

# MINUTES

## VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

12:00 PM WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2020  
GLOBAL GOTOMEETING VIDEO CONFERENCE PLATFORM  
INITIATED AND CHAIRED FROM  
LRGVDC MAIN CAMPUS - 301 W. RAILROAD STREET, WESLACO, TEXAS  
BUILDING B, SMALL BOARD ROOM

PRESIDING: MAYOR JIM DARLING, PRESIDENT

President Jim Darling called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared. President Darling next announced the unfortunate passing of Board Member Jesse Zuniga. Mr. Zuniga served on the LRGVDC Board of Directors during FY 2018-2019 representing the City of La Feria, then as a Member-at-Large for FY 2019 until his passing on August 7, 2020. A moment of silence was observed. President Darling then announced that Member-at-Large Norma G. Garcia submitted her letter of resignation on Monday, October 26, 2020. The Board now has 2 vacancies in the Member-at-Large category, the bylaws provide that the Board will make appointments to fill these vacancies.

President Darling then moved to item 2: Consideration and Action to Approve Meeting Minutes (September 30, 2020)

***Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 30, 2020 Board Meeting as presented. Mayor Pro-tem Norie Gonzalez Garza seconded; and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

President Darling then moved to item 3: Public Comment and/or Report from Legislative Delegation; there being none he moved to item 4: Administration.

### A. Presentation on Updates from the Texas Workforce Commission

President Darling turned the floor over to Executive Director Manuel Cruz to introduce this item. Mr. Cruz stated that on October 8 he attended a virtual roundtable discussion titled "Powering Texas Wind Energy" that was hosted by the RGV Partnership. Other topics discussed at this event were workforce and education, economic development, continued investment, and legislative priorities. He thanked the RGV Partnership for inviting him, and Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr., and Texas Workforce Commissioner of Labor, Julian Alvarez for their leadership. He noted that other community leaders in education, local government, and business took part in this virtual discussion on wind energy investment. Not long after the roundtable, Mr. Cruz contacted Commissioner Alvarez and extended an invitation for him to speak at today's meeting. Mr. Cruz then turned the floor over to Commissioner Alvarez.

Commissioner Alvarez thanked Mr. Cruz for the invitation and opportunity to share some of the great things that the Rio Grande Valley is doing. He stated that the RGV has been fortunate to be on the receiving end of multiple JET (Jobs and Education for Texas) grants which are for equipment that is awarded to high schools, community colleges, and technical schools.

Commissioner Alvarez stated that he appreciated the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) about renewable energy, and one of the things that was brought to their attention is what TWC is doing to support the needs of RGV wind farms. They have provided courses at TSTC and South Texas College to train technicians needed to service the wind turbines. And STC has been innovative

in providing training for drone operators that allows them to receive credentials in this field.

Today he shared that TWC has rolled out tens of millions of dollars in South Texas from Port Isabel that received a JET grant to La Joya and Roma that received grants for equipment. TWC thanks the community leaders for being proactive in their discussions with the economic development corporations, the cities, and business partners. TWC has provided COVID-19 training in Brownsville with the Counseling Centers International and Texas Southmost College to teach business owners about the proper way to clean their facilities prior to opening back up. And they have Skills Development grants that are being awarded throughout Texas; they are working with the incumbent workers at Space-X. His office has been successful promoting that a four-year degree is not necessary to be successful, and especially in trade jobs that are in demand in the RGV. He stated that there are things going on that the general public may not be aware of, such as in Mission, there is the only brew master apprenticeship program in the country that teaches veterans who have transitioned out of the military, to make beer. The very first class will graduate in the next couple of weeks. The TWC can provide not only the services through the Texas Workforce, but also provide services like small business loans that could enable veterans to potentially open their own business.

He emphasized that LRGVDC Board Members, as community leaders have played a major role in the economy of not only the RGV, but for the state of Texas. He thanked Mr. Cruz for the opportunity to speak today and added that he often uses South Texas as an example of what other parts of Texas should be doing.

