

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE**  
**LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

12:00PM Thursday December 18, 2025

HELD IN-PERSON AND BROADCAST VIA YOUTUBE VIDEO CONFERENCE.  
INITIATED AND CHAIRED FROM  
LRGVDC MAIN CAMPUS - 301 W. RAILROAD STREET, WESLACO, TEXAS  
BUILDING B, KEN JONES EXECUTIVE BOARD ROOM

PRESIDING: Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza

Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. Roll Call was taken, and as of 12:06 p.m. quorum was attained.

**Present:** Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza

Judge Aurelio Guerra, Willacy County  
Commissioner Nurith Galonsky, City of Brownsville  
Commissioner Ellie Torres, Hidalgo County  
Mayor Rosa Perez, City of La Villa  
Mayor David Moreno, City of Donna  
Mayor Pro Tem Rene Pena, Sullivan City  
Mayor Alejandro Flores, City of Los Fresnos  
Commissioner Pepe Cabeza de Vaca, City of McAllen  
Commissioner Edward Gonzales, City of Raymondville  
Mayor Rick Guerra, City of San Benito  
Mr. Richard Sanchez, UTRGV  
Mr. Paul Hernandez, South Texas College  
Mr. Luke Lucio, TSTC  
Mr. Troy Allen, Delta Lake  
Mr. Ernesto Cavazos, Willacy Co, Navigation District  
Mr. Jim Darling, Member-at-Large  
Mr. Andres Chavez, Member-at-Large  
Ms. Lupita Sanchez Martinez, Grassroots Org

**Absent:**

Mayor Omar Ochoa, City of Edinburg  
Mayor Norma Sepulveda, City of Harlingen  
Commissioner Joey Lopez, Cameron County  
Mayor Adrian Gonzalez, City of Weslaco  
Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez City of Pharr  
Commissioner Marco Villegas, City of San Juan  
Mr. Oscar Garcia, Member-at-Large  
Mayor Oscar Montoya, City of Mercedes

Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Item#2

***Item #2: Consideration and ACTION for approval of September 24, 2025, meeting minutes. Mr. Richard Sanchez made a motion to approve the minutes for September 24, 2025; Ms. Lupita Sanchaez Marinez seconded the motion upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.***

**Item #3:** Public Comment – No public Comment

**Item #4:** Administration - Mr. Cruz and all board members decided to approve all the following action items all at once. They were as follows.

1. Ratification of Executive Committee ACTION on approving a participation Agreement between the Texas County & District Retirement System (TCDRS) and the Lower Rio Grande Valley development Council (LRGVDC) as detailed in the Plan Agreement, pursuant to section 391.005(b) (4) (B) of the Texas Local Government Code, chapter 391 Regional Planning Commissions, with effective date January 1, 2026.
2. Ratification of Executive Committee ACTION on approval and adoption of the LRGVDC Procurement and Procedures Manual, Version 3, revised as of October 2025.
3. Ratification on executive Committee ACTION to approve the Recommendation to obtain the GUIDE Contract, which will generate a new, sustainable revenue stream and support caregivers of Medicare participants living with Alzheimer's and Dementia through comprehensive respite services, education and care navigation.
4. Ratification of Executive Committee ACTION to approve the Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) Policies, Procedures, and Scoring Criteria for FY 2026-2027 Grant Cycle.
5. Ratification of Executive Committee ACTION to approve the Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) Bylaws and Membership Roster for FY 2026-2027 Grant Cycle.
6. Ratification of Executive Committee ACTION to approve the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC) Policies, and Procedures and Scoring Criteria for FY 2026-2027 Grant Cycle.
7. Ratification of Executive Committee ACTION to approve the Criminal Justice Advisory committee (CJAC) Bylaws and Membership Roster for FY 2026-2027 Grant Cycle.
8. Ratification of Executive Committee ACTION to approve entering into a Building lease Agreement between the Edinburg economic Development Corporation (EEDC) and the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC)- Valley metro for the Edinburg Transit Terminal 1<sup>st</sup> Floor.

