MINUTES OF THE

COMMISSIONERS' COURT

WORKSHOP MEETING - JULY 31, 2018

On the 31st day of July, 2018, there was a Workshop Meeting of the Commissioners' Court in the Justice of the Peace Courtroom in the County Courthouse, located at 2840 Highway 35 North, 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.

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 2018 Effective & Rollback Tax Rates.
- 2. General discussion of 2019 Budget with elected officials and department heads as scheduled.

Suzy Wallace: Jeri Cox will not be here today on Item #1, she rescheduled for tomorrow.

<u>Kristen Barnebey - County/District Attorney</u>: After reviewing my budget I found that I neglected to figure step increases for last year, so this year I am paying my step increases for my employees out of my budget, I didn't realize I had to put them in next year's budget, so that's going to increase my budget by \$11,794. On top of that, within my budget I had to raise the salaries of my two youngest attorneys, from, because I did not

realize that Nueces County and the Texas Attorney General, as of September 1st, are raising the salary base level from \$50,000 to \$60,000, this change does not increase the salaries for my older attorneys, it's just the baseline for the younger attorneys. So both of my younger attorneys came to me and said they are leaving if they can make \$10,000 more somewhere else. Now I can eat most of, if not almost all of, the raises but the step increases I cannot, so I went back and looked, we are now recovering money in the District Court on bond forfeiture cases and this year alone we have recovered \$20,295.

Judge Mills: Where does that money go?

Jackie Cockerham: It just goes in the General Fund.

Judge Mills: Is there a way we can keep track of that money, I would like to see how much it is on a regular basis.

Suzy: We can show that on the monthly fees report.

Kristen: I just want to be clear, this is in the District Court, because we have always taken bond forfeiture money in the County Court. The District Clerk was not taking the money and was saying she would not take it, but yesterday, Judge Bauer ordered her to take it. So, my budget did increase by \$11,794 for step increases for my staff and about \$3,000 or \$4,000 of that is the remainder of what I did not have in my budget for the new attorney salary increases, the new attorney swill not be getting the step increase. The \$70,000 for the attorney position that you allowed me back a year and a half ago, the position I have not been able to fill, that money is going back to the General Fund.

Commissioner Casterline: Is her department the only one who does step increases out of their own budget?

Suzy: No, the Sheriff's office, the Jail and all of the Non-General Funds.

Commissioner Chaney: The idea of using the bond forfeiture money, we don't have a guarantee of what we are going to get each year, I have a problem dealing with paying a permanent position out of a fluctuating type fund. I'm not saying I'm against it, I just have a problem with it.

Kristen: I'm not asking for that, I'm just giving the \$70,000 back and the court can decide what to do.

Commissioner Chaney: So can we cover her shortage out of that bond forfeiture fund?

Commissioner Casterline: It goes back to the General Fund.

Commissioner Chaney: I know, but can we cover it out of the forfeiture fund?

Kristen: Well, I'm only asking for \$11,794 and I brought in \$20,000, so were good.

IRIS SANCHEZ - LIBRARIAN: My budget is the same, we received a lot of book donations this year and purchased books with monetary donations.

RENE BUTLER - MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR: I am asking for a part-time person, Laura Clark, to take care of the lawns and landscaping for 2019. This will save us money, including burdens, compared to what we were paying the previous lawn care company in 2017. Laura is a Master Gardener, she has the skill set to do irrigation and control boxes.

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Commissioner Casterline: Do you have the equipment?

Rene: Yes, I have actually already purchased a commercial Hustler Mower from ACE Hardware for \$12,000. We already had a weed eater, blower, and a push mower.

Commissioner Chaney: So we are going to do away with the contractor?

Rene: It's done, and we also cut Amazing 20/20 from doing our windows, which is a \$4,600 savings per year. If possible I would like to give step increases next year if it's available, I've got a couple of people I need to bring up, but I can wait until 2020, if need be.

Commissioner Olsen: Did you do all of your step increases for this year?

Rene: Yes.

VALERIE AMASON - COUNTY CLERK: I don't have anything different.

