

MINUTES OF THE

COMMISSIONERS' COURT

REGULAR MEETING - AUGUST 26, 2019

On the 26th day of August, 2019, there was a Regular Meeting of the Commissioners' Court in the Commissioners' Courtroom, 2840 Hwy 35 N, 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; **Wendy Laubach**, Commissioner, Precinct 4; and **Valerie K. Amason**, County Clerk.

Other County Officers present were **Kristen Barnebey**, County District Attorney; **Jeri Cox**, Tax Assessor-Collector; **Alma Cartwright**, Treasurer; **Pam Heard**, District Clerk; **Bill Mills**, Sheriff; **Suzy Wallace**, County Auditor; **Linda Garcia Haynes**, Executive Assistant to the County Judge; **David Reid**, Road Administrator/Drainage Engineer/Stormwater Management Engineer; **Katherine Comeaux**, Development Services Coordinator; **Collin Jackson**, IT Director; **Linda Doane**, Human Resources Director; **Michael Geer**, Airport Manager; **Valerie Gonzalez**, Environmental Health Director; **John Strothman**, Pathways Project Manager; **Michele Bennett**, Elections Administrator; **Carrie Arrington**, Office & Contracts Manager, County District Attorney's Office; **Jacky Cockerham**, First Assistant County Auditor; **Iris Sanchez**, County Librarian; **Melodee Field**, Assistant Librarian I; **Lois White**, Chief Deputy Treasurer; **John Gutierrez**, Chief Deputy Sheriff;

**Long-Term Recovery:** Will Whitson, Kim Foutz, Randall Freeze,  
Long Term Recovery Specialists;

Members of Local City Government, Community Groups and other  
Interested Parties present:

**Aransas County Medical Services, Inc.:** Patricia Arnold; Al  
Johnson; Victor Medina;

**Special Guests:** Suzanne Reuber, Author of "Not Gone with the  
Wind" and "Roadmap to Recovery"; Ina Zummerman, Assistant to  
Suzanne Reuber;

**Mike Probst**, Editor and Publisher of the Rockport Pilot  
Newspaper;

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:

**CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

**PRESENTATIONS**

1. Presentation of author, Suzanne Reuber's latest book,  
Roadmap to Recovery, to be given to Judge Mills and County  
Commissioners.

**Suzanne Reuber:** I'm an accidental author, I'm a Winter  
Texan, second generation, and I came to Rockport in  
December after Hurricane Harvey and thought "Oh My God",  
What am I going to do? For obvious reasons my children

have forbidden me from using ladders and chain saws, so I was thinking, what can I do? I had just gotten here and a friend of mine came by and I said, Mary Ann, tell me your hurricane story, two and a half hours later I had a job. For the first book I interviewed about 100 people or more and it was fascinating, I started out because I thought, people need to tell their stories, so that was the original job. The stories were too good not to preserve and I was there at a time when these were primary sources, so I thought I'll write a little booklet for the Women's Club and they can sell it for their Scholarship Fund, thinking about 30 pages would be good, I blew past that in about a week and a half and I thought, Ok, so this is going to be interesting because I had never written a book before. So this first book is about 180 pages and it was released on Harvey's birthday last year and the second book is about the same length and it was released on Harvey's birthday this year. It was an interesting task to do the second one because I thought I had it pretty well written from the first interviews, I mean I had already talked to people, right? Then there was Mexico Beach, and then there was Paradise, California, and I thought these are more, very small, communities hit by very large disasters and maybe I ought to re-think how I'm going to do the book. But I was struck by several things on the second book and I wanted to know, how does one of the smallest, poorest, kinds of counties, in a very large state keep attention focused on it long enough to recover? How did Aransas County do it and other places don't? What did they do that was different? And again, I went back and I talked to people,

I talked to many of you who are here today, asking that same question and I came up with some notions. First thing that has to be in place is a plan and if it was in place before the disaster, it's gold, you may not follow that plan but you aren't paralyzed, and that plan was in place for many of the institutions in Aransas County. Many of the businesses have rather extensive disaster plans, H.E.B. is a prime example, the electric company, I mean these folks have planning down to an art form. If that plan is there it will have in place the unique people, people that know something about the system and you know Aransas County has been attracting retirees here for many generations who have experience, they are retired educators, managers, government, military, these folks know how systems work and they can work within the systems, there is a big pool of those folks living in Aransas County and they have skills that translated into disaster recovery better than people who have no previous experience doing this. They also understood patience and persistence, because if you didn't have those two things you wouldn't have any hope, you wouldn't see that there was a future, so it took that too. The last thing that I found, that was really interesting to me is, if your institution, or your business, or your family, even had a little bit of cash, that was essential because the people that had a little bit of ready cash could hire people to do stuff, if they were available, they didn't have to wait for their insurance settlement to come in or until they got FEMA money, or whatever, and those folks began recovering very quickly. And it seemed to me, as I talked to many of the County Officials, that this was

