

MINUTES OF THE

COMMISSIONERS' COURT

WORKSHOP MEETING - AUGUST 3, 2017

On the 3rd day of August, 2017, 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; **Brian Olsen**, Commissioner, Precinct 3; **Betty Stiles**, Commissioner, Precinct 4; and **Valerie K. Amason**, County Clerk.

Other County Officers present were **Jeri Cox**, Tax Assessor-Collector; **Bill Mills**, Sheriff; **Suzy Wallace**, Interim County Auditor; **Jacky Cockerham**, Assistant County Auditor; **Collin Jackson**, IT Director; **Michele Bennett**, Elections Administrator; **Roman Cortez**, Deputy Chief/Jail Operations and Grievance Officer; **David Klanica**, Lieutenant/Jail Administrator;

The Meeting was convened at **9:00 a.m.** WHEREUPON, the following proceedings were had and done to wit:

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DISCUSSION

**Judge Mills:** I think the City's increase is 5% above the effective rate this year.

**Jeri Cox:** I think so and they are going the roll back rate, but it works out to about 5.something.

**Commissioner Stiles:** They've gone the roll back rate for like three years in a row, haven't they?

**Jeri Cox:** I think maybe longer, maybe 4 years.

**Jackie Cockerham:** What's still in here right now, is that 2016, you wanted to go that penny and a half, I'm going to go ahead and plug that number in, about \$30,000 dollars difference.

**Commissioner Olsen:** Let's see where it puts us.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Jeri, can we, and I think we have done this in the past, could we vary the rate only on the M&O?

**Jeri Cox:** Yes, the debt is set, you have to go with that rate, but when we're proposing we're kind of going a total rate and you can move that around between County M&O, Road & Bridge & Flood M&L. But not, I just put it in a penny, a penny and a half, I just put it in the County M&O.

**Commissioner Chaney:** So the County M&O, Road & Bridge, and the Flood M&O together, if we were to make changes in each one of them, you still can't go over the 5%?

**Jeri Cox:** Well it can't go over the total roll back rate.

**Suzy Wallace:** Well, that didn't change it hardly any at all.

**Jackie Cockerham:** No, about \$30,000.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Well ya'll are on a different wavelength than me, I would come under the penny, not over.

**Commissioner Olsen:** And then pull the rest from the reserve.

**Commissioner Casterline:** And then the only thing would be manipulate it to where it didn't affect Road & Bridge.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Well it doesn't affect Road & Bridge now.

**Jackie Cockerham:** All of these that she has on the list, none of them affect them, it's just M&O County.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Well if it's not going to make more than \$30,000 dollars difference, let's just stay with a penny, what do ya'll think?

**Jackie Cockerham:** Ok, because what was in there then was the current 2016, let me put the penny in and show you what the difference is.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Is it relative if a half is 30, then a penny would be 60.

**Jackie Cockerham:** Ok, a penny is a \$100,000 difference, no \$130,000 difference. So, you want to go to a one and a half?

**Commissioner Casterline:** On the last one, what would that leave in the reserves?

**Jackie Cockerham:** On this one that I just did with the penny?

**Judge Mills:** Yes.

**Jackie Cockerham:** Or the penny and a half?

**Commissioner Casterline:** No, the penny.

**Jackie Cockerham:** The penny, it leaves in reserves, 4644.

**Suzy Wallace:** The other one was 47.

**Jackie Cockerham:** That's bringing it down significantly.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Yeah, that's too much, because again, next year that becomes our base rate to start with and that's one of my concerns. I think we need to stay with a penny and a half, I don't think that hurts anybody and it doesn't require us to take as much out. We have the reserves for catastrophic events, again there's a point of diminishing returns and it's hard to say you have too much money, but it does make a difference.

**Commissioner Olsen:** Yes, it does.

**Commissioner Stiles:** I agree, and we are also giving 2.5 COLA too and that helps.

**Judge Mills:** Ok

**Commissioner Chaney:** So with the changes that we've made, this should be a reasonably secure figure.

**Commissioner Casterline:** What did we end up doing on the Transfer Station, on the Administration Fees?

**Jackie Cockerham:** It's still at \$100,000 and that's the Court's choice, if you want to change it.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Does all the other places that are set up as separate funds...