ALMA - COUNTY TREASURER: Nothing new in this budget. Alma questioned Suzy about her step increase requests and if they were included and Suzy assured her they were included.

ALMA - ASSISTANCE DEPARTMENT: Same thing on this budget. Alma questioning Suzy about the step increase for Brenda, Suzy assured her that if it's already been done, it's in there. Alma stated that on the salaries, she is going to do an evaluation on her new employee Suryta Laqua, after a 150 day introduction, to bring her back up to what she had in the budget for the previous person, but because she had done a step increase for the supervisor, money wise I have it in the budget, but budget wise I don't and actually I have it on the agenda to bring to the

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Commissioners' Court to bring her up to what was in the budget. She came in with medical knowledge and has done very well. As far as the supervisor, I know for a fact that she is retiring by the end of the year so in next year's budget I will have a 5-7 step difference because I will not hire the new supervisor at the same rate she was at, she was here for 18 years and so she's on up in the scale.

ALMA - HEALTH CARE SALES TAX: Suzy gave me some numbers on what we decided to pay out of HCST, the Jail Medical, Immunizations, Flea & Tick Control, and pre-employment Physicals, if the Jail works out a plan for a Health Care Nurse, anything that is health related can be paid out of this fund. So I ran some numbers and discussed it with the Judge, if we collect what I have projected and pay out everything for this year, my ending balance will be at 1 million, so we are still good on anything that we are adding.

Judge Mills: And we are adding, Code 3 has done an outstanding job in working with the people of Aransas County who do not have insurance and doing it at a terrific cost to them and I'm suggesting that we supplement them with \$75,000 this year and another \$75,000 next year.

Suzy: So you want to change the \$50,000 to \$75,000 for next year?

Judge: Yes, and an additional \$25,000 for this year.

Alma: They had \$370,000 worth of no pays in about a year's time and I attribute a lot of that to the Hurricane Harvey people being in town, because that was from July through February, or something like that.

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Commissioner Chaney: They have gone far and beyond the expectations and I would like to supplement them as much as we can.

ALMA - HOT FUNDS & VENUES: On the HOT Funds we've got 4% going to the Art Center & the Maritime Museum, I think we still have \$10,000 going to the Aquarium, of course that will not be paid until they build, right? And then, The Wings Rescue \$3,500, Cultural Arts, we added that this year, that was \$5,000.

Jackie: You were also wanting me to remind you to maybe hiring someone to come in and monitor.

Alma: I have \$2,500 that has always been in the budget, the City last year actually used some of their HOT Funds to supplement salaries for someone to do the collections. We could use a person to drive around and find the places that are coming back, there's new people in the game with houses being rented, I'm constantly getting e-mails from someone who's asking if this person is paying, if that person is paying, and have found four vacation rentals who were not paying. Sue was hired to help out with this, but she only has time to enter the data in the computer. It just takes time and we could use a part-time person to chase this down, I don't know if \$2,500 is enough, I think the Hotel and the Venue could split the cost, it's up to the Court.

Commissioner Casterline: What' the status of our collections? **Alma:** I just ran the July numbers and for the Hotel/Motel we are down 46%, Venue is down 53%, basically right at 50% total for year to date down.

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Commissioner Casterline: So what have you done for the projected income for next year?

Jackie: Right now it's at \$345,000, which is down \$82,000, for Hotel/Motel.

Judge Mills: It's down quite a bit.

Commissioner Olsen: \$82,000 down from projected 2018 in Hotel Tax.

Jackie: And venue is \$395,000, down \$123,000.

Alma: So hotel/motel is at \$88,000 year to date and venue collections is at \$133,000 for the year.

Commissioner Stiles: Well John Strothman has been very conservative with his budget on pathways projects.

Alma: Well, how much do we put to the venue, tax money that goes to the venue projects?

Jackie: We are showing \$204,000, so it's down \$73,000, based on the budget that John turned in.

Alma: So I request that we hire someone part-time to help out with collections.

Suzy: So if we did hire someone, it would go into the Treasurer's department?

Alma: Yes, and then reimbursement from them, is that how you would do it?

Suzy: Yes, transfer those funds to the general fund. Ok, so if we put that person in for the Treasurer, so would that be a part-time person and what hourly rate would you want?

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Alma: I would say that we start with a part-time person and we see how it goes, mileage allowance of some sort, 20 hours a week at \$15.00 per hour.

Suzy: Ok, we can put that in and then figure out the transfer.

DIANE DUPNIK - JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, PRECINCT 1: I'm requesting a Temporary Part-Time person and the reason is, our office is inundated with citations, we've been doing a lot of clean out and in 2017 we had 1,505 tickets, so far in 2018, from January to July, we have received 1,596, it takes about 15 minutes per ticket to enter a case, then you have to enter it again in I-Plow. All while answering the phone, waiting on customers and all the other processes in the office, it just takes a lot of time to get everything done and we don't have the manpower. Now we have new laws concerning show cause hearings if we want to issue warrants. We have 768 cases from 2000 to 2010 that we need to potentially dismiss if we can't get the help we need. I would like to get someone for about 6 months and see how it goes, maybe 20 hours a week to start off with.

Betty Stiles: Do you think you could generate enough money on the old cases to fund the position?

Diane: I think we can.

Commissioner Casterline: How much of the money collected stays in the County?

Tana Taylor: We've estimated about 70%.

Commissioner Chaney: So you're asking for someone in the upcoming budget, but did you need that person now?

Diane: Yes.

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Commissioner Chaney: So we need to be looking at this as two different things, the position now would need to be added on the agenda, but this should be a carryover until such time that you feel it wasn't necessary or for six months. In six months you would come back to the court with an original expectation.

Diane: Yes, correct.

Alma: I would like to add that, looking at the time sheets, the people are putting in the overtime and the liability is occurring anyway.

Commissioner Chaney: So if you brought this to the court at the next meeting as a current budget amendment, get somebody on line, then we would have say the end of August to December to find out how effective it was, then if necessary we could make a budget amendment to the 2019 budget or go ahead and budget it now, because if it is as critical as you say, and I'm sure it is, if you wait another 5 months the situation is just going to get worse.

Commissioner Stiles: How much of your budget in 2018, part-time, have you utilized?

Diane: I don't know.

Suzy: So I guess if you wanted to offset that 540 from your regular part-time budget of \$3,200.

Diane: Yes, I just brought Myra in and she worked right after the hurricane when she was unable to work at the school, she came in and helped us get everything back in order and then I've used her when she was on summer break. Commissioners' Court - Page 10 July 31, 2018

Suzy: I have a question, we were talking about the 20 hours per week?

Diane: Yes, I think 20 hours will be a big help.

Judge Mills: If you see in 5 or 6 months that it would pay to have more time than we will think about it.

Diane: Ok.

JANNA WHATLEY & PATRICK FLANNIGAN - DISTRICT JUDGES:

Judge Whatley: We don't have any changes except the \$2,580 on maintenance agreements, was that in case we have some maintenance issues? Because the numbers are different.

Suzy: That was for the new software. That was \$500 more than what you have?

Judge Whatley: Yes, I'll get together with you later on that, they are still in negotiations with Collin on the I-Bench package.

Suzy: Ok.

Judge Whatley: Last week, we had a security breach in the Judge's office and we are going to need a safe installed in our office, secured to the floor for evidence.

Judge Flannigan: In the old courthouse we had the Clerk's office in which there was a vault and a safe that we could deposit evidence during trial and after trial until it was to be disposed of in some way, we don't have that here. An issue arose last week and what we assumed to be a secure location, the Judge's chambers, it's not so. We can't keep evidence in the Judge's chambers and expect that folks who otherwise have no

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business being in our office gained access to our office, particularly when they are going in there to retrieve or recover some evidence that was involved in a case that the County Attorney's office decided to dismiss in the middle of a jury trial. This involves some narcotics, we ultimately found a few days later that it had been returned to the law enforcement agency that should have been responsible for it, but while it's in the custody of the courts, or court personnel, if we can't feel secure in our office and frankly people trespassing into our office for their purposes, for whatever reason, then we have to take the next step, so spending a few thousand dollars on a safe, that's just a cost that the county is going to have to bear.

Judge Mills: What size safe do you need?

Judge Whatley: I'd say about a 12 gun safe.

Judge Mills: I'm going to make sure that no one gets in your office in a short length of time, the Judge's will be the only ones who have access. Would you prefer to have only key locks instead of the badge swipe entry?

Judge Flannigan: A key lock would be fine.

Judge Mills: And we will have the safe put in the District Clerk's office if that's ok.

Judge Flannigan: That will be fine, that's the way it was before. Getting back to the budget, preliminary information for salary purposes, San Patricio County, in the District Court, is going to authorize a 2% to 3% increase for their employees, so obviously a portion of that will trickle down to Aransas County.

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Judge Whatley: I believe we did budget for that, just so you know, it's in our proposed budget, we told San Pat that we were going to go with whatever they authorized, if they do nothing then we are going to back down on our budget.

Judge Flannigan: Hopefully we've found enough money, moving stuff around, like the visiting Judge cost and some of the other expenses that the Auditor, Judge Whatley and I have gone over so it's going to be a very negligible increase to Aransas County.

Commissioner Chaney: So Judge, are we going to put a new safe on the agenda or are you just going to do it? I'd just as soon as you do it.

Judge Flannigan: Correct me if I'm wrong but I think we have money in our District Court Budget to take care of that issue.

Suzy: I think there's enough money there.

DIANA MCGINNIS - JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, PRECINCT 2: I don't have anything.

Judge Mills: Ok, thank you.

LINDA DOANE - HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR: The only two things I'm asking for is, my assistant received her APHR certification so I would like to put her in for a step increase this year, if possible. With Encode, our deployment is supposed to be on the 7th of this month, they are going to do the setup the 13th through the 15th and then they are going to come out in November and train us and then we will go live at that point. I'm hoping to get everything that we have loaded in there before the next storm season, so I'm asking to get a part-time temporary person for about 8 weeks at 20 hours a week.

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Commissioner Stiles: What did you want pay them?

Linda: I was thinking \$15 an hour, because they are going to be handling some pretty pertinent data and want to make sure it's done correctly.

Commissioner Stiles: And you want this for 2019?

Linda: Yes.

Judge Mills: Thank you and for all you're doing too.

VALERIE GONZALES - ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: I have a change, because David Jimenez is doing a lot of work and we are trying to get someone to help him under the grant, I would like to give him an increase, but I think his job description doesn't have that ability, I think I would have to bring that to Commissioners' Court. I know he is definitely overwhelmed and he does need help.

Commissioner Casterline: Do you think you are going to have a chance to find someone with that grant?

Valerie: I think so, of course there will be some training required, but it's not impossible.

Suzy: It was also suggested, because of the situation, that this position, a new Code Enforcement position, may be funded by Health Care Sales Tax, the whole position.

Judge Mills: Whoa!

Commissioner Olsen: We like that.

Valerie: Then we wouldn't have to pay the new position with the grant, because then I would have to share that person with the City.

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Commissioner Chaney: So Valerie, if we do that are we going to do a budget amendment this year?

Valerie: I think we should, especially if we want to move forward, faster, with our demo program.

Suzy: Ok, so both the group and the Health Care Tax position for this year?

VALERIE GONZALEZ - MOSQUITO CONTROL: No changes in this department.

VALERIE GONZALEZ - TRANSFER STATION: The only increase is moving the part time cashier to a full time position. We did the increase for the oil and diesel

Commissioner Stiles: Professional services, is that TECQ?

Valerie: That's our landfill bill and the equipment rentals when we have to rent. No equipment will be required next year, containers are good.

Commissioner Casterline: What about a permit increase?

Valerie: If you want to put it on an agenda, I will be happy to do it.

Commissioner Casterline: I think that we should increase the amount of containers that we can do in a day.

Valerie: I think if we increase it by two I think I can turn them around, as long as we still have the two drivers. We are not taking the metal to Commercial Metals anymore, we are having them come pick it up, you get a little less money for it, but it saves money. So now that we have freed that up our driver can make more trips to the landfill.

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JOHN STROTHMAN & RONELL BURKE - ANIMAL CONTROL:

John: I see that we have a couple or three things that we have deductions on, one was out of our contract maintenance agreement for \$600 that is our Shelter Pro IT agreement, the annual fee that we pay for that program.

Jackie: So you need the \$2,600?

John: Yes. The other two, I'm ok with them. Anything else? Judge Mills: Yes, and I think we need to do it sooner than later, sealing those floors this year. I need a \$ amount.

John: It needs to be done, we had some parvo outbreaks this year.

Ronell: One issue, and I'm going to talk with Dr. Tyler at the state, about being able to not impound any animals for a time frame because that's going to be another problem or we are going to have to do a half and half situation. But once we have a pretty good comprehensive idea how to get in there and get everything done, we can get in there and do the one side of the shelter at a time and we would still have 10 spaces for the animals.

Judge Mills: How many pens do we have that are outside?

Ronell: Ten and one of those they keep breaching, because it was a donated one.

John: We'll get a price, it's going to have to be scrubbed down, cleaned, dried, and then applied, so it may be a week long process.

Suzy: So do you have a rough idea of what it will cost?

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John: No, and under the circumstances, with painters and all, it may be difficult but we will work on it, it's not going to be a thousand dollars, it's going to be thousands of dollars.

Ronell: Between one & ten.

Commissioner Stiles: How long do you think that will last, how often do you think this needs to be done?

Ronell: At least every five years, we need to revisit it.

JOHN STROTHMAN - PATHWAYS: As we are leaning towards our reduced budget, it's a little difficult for some of the volunteers to accept, the fact that we don't have the people, the time, or the money to make things happen like they used to, but things will come back around once we have hotels, it's just going to be what it's going to be. We had a problem with the air conditioner at the History Center and had to get that put back up, but we are good. We haven't depleted our reserve so if we can get through the next few year with our reduced number maybe 2020 will be better.

Judge Mills: The old train depot, there's the possibility that it could be bought with somebody else's money, the owner doesn't have the funds to restore it and it would be a shame to lose that old building.

John: We have about \$150,000 left in bond fund, I'll have to go back and double check that number.

Judge Mills: We've discussed buying the property and the building if it's for sale or just buying the building and moving it, but I don't think its movable.

Commissioner Stiles: There is a historical marker there.

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John: The minute you move, you lose that, we'd still keep the marker but the building is no longer registered with the historical commission.

Judge Mills: Do we know what he's asking for it? John: No, but I can find out.

Linda Garcia Haynes: I had heard that it was about \$400,000. Commissioner Stiles: Is there any grant money from the Texas Historical Commission that may be able to help?

Linda: There may be, that would certainly be a consideration.

Judge Mills: Yes, look into that, I'd hate to lose that old building.

John: Anyway, Pathways will be fine, the History Center will be taken care of, the sites will be cut and maintained, the volunteers have stepped up, we had a group come in last week end and cleaned up the Castro gardens.

Commissioner Stiles: Did they do anything with the fence? **John:** We had 10 volunteers from a church group last week and helped Russ start putting the fence back up, so by Hummer Fest, most or all should be up.

Sheriff Mills and Gavin Harrison - Sheriff's Office:

Sheriff Mills: Something that came up in the last 2 days is the company that provides software for the locks in the detention center is going bankrupt. So we can wait until they individually fail and replace them at \$700 each, and I don't know that you could replace them individually, the software part of it, so we are reaching out to different companies for a plan of conversion

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on what we currently have but it could have a \$100,000 price tag on it. The mechanical part of the locks are ok, it's going to be the electronical part that we may have a problem with, so that's something we may be looking at in this budget.

Gavin: It's a possible that we can do them individually, but that's a possibility, not a probability.

Sheriff Mills: The rest of my budget pretty well stands with what we've submitted, the only change we are asking the court to consider, we started this week as well, is we have that Stipend system for employees who have changes in license certifications as well as education certifications. Traditionally in the past when they qualified, because we didn't know if the budget could absorb it during the year we would make them wait until the next budget year, but Suzy's office and Linda Doane, I think, they would like to see us honor them as soon as it is earned, rather than putting them off. That might slow down some of the departure of employees.

Linda Doane: One of the issues, the jail alone has had a significant turnover, they were down 9 or 10 people at one point and if you tell your employees that you're going to get a bonus if you earn the certificate and then you wait anywhere from 8 to 12 to 16 months before you get it and you are still having to use the certification in your job, it kind of discourages them and I'm concerned that may be part of why they are leaving and going somewhere where they can earn more money. Also, from a legal standpoint, as far as employment law, if we are giving it to new hires but we are making these people wait, if the labor board came in and looked at that, they could say you are not

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treating your employees fairly across the board. I didn't realize until a few days ago that we were doing it that way.

Commissioner Chaney: What is the impact from these certifications on the budget in a year's time?

Tana: I think for 2019 we are at \$13,300 per month.

Commissioner Chaney: It needs to be absorbed in the budget year in which it's earned.

Suzy: For the Sheriff's department right now we have \$78,000 budgeted for this calendar year; \$96,000 in Gavin's department and \$67,800 in the jail. Adding those people as they come on board is not going to be that big of an impact. Due to the attrition that we have in the jail....

Judge Mills: I think we need to do something.

Sheriff Mills: Yeah, because we have some that I do think that have the stipend, I couldn't have told you how it played out at the end of the year.

Suzy: We were going to do a one lump estimated amount and as people come on board we will reduce that amount and spread it throughout the departments.

Commissioner Chaney: I think we need to do it in the current budget also. I didn't know we were doing it that way either.

Suzy: I'll put it on the agenda. It's actually, relatively, a new process, we've only been doing this since 2015 and so it's kind of just working through it and how it's evolved.

Sheriff Mills: On a positive note, out of the storm with the contract awarded for radios, I shared with the Judge yesterday,

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I got an invitation to attend a meeting on August 20th in Corpus. The City of Corpus Christi is going to have a bond issue in November for an upgrade or a conversion to their radio system anyway, so we were getting ready to have to pay for new radios one way or another, so I thought with the action taken we'd be ahead of that curve and that's something that we control, what we do in the future anyway.

Commissioner Chaney: The radio change outs and all of that, a lot of that is covered with insurance, right?

Sheriff Mills: Yes, sir.

Suzy: From all of the suggestions that were made today, are you going to going to be ok to input them into the budget and we'll look at the numbers or do you want to go case by case?

Judge Mills: I'm ok with it, I don't know about the rest of the court, with everything that was discussed I don't see anything that we could say no to right now.

LINDA GARCIA HAYNES - COUNTY JUDGE'S OFFICE: Here is something that I would like to ask for, some part-time, temporary help for Commissioners' Court, I gave you three scenarios and my preference would be number case #2, which that would be the ultimate maximum, and more than likely it would be half of that, but it would allow both of us to be in Commissioners' Court, which I have found that it is really necessary.

Judge Mills: Can you give me an example of why you think it is necessary?

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Linda: Well because half the time when I'm working on something I don't know what's happened in Commissioners' Court and it's just been a problem because I don't know what's happened.

Judge Mills: The minutes don't suffice what's happened in Commissioners' Court?

Linda: I don't even see the minutes most of the time.

Commissioner Stiles: Valerie can put you on that distribution e-mail.

Linda: Yeah, if she would get them to me long before, but it's just been a problem I can't be there, and a lot of times I need to be there because I'm on the Historical Commission and things like that. Most of the time they are not even an hour long and we can just ask Elizabeth to watch it for fifteen minutes, that's not a big deal, but if we could just have even the smallest amount and we might not even need all of it, but it would just be a help.

Commissioner Olsen: Well, we can consider it.

No further discussion presenting, the Court adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

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

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VALERIE K. AMASON,

EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE

COMMISSIONERS' COURT