B. Consideration and Action to Adopt Annual Investment Policy and Accept Quarterly Investment Report

Finance Director Crystal Balboa was recognized and stated that the Annual Investment Policy and the Quarterly Investment Report were provided in the meeting packet for review prior to the meeting. She stated that staff recommends re-adoption of the current policy and asked if there were any questions; there being none, President Darling asked for a motion. ***Mayor Pro-tem Norie Gonzalez Garza made a motion to adopt the Annual Investment Policy and Accept the Quarterly Investment Report. Mayor Pro-tem Rick Salinas seconded, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

C. Consideration and Action to Approve Contract for Landscaping.

Business Operations Director Rick Carrera was recognized and reported that this contract would be for one (1) year with the option of two 1-year renewals for land and landscape services to Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping. The land and landscaping services will be for all LRGVDC locations, including those in Weslaco, Harlingen, and Edinburg. He explained that the current landscape contractor has been on board for many years, so it was time to re-bid this service. Maldonado Landscaping submitted a high-quality proposal. Mayor Dave Kusch asked what the cost is that Maldonado quoted. Mr. Carrera stated that the cost is \$45,000 for twenty (20) visits per year which is a 20% annual savings. Upon conclusion of discussion, ***Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve the contract for landscaping as presented. Mayor Pro-tem Rick Salinas seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

D. Executive Director Report

1. Introduction of New Staff Members

Mr. Cruz announced the following new staff members:

- Ms. Perla Perez – Customer Service Representative in Valley Metro’s Maintenance Department
- Mr. Miguel Leal – Instructor for the Regional Police Academy
- Ms. Mary Strough – Case Manager for the Area Agency on Aging
- Ms. Amanda Villanueva – Case Manager for the Area Agency on Aging

Mr. Cruz was pleased to announce the following promotions:

- Mr. Jesse Vargas - promoted from Regional Police Academy Instructor to Training Coordinator

- Mr. Randal Snyder - promoted from Director / Training Coordinator of the Regional Police Academy to Director of Public Safety
- Mr. Rick Carrera - promoted from Director of Business Operations to Director of Community & Economic Development, Mr. Carrera will manage both departments until his replacement in Business Operations is found.

2. It's time Texas (Melissa Garcia, RGV Regional Manager)

Ms. Melissa Garcia was recognized and introduced herself as the new It's Time Texas RGV Regional manager. She provided updates and stated that her door is open to the board. She quickly realized how competitive the RGV is, and this Sunday registration will open for the 2021 It's Time Texas Community Challenge. Mr. Cruz added that the status of the LRGVDC annual Mayors' Walk for Wellness and RGV Fit 5K is currently uncertain; with safety as the primary concern, staff will determine at a later date if and how this event can take place.

3. Census 2020

Mr. Cruz informed the Board that a total of 1,730 census surveys were taken with LRGVDC iPads at different events between June and October and that the LRGVDC was happy to help with the 2020 Census count in this way.

4. Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC) Updates

Mr. Cruz reported that staff is closely monitoring the 87<sup>th</sup> legislative session, but that it is too early to determine if the capitol will open its doors to the public. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, public demonstrations, and recent riots TARC staff thinks it is unlikely.

At the TARC Executive Directors meeting on October 12, TARC extended an invitation to the October 19 Governors Broadband Development Council. He explained that this council was established in 2019 by the 86<sup>th</sup> legislature for the purpose of determining how to provide internet access to underserved communities. The electronic report is due to the governor, lieutenant governor, and legislature by November 1.

Other items of importance are that the state funding agencies have made cybersecurity a priority. By 2021 a nationwide cyber security assessment will need to be conducted by all sub-recipients and potential sub-recipients of Homeland Security and Criminal Justice funding. Regarding the Coronavirus Relief Fund, in October staff received notice from the state that if jurisdictions have not exhausted their allocation, they must submit a plan detailing proposed expenditures by November 13 and all documentation and reimbursements must be submitted to the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) by December 15, 2020.

