

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS, GENERAL MEMBERSHIP & CORPORATION

12:00PM WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2024

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

PRESIDING: Secretary Jim Darling

- DRAFT

President Jim Darling called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m. Roll Call was taken for both the board and membership and a quorum for both was attained. They moved on to Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Jim Darling

Commissioner Frank Morales, City of Harlingen
Councilwoman Marissa Ortega-Gerlach, City of Mission
Commissioner Gowen, City of Brownsville
Commissioner Josh Pedraza, City of Weslaco
Commissioner David Garza, Cameron County
Mayor Ramiro Garza, City of Edinburg
Omar Quintanilla, City of McAllen
Mayor Oscar Montoya, City of Mercedes
Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, City of Pharr
Commissioner Edward Gonzalez, City of Raymondville
Mayor Ricardo Rick Guerra City of San Benito
Ms. Veronica Gonzales, UT Rio Grande Valley
Mr. Paul Hernandez, South Texas College
Mr. Luke Lucio, TSTC
Mr. Troy Allen, Delta Lake ID
Ms. Ann Williams Cass, Member at Large
Judge Richard Cortez, Hidalgo County

Absent:

Judge Aurelio Guerra, Willacy County
Mayor J.R Garza, City of Alamo
Commissioner Betty Rodriguez, City of La Villa
Mayor Mike Carter, City of Laguna Vista
Mayor Jaime Gonzalez, City of Los Indios
Commissioner Marco "Markie" Villegas, City of San Juan
Mr. Ronald Mills, Willacy County Navigation District
Mr. Eleazar Garcia Jr, Member-at Large
Ms. Lupita Sanchez Martinez, Grassroots Org

Without questions from the board, Mayor Jim Darling moved to Item #2.

Item #2:

Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve Annual Election Meeting Minutes of May 31st, 2023.

Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve the Annual Elections Meeting Minutes for May 31, 2023. Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

Consideration and **ACTION** to approve Board of Directors meeting minutes for December 13, 2023.

Troy Allen made a motion to approve the Board of Directors meeting Minutes for December 13, 2023. Commissioner David Garza seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

Item #3: Public Comment: No Public Comment currently. Jim Darling then moved on to Item #4.

Item #4: Administration

Consideration and **ACTION** to approve Resolution 2024-01 Honoring David Suarez.

Jim Darling started by briefly going over the Resolution. Mr. David Suarez has faithfully served the people of the Rio Grande Valley as a member and officer on the Executive Board with distinction for 7 years, since 2015; and, Mr. David Suarez has moved the LRGVDC & Region forward in several areas, including response to the pandemic, improving public health and safety, supporting economic growth, protecting our environment, and supporting and continuing to advance our transportation resources and services; and Mr. David Suarez's tenure has been defined by his calm, steady, and collaborative leadership style, along with his commitment to inspiring public confidence in local government. The Board of Directors thanks Mr. David Suarez for this dedicated service and wishes him well as he continues to represent our community and the Rio Grande Valley. *Troy Allen made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-01 Honoring David Suarez. Commissioner David Garza seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.*

Mr. Cruz then let everyone know that he would make sure Mr. David Suarez would receive his much-deserved plaque. And, again, on behalf of the Staff and directors we want to thank the previous Mayor, David Suarez, for his dedication, and his public service, and we wish him well.

Consideration and **GENERAL MEMBERSHIP ACTION** on FY 2024 Annual Report & Budget.

Mr. Cruz then goes on to explain to the board that he knows it's quite an extensive annual report that we have for you, but the annual report offers a general membership and board of directors and its members and the public, a detailed outline of the LRGVDC, organization structure, and programmatic responsibilities. The Annual Report outlines The LRGVDC 2024 performance goals and 2024 budgets for the current year as well as productivity from the previous year of 2023. It's a recommendation coming from the LRGVDC Budget Committee, which met on January 10 to review and approve the annual report and budget. I'll be happy to answer any questions if there are any. Jim Darling entity, mentioned that the Budget keeps growing every year, we're unique in that we are considered a zero-budget entity in other words we're supposed to spend all the money the state gives us and we don't get any more during the budget year and there are some reconciliations but unusual, from most of our local government type budgets. And we must deal with it so, it's grown quite a bit since I've been around. *Troy Allen made a motion to approve the GENERAL MEMBERSHIP ACTION. Frank Morales seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.*

With no further comments or concerns, Jim Darling then moved on to the Next Action Item C.