***Mr. Troy Allen made a motion to approve all ratification Action items from 1-8 all at once. Mr. Richard Sanchez from UTRGV seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

9. Consideration and ACTION to adopt Annual Investment Policy and Accept Quarterly Investment Report. ***Mr. Jim Darling made a motion to approve to adopt Annual Investment Policy and Accept Quarterly Investment Report. Mr. Troy Allen seconded the motion upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

10. Consideration and ACTION to approve Revisions to the LRGVDC Personnel Policy Manual, including updates related to the new retirement System and additional Administrative Policy Amendments. ***Mr. Jim Darling made a motion to approve Revisions to the LRGVDC Personnel Policy Manual, including updates related to the new Retirement System and additional Administrative Policy Amendments, Mayor Ricardo Guerra seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
11. Consideration and ACTION to approve award and enter into agreement with Total Lawn Care (TLC) for Lawn and Landscape Services. ***Mr. Jim Darling made a motion to approve to award and enter into agreement with Total Lawn Care (TLC) for Lawn and Landscape Services. Mayor Rosa Perez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
12. Consideration and ACTION on Date & Time for Annual report, and Budget Committee and State of the COG. It was discussed and everyone decided that the day of Jan. 8 at 12:00 PM was good for everyone. ***Mr. Troy Allen made a motion to approve the Date & Time for Annual Report, & Budget Committee and State of the COG. Mr. Jim Darling seconded the motion upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
13. Consideration and ACTION to approve the 2026 Board of Directors meeting schedule. Mr. Cruz raised concerns about not meeting quorum during certain months and asked whether the Board would like to adjust the meeting schedule to adjust during holiday months. After discussion, the Board decided to keep the schedule as it is. ***Mr. Jim darling made a motion to approve the 2026 Board of Directors Meeting Schedule, Mayor Alejandro Flores seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
14. Consideration and ACTION to appoint Board Designee and Alternate to Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC). Mr. Cruz mentioned that we participate in the Texas Association of Regional Councils, which serves as our state-level advocate. All councils of governments convene twice a year, and attendance is the responsibility of the board member selected for this role. Currently, Mr. Jim Darling serves as the representative, with Mayor Sepulveda of Harlingen as the alternate. Mr. Darling has expressed his interest in continuing in this role; however, the final decision rests with the Board. At this point, the matter is being brought forward for direction on the appropriate motion. After further discussion they had decided to leave as is. Jim Darling and the alternate will stay as Mayor Norma Sepulveda. ***Pepe Cabeza de Vaca made a motion to appoint the Board Designee and Alternate to Texas Association of Regional councils (TARC). Mayor Rosa Perez seconded the motion upon a vote; motion was carried unanimously.***

**B. Executive Directors Report.** Mr. Cruz introduced all new staff that were brought in and started in November as well as promotions. Mr. Cruz then moved on to updates. At the federal level, discussions are still ongoing. We are currently experiencing uncertainty related to FEMA, as there have been proposals to eliminate or significantly restructure the agency; however, no final determination has been made. This uncertainty directly impacts our Homeland Security program, which receives funding through FEMA.

As a result, we are preparing to engage with the Texas Association of Regional Councils to advocate as strongly as possible for the continuation of this program. Soon, I will be requesting the Board's assistance in signing letters of support to help ensure the program remains in place.

As you know, this program provides critical support to first responders across the three-county region, including assistance with emergency management planning, equipment procurement, and equipment inventory, among many other responsibilities. Eliminating this program would be detrimental, as it plays a vital role in strengthening and enhancing first responder capabilities throughout the region.

No further question or comments, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Item #5.

#### Item #5 Department Reports

### A. Community & Economic Development

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve amending the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) Bylaws, under Article IV: Membership. Melisa explained that we have extended the membership term for EDOs to address two current vacancies. The proposed change was included in your packet. Currently, I'm happy to answer any questions. If there is none, I would request your approval to amend the EDAC bylaws accordingly. **Mr. Troy Allen made a motion to approve Amending the economic development Advisory Committee (EDAC) Bylaws, under Article IV: Membership. Mr. Paul Hernandez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**
2. Consideration and ACTION for approval for LRGVDC to accept Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Rider PM 2.5 Local Air Quality 2026-2027 Grant Funds. Melisa mentioned I am requesting approval to amend the Regional Small Cities Coalition bylaws under the membership section. The proposed amendment aligns with the Board's leadership structure by moving the chair to vice chair and the vice chair to chair. This approach mirrors the Board's existing process and will be applied consistently within the Regional Small Cities Coalition. **Mr. Troy Allen made a motion to approve LRGVDC to accept Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Rider PM 2.5 Local Air Quality. Mr. Paul Hernandez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**
3. Consideration and ACTION to approve amending the Regional Small Cities Coalition (RSCC) Bylaws, under Article IV: Membership, Sections D, E & F. **Mr. Troy Allen made a motion to amend the Regional Small Cities Coalition (RSCC) Bylaws, under Article IV: Membership, Sections D, E & F. Mr. Paul Hernandez seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**
4. Consideration and ACTION to approve Regional Small Cities (RSCC) Elections of Officers for 2026. As per the RSCC Bylaws, the advisory Committee shall consist of Chair, Vice Chair, & Secretary. The Chair would be Mayor Pablo Morales of the City of Lyford, the Vice Chair would be Mayor Sylvia Castillo of Sullivan City, and the Secretary would be Ben Medina from the City of Rio Hondo. **Mr. Troy Allen made a motion to approve regional Small Cities (RSCC) Elections of Officers for 2026. As per the RSCC Bylaws, the Advisory Committee. Mr. Paul Hernandez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**
5. Consideration and ACTION to submit a funding application for the Texas regional Broadband program (TRBP). Melisa stated we are grateful to receive \$107,000 annually under a three-year contract to support broadband planning efforts or, since we already have a digital broadband plan in place, to begin implementing related activities. **Mr. Troy Allen made a motion to approve to submit funding application for the Texas Regional Broadband Program (TRBP). Mr. Paul Hernandez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**

