

MINUTES

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

12:00PM WEDNESDAY, March 27, 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: Mayor Norma Sepulveda

- DRAFT

Mayor Norma Sepulveda called the meeting to order at 12:07 p.m. Roll Call was taken and a quorum was attained. They moved on to Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Mayor Norma Sepulveda

Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza, City of Mission
Commissioner Ernie Garcia, Willacy County
Mayor John Cowen, City of Brownsville
Commissioner Ellie Torres, Hidalgo County
Mayor Ramiro Garza, City of Edinburg
Commissioner Ruben Saldana, City of Mercedes
Commissioner Edward Gonzalez, City of Raymondville
Mayor Ricardo Rick Guerra City of San Benito
Mr. Ron Garza, UT Rio Grande Valley
Mr. Paul Hernandez, South Texas College
Mr. Troy Allen, Delta Lake ID
Mr. Ronald Mills, Willacy Co Nav. Dist.
Ms. Ann Williams Cass, Member at Large
Ms. Lupita Sanchez Martinez, Grassroots Org

Absent:

Jim Darling, Member at Large
Mayor Adrian Gonzalez, City of Weslaco
Commissioner David Garza, Cameron 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
Mayor Javier Villalobos, City of McAllen
Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, City of Pharr
Commissioner Marco "Markie" Villegas, City of San Juan
Ms. Cledia Hernandez, TSTC
Mr. Eleazar Garcia Jr, Member-at Large

Without questions from the board, Mayor Sepulveda moved on to Item #2.

Item #2: Meeting Minutes

1. Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve Meeting Minutes for February 28, 2024. **Commissioner Ernie Garcia motioned to approve the Meeting Minutes for February 28, 2024. Mayor Norie Gonzalez seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.**

Item #3: Public Comment: No Public Comment, Mayor Norma Sepulveda moved on to Item #4.

Item #4: Administration

- A. Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Presentation by Heather Smith. Ms. Smith started by telling a little story about how she became a foster parent and helped without knowing the situation. Ms. Smith gave good information to the board and then emailed info for the community after the meeting over to Mr. Cruz. Ms. Smith then explained a little about Blue Sunday. She mentioned that this year was Blue Sunday's 30th year celebrating Child Abuse Prevention. Ms. Smith explained that Blue Sunday is a non-profit organization that tends to raise awareness of child abuse among faith communities that also desire to meet the needs of each abused child in the Rio Grande Valley. She mentions that Blue Sunday also offers possible solutions to ending child abuse through prayer, and addiction treatment programs, while also addressing issues like the cycle of abuse and poverty. If you know of any spiritual leaders in your community, that would be interested in learning about becoming a blue-ribbon church, Janet Magee, or I will offer you free resources. I am an active member at Faith Christian Church in Harlingen, and I'm proudly Blue Ribbon Church. In conclusion, she mentioned, I'm grateful for the opportunity to share with you today the information, and I hope it has opened your eyes. Child abuse is an unusual topic, nobody likes to talk about it. I believe that the RGV is full of good people doing great things for the vulnerable. I encourage you to join us in promoting April as Child Abuse Awareness Month. Use the Governor's Child Abuse Prevention Proclamation in your communities. Connect with people, and hear their stories, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.
- B. Consideration **RATIFICATION** of executive Committee **ACTION** on the following Item.
 1. Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) Prioritized Lists for FY2024-25 Homeland Security Grants Division Regional Grant Applications. **Troy Allen motioned to approve the Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) Prioritized Lists for FY 2024-25 Homeland Security Grants Division Regional Grant Applications. Rick Guerra seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.**
- C. *Presentation on AEP Rate Case by Mr. Thomas Brocato, Lloyd Gosselink Rochelle & Townsend.* Mr. Thomas is taking charge of the Texas Gas Service rate increase that is currently ongoing. He started by letting the board know that he just wanted to give them a little bit of an overview of the filing, and then tell you a little bit about what we've been doing. As you probably saw on February 29th, AEP followed their first comprehensive base for 8K, since 2019. They're seeking to increase electric rates by one hundred and sixty-three point five million dollars, that's about a 10.3% increase and they're seeking to increase their return on equity, which is a major issue, in the case, from 9.4% to 10.6%. If the increase is adopted, it will result in a 14.77% increase in residential customers as a group. Some perspective, on the impact, it would be about a \$4.00 and 89% increase per month. So, if you use one 1000 KWH your bill is going to go up 4.89 regardless of who you choose as a retail Electra provider because this is what's referred to as a non-bypass wall chart. No matter who you choose as a rep, you're going to pay a piece if this is approved. Now, they also have a tax refund and another charge that's already been on your bill for quite some time, that will be expiring soon. If you net all of that out, the 1000 KWH customers will see about a \$2.11 increase.