something that this area had figured out and they were able to begin recovery rather soon, if you had to wait for Government money to come in, or your Insurance money to come in, you lose hope and you leave, you just run away, because it doesn't look like it's possible, so those things seem to me to be the three big deals about a recovery. The last one, and this is facetious, if you're going to have a big disaster in a small community, you better have somebody bigger than you that it hits also because all of this Legislative action that has taken place has happened because there is a rather large voting block to the East of here that got hit badly and as a result there was pressure coming from a much larger voting block than you have here in Aransas County, that's for sure. One of the other things that I thought was really interesting is the number of friends that Aransas County has, of all sorts, because all these people that came in, that retired down here, brought their address books, who knew, and they had people they could call, people they could ask for help, and they did, and a lot of those folks made a big difference. A lot of the stories are wonderful and my favorite one, in this book, however, since it involves someone here in the room I'm going to tell it because it's one of my favorites. "I've often declared disaster emergencies where it didn't disaster, when this came along I just declared it a mandatory evacuation and my wife said I'm not leaving again, I'm sorry, I've left every other time and I'm not leaving this time. By the time I figured out that this was the real deal, not just one of those that was just going to go up the coast and it was too late to leave, so my dog

can't leave if the people don't leave, so I packed up my wife and dog and headed for my post at the Emergency Operations Center. I had some reservations about this because my dog is a Jack Russel Terrier, and it seemed to me that he was probably not going to adjust to this very well, I was wrong because when we came in the door, headed right in, sat down, and the dog took one look around, picked the biggest canine dog he could find, went over and sat down and stayed beside him the whole night. Smart dog, but that's one of my favorite stories and it's been an honor and a privilege to be able to write these books, I'd like to think that I had some choice in it but I don't think I did, because I kept getting nagged. You know how authors say that their characters nag them about what they are going to do next? Rarely, do you get nagged by a hurricane, I wrote most of those between 2:00 - 4:00 in the morning because it started out, just make a note and do it in the morning, before you know it it's morning. So, that's when most of it was written, but it was a privilege and a pleasure, and I can't thank the people enough who have been involved in the recovery, that includes project managers, long term planners, and it includes all of you, because if you hadn't chosen to do this, it wouldn't be happening, it takes people who have the courage to lead, and man, does a project like this take courage, because you guys are targets and probably have been all along. I mean everybody that's got a complaint, your name is right out there and it takes courage to do that, so thank you, I appreciate your time and effort. If anyone is interested in purchasing either of my books they are available on Amazon. My first

book, "Not Gone With the Wind", is dedicated to the Rockport Women's Club because they were about the only building left on the waterfront that was not gone with the wind, and proceeds from this book all go toward their scholarship fund. My second book, "Roadmap to Recovery", is dedicated to Rockport Center for the Arts and the proceeds will all go to them. The reason for the dedication on this one is because they lost their building and everything and they still met every calendar event that was planned before the hurricane, for the next year and I find that just remarkable.

**CONSENT ITEMS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Chaney to approve:

2. Minutes from the Public Hearing of August 19, 2019, the Public Hearing and Regular Meeting of August 19, 2019, and the Public Hearing of August 22, 2019.
3. Accepting new books, Roadmap to Recover, from author Suzanne Reuber.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

**COUNTY POLICY & PROCEDURES**

4. Motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve Order #0-12-2019, Third Amended Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum, at Meetings of the Aransas County Commissioners' Court,

incorporating new Texas Legislation to become effective September 1, 2019.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

**COUNTY REPORTS**

5. Motion was made by Commissioner Chaney and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve accepting a donation of \$1,784.90 from the Aransas Bird and Nature Club for the purchase of two benches to be located at Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

**COUNTY ROADS & FLOODPLAIN**

6. Motion was made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve Order #O-13-2019, granting a variance from original Order #O-02-2016 Aransas County Floodplain Management and Watershed Protection Order, Article 5 - Provisions for Flood Hazard Reduction, Section B - Specific Standards, Subsection 4 - Manufactured Homes, which prohibits the placement of manufactured homes and recreational vehicles in FEMA Zone (V) and Coastal (A) Zone.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

**CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, GRANTS & LEASES**

7. Motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve and authorize County

(Insert)

Judge to sign a Proposal for Financial Assistance (PFA) for the Department of State Health Services (DSHS). This PFA is dedicated to funding vector control activities with a strong link to hurricane recovery and/or preparedness activities. The funds target jurisdictions within the 2017 Governor's 60 county Hurricane Harvey Disaster Declaration. Aransas County Vector Control is within Governor Abbott's 60 county Disaster Declaration counties and the funding will enhance current vector/mosquito control operations by allocating funds for purchasing pesticides, equipment, and other resources identified by the local health departments as expenditures or needs following the hurricane.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

8. Motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve Resolution #R-29-2019, a Resolution of Aransas County, Texas authorizing the submission of a Hurricane Harvey Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) grant application to the Texas General Land Office (GLO) and authorizing the County Judge to act as the County's Executive Officer and authorized Representative in all matters pertaining to the County's participation in the CDBG-DR Program, contingent upon any comments that may be received during the 30-day comment period ending August 21, 2019.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