**Jackie Cockerham:** Road & Bridge does, Airport does not.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Well to me if the Airport doesn't pay anything, then the Transfer Station shouldn't either.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Those are enterprise funds.

**Commissioner Casterline:** I concede that Road & Bridge has their own tax base.

**Jackie Cockerham:** Well, I think the Airport should be paying some, but they're not generating the revenue right now to do it. In all actuality, I just took those salaries and halved them between the Airport and the Transfer Station and did not put it in the Airport, because there's no money to do it, but we could take a lesser amount, we could take 50% or 25% of each and do 50/50. That could be an option too.

**Commissioner Casterline:** We raised the rate we charge out there so many times in the last few years.

**Judge Mills:** Let's see what happens if you do 50%.

**Jackie Cockerham:** Ok.

**Commissioner Chaney:** On the revenue side, the Transfer Station made projections if we go over a penny, that's that 20%

**Jackie Cockerham:** Yes, that's in the Transfer Stations numbers. Now, if we change this to 50, it's just going to change what you're increase what you're going into fund balance by. Ok, it's less than \$200,000 that you'll go into reserves and still keep it at 4.7.

**Judge Mills:** Ok, why don't we do that, anybody have any objections?

**Commissioner Olsen:** No, it works.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Judge, are we going to allow Road & Bridge to come back and request equipment under capital from the reserves?

**Judge Mills:** I don't think he needs to come back, I gave him that authority, if he can find the money in the CO's and put it back in.

**Commissioner Casterline:** I think that he's actually done a lot of the work that the CO's were supposed to pay for already.

**Jackie Cockerham:** Right, we already talked about that, he's supposed to be getting me a list of that together.

**Commissioner Casterline:** And that should boost his reserves up. How many years do we have left on the CO's?

**Judge Mills:** Two years.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Because he's only going to be able to do so much work a year, he really needs to learn how to hone in on how to do that, how to do the bookkeeping in a certain amount of time, because he might need to do the work and pay for it out of that, and what he has budgeted, he spends a couple hundred thousand a year of what he has budgeted on roads like that, he might need to do the money from the reserves first and he can hold that back in his reserves, you know I think it's just a bookkeeping kind of deal.

**Jackie Cockerham:** Ok, I looked at the calendars this morning and really got concerned about having the public hearing on the 17<sup>th</sup> only gave us 9 days from the date that we publish it, so I would like to change the calendar, with your permission, we would change the public hearings from the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> and the 28<sup>th</sup> and adopt on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Judge Mills:** Does it have to be a regular meeting?

**Jackie Cockerham:** It has to be a on a weekday.

**Jeri Cox:** I don't think it has to be, the City's adamant that it has to be a Regular meeting, but I think that's their choice.

**Judge Mills:** I was just thinking earlier in September.

**Jeri Cox:** I left that on my desk, I forgot to bring it with me, let me go get my notes. I will be right back.

{More discussion on time lines and Regular Meeting vs. Not}

**Jeri Cox:** So, it has to be posted at least 7 days before the first public hearing and the meeting to vote on the tax rate

must take place, no less than 3 days and no more than 14 days after the 2<sup>nd</sup> public hearing.

**Jackie Cockerham:** So we're good with the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup>

**Jeri Cox:** And our plan is to adopt on the 28<sup>th</sup>? (All agreed)

**Commissioner Stiles:** Now we meet at 8:30 on public hearings, is that right?

**Jeri Cox:** Well, are you having one or two hearings on the budget?

**Commissioner Chaney:** We only have to have one, because we're not going propose a rate higher than the effective rate.

**Jackie Cockerham:** The calendar says the 21<sup>st</sup> and then adopt on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Jeri Cox:** I think on the one where we have two separate public hearings, we have one at 8:30 and one at 8:45.