Consideration and **ACTION** to Adopt Annual Investment Report and Accept Quarterly Investment. Troy Allen made a motion to approve and Adopt the Annual Investment Report and Accept the Quarterly Investment. Commissioner David Garza seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

DURING THE TIME AFTER FINANCE DID THEIR ACTION ITEM. THE COMPUTER IN KEN JONES BOARD ROOM FROZE AND THE AUDIO WENT OUT. QUORUM WAS MAINTAINED

With no questions or comments. Jim Darling then moved on to Item #4D Executive Director Report.

A. Executive Director Report: Mr. Cruz started by introducing all-new Hires.

Mr. Cruz moved on to Presentation and Update on the progress and research related to the establishment of a Regional Transit Authority as stipulated by House Bill 71, ratified in 2019. Tom Logan and Javier Dominguez started with the presentation and amongst the board were questions and concerns about the presentation taking place. (It was hard to hear or understand due to the audio being down). Judge Richard Cortez from Hidalgo County wanted to thank everyone for the hard work and the service that you do. We have 254 counties in the State of Texas. I believe that Hidalgo County is now the seventh most populous county in the state of Texas. Unfortunately, we also have a minimum of 27.4% or more people in poverty. Our people need to have a way of transportation for them to go to work, to look for health care. Received services and a lot of things. As you well know, we've just given the highway, the highway system is already being very taxed, subject to a thorough, complete study to make sure that we're fair and equitable in finance and anything for the public good, which is always an issue. We're not going to solve this problem by ignoring the problem, we're going to solve the problem by addressing the problem and seeing what the best way for us is to move forward. Corpus Christi has a transit authority, and Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, and other people have a transit authority. Well, why do they have a transit authority? Because obviously, it provides a service. We don't know if we in the Rio Grande Valley need a transit authority, we don't know what the best way is to finance it. We don't know what the best way is to allocate the cost of it. But unless we study the situation, and come together, then it's not going to solve the problem. We need rail access. Suppose you talk to the economic development people. In that case, they're going to tell you that we can't compete with other parts of Texas, much less other parts of the United States because we need real big companies. We can't compete with other people if we don't have access to water. We can't compete with other people who want to have access to energy. We can compete with other people to bring the jobs that we need to provide the quality of life that would be unless we address all those issues, this is a long-term solution; this is not going to happen tomorrow. As bridge owner of McAllen and Pharr, I would be very upset, too, if you're going to put the cost on bridges that don't belong to anybody other than to those cities. So, I can certainly see any opposition to those cities because that's not fair and equitable. I want to leave here with you all to get a very clear understanding that I believe that it is in the best interest of the Rio Grande Valley to pursue a very good study to see if this regional transit authority works best for us. We will never know the answer until it's studied thoroughly, and not prejudge anything until we can prejudge. Javier then went on to let BOD know that, If I may, I just want to conclude by saying that I think if anything, this discussion proves, perhaps, we can work that out with the messaging, but proves the reason for coming to you today, is because that not very many of the board members knew that there was a bill to begin with. And so, bringing this up to light and getting this feedback from you, really helps us guide us in directing us to the point that you, as a board, would wish for us to proceed. Our effort today was just to show you the bill as it states, and if we take your feedback and move forward with it, we're all on board, and we appreciate your honest and open suggestions and feedback. Ms. Ann Cass then had something to say as well, she just wanted to point out that, on your very first step, in having public meetings, it is so important that they be bilingual. We had a meeting of about 150 colonia residents with the rural transportation staff. They were hesitant to speak in Spanish. I had to hire a translator. That's one of the issues that the people have is that people, when they call it, no one can help them in Spanish, and so please, when you have those public meetings, I would say put a note there that you provide translation for people.

In the Interest of time due to it running long, the president requested to address only Action Items of the Programs.