**(Inserts)**

9. Motion was made by Commissioner Chaney and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve Resolution #R-32-2019, a Resolution of Aransas County, Texas, authorizing the submission of a Texas Community Development Block Grant (TxCDBG) Program application to the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) for the 2019-2020 Colonia Planning Fund and authorizing the County Judge to act as the County's Executive Officer and authorized Representative in all matters pertaining to the County's participation in the TxCDBG Program. The requested amount of TxCDBG funds is a maximum of \$34,250 for the Oakdale/Hills Village and Market Street/Peninsula Oaks Colonia Area Plan.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

10. Motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Chaney to approve Resolution #R-33-2019, a Resolution of Intent of the Commissioners Court of Aransas County, Texas, to pursue a Texas Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) grant application process for the creation of a Micro-Hospital to serve the medical needs of Aransas County.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

11. Discussion on an Interlocal Agreement between Aransas County and Aransas County Medical Services, Inc. [Tabled from 08/19/2019] went into closed session.

(Inserts)

12. Motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve and authorize the County Judge to sign an Interlocal Contract with Department of Information Resources (DIR) and an Affirmation Statement of DIR's Managed Security Services (MSS) Program in order to receive an election security assessment, at no charge to Aransas County, through the Secretary of State's Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

13. Motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Chaney to approve and authorize the County Judge to sign a grant contract with Tocker Foundation and accept a \$30,500 award for the purpose of creating a Discovery Garden and Imagination/Seating Area at the Aransas County Public Library.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

**PLANNING & BUDGET OFFICE**

14. Motion was made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve adopting Elected Official Salaries, Expenses and Other Allowances for 2020.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

15. Motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Chaney to approve adopting the 2020 Budget.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

**(Inserts)**

16. Motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve an increase of the property tax rate over the effective tax rate by the adoption of the Tax Rate of \$0.451453 cents effective at an 8.70 percent increase in the Tax Rate over the Effective Tax Rate with the rate split as 0.323536 for County Ad Valorem Maintenance and Operations, 0.052225 County Interest and Sinking Fund, 0.013994 County Flood Control Interest and Sinking, 0.061698 County Farm to Market and Flood Control Maintenance and Operations with a 92.25 percent split for Road and Bridge and 7.75 percent for Flood Control.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

17. Motion was made by Commissioner Chaney and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve adopting the 2019 Tax Roll and Levy.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

18. Motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve Resolution #R-31-2019 for the 2019 Tax Roll, Levy and Rate (Special Note: Because the proposed rate exceeds effective rate, the vote on the resolution setting the tax rate must be a record vote).

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

19. Motion was made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve ratifying the

**(Insert)**

Property Tax Increase reflected in the 2020 Budget.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

20. Motion was made by Commissioner Chaney and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve new job description and pay group for the Airport Attendants; market comparison and a multitude of duties which require a wide array of expert skill, attention to detail and months of training require a higher pay group. New job description will move the attendants from Pay group 12 to 15 beginning December 16, 2019 for the 2020 budget year - no new monies.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

21. Motion was made by Commissioner Casterline and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve Budget Line Item Transfers of which there were none.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

22. Motion was made by Commissioner Chaney and seconded by Commissioner Casterline to approve Accounts Payable and Payroll/Payroll Liabilities.

Question. Motion carried unanimously.

It is so ordered.

**(Insert)**

REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS, ELECTED OFFICIALS &

DEPARTMENT HEADS WHEREIN NO ACTION WILL BE TAKEN

**Suzy Wallace:** For the month of July compared to last year 2018 July, the County has collected \$79,902.06 more than last year at the same time.

**Commissioner Chaney:** I went to Baton Rouge last week and I had no less than five people recognize, when they found out I was from Aransas County, they were all just amazed at how well we are doing, so I just wanted to compliment everybody for everything they've done this past two years, it's not going unnoticed.

**Pam Heard:** Just one announcement, apparently the Jury Duty scam is going around again, people getting calls, that would never happen, that is not the process. Also be sure and let your friends and neighbors know that we don't have your phone numbers, most people have cell phone numbers now and none of that comes out on the Jury Rosters so nobody's going to call you and in the nineteen years that I have been doing this in District Court we have not had a time that they have had me issue any show cause, which is where the Sheriff would come out and hand you a document, it's a lot of time and a lot of money that just frankly, isn't worth it. So, nobody is ever going to call you, make sure your friends and everybody knows, especially older people.

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*The Court entered into closed session at 9:37 a.m. to discuss and review potential litigation issues and other matters covered by the attorney-client privilege pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071(1)(a); and to discuss real estate negotiations, including Pathways Projects pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.072; and resumed Open Meeting at 9:58 a.m. with all members present, and further proceedings were had and done to wit:*

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11. **No action taken** on Discussion on an Interlocal Agreement between Aransas County and Aransas County Medical Services, Inc.

[Tabled from 08/19/2019]

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*No further business presenting, the Court adjourned at 9:59 a.m. on a motion made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Casterline.*

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





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