**Judge Mills:** Well, Judge Bianchi might have court that day, so we'll have it at 8:45 or 8:30 that day too.

**Jeri Cox:** So, do you have anything else for me?

**Commissioner Stiles:** No, but thank you for doing this sheet for us. (All - Thank you, Jeri.)

**Bill Mills - Sheriff**

**Judge Mills:** Ok Sheriff, we learned that you lost \$42,000, you know about that, right?

**Sheriff Mills:** You're talking about the IT money, I've got a note that we were trying to run that down.

**Judge Mills:** Suzy's already figured it out.

**Sheriff Mills:** I had some questions, because the workbook that I was sent, I was shocked to learn that I was overrun in my small equipment, \$86,000 and I found out it was a Typo. Within the Sheriff's Office Budget, I guess the proposed line that is the 2018 proposal on work cost, is that our request or is that what ya'll willed on the last column?

**Suzy Wallace:** It's a combination of both.

**Sheriff Mills:** I don't have any problem with my budget, but I want the court to know in the near future, we've got a problem with radio towers and my understanding the City has already started a sinking fund.

**Judge Mills:** They've got \$100,000 in there. Actually, if push comes to shove, if we could come to some kind of agreement with the City of Rockport on something, the tower could be built and they could pay us back.

**Sheriff Mills:** Because we've encountered some problems and Commissioner Chaney's been involved out there on one of the calls where the serviceability and the liability of it, we've had 3 or 4 outages in the last 6 months, where we lost everything.

**Judge Mills:** Sheriff, where would you propose to put that tower?

**Sheriff Mills:** It would depend on the height, if we could stay at a 300' height and you move that thing inland along the ridge along the County.

**Commissioner Casterline:** How much property does it take to footprint that idea?

**Collin Jackson:** You could build it like a cell phone tower, almost, just a small...

**Sheriff Mills:** It just depends on the type of tower it is.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Would it have to be able to fall on property that you own or...

**Sheriff Mills:** They make them, if they fall theoretically, they're supposed to fall straight down. If it's a single pole and not like this deal out yonder.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Well I don't know, since there's houses around, but something I ran across a while back, the County owns two pieces of property in Oak Terrace on the north end of the Subdivision, one on Hickory Street and one on Redwood Street.

**Commissioner Chaney:** We also own some property at the Transfer Station that's to the west.

**Judge Mills:** Yeah, ten acres there.

**Sheriff Mills:** Is that going to be a problem with the FFA?

**Commissioner Chaney:** Oh, yeah.

**Commissioner Casterline:** We also have the piece we just bought over there off of Burton Street.

**Commissioner Stiles:** Don't we own some property at 1781, towards Copano Cove, off of Rattlesnake Point Road, because I know Road & Bridge stores their stuff over there, five acres, I think?

**Sheriff Mills:** That would be something that Collin would have to get with the carriers, because the tower here on the back parking lot, was deemed unsafe to climb and if you can't climb it they are going to recommend taking it down. The work we did

on it last time required a crane and a bucket to do it. So, if the one at 9<sup>th</sup> and Hardee comes down, blows down, whatever, there's no obligation on his part to put it back up and the time to buy a tower is not when it's laying on the ground. So, we really ought to start thinking about this now.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Do the people who know about the coverage you get, I would assume that the closer that you get to the ridge, the better you are, is that right?

**Sheriff Mills:** Well, I think that would just add to the ability of it and it may allow us to shorten the tower, we may not have to go 300', we may get away with 250' if we get somewhere along the ridge, where we get better elevation. We don't have so much of a need to reach out in the water with it, but it is nice to have it on the boat, and for Parks and Wildlife as well, but I don't think that's a problem at 250 or 350 feet, but there are places that they refer to as gray areas, they've run studies and that would be a question to ask with the Fire Departments and the Radio people.

**Judge Mills:** We do have \$200,000 and the last time I heard, it took about \$1,000 a foot, so we could do a 250' tower.