Item #5: Department Reports:

Community & Economic Development

Community & Economic Action Items:

Consideration and **ACTION** to approve Regional Small Cities Coalition (RSCC) Elections of officers for 2024. As per the RSCC Bylaws, the Advisory Committee shall consist of a chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Chair: Mayor Yvette Cabrera, City of Granjeno, Vice Chair: Celina Gonzales, City of Primera Secretary: Mayor Jose Solis, City of Lyford. *Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez made a motion to approve the Regional Small Cities Coalition (RSCC) Elections of Officers for 2024. As per RSCC Bylaws, the Advisory Committee shall consist of the chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Commissioner David Garza seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.*

Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve the Nomination of an Elected or Appointed Official of a Non-Entitlement Community to be considered for Appointment to the Unified Scoring Committee (USC) by the Texas Department of Agriculture Commissioner. USC Representative: Ben Medina City of Rio Hondo. USC Alternate: Jared Hockema, City of Port Isabel. *Mayor Oscar Montoya made a motion to approve the Nomination of an Elected or Appointed Official of a Non-Entitlement Community to be considered for Appointment to the Unified Scoring Committee (USC) by the Texas Department of Agriculture Commissioner. Commissioner David Garza seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.*

Program Status Reports

Due to limited time, Melisa did not go through all the status reports for her department. But informed the members that they were in the packet for the review

Health and Human Services Action Items:

Margarita Lopez came up with one Action item on her agenda. Consideration and **ACTION** to approve the Citizens Advisory Council Membership Appointment for Maria Elia Lopez. *Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez made a motion to Approve Citizens Advisory Council Membership Appointment for Maria Elia Lopez, Mayor Oscar Montoya seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.*

Program Status Reports

Status reports are also in the packet and in the interest of time they were not presented to the Board at this time.

Public Safety

Criminal Justice and Homeland Security Program Action Items.

Consideration and **ACTION** to approve resolutions for FY 2024-25 Homeland Security Grant Funding.

Consideration and **ACTION** to approve the resolution for FY 2024-25 Coordinator for the Regional Fire Academy.

Consideration and **ACTION** to approve the resolution for FY 2023-2024 Coordinator for the Regional Fire Academy. The dates are being updated to match updated grant policies as recommended by the Governor's Public Safety Office.

Consideration and **ACTION** to approve the Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) recommendation to accept scoresheets for HSGD FY 2024-2025 grant projects.

Consideration and **ACTION** to approve the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee recommendation to accept scoresheets for CJD FY 2024-2025 grant projects.

Consideration and **ACTION** to approve the Criminal Justice Advisory Council (CJAC) membership renewals.

All action Items for Criminal Justice and Homeland Security were all approved at the same time. *Mayor Oscar*

Montoya made a motion to approve all Action Items for Criminal Justice and Homeland Security. Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

After all Action Items were complete and approved Jim Darling and all BOD moved on to Item #6. All staff and the public stepped out of the room and the BOD continued to the Executive Session.

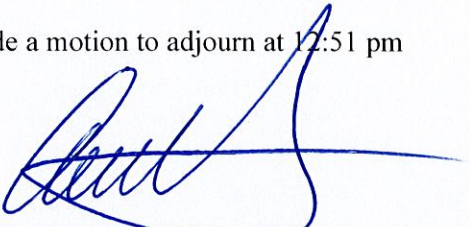
Item #6 Executive Session

Personnel Matters under Section 551-074 (1) to deliberate the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of a public officer or employee RE: Executive Director Annual Performance Evaluation.

Reconvene into an Open Session to Consider **ACTION**, if any on the items Related to the Executive Session as described above. *Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez made a motion to Approve Reconvene into an Open Session to Consider **ACTION**, if any on the items Related to the Executive Session as described above, Mayor Oscar Montoya seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.*

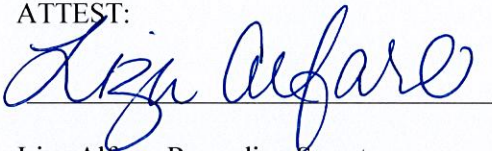
Item #7 New & Unfinished Business

There being no further business to come before the board, Jim Darling made a motion to adjourn at 12:51 pm



Secretary Jim Darling

ATTEST:



Liza Alfaro, Recording Secretary