We understand that you have an important relationship with AEP. We know that you must maintain a good, healthy, professional relationship with them, and in that respect, we make sure that, um, we act accordingly. I'm happy to answer any questions that you all have. I'm happy to also come back later in the case and give you an update, as well. Mr. Cruz then had a question for Thomas, his question to him was I noticed some of the cities were not incorporated cities, so who would be doing the filing or urged to read for those? Thomas then responded with so for very small cities that are unincorporated, usually under 4000 in population, they are not legally required to act. They can still participate in the case and whatever mechanism the city has, for approving such actions, they can do so. If they still operate by adopting ordinances and resolutions, they can do that as well. Now to intervene to participate in the coalition, to have their expenses reimbursed, they can. But those aren't regulatory authorities with original jurisdiction. They don't have to act.

No comments or questions Mayor Sepulveda then moved on to Executive Director Report.

Executive Director Report: Mr. Cruz started by first and foremost introducing all new staff and all promotions. He then moved on to an email he had just received before the meeting on USIBWC they were going to have a meeting on April 2nd in Mercedes and he wanted to let the board know in case anyone wanted to attend. He did let the board know that Ms. Giner would be in attendance and would provide information on meeting minutes negotiation between the US and Mexico. Mr. Cruz went on to let everyone know that we continue to experience the drought severe water issue and Mexico isn't delivering the committed share. Mr. Cruz explained that it would be discussed by Commissioner Giner and that it would be one main point of discussion. Mr. Cruz then mentioned that to this day they are still receiving resolutions, he let the board know that Mr. Sonny Hinojosa made a trip to DC on the 18th of this month to visit with the state department and see what they can do to deliver the debt from both countries. Lastly, Mr. Cruz then wanted to update everyone on Valley Metro Regional Headquarters. He mentioned that they are new owners of this land as of November last year, which is 27.56 acres. All they are waiting for now is to see what funding they secure, he mentioned that Tom Logan is working on trying to identify funds and working with other departments such as EDA, TxDot, and FTA in trying to do it in part funds. So, they can start construction and get the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony done and invite everyone. We're also working with the Economic Development districts or centers around the area to see what they can offer as far as any private commercial contributions or partnerships. I just wanted to update you on that.

No further comments or concerns. Mayor Sepulveda moved on to Item #5.

Item #5 Department reports

A. Community & Economic Development

1. Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve the Solid Waste Applications Ranking & Scoring for Funding Year 2024-2025. Melisa stated that on March 5, 2024, the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) met to score, and rank submitted applications for funding year 2024-2025. She stated that they had received 11 applications. However, 1 of those applications was not administratively complete, therefore only 10 applications were scored and ranked. Melisa mentioned that they have 4 cities that have ranked the top highest they were as follows City of Mission, City of Alton, Cameron County, and then City of Palm View. ***Paul Hernandez made a motion to approve the Solid Waste Application Ranking and Scoring for the funding Year 2024-2025. Troy Allen seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***
2. Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve the Nominee for the Regional Water Resource Advisory Committee (RWAC) Nominations for Special Purpose District for Irrigation Category. Melisa explained that the RWAC met and selected Mr. Troy Allen to fill this position. She then stated that she is asking for board approval to approve Mr. Troy to fill the position that Mr. Joe Hinojosa vacated back in December.

Minutes Board of Directors, March 27, 2024

Mayor Norie Garza made a motion to approve the Nominee for the Regional Water Resource Advisory Committee (RWAC) Nominations for the Special Purpose District for Irrigation Category. Ron Mills seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion a carried unanimously.

3. Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve Resolution 2024-01 