

ORIGINAL

MINUTES OF THE

COMMISSIONERS' COURT

WORKSHOP MEETING - AUGUST 6, 2014

On the 6th day of August, 2014, there was a Workshop Meeting of the Commissioners' Court held in the Commissioners' Court, 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 Joy M. Dias, Chief Deputy County Clerk.

Other County Official present was Richard Bianchi, County Attorney; Lezlie Kirk, County Auditor; and Jeri D. Cox, Tax Assessor/Collector. The Meeting was convened at 8:30 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

TAX RATES

Tax Assessor/Collector Cox gave a report on calculation of 2014 effective and rollback tax rates. She pointed out two (2) public hearings would be required if the Court approved a tax rate over the effective tax rate. She also told the Court there is a new notice. The current effective tax rate according to Cox's calculations is \$0.364669.

(Report inserted)

2015 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Tax Assessor/Collector Cox stated her proposed budget is less than last year partially due to lower professional services.

IT Director Jackson's budget showed an increase in maintenance fees and included a new phone system. The Court recommended the phone system be under a separate budget. Jackson requested an additional full-time employee, a raise, and authorization to fill his part-time position currently budgeted in the 2014 budget.

Airport Manager Johnson requested a grade increase for his employees from Grade 11 to Grade 14. The ramp grant in his budget can be used for emergency repairs. Discussion was had on the need for repair to John Wendell Road. Johnson stated this should be a legitimate expense of the Airport.

Court took a five (5) minute recess then returned to budget discussions.

Sheriff Mills discussed losing twelve (12) people in the last year due to higher salaries elsewhere. Commissioner Chaney stated he believes in pay for merit and education that is performance based. Commissioner Smith proposed an additional \$140,000.00 for merit raises in the Sheriff's Department and Jail. The Sheriff did not reply to Commissioner Smith question as to whether he would prefer to increase personnel salaries or get a storage building. Discussion was also had on the proposed new K-9 dog.

Commissioner Casterline suggested the jail rent an ice machine rather than purchase a new one. Casterline also suggested Sheriff Mills revisit his budget and take out some of the "slack" as he has under spent between \$100,000.00 and \$150,000.00 for the past several years. Rather than purchase two (2) vehicles in 2015 and purchase a building for the \$65,000.00 that would be spent on the vehicles, the building was taken out and \$130,000.00 for purchase of four (4) vehicles was put back in.

Sheriff Mills suggested the creation of a new training coordinator position. This person would be qualified to train new deputies for the County and could also be paid to train deputies from other counties. This position would be in a separate fund so the Court could track it to see if it was warranted.

The Court discussed the license and weights budget noting that revenues are down. Sheriff Mills stated it is not his job to generate revenue; however, Commissioner Smith reminded Sheriff Mills the license and weights is a revenue generator and it is down. Commissioner Casterline suggested two (2) weigh stations are not needed if revenues are down. Commissioner Chaney recommended spending \$2,700.00 on repairing the current vehicle in license and weights rather than purchasing a new vehicle.

Dispatch/911 Coordinator Lee Zapata noted the County will be paying less for dispatch in next year's budget. She stated the City of Rockport is giving a 2.5% COLA and their budget includes 3% for merit raises.

Fleet Maintenance Supervisor Mike Gordon discussed his budget. The Court recommended he bill parts to whatever department is getting them. He noted the Sheriff's Department and the Road and Bridge Department get the majority of parts. He requested a one-ton pickup truck to replace his aging vehicle. This would allow him to go places he is currently unable to access.

The Court had no questions for District Clerk Heard.

Justice of the Peace, Precinct 2, Diane McGinnis appeared although she was not on the schedule. The Court noted collections are down in her department also. When asked what qualifications DPS Secretary Sharron Loflin had to appointed as J.P., she replied that Loflin is only doing magistrating and manning the desk; she is not hearing any court cases.

Proposed Elections Administrator Michele Bennett appeared before the Court and answered questions regarding the revenue earned from conducting the Primary and Runoff Elections for the Democratic and Republican Parties. Commissioner Smith stated we should not be conducting their elections for free. County Clerk Friebele reminded the Court all early voting costs, including ballot by mail costs, are borne by the County.

Director of Environmental Health Jackson wants a new truck for mosquito control. He has seven (7) vehicles with low mileage but the body and bed are deteriorating due to the mosquito chemicals. Commissioner Chaney suggested taking the license and weights vehicle and repair it for \$2,700.00. Jackson stated he normally uses the new vehicle for a few years prior to actually putting it into service for mosquito control. It was also suggested the current Fleet Maintenance vehicle be transferred to mosquito control. Court suggested an increase in fees at the Transfer Station to cover the current shortage in Jackson's proposed budget.

Constables Thomas and Phillips requested new vehicles. Phillips stated he preferred a car to a truck. They were looking at purchase of a new Impala because it gets good gas mileage. Judge Mills asked them to get a price on the cost of lights for the vehicles.

County Attorney Bianchi discussed the County Attorney, law library, county court at law and pre-trial diversion budgets. Kristen Blanford stated she wants to hire a new Assistant County Attorney when she begins her term as County Attorney. Bianchi told the Court they would enter additional costs next year for visiting judges when he becomes County Court at Law Judge. These judges will be hearing cases he has filed as the County Attorney. Bianchi also stated he would need a law researcher next year when he becomes Judge.

Tax Assessor/Collector Cox returned with new figures showing how much revenue there would be with different amounts over the effective tax rate.

(Report inserted)

County Auditor Kirk lead discussion on remainder of budget. She verified various choices of the Court so she could give them new budget figures on August 7th when discussions continued. She told the Court she would need to have step increases in her budget in order to give her deputies a step increase under the current county policy. The District Judges will not allow her to transfer from the \$50,000.00 fund set up specifically for this purpose. The funds must be in her budget first. She requested including a step increase in her budget for her four (4) deputies and herself. The Court agreed but instructed Kirk she must follow the rules for giving a step increase which included job evaluations.

(All other reports inserted)

No further business presenting, the Court adjourned was adjourned by Commissioner Smith duly seconded by Commissioner Casterline.

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

PEGGY L. FRIEBELE, COUNTY CLERK &
EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE
COMMISSIONERS' COURT