



MINUTES

Aransas County Commissioners Court

9:00 AM – Monday, June 13, 2022

The Aransas County Commissioners Court met in **Regular Session** on Monday, June 13, 2022, at 9:00 AM, in the Aransas County Courthouse, 2840 Hwy 35 N, Rockport, Texas.

Present: **C. H. "Burt" Mills, Jr.**, County Judge
Jack Chaney, Commissioner Precinct 1-1A
Leslie Casterline, Commissioner, Precinct 2
Pat Rousseau, Commissioner, Precinct 3
Wendy Laubach, Commissioner, Precinct 4

Absent:

I. Call to Order & Pledges

The meeting convened at 9:00 AM, followed by pledges to the American and Texas flags.

II. **The Invocation** was given by County Surveyor Jerry Brundrett.

III. **Roll Call** was taken. **A Quorum was declared**, and the following proceedings were had and done, to wit:

IV. **Citizens to be Heard** – There were none.

(At this point, Judge Mills skipped down to agenda item 12. to accommodate Richard Dominguez's wife and daughter who accepted the County's proclamation honoring their husband and father. Mr. Dominguez could not accept the honor personally due to health reasons. Following this item, the meeting resumed in regular agenda order.)

V. Presentations –

1. **Martin Ornelas**, Director, with **Rural Economic Assistance League, Inc. (R.E.A.L.)** reminded the court about the principal services R.E.A.L. provides for rural communities in South Texas:

- rural public transportation,
- housing facilities,
- adult day care activity health centers,
- home health & provider services, and their
- South Texas Community Clubhouse serving adults with serious mental illness

and then focused on their rural public transportation services. He recapped the numbers of weekly and annual trips provided by R.E.A.L. during the years 2019-2022, and discussed how the trip purpose percentages have changed. He mentioned that

system-wide ridership was up 22% from 2021, and Aransas County's 2022 ridership was even up 8% from pre-COVID trips! (Annual trips in 2019 were 295,000 but fell to 71,450 in 2021 primarily because of COVID. During the first six months of 2022, there were 43,619 trips.)

In 2019, 48% of the trips were for personal reasons and 36% of them were for medical (with the balance for work and education). In 2022, 65% of the trips were for medical, 32% were for personal reasons, and 3% were for work.

He talked about two ridership programs currently in place: Project Access, which gives an 80% fare reduction (\$3 instead of \$15) for seniors, persons with disabilities, or low income to/from Corpus Christi (while funds last), and Color Express, a pilot program which provides NO cost transportation to/from higher education or training purposes anywhere within the coastal bend region so long as they originate in rural areas (ends April 2023). R.E.A.L. currently has several students from Rockport who have committed to taking advantage of this program who will receive round-trip transportation to Del Mar and Coastal Bend College this fall.

The issue with these programs is that the first has funding limitations and the second is a pilot program so they are looking for ways to sustain those services over the long haul. Based on their use patterns, Ornelas believes they will be fine for the next 12-18 months; after that the \$15 fare that is now being charges at \$3 will need to back to \$15, unless they find other sources of funding to continue subsidizing these services. Live Oak County, for example, offers financial support to all Live Oak County residents by reducing the fares for ALL trips initiated in Live Oak County by 80%.

R.E.A.L. currently has four hubs (Alice, Beeville, Falfurrias, Sinton), 82 ADA accessible vehicles (with 20 more on order), 36 drivers, and 13 support staff. However, since there is considerable usage of the transportation services by Aransas County residents, Mr. Ornelas was hoping Aransas County would consider providing both financial support for this well-utilized public transportation program as well as some fleet vehicle parking space (for 4-6 vehicles) and a small amount of office storage space (key access) to help the program be more cost-effective. Currently, drivers who transport Aransas County riders come from Sinton. [note: Although programs are offered to particular groups, ridership is open to ANYONE.]

- 2. David Reid, County Engineer**, presented the Aransas County Stormwater Master Plan for the Tule Creek Watershed along with information about stormwater management as it relates to the health of Little Bay.

Reid's overview pointed to Tule Creek as a major drainage system conveying stormwater runoff from 2,400 acres into Little Bay. He made it clear that increased development has had negative impacts on flood control, water quality, and natural habitat, citing several sources of pollutants into the watershed:

- sediment from new construction (homes/developments/infrastructure),
- nitrates and phosphates from treatment plant, and
- residential pollutants (paper trash, used motor oil, fertilizer, bacteria from

animal waste, chemicals from improper disposal of paint cans, cleaning supplies, etc.)

He discussed five potential projects to improve water quality in Little Bay:

- Little Bay Circulation Improvements, per the Mott MacDonald report,
- Tule Creek hydrologic and hydraulic modeling
- maintenance of existing drainage system,
- retrofitting Tule Creek with detention, water quality, and habitat protection features, and
- extending Tule drainage system to future developments and provide retention, water quality, and habitats

and recommended tasking a committee represented by each of the four jurisdictional authorities responsible for stormwater discharge into Tule Creek (City of Rockport, Town of Fulton, Aransas County, and Aransas County Navigation District) and private citizens to oversee the process and implementation of the master plan.

Additionally, he suggested:

- adopting community-wide drainage criteria that includes a water quality component and habitat protection,
- continuing to work with General Land Office, Texas Water Development Board, and other state agencies for engineering support, planning, and grants, and
- seeking community support through social media and open forums

3. **Christopher Mace, President of Friends of the Aquarium at Rockport Harbor,** presented the conceptual drawings and plans for the new Aquarium at Rockport Harbor.

VI. Items for Deliberation and/or Action

Consent Agenda:

4. Minutes from the May 18, 2022, Special Meeting
5. Minutes from the May 23, 2022, Regular Meeting
6. Minutes from the June 3, 2022, Special Meeting
7. \$14,806.72 donation from the Friends of the Aransas County Library to be used to improve and update the media equipment in the Library Conference Room
8. \$80.00 donation from Richard Stack for Aransas County Animal Control supplies
9. \$140.00 donation from Susan Bishop for Aransas County Animal Control supplies

10. \$100.00 donation from Richard Burchfield for Aransas County Animal Control supplies
11. \$40.00 donation from Christy Hutt for Aransas County Animal Control supplies

Motion by Commissioner Casterline to approve the Consent Items; seconded by Commissioner Rousseau.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

County Reports:

12. Proclamation #P-07-2022

Motion by Judge Mills to approve Proclamation #P-07-2022 honoring Richard Dominguez for his lifelong contributions to this community - especially to the veterans of this community; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

13. **NOT AN ACTION ITEM:** Judge Mills acknowledged receipt of a letter dated June 1, 2022, as an official notification from the Coastal Plains Community Center of their intent to purchase real property located in the City of Alice, Texas, as such notice is required by the *Texas Administrative Code*.

14. Aquarium Construction

Motion by Commissioner Laubach to approve the conceptual plans presented for the construction of a new Aquarium at Rockport Harbor; seconded by Commissioner Rousseau.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

15. Burn Ban

Motion by Commissioner Rousseau to approve Order No. O-13-2022, an Order of the County of Aransas, Texas, Prohibiting Outdoor Burning for a period of up to an additional 30 days due to the existence of conditions that have created a public safety hazard that would be exacerbated by outdoor burning; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

16. Fireworks Ban

Motion by Commissioner Chaney to approve Order No. O-14-2022, an Order of the Aransas County Commissioners Court Prohibiting Certain Fireworks in Unincorporated Areas of Aransas County for the Fourth of July Fireworks Period due to the existence of drought conditions; seconded by Commissioner Rousseau.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

17. Airport Fly-In

Motion by Commissioner Rousseau to approve a request from the Airport Manager to host a fly-in event that will be free and open to the public on December 10th and 11th, 2022, at the Airport Terminal and ramp; seconded by Commissioner Laubach.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

County Roads and Floodplain:

18. Surplus Property Donation

Motion by Commissioner Rousseau to approve declaring the Aransas County 2006 New Holland D85 Dozer (VIN #SN N6DC85204, ACID #1926) as surplus property and donating it "as-is" to Aransas County Emergency Corp., a 501c3 tax exempt corporation which consists of the Rockport Volunteer Fire Department, Fulton Volunteer Fire Department and the Lamar Volunteer Fire Department; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

Contracts, Agreements, Grants, and Leases:

19. Network Cabling Services Agreement

Motion by Commissioner Laubach to approve an agreement with Network Cabling Services (NCS) for improving/updating the media equipment in the Aransas County Library Conference Room in an amount not to exceed \$14,806.72 and authorizing the County Judge to sign all necessary documents; seconded by Commissioner Casterline.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

20. Dozer Purchase

Motion by Commissioner Rousseau to approve the purchase of a used Caterpillar D6K Type Dozer from Holt Cat in the amount of \$186,746.35 and authorize the County Judge to execute necessary documents; seconded by Commissioner Casterline.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

21. GLO Contract Change Request No. 4 - **STRUCK**

22. PGAL Fee Increase Request - **STRUCK**

23. Resolution #R-10-2022

Motion by Commissioner Casterline to approve Resolution R-10-2022, a Resolution Awarding a Contract to CrowderGulf for Disaster Debris Management, Debris Disposal and Debris Removal Services; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

24. Resolution #R-11-2022

Motion by Commissioner Laubach to approve Resolution R-11-2022, awarding a contract to Thompson Consulting Services for Monitoring Services related to Debris Removal and Disposal seconded by Commissioner Casterline.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

25. Multi-jurisdictional MOU

Motion by Commissioner Casterline to approve entering into a Multi-jurisdictional Memorandum of Understanding for Disaster Debris Removal Management and Debris Removal; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

Planning and Budget Office:

26. Indigent Health Care Report

Motion by Commissioner Casterline to approve May 2022 Indigent Health Care Report; seconded by Commissioner Rousseau.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

27. Outside Audit Report

Motion by Commissioner Rousseau to TABLE accepting the Aransas County Annual Financial Report for the Year Ending December 31, 2021, as presented by Beyer and Company, Certified Public Accountants; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Outside auditor Wayne Beyer, CPA, Beyer & Company, who was available via Zoom, went through the report with the Court and addressed their questions; however, the commissioners wanted additional time to review the detailed document before accepting it.

Vote: Motion to TABLE carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

28. Employee Health Insurance for 2022-2023 Plan Year

Motion by Commissioner Rousseau to address the employee health insurance premium rate increase by approving Option A (County absorbs full increase) and authorizing County Judge to enter into and sign the Renewal Agreement with Texas Association of Counties (TAC) for Employee Health Insurance for the 2022-2023 Plan Year; seconded by Commissioner Chaney.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

29. Budget Line Item Transfers

Motion by Commissioner Rousseau to approve Budget Line Item Transfers; seconded by Commissioner Chaney. (Per Auditor Cockerham, there were none.)

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

30. Accounts Payable and Payroll/Payroll Liabilities

Motion by Commissioner Casterline to approve Accounts Payable and Payroll/Payroll Liabilities; seconded by Commissioner Chaney. (Auditor Cockerham pointed out the report was pulled on the 3rd so the \$142K check for the Lamar property purchase that you all approved at the June 3rd Special Meeting for shows up in this run. Also, Fund 290 includes our annual lease payment of \$19K to the Nav District. In Fund 322, there is a transfer to our Downtown Anchor of \$2.5M which is going to be deposited into that account so we can pay our almost \$2.1M bill to Teal.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0; it was so ordered.

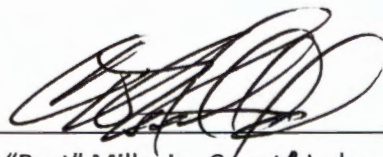
VII. Reports from Commissioners, Elected Officials & Department Heads – No action will be taken –

Jacky Cockerham, County Auditor: *I have preliminary budget books for you because, as you know, Monday is our first workshop. I hope you all will have a chance to look at them and see if there's anything you have questions on. The numbers kind of look funny because I used this year's tax income instead of projecting what it might be. I'd rather just leave it as a placeholder and not have any false hopes of what it may or may not be in the end. If you all will stick around after the meeting, I will get them to you.*

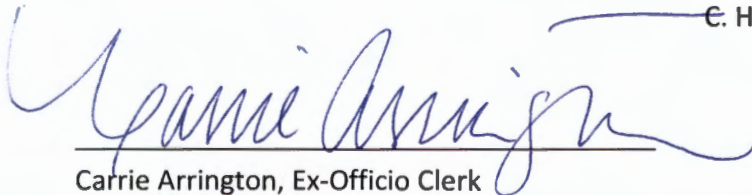
Judge Mills: *I just want to say that the burn ban and the fireworks ban is nothing to be taken lightly. Anything can start a fire but, not long ago, at one or two o'clock in the morning, some kids decided to have a fireworks party and started a fire that burned 20 acres and almost a house. Calling out volunteer firemen and women at that time of night, let's be a little more considerate.*

VIII. Adjournment

No further business presenting, the Court adjourned at 10:53 AM on a motion duly made by Commissioner Rousseau and seconded by Commissioner Casterline.



E. H. "Burt" Mills, Jr., County Judge



Carrie Arrington, Ex-Officio Clerk
of the Commissioners Court