**Program Status Reports:** Ms. Melisa Gonzalez just wanted to give a quick announcement. We will be hosting a Texas Water Development Board training and presentation with Geta, the Board's regional representative, on Wednesday, January 21st, at 9:00 a.m. here at the Ken Jones Executive Board Room. She will be discussing the current funding opportunities available through the Texas Water Development Board and will also be available for one-on-one questions. We encourage everyone to attend.

Our second announcement is that we will be issuing a Request for Applications for the 2026–2027 solid waste funding cycle. The RFA will be released in January, and we will notify everyone once it is available.

Lastly, please remind your teams that if they are applying for grants, they should not hesitate to reach out to us for letters of support. When a project can be tied to our region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, it significantly strengthens the application.

No further questions Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to next item.

## **B. Health and Human Services**

Ms. Margarita Lopez had no action items on the agenda for this meeting.

**Program Status Reports:** Ms. Margarita Lopez stated, I will be very brief, as I am saving the full details of 2025 for the State of the COG presentation, and we hope to see you there for a more comprehensive overview of the work completed within the HHS Division at the COG.

In 2025, we faced several challenges, including funding and staffing shortages, as well as the Harlingen flood. Despite these hurdles, our team responded quickly and effectively to ensure continued service to our communities. As a result, we were able to serve more than 700,000 meals through our nutrition program, demonstrating our continued commitment to meeting community needs.

One of the key highlights this year, and one for which I am deeply grateful, was our coordinated advocacy effort. Working alongside the Board, our Executive Director, and community partners, we successfully gathered more than 500 letters in support of protecting aging and disability services nationwide. These efforts helped elevate the needs of our elderly community at a critical time, and this would not have been possible without your support.

I am also proud to report that our Ombudsman Program and CDBG-funded activities received zero findings during their monitoring reviews. This achievement reflects the resilience of our team and our continued commitment to compliance and strong stewardship of the funds entrusted to us.

Looking ahead to 2026, we will continue to focus on service delivery, compliance, emergency preparedness, vendor expansion, staffing stability, and ongoing advocacy, as uncertainty remains in several areas. My full report is included in your packet, and I am happy to answer any questions currently.

## **C. Public Safety**

### **C.1.A. Emergency Services Criminal Justice & Homeland Security &**

**Program Status Reports:** Mr. Cesar Merla mentioned there are no action items at this time beyond those already approved by the Executive Committee. I would, however, like to reiterate and expand on a point Mr. Cruz mentioned earlier regarding the importance of our Homeland Security programs.

Earlier this year, we facilitated an active shooter incident management training through our Homeland Security division, along with preparedness training, senior official training, and several other initiatives benefiting the Rio Grande Valley. We continue to closely monitor the status of FEMA, as well as developments within the state's public safety and Homeland Security offices. As opportunities become available, we will share them accordingly. At this time, projects that were prioritized in March remain on hold as we await further guidance.

On the side of Criminal Justice, the current Request for Funding Applications is open. We will be hosting a workshop on Monday, December 22nd, at 9:30 a.m. here in this room. The workshop will be offered in a hybrid format, and funding opportunities are available for eligible criminal justice applications.

### **C.1.B Rio Grande Valley Emergency Communication District.**

**Program Status Reports.** Our 9-1-1 division has also been very busy across GIS, IT, and public education. The team has been hitting the ground running throughout the year and continues to make strong

progress across the region, ensuring that 9-1-1 services are well understood throughout the service area and that meaningful strides continue to be made across the Rio Grande Valley.

## C.2 Police Academy Program

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve an Interlocal Agreement between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Academy and the Willacy County Sheriff's office for reporting the TCOLE training for the Willacy County Sheriff's Office and with Approval to have LRGVDC Executive Director, Manuel Cruz sign and finalize the agreement. Mr. Javier Solis stated that The Willacy County Sheriff's Office identified a need to report training to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement. The Sheriff's Office has qualified instructors, facilities, and resources available to support the implementation of law enforcement training programs for Willacy County. Currently, deputies with the Willacy County Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agencies in the county must travel to Hidalgo or Cameron County, including South Texas College, to complete required training. Currently, there are no local law enforcement training opportunities available within Willacy County. In response, Willacy County Sheriff Joe Salazar has reached out to establish a partnership that would allow training to be hosted locally, making law enforcement training more accessible to officers within the county. Today, we are requesting your consideration and action to approve an interlocal agreement between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Academy and the Willacy County Sheriff's Office for the reporting of TCOLE training. We are also requesting authorization for LRGVDC Executive Director Manuel Cruz to sign and finalize the agreement. **Mr. Paul Hernandez made a motion to approve an Interlocal Agreement between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Academy and the Willacy County Sheriff's office for reporting the TCOLE training for the Willacy County Sheriff's office, and with approval to have LRGVDC Executive Director, Manuel Cruz, sign and finalize the agreement. Mr. Jim Darling seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**
2. Consideration and ACTION to ratify the appointment of Police Chief Mark Perez, Police Chief Josue Trevino, and Cameron County Emergency Management Director Tom Huchen to the LRGV Academy Advisory Board. **Mr. Paul Hernandez made a motion to approve the appointment of Police Chief Mark Perez, Police Chief Josue Trevino, and Cameron County Emergency Management Director Tom Huchen to the LRGV Academy Advisory Board. Mayor Ricardo Guerra seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**
3. Consideration and ACTION to have LRGVDC Executive Board appoint Willacy County Precinct 4 Commissioner Ernesto Garcia, to serve on the LRGV Academy Advisory Board as LRGVDC Executive Board Representative. Commissioner Garcia brings extensive law enforcement experience, having served as a Texas Peace Officer with the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife, the Texas Office of Inspector General, and the Willacy County Sheriff's Office. He holds a Master Peace Officer certification from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement and is a certified firearms instructor and range master. Commissioner Garcia also has significant experience in detention and correctional operations, including converting multiple detention facilities into operational jails. He has expressed interest in serving on the LRGVDC Board of Directors as a representative on the LRGV Academy Advisory Board. **Mr. Jim Darling made a motion to have LRGVDC Executive Board appoint Willacy County Precinct 4 Commissioner Ernesto Garcia to serve on the LRGV Academy Advisory Board. Mr. Troy Allen seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**
4. Consideration and ACTION to approve amendments to the LRGV Academy Cadet Rules, Policies, and Procedures manual to include a section on United States Veteran benefits. Mr. Solis went on to mention that Our Police Academy provides support to military veterans, assisting with tuition and enrollment. In compliance with requirements from the Texas Office of Veterans Affairs, we have made several updates to our policy manual. These include language regarding the retention of records for enrolled students, a statement noting that the GI Bill is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and policies related to granting credit for courses previously completed by veterans prior to joining the Academy.

***Mayor Alejandro Flores made a motion to approve amendments to the LRGV Academy Cadet Rules, Policies, and Procedures manual to include a section on United States Veteran Benefits. Mayor Rosa Perez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

**Program Status Reports** Mr. Solis mentioned a couple of announcements. I'd like to share some updates on projects we are currently working on. Our Police Academy admissions process is underway, and we anticipate starting the next class in January. We are in the final stages of testing, background checks, and making our final selections.

We are also conducting testing for the Rio Grande City site, which will serve as our second academy in Starr County. Additionally, Zapata County has reached out expressing interest in partnering with the LRGV Academy. Overall, we have a busy and exciting schedule planned for 2026.

#### **D. Valley Metro Transportation**

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve the updated Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan for Valley Metro. Ms. Nancy Sanchez mentioned to board that these are annual federally mandated requirements that must be updated for the program. We have listed them in your packet for your review. ***Mr. Jim darling made a motion to approve the updated Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan for Valley metro. Mayor Rosa Perez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
2. Consideration and ACTION to approve contract award for Bulk Diesel, DEF and fluids for LRGVDC Valley Metro Transit Operations. We issued a Request for Proposals, and the submissions were evaluated accordingly. Based on those evaluations, we are recommending Maverick Fuels LLC to provide bulk diesel, diesel exhaust fluid, and related maintenance fluids for Transit. ***Mr. Jim Darling made a motion to approve the Contract award for Bulk Diesel, DEF and Fluids for LRGVDC Valey Metro Transit Operations. Mayor Alejandro Flores seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
3. Consideration and ACTION to approve award and enter contract with the highest-ranked proposer resulting from the evaluation of responses to RFP No.205-07, LRGVDC Valley Metro 5-year Regional Public Transit Coordination Plan. ***Mayor Alejandro Flores made a motion to award and enter contract with the highest-ranked proposer resulting from the evaluation of responses to RFP No.2025-07, LRGVDC Valley Metro 5 Year Regional Public Transit Coordination Plan. Mr. Paul Hernandez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
4. Discussion and ACTION to approve on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Inactive Grant and Scope Revision. At this time, we are making a recommendation related to our inactive grants. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has requested that we act on inactive grants to prevent potential recapture of funds. One of those grants is the Harlingen Transit Terminal project in partnership with the City of Harlingen.

This grant had been at a standstill due to funding challenges. As a result, FTA is requesting that we move forward with a budget revision or expend a portion of the funds to keep the grant active and avoid recapture. Therefore, we are recommending approval to submit a budget revision to reallocate some of the funds toward operating and preventive maintenance. This action will allow us to keep Grant TX-2021-064 active and maintained under Valley Metro.

Mr. Cruz provided additional background on the project. The project dates to around 2020. At that time, the City of Harlingen had not yet acquired the additional acreage needed for the terminal. The site consisted of approximately two acres owned by our facility. We proceeded with procurement and solicited bids for construction; however, this occurred during the pandemic, and all bids came in significantly over budget—

by approximately \$5 to \$7 million. Due to those cost increases, the project did not move forward and has remained inactive since then.

Since that time, Harlingen has acquired approximately ten additional acres adjacent to the existing property using FTA grant funding. This brings the total site size to approximately 12 to 13 acres. FTA is now allowing us to temporarily reallocate funds, with the intent of potentially restoring them later.

It is important to note that there has been no lack of effort in pursuing additional funding. Applications were submitted through multiple avenues, including a congressional earmark request through Senator Ted Cruz, direct FTA funding opportunities, and most recently through the Rio Grande Valley MPO. While we were close to securing funding, we were ultimately unsuccessful.

Moving forward, we will continue to identify and pursue funding opportunities and re-evaluate the project given the expanded acreage. This will likely require re-engineering the building footprint to align with the existing structure on the adjacent AEP property. The primary goal currently is to ensure that no funds are lost and that we make every possible effort to preserve and secure funding for this project. Mr. Jim Darling then asked if we had a contract with Harlingen. Mr. Cruz then addressed those questions by explaining that, technically, the property is owned by Valley Metro, as it was purchased using FTA funds. While an interlocal agreement was in place with the City at the time the grant application was submitted, any property acquired through FTA funding is ultimately owned through the grantee—in this case, Valley Metro. The property has since been deeded to Valley Metro, providing full ownership, although certain contractual obligations remain in place under the interlocal agreements. ***Mr. Darling then stated that he believed the item should be approved and made a motion to approve it, with the additional request that staff review any existing contractual obligations to determine whether amendments are necessary because of this action, Mr. Richard Sanchez seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

**Program Status Reports.** We also provided a status report on ridership and the public involvement events we have attended. Year-to-date ridership for the Rio Grande Valley, from September 2025 through November 2025, totals 254,113. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask or reach out to me via email for additional information.

## **D.2 RGV MPO Program Status Reports:**

Mr. Medina was not present therefore no reports at this time for RGV MPO

Item #6 New & Unfinished Business. Mr. Cruz just had a couple of words for the Board, once again, thank you for your leadership and dedication to the LRGVDC. We recognize that coordinating schedules can be challenging, and we truly appreciate the effort you make to be here. Your involvement has a meaningful impact on the entire region, and it is always encouraging to see you engaged in the decisions that will shape our collective future.

On behalf of myself, our staff, and our directors, I would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We look forward to seeing you next year. Please remember that the State of the COG will be our first meeting of the year, and lunch will be provided—this will be a plated meal, not boxed lunches. RSVP invitations will be sent out, and we kindly ask that you confirm your attendance so we can plan accordingly.

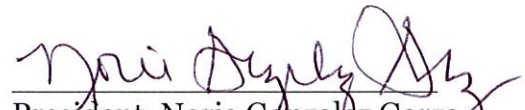
With that, happy holidays to everyone, and thank you again for being here today.

Item #7: Adjourn: There being no further business to come before the board, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza made a motion to adjourn at 1:09 pm



ATTEST:

  
Liza Alfaro, Recording Secretary

  
President, Norie Gonzalez Garza