Mr. Cruz stated that he plans to invite TARC Executive Director Ginny Lewis to join our January 2021 Board of Directors meeting to provide a summary of what TARC does for councils of government.

5. RGV Day at the Capitol

Mr. Cruz reported that on October 13 the first RGV Legislative Tour and Day at the Capitol planning meetings were held virtually. The Legislative Tour is scheduled for January 21–24, 2021 and will focus on Cameron and Willacy County during this session. The RGV Day at the Capitol is scheduled for February 23-25, 2021. He reiterated that this is a fluid situation due to current circumstances and assured the Board that updates will be shared as they are received.

6. Upcoming 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session

The report on this topic was included under the previous item.

Upon conclusion of Administration Items President Darling moved to item 5: Department Reports.

A. Community & Economic Development

Program Action Item:

1. Consideration and Action to Approve Texas State University to Provide Professional Services to Update the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and Authorize the Executive Director to Enter into an Interlocal Agreement for these Services

Mr. Carrera was recognized and informed the Board that the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) recommends that Texas State University develop the Regional Solid Waste Management Plan (RSWMP) for the next 20 years. He explained that previously the SWAC had decided to utilize interns to work on the RSWMP but due to a lack of qualified applicants, the SWAC decided that it would be beneficial for Texas State University Institute of Governmental Innovation to perform the services. He added that they bring years of experience in producing studies and plans on related concerns for governmental entities. Additionally, they are able to meet the deadline established by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for this plan. ***Mayor Chris Boswell made a motion to approve Texas State University to Provide Professional Services to update the SWMP and authorize the Executive Director to enter into an interlocal agreement for these services as presented. Commissioner David Garza seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

Program Status Reports

The Community & Economic Development Program Status Reports were provided in the meeting packet. Mr. Carrera highlighted the Flood Infrastructure Fund (FIF) item and reported that staff submitted a proposal to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) for consideration of a \$7.9 million FIF. If awarded, the grant will fund the Lower Rio Grande Valley Regional Flood Protection Planning project which will promote the identification, development, and implementation of flood mitigation solutions to benefit the region. If awarded, the total cost of the project will be \$8.87 million including local matching funds from the regional partners participating in this project. The proposal, with regionality taken into great consideration, required considerable coordination with other area entities submitting FIF applications to ensure no duplication of objects, outcomes, or metrics would occur. This will improve the probability of an award from TWDB.

Mayor Darling reported that Mexico paid their water debt with the caveat that Mexican cities in need can take the water back and be in debt again. He also reported that the Region M Water Planning Group has adopted the final version of the 2021 Rio Grande Regional Water Plan and submitted it to the TWDB for final review.

B. Health & Human Services

Director Jose Gonzalez was recognized to address the following items:

Program Action Item

1. Consideration and Action to Add Vendors (Contractors) to Vendor Pool

In response to the open enrollment for Direct Purchased Services, the Area Agency on Aging received ten (10) additional applications. The Advisory Council recommends adding these organizations to the current contractor pool:

- Absolute Construction – Residential Modifications
- Tender Touch PHC Services – Residential Modifications
- A Better Choice Home Health Services, Inc – Homemaker, Respite, Personal Assistance

All Star Primary Home Care, LLC – Homemaker, Respite, Personal Assistance  
Only Love Home Care – Homemaker, Respite, Personal Assistance  
Vive Home & Health Services, LLC, Alton, TX – Homemaker, Respite, Personal Assistance  
Richard’s Pharmacy/Richard’s Rx, LLC – Pharmacy, DME, Supplies, Etc.  
Richard’s Pharmacy/Margo Rx, LLC – Pharmacy, DME, Supplies, Etc.  
Richard’s Pharmacy/Richard’s RX, LLC, Edinburg – Pharmacy, DME, Supplies, Etc.  
Rawl’s Rx, LLC – Pharmacy, DME, Supplies, Etc.  
Tender Touch PHC Services – Pharmacy, DME, Supplies, Etc.

***Mayor Pro-tem Norie Gonzalez Garza made a motion to approve adding the vendors as presented. Javier De Leon seconded, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

2. Consideration and Action to Authorize Executive Director Manuel Cruz to Sign all Documents Related to Community Development Block Grant Funding

The Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council recommends authorization for Manuel Cruz, Executive Director, to sign all applications and agreements on behalf of the Area Agency on Aging for CDBG funding. This authorization is for the Cities of Brownsville, Edinburg, Harlingen, McAllen Mission, Pharr, and San Benito and covers program years 2021-2022, and 2022-2023. ***Mayor Chris Boswell made a motion to authorize Executive Director Manuel Cruz to sign all documents related to CDBG funding. Mayor Pro-tem Rick Salinas seconded, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

President Darling asked Mr. Gonzalez about shut-ins and contact with meal delivery staff. Mr. Gonzalez stated that the Retired Senior Volunteer program has taken on the task of contacting the individuals receiving home delivered meals and checking in with them. Additionally the Area Agency on Aging has the in-house telephone/social reassurance program. Mr. Gonzalez added that staff would like to have more contractors or agencies who would also provide social reassurance because funding from the CARES Act is available for such activities.

#### Program Status Reports

The status report on the Medicare open enrollment period was available for review in the meeting packet.

#### C. Public Safety

##### Program Status Reports:

Mr. Randall Snyder was recognized and stated that the status reports on the Public Safety programs was provided in the meeting packet. He highlighted the progress of resolutions from cities supporting the creation of an Emergency Communications District in Hidalgo and Willacy Counties.

President Darling asked about the downward trend in the amount of 9-1-1 calls received in the last 5 months. Mr. Cruz stated that lower volumes of 9-1-1 calls is a situation occurring throughout the State of Texas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A follow up report will be provided at the December meeting.

#### D. Transportation

Valley Metro Planner Frank Jaramillo was recognized to report on behalf of Program Director Tom Logan.

##### Program Action Item:

1. Consideration and Action to Authorize the Executive Director to Negotiate and Enter into an Interlocal Agreement with City of Edinburg for the Purpose of Establishing Valley Metro Micro Transit Service

Mr. Jaramillo informed the Board that Microtransit is a form of demand-responsive transport. This transit service offers flexible routing and/or flexible scheduling of minibus vehicles. Microtransit extends the efficiency and accessibility of existing transit service so that transit can be provided either as a stop-to-stop service or curb-to-curb service. Conceptually, microtransit fits somewhere between private individual transportation such as cars, taxicabs, or Uber and Public mass transit (busses).

The City of Edinburg has submitted a Letter of Intent to move forward with the Valley Metro Microtransit project, tentatively dubbed "FAST RIDE", for the benefit of the general public. Funding for the project, both local and Federal, is currently in place. Mr. Cruz informed the board that at this time Valley Metro was experiencing a shortage in drivers and that the project once implemented would be within budget. ***Commissioner David Garza made a motion to authorize the Executive Director to negotiate and enter into an interlocal agreement with the City of Edinburg for the purpose of establishing the Valley Metro Micro Transit Service. Mayor Pro-tem Norie Gonzalez Garza seconded, and upon a vote the motion carried.***

Program Status Reports:

Mr. Jaramillo noted that the status reports were in the meeting packet for review.

RGVMPO Executive Director Andrew Canon announced that during yesterday's Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) meeting the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RGVMPO) was awarded outstanding large MPO award for 2020. Mayor Mendez and staff nominated the RGVMPO which is directly effective of the merger. Mr. Canon added that staff is gearing up for federal certification which will be a 3-day virtual process.

Item 6. – New or Unfinished Business

There was no new or unfinished business to discuss.

Item 7. – Adjourn.

There being no further business to come before the Board, ***President Darling adjourned the meeting at 1:00 pm.***

  
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Mayor Jim Darling, President

ATTEST:

  
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Deborah Morales, Recording Secretary