**Collin Jackson:** But does that include the equipment it will take to bring interconnect back to...

**Sheriff Mills:** If you do a joint deal with the City, you're only looking at, if they're putting in half.

**Judge Mills:** Yeah, but I'm thinking if we need to put it on fast track, it would be about \$200,000.

**Commissioner Casterline:** And if you wanted to get into something with the City, you might want to put it on the property where they have their building at.

**Commissioner Stiles:** They also have a water tower, not too far from here that we were looking at to put a garden in at one point.

**Commissioner Casterline:** They also have one out there by their building, it seems like the best place is going to be on the ridge, down the bypass.

**Sheriff Mills:** It just depends on what's available, I'd have to see it go..., the problem with too far South is we have to reach the Holiday Beach tower too and we're still lacking a T1 to tie the towers together, but the way that was designed and the original inception was that driving North, there would be a seamless transition for the deputies that were driving North, that they wouldn't have to change anything, it would just pick up on the Holiday Beach Tower, but that doesn't happen because there's not a T1 in place tying the two towers.

**Judge Mills:** Ok, we need to get on that, but that's not really a budget item.

**Sheriff Mills:** DPS has rescinded their deal, they are backing away, but there is no commitment yet to speed the process up for the return of the lab submissions.

**Judge Mills:** Yeah, there's \$30,000 in the DA's funds.

**Sheriff Mills:** I still say, unless they upgrade their labs to return them on a timely basis... It's money well spent if we go with a Commercial Facility, because of the time they are sitting

in Jail it's costing us a lot of money for arrests where they are going to Grand Jury. There is a slim chance that we can recoup some of the cost through restitution at sentencing. I think \$30,000 is a good place to start, but I don't know if Kristen's going to cover all cases for drug arrests that are being filed.

We did cut back on the rental and I guess a good explanation for that is we gave up one of the boat stalls and they put us in one of the hangars at the airport, but that one of those deals that in six months we could lose that hangar. We have stolen property in one out at Larry Pierce's, we currently rent three from him, two for stolen property and one for the boat.

The request for the additional training, last time I think we discussed the impact of Legislation, but I don't see anything in this Emergency Session that will have any impact. We had \$6,000 in that line item and we increased it to \$25,000.

**Commissioner Casterline:** Can you do any of that here?

**Sheriff Mills:** We will do most of it here, but it allows us to cover some of the overtime, because we can't bring everybody into one training session, we will have to have several and stagger them because of the shifts. We won't spend what we don't have to, but we needed to make you aware of what's going on with this requirement.

Other than that, the small equipment, we've been back and forth about the computer money, because we took care of a lot of cars last year, but 911 which is the manufacturer of our mobile terminals. They are getting ready to release, in November I believe, Generation II of their Body Cams and that's the one, I think we discussed it before, that their intent that as soon as

the car is activated the body cam will come on automatically and the officer doesn't have to remember to turn it on. It will also download to the car where we won't have to carry it in anymore and download it on a stand-alone terminal, when we come to the parking lot it all seamlessly transfers to our storage. There is also a feature that if a deputy has left the car and is in the yard talking to someone and he turned the camera on manually there, it activates the car, the car becomes the native which carries the voice signal where it will capture the conversation as well, and it will give us a perspective from afar, the patrol camera is on capturing the discussion in the yard where he's at. So now, since we found the money, now we can get the upgrades ordered.

**Commissioner Olsen:** Sheriff, your office furniture and equipment is up \$3,000, you explained that to us the first go round, but I've forgotten.

**Sheriff Mills:** That's been the standard, hasn't it?

**Commissioner Olsen:** No it's up from \$1,500 to \$4,500. I thought it had something to do with an Evidence Locker or something.

**Sheriff Mills:** Ah, we were discussing at that time of having to purchase a CONEX Building to place her on the parking lot by the tower, because our evidence vault is full and there's not room to expand. The change that occurred since then, is that the State Fire Marshall has vacated the building, we no longer have a State Fire Marshall in Aransas County. He was occupying part of the back evidence room and was keeping his evidence and containers in there and that has all been removed, so we recovered some room for this year, but we will still be dealing

with that down the road, if fact, we have placed some stuff in his office space up front.

**Judge Mills:** Well, I don't see anything more that we need to discuss on the Sheriff's department and I've looked real hard in the detention center.

**Commissioner Stiles:** I have a question on the detention center, on our Federal Prisoner income, do you have that handy? I know last year I think we budgeted for 95, what is the actual?

**Judge Mills:** We went down to 90.

**David Klanica:** Most days 79, some days 80.

**Sheriff Mills:** 80 to 84.

**Commissioner Stiles:** So 84, is that more of a realistic number than 90?

**Sheriff Mills:** Well, what's out there, and I've talked to Collin, I met with Odyssey on two occasions at conference this last week, all the bookings are done in Odyssey and all of the case filings are done in Odyssey, the numbers are there, they just don't know how to get them out into a report. I want a report, and I'll pay for it, that I can pull today that will tell me the inmates names, charges, days in jail, and I want to know if a case is filed. While you're going to be shocked to find out that I'm building a file of expunctions requests for cases that are over two years old, the statute is expired, and the cases were never filed. That person may or may not have sat in our jail, 30, 60, 90, or 120 days and that's a bigger problem than I initially thought, as I got to digging into it. I've already sent the directive to my staff, that if they don't file

a case in 30 days, their coming to my office to explain what's going on. When you make an arrest, you ought to be able to put a case together today and file it in the prosecutors' office, and that's important because now we can make attorney assignments and they can start negotiating deals and everything else. They don't know what the case is about if they are sitting in jail and no case has been filed, so they sit there unable to pay the bond to get out. My request for you at the end of the year is probably going to be that, while I can't dictate other agencies policies about filing cases, I don't think Aransas County should be negatively impacted in our budget and suffer because they are not filing them timely. While we charge other agencies only now for Class C arrests, I'm going to come back and ask for an amendment to that, that if they haven't filed a case within 30 days, I'm billing them for all. If that case has not been filed within 30 days you need to pay me for it, and then you can take all the time you want, I don't care. But I don't think we should be out \$400,000 because officers are not following up and not diligently filing the cases. There are some cases, and this report could identify who they are, I think some people get thrown in jail by an officer who has no intention of filing a case and that's wrong. The Feds have the prisoner, we just don't have the room, because of this situation with other inmate cases not being filed.

**Commissioner Casterline:** What number do we have in the budget right now?

**Jackie Cockerham:** 90 prisoners average, at \$63 dollars a day.

**Sheriff Mills:** Everything else in that jail, we've done everything we can, food is becoming a concern as the costs keep

creeping up, over the years we haven't made any big changes to the budget. But the training is going to impact detention officers as well, mandated out of the Legislature this year, but I think the \$25,000 that we've set aside will be enough to cover all of that.

**Commissioner Olsen:** Yeah, you want \$1,500 on that line and that's pennies for all of the staff you have over there, so I know you're taking some of it out of your Sheriff's budget.

**Commissioner Stiles:** Your training, I've noticed you have \$1,500 more on training through the jail part of it, but isn't that the same kind of training that you're doing with the Sheriff's department?

**Sheriff Mills:** Yes, like I said, Gavin will cover portions of it, David will cover portions of it, each jailer now, the only thing in the past on recurring training they had, was one class and now that course has been expanded to an 8 hour course, where before you did cultural diversity and you were good for two years. Now they are wanting the jailers to take a course in deescalation and mental health and on a new jailer coming in, it's going to change from 96 hours to 120 hours. It may end up a little less than 120, because this is one of those things they are kicking back and forth, because in the current jail certification your covering a certain amount of mental health and deescalation, but they are wanting more of it, so they don't think they are going to have to add the whole 24 hours to pull it off, they may end up with 115 hours. But all jailers are going to have to back up their mental health findings in the jail and their deescalation. Your jail administrators in the State of Texas will have to pass a test certifying them as a

jail administrator. If you are currently a jail administrator, you're grandfathered and they are not going to require them to take a test. If you have a new jail administrator or if a new Sheriff is elected and he holds on to that administrator and appoints him, they are going to make him take the test. They are wanting to insure that someone in the facility knows the rules in the facility.

**Judge Mills:** Well, your record shows that everything is going good in that department, so Congratulations, again. Let's go to license and weight, I had discussed with you that we zeroed that out, but if you get 100% and you get somebody out there and you feel like it can pay for itself, then we can find funds to open it back up in the middle of the year.

**Sheriff Mills:** I'm good with that, we've got two applicants that we will interview in about a week and a half, when John gets back. We filled one of the vacancies that we had, but then Mick Timm took his retirement, effective the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, so we fell back again, down one.

**Judge Mills:** The northbound, you never got it up and running?

**Sheriff Mills:** All we need is to get that sign up and Burke is supposed to be working on that, then the solar panel and Collin can it hooked up, because it's a wireless connection, then it will just need to be programmed and DPS inspected and it's ready to go.

**Judge Mills:** Well, like I said as soon as you are happy with it and think that it can pay for itself then we can talk about opening it up and get it going. Does anyone have any more questions about the detention center?

**Sheriff Mills:** Well, David has a concern about the food, whether the \$185,000 is going to be a realistic number, it's a struggle now and it's all gone up.

**Commissioner Casterline:** How much more would it take?

**David Klanica:** I think about \$1,000 more a month.

**Commissioner Stiles:** Well, that's a realistic request. (All in agreement)

**Judge Mills:** Ok.

**Commissioner Olsen:** Good job on your budget, Sheriff.

**Sheriff Mills:** I will offer one explanation on the Sheriff's budget, on equipment rental 456 this year. Year to date we are overrunning almost double, that was, we got a letter from the tower company this year and they had failed to send us an invoice last year and they thought we would just cut them a check without an invoice, so this year we paid tower rental for two years, that's \$16,000 in there.

**Michele Bennett - Elections Administrator**

**Michele Bennett:** We just got back from the Elections Law Seminar that we attend every summer and a House Bill that was just passed, and now it's in law, saying that during the early voting period that you have to visit the Nursing Homes.

**Judge Mills:** It's currently in law?

**Michele Bennett:** It's in law, but they are appealing it now. They told us that we have to be prepared for the upcoming November election and because they don't know, it's kind of like in limbo, so my question to you is...

**Commissioner Casterline:** What does the law say?

**Michele Bennett:** The law says, if we, we get ballot by mail requests, so if we receive at least 5, we have to told them, we can't even process them until we make sure we get 5, but once we get 5, we have to hand deliver the ballots to the nursing home, rather than mail them, allow them to vote them, and bring them back. But it also says if we get there and there are other people who did not mail in a request and they want to vote, and they qualify, that we have to process them there on the scene and go ahead and vote them. We have to visit 4 nursing homes, but the cost is going to be about \$500 more for each election to cover it, because we can only provide paper ballots, because it's still considered voting by mail.

**Commissioner Stiles:** We have docents at these nursing homes and I know in the past, they have taken ballots and helped the elderly fill them out and brought them...

**Michele Bennett:** It can't be anyone from the nursing home, it has to be someone that works for the Elections office, because there's an assistance law that just went into effect also. My question to you is, I have \$7,500 in there for professional services right now, and in 2016 we had four elections, so that would be \$2,000 estimated cost of what it is going to cost if we possibly have that many in 2018, so my question is, should we increase it now, or if I run out just come talk to you in 2018, I know you don't want to put anything in there unless we absolutely need it, so I just wanted to get a feel for how you wanted me to handle this.

**Judge Mills:** Just use what you have and if you run out come talk to us, or before you run out, come talk to us.

**Michele Bennett:** Alright, and I did learn something new that I did want to tell you about, with our vote centers, during the Presidential there were people upset that they couldn't vote on paper at the poll site, because we can only have electronic at the vote centers. Well, now they are allowing us to have paper ballots during early voting, and only during early voting, not on Election Day.

**Commissioner Stiles:** That's an additional expense.

**Michele Bennett:** It is, because they are 56 cents apiece and if we are going to have the nursing home bill, and we offer paper ballots, I just wanted to throw it out there.

**Commissioner Stiles:** How many people objected at early voting, that they had to use the machine?

**Michele Bennett:** We had some objections, but only one person left.

**Commissioner Olsen:** And is that part of your miscellaneous supplies?

**Michele Bennett:** No, that's under professional services, because we currently pay Harte to program all of our balloting machines and they do the printing of the ballots.

**Commissioner Olsen:** Ok, thank you.

**Michele Bennett:** And, speaking of Harte, I met with them yesterday morning, they said, I guess because we've been holding out the longest, and I did check with Dominion and they are three years out for even being certified in the State of Texas, but Harte did say this is the end of our fiscal year, and if you would like, we would like to work with you guys. We are flexible

on our pricing, we can offer you additional services and a better price on the machine. So, as we were talking, we were adding up how much we spent to allow them to program our equipment. If we chose to go with Verity, we would have to invest in their program which would actually help us recoup some of our cost, because we already charge other entities for doing the programming that Harte charges. In one year, which would be a Primary year, plus we had more elections, we could recoup the cost of that program and then us program in house, then we wouldn't have to worry about the 56 cent cost per paper ballot, we would just print them as we need them. And we wouldn't have to pre-order 3,000 paper ballots that we have to store for 22 months.

**Commissioner Stiles:** Why don't you put that in a spreadsheet, so we can look at it?

**Michele Bennett:** Ok, and I asked Collin to come in her with me, because when they took us in to talk, they said look the SERVO is what we use as the brains, the one that captures all of the images, well they are no longer offering security because it operates out of Windows 2000, and so it's 17 years old and when we bought the equipment, we used money from the government to buy the equipment. Originally, they gave us the money, that's when Peggy ordered the equipment and we were able to pay it that way. I didn't want to bring it into this year, but I just wanted you to know it's out there and they are willing to be flexible on the pricing and if we agree to purchase their equipment, we won't have to make a payment for like 12 months.

**Commissioner Stiles:** Do they offer installments?

**Michele Bennett:** Yes, a three year plan.

**Collin Jackson:** One of the security things she brought up, the conference that I was just at, they had a voting center "hacking village" set up and it took them about 5 minutes to trash the machines and alter the votes. They did not use any Harte, but a lot of the other competitors.

**Michele Bennett:** I just wanted to let you know that security is going to be a big issue this year and Verity is a non-internet based system. Also, if our SERVO dies, there are no more SERVO's.

**Commissioner Stiles:** Will our tablets be compatible with Verity?

**Michele Bennett:** Yes. I also want to let you know that on Tuesday I was elected into the State Board of Elections Administrators and I will be serving on the board four years. I'll be serving as Secretary starting this year. We meet in Austin every summer during our Elections Law Conference and then in January we have a Mid-Winter Conference with a different County in Texas hosting every year and being on the board, my hotel room will be taken care of.

**Commissioner Stiles:** Oh, good.

**Commissioner Olsen:** Good for you.

**Judge Mills:** Well, congratulations. Ok, get us the information, the sooner the better.

**Commissioner Olsen:** Is there anything we need to talk to Suzy and Jackie about?

**Commissioner Stiles:** I have a question, are we meeting again on Monday?

**Suzy Wallace:** Yes, Monday we'll talk about the Proposed Tax Rate, the Budget and the Elected Official's salaries.

**Commissioner Casterline:** I don't want to blindside ya'll Monday, but I'm not inclined to vote for anything over a penny or the Elected Official's raise.

**Commissioner Stiles:** I don't have problem with the elected official part of it, but I do like the penny and a half.

**Judge Mills:** Anything over a penny, I have a problem with it.

**Suzy Wallace:** Well you have the option of opting out of the 2% COLA.

**Commissioner Casterline:** I'll do that, if it passes. I don't think we need them every year, like the employees do.

**Commissioner Chaney:** Anything else?

**Suzy Wallace:** No, that's all we have.

**Commissioner Chaney:** You are doing a great job, again.

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*Court adjourned at 10:55 a.m.*

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VALERIE K. AMASON,  
EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE  
COMMISSIONERS' COURT