

MINUTES OF THE

COMMISSIONERS' COURT

PUBLIC HEARING - AUGUST 22, 2016

On the 22nd day of August, 2016, there was a Public Hearing 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; **Charles Smith**, Commissioner, Precinct 3; **Betty Stiles**, Commissioner, Precinct 4; and **Valerie K. Amason**, County Clerk.

Other County Officers present were **Jeri Cox**, Tax Assessor-Collector; **Lezlie Kirk**, County Auditor; **Bill Mills**, Sheriff; **David Reid**, Road Administrator/Drainage Engineer/Stormwater Management Engineer; **Diana Espinoza**, Drainage Engineer;

Members of Local City Government, Community Groups and other Interested Parties present were Aransas County; **Brian Olsen**, Unopposed Candidate for Precinct 3 Commissioner in upcoming 2016 General Election; **Norma Martinez**, Managing Editor of the Rockport Pilot Newspaper; **Wendy Laubach**, **Greg Laubach** and **Linda Beauchamp**, residents.

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:

ITEM FOR DELIBERATION

Public comments on the 2016 Tax increase used to fund the 2017 Budget.

Wendy Laubach: I live in Lamar and I got the news a few week ago that the Court needed to make budget cuts which included the elimination of our polling station, so we are all going to need to drive five to ten miles into town to vote. I understand that it has to do with the costs of elections and the cost of new equipment and that there was discussion about the possibility of returning to paper ballots. As a former election judge, I had many comments from voters and their unhappiness that we were moving away from paper ballots. We feel that paper ballots are the only way to truly have a secure, written, audit trail if there were ever a problem with an election in Aransas County. If there ever were a way to make a cost effective decision, even if that meant paper ballots, I hope that the court would consider it.

Second, I understand that public services go away when money isn't there to pay for them. We recently had an election on the groundwater conservation commission and I hear that there may be another one in the future. This was an unpopular initiative among the public, an expensive election, and I would really hope the County would decide not to spend money on an election that no one wants.

Commissioner Smith: I couldn't agree more with your comments on paper ballots. It's interesting that state law says that you have to order three paper ballots for every registered voter at fifty five cents a ballot. We still haven't made a decision on paper ballots vs. the electronic system.

Commissioner Casterline: Since our last meeting, we have found that there is another company that will support our machines for years to come.

Linda Beauchamp: Isn't the integrity of our elections the most important thing? I have heard reports through C-SPAN, that people who have made these machines have discussed how easy it is to manipulate the software. We should really value the integrity of the elections or we are deceiving ourselves.

Commissioner Smith: Not only that, the state is currently being attacked on the voter I. D. Laws.

Norma Martinez: Is the Court still considering the proposed two cents added to the effective tax rate?

Commissioner Smith: If you will note that is a 4.43% increase on the average home.

Gentleman in the back who came in late: Has the court already budgeted money for a proposed water district, which we have already defeated?

Judge Mills: No.

Commissioner Smith: Actually, a little bit of history on the Groundwater Conservation District, we went to the legislature to be able to put it out for a public vote, we did not propose a tax increase and it would not pass unless the voter's approved it. But the other thing I point out, once the legislation was passed, the court appointed a temporary board, we no longer have any authority over the process.

(Insert)

No further business presenting, the Court adjourned at 8:42 a.m. on a motion made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Casterline.

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

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