

## **Aransas Pathways Steering Committee**

**Minutes of March 3, 2026 Regular Monthly Meeting at 3:00 P.M. at the Aquarium Education Center located at 706 Navigation Circle, Rockport, Texas, 78382**

### **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 P.M. by Co-Chair Pam Stranahan.

### **2. Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum**

Members present: Commissioner Pat Rousseau, Pam Stranahan, Shelly Stuart, Councilwoman Mary Ann Pahmiyer, Steve Ferguson, Shelly Steckler, and Jim Farnsworth

Members absent: Rich Connell, Andrea Hattman, Dr. Rebekah Rylander, Jatin Bhakta

Staff: Rene Butler and Leah Medado

Guests: Earl Matthew, Morgan Rodriguez, Ashley Bennis, Nanette Eiland

A quorum was present.

### **3. Citizens to Be Heard**

The consent agenda, including approval of previous meeting minutes, was presented and approved.

- a) Approval of February 3, 2026 Minutes
  - Minor corrections noted:
    - Name correction (Jim)
    - Clarification on Shell Creek reference
  - Motion to approve minutes as amended
  - Result: Approved unanimously

### **4. Steering Committee Co-Chair's Report Pam Stranahan**

- a) Welcome remarks were provided.
- b) Recognition of increased collaboration and event activity across the county
- a) Emphasis on volunteer engagement and community partnerships

## **5. Subcommittee Reports-**

### **Commissioner Pat Rousseau**

- a) County posted notice for Land Use Subcommittee membership applications
- b) Interested individuals to submit letter/resume to County Judge's office

#### **Update:**

- Placer.ai subscription – County Judge not in favor of participation at this time
- Clarification:
- Land Use Subcommittee tied to GLO requirements and requires coordination with the North American Land Trust Reported on recent Commissioners Court action approving placement of the Bailey Ranch/Copano Cove project under the auspices of Aransas Pathways.

### **5.1 Birding – Rebekah Rylander (c/o Leah Medado)**

#### **Aransas Bird Days (ABD) – Inaugural Event**

- a) Dates: **April 18–19, 2026**
- b) Partnership: Aransas Pathways & Goose Island State Park
- c) Event Components:
  - a. Bird Banding (Linda Castro)
  - b. Kids Zone (Connie Hagar)
  - c. Guided Tours (Nature & History)
  - d. Evening Reception (Community Center)
- d) Focus:
  - a. Migration awareness
  - b. Nature tourism promotion
  - c. Community engagement

#### **Operational Notes**

- Multi-site event requiring ~10+ volunteers
- Development of birding hotspots aligned with eBird
- Coordination with partners (e.g., Chamber, City, Texas Master Naturalists)

### **5.2 Kayaking – Jim Fansworth**

#### **a) 30-Mile Paddling Trail**

Approved and progressing

- Spreadsheet being prepared for Texas Parks & Wildlife (TPWD) with segment/site details
- Request for committee review support

### **Signage Plan**

Proposal includes:

- Large kiosk signage (~\$1,500 each)
- Smaller directional signposts with QR codes

Potential locations:

- Tule Park Pavilion
- Murph Park

**Motion passed** to proceed with planning and costing

### **b) Little Bay Paddling Trails Proposal**

Proposed loop options:

- 1.6-mile loop
- 3.7-mile loop
- 5-mile extended route (Intracoastal around Key Allegro)
- Coordination with Navigation District completed

**Motion:** Approve and forward to Commissioners Court

**Result:** Approved unanimously

### **c) Other Updates**

- a) Sunset Paddle planned in coordination with **Ecosystem Summit (June)**
- b) Consideration of Juneteenth holiday scheduling impacts

## **5.3 History – Pam Stranahan**

### **a) Programs & Initiatives**

- Alamo commemoration activities announced
- History Center:
  - Vaquero Exhibit opening (March 21)
- Preservation Awards:
  - Nominations open

## b) Upcoming Educational Programs

- Texas Maritime Museum lecture series
- Topics include:
  - Lipan Apache Tribe
  - Texas Navies
  - La Salle settlement

## 5.4 Copano Cove/Land Use Sub-Committee -Steve Ferguson

### Overview

- Focus on **Cove Harbor / Copano Cove conservation area**
- Guided by:
  - Conservation Easement (2018)
  - Baseline Documentation (2019)
  - GLO Grant Requirements

### Key Points

- Land use must align with conservation restrictions
- North American Land Trust approval required for major activities
- Approx. **\$140,000 budget** for land use plan development

### Next Steps

- Form subcommittee via Commissioners Court appointments
- Develop RFP for environmental planning firm
- Establish decision-making structure:
  - Subcommittee → APSC → Commissioners Court

## 5.5 Trails—Rich Connell (Pam Stranahan)

### American Volkssport Association (AVA) Proposal

- Proposal for Aransas Pathways to serve as host organization
- Includes:
  - Establishment of additional walking routes (e.g., Fulton Harbor Walk)
  - Tourism and visitor engagement opportunity
- Annual membership fee: \$75
- Revenue model via participation fees

### Motion:

Adopt AVA membership and operational responsibility

**Result:** Approved

## 5.6 Marketing – Jatin Bhakta (Leah Medado)

### a) Digital Tools Proposal

- STQRY (interactive mapping platform) – ~\$5,000/year
- Eventbrite Pro – ~\$300/month
- E-newsletter platform integration

### b) Purpose

- Enhance visitor engagement
- Improve event registration and communication
- Support digital storytelling and mapping

**Motion:** Approve subscriptions under existing marketing budget

**Result:** Approved

### c) Operational Framework

- Guiding principle:
  - *Measured Impact + Strategic Partnerships = Sustainable Growth*
- Focus areas:
  - Partnership integration
  - Structured event coordination
  - Data-informed marketing

## 5.7 Facilities- Rene Butler

### a) Linda S. Castro Nature Sanctuary

- Road improvements completed (grading and widening)
- Seal coat planned (weather permitting)
- Pond restoration:
- Removal of cattails
- Water table restored
- Wildlife activity observed and improved habitat conditions

### b) Improvements & Maintenance

- Sculpture installation scheduled for **April 11**
- Collaboration with Rockport Center for the Arts (Art Walk)
- Tule East invasive species removal (Phase 2 scheduled)
- Tree safety and vegetation management underway

### c) History Center

- Interior work nearing completion
- Window restoration planned (historic preservation approach)

- Budget request submitted for 2027 repairs

### **5.8 Events –Leah Medado**

**a) Partner Introductions-** Texas A&M Corpus Christi (Ashley Bennis) introduced as potential partner for:

- Environmental education
- Event collaboration
- Research support

### **Next Regular Meeting**

The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 7, 2026, at 3:00 P.M.

### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made and passed. The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:22 P.M.