee with that experience in the future. The court suggested that she come up with a plan, a schedule, and get back to the court within ten days. Rene stated that she would appreciate the court allowing her an additional full time maintenance/custodial employee in her budget for 2017 with a salary of \$43,444, which includes burdens.

Diana McGinnis, Justice of the Peace, Pct. 2

The court informed Judge McGinnis that \$20,000 is going to be added to her "autopsy" court costs fund. Judge McGinnis stated that she is not asking for anything more in her budget, but would urge the court to consider paying employees accordingly based on their degrees, as the City of Rockport has implemented. She said she has lost employees to the city and she is tired of training them and then losing them. She stated that the City is paying a \$13.00 base and an additional \$250 a month for an Associate's degree, \$750 for a Masters and \$1,250 for a Bachelors. She added, that the Sheriff's office is already doing this and doesn't know why it's not the same for the rest of the county.

Alma Cartwright, Assistance Department

Alma stated that there are no changes in this budget, the conference fee has been reduced by \$500 and she asks that her three employees in this department be included in the step increase when the time comes. Commissioner Smith inquired about the increase from \$1,500 to \$3,500 in the Assistance Program Line Item and Alma explained that this is money donated by the Jurors and therefore, does not affect any of the County's money. This program assists qualifying people with electricity, etc. at the rate of \$50 per person, per year and added "if I don't get the money I don't spend it". She also stated that this department pays for the office overhead and the employees to run the ICH program and the revenue is transferred from the Health Care Sales Tax Fund.

Alma Cartwright, Health Care Sales Tax

Alma projected 6% increase for this fund with a figure of \$1,618,000 and Lezlie submitted a more conservative 4% increase of \$1,581,160. Alma stated that the number of \$9,000 is good for the Health Care Facility Subsidy, which is South Texas Family Planning. She also explained that Utilities Health Care Facility is the utilities that we pay at the MHMR building and added that the Tri County EMS remains the same as last year at \$4,500. Halo Flight requested \$2,000 and we increased that to \$10,000. In 2015, they made 28 trips here and so far this year through April they have made 10 trips. Commissioner Smith, referring to the transfer from the general fund, asked if this is to reimburse the jail nurses and the reply was yes.

Commissioner Smith also inquired as to the Indigent Health Care, if that's set at 8% of Gross Revenue Tax Levy, how do you explain the decrease from the prior year? Alma explained that it's because our tax levy numbers were down, the numbers Jeri was giving me in the past included the I&S, not the M&O only, so that made a difference. The good thing is our mandatory would have been less, but we have never, not met our mandatory, so we were good.

Alma Cartwright, Indigent Health Care,

Alma stated that this basically takes what we have to spend in our 8% and breaks it down to the different types of medical, so there's nothing that my department can say about how much goes to which and the amount is based on history. Commissioner Casterline inquired, when we get the medical center, what part of the money wouldn't go away, would it still be in there, you would just pay it to them? Alma replied, if they are just the

provider, we would pay them at probably the same rate we pay anybody else, except we would have more expenses for local, people to go to Corpus or Aransas Pass. We have to give clients a list of providers and they get to choose as long as it is someone in our program. Commissioner Smith asked, who reported this fund balance and Lezlie said that she did, this was audited December 31, 2015. Alma stated that this account will actually increase because we have not spent all that we budgeted for this year, she added that we're not spending as much money and when we budget \$770,000 we move \$770,000, so that fund balance will increase at the end of 2016. This is reserved for our medical expenses only.

Alma asked that the Court consider budgeting the same \$5,000, as they did last year, for the health fair and immunizations out of Health Care Sales Tax. Commissioner Chaney asked why we are not budgeting for Tri County and Judge Mills explained that Allegiance is picking everyone up in Aransas County, so we do not need to pay them.

Alma Cartwright, Hotel/Motel Tax, Alma projected 3% increase in this budget for a total of \$421,000. The court opted to keep the same percentages as in 2015 for the Aquarium, Art Museum and Maritime Museum and allowed the Fulton Mansion the \$15,000 they asked for. Other disbursements include \$50,000 to the Chamber of Commerce; \$5,000 to the Lamar Volunteer Fire Department; and \$15,000 to the Fulton Mansion.

Alma Cartwright and Lezlie Kirk, Waterway Restoration

Fund balance beginning January 1, 2016 was \$324,789 and you can add to that, the \$154,000 that we gave it so far this year. We moved \$265,000 over from Hotel/Motel to Waterway Restoration and

are paying Coast and Harbor and Richard Beck. The fund also includes \$10,000, collected from the Navigation District.

Alma Cartwright, Venue Tax Fund

Alma stated that she and Collin are looking at a software collections program, "Seamless Gov", for Hotel/Motel which will allow entities to submit forms and pay on-line. This may help other departments also, such as the Road & Bridge and the Environmental Health Department and she thinks the Hotel/Motel Tax may fund a portion of this, if approved.

Alma added that she is required to post in the paper, twice, before September 1st, the poverty level eligibility for Indigent Health Care, and asked the court if they wanted to leave it at the 21%, the reply was yes.

John Strothman, Venue Projects

This budget shows an increase due to planned improvements on the sidewalk, which is not ADA compliant, at Tule Marsh East. The History Center needs painting and there is also a need for Base Spray on Tule Marsh West, 2-3 times a year. Tule Marsh West will be a 65/35 split with the City of Rockport. Projected revenues are \$537,000.

John Strothman and Ronell Burke, Animal Control

Ronell reported on numbers reflecting animals dropped off from the following areas: Rockport - 1316, Town of Fulton - 268, County - 2,196, Unknown - 1,337

The amount of animals being pulled for adoption by the Humane Society has been dropping steadily every month this year since February. Last month they took 4 dogs and some cats. The way it works is we collect an adoption fee and the animal goes to the Humane Society and then they pick up the remaining of the tab

for the spaying & neutering fees. We are needing to go up on the adoption fee to cover this cost ourselves. Judge Mills stated that the Humane Society has requested \$35,000 and this was lowered to \$5,000, because it doesn't seem that they are doing anything positive for our facility. This department is also asking for Capital Improvement funds in the amount of \$46,515 for machinery (Storage Refrigeration Unit), building improvements (building & gate repairs) & new used truck.

Bill Mills, Sheriff's Department

Sheriff Mills stated that as an overview, \$9,000 maintenance fee has been moved to Public Facilities. The radio tower in Lamar is up and running, but it doesn't transfer calls on the hand held radios, this is impacting calls on the South side of the Bridge. Adjustments have been made in the budget, moving part of the tower rental and the T1 Line fee over to the Dispatch budget. Sheriff is asking for money to be spread over two years to replace four (4) 911 terminals with cameras in the patrol cars this year and the rest next year. Commissioner Smith stated that it seems the Sheriff is coming in under budget this year and he could go ahead and purchase some of these and keep it out of the capital budget. The Sheriff also stated that he has a new request in his budget this year allowing \$3,500 for signage, some of our subdivisions have been asking for neighborhood watch signs. He also suggested that he needs seed money for cameras at intersections.

Bill Mills, License & Weight

Sheriff Mills stated that they have all of the equipment ready now, he is just waiting on TxDOT to get back with him on getting a truck big enough to dig the hole for the sign, once the base

is set they can get an inspection, then when this North Bound Site is up and running we can shut down the South Bound and do some repairs. On the revenue side, we should be seeing an increase due to five new Troopers being allocated to Aransas County.

Bill Mills, Jail Personnel

Jail Personnel costs on over-time are down to date, this fluctuates depending on transporting prisoners out of county. I have recently been contacted by the Feds requesting that we transport federal prisoners to Victoria.

In January, DPS is making a change adding twenty more categories for 51 crimes which creates a more detailed reporting and this will require updates to Odyssey's software.

We will be needing a new van next year which will have a bigger compartment with a separation down the middle to separate female and male prisoners.

Mike Geer, Airport

Mike reported that fuel is 60 % of the Airport's Revenues and they have been declining due to a reduction in fuel costs. Commissioners' Casterline and Smith suggested that the discounts he is giving to his clients may need to be re-structured. Mike projected that when the new hangar is built the fuel sales should go up. Our hangar rent is structured for people who fly a lot and the fuel we sell as a result. Mike stated that his grant money is due to expire soon and he will be coming back to the court with a request for use of this money.

Richard Bianchi, County Court at Law/Judicial County Court

My budget for next year shows an increase of \$32,925 of which \$30,000 is for the indigent defense system. There was discussion on the pre-trial intervention process and Lezlie stated that Kristen Barnebey has recently stopped collecting this \$500 from defendants due to some legislature issues based on an AG opinion. Richard explained that the AG opinion is referencing what the money is being spent on.

No further business presenting, the Court adjourned at 4:05 a.m.

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

VALERIE K. AMASON,

EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE

COMMISSIONERS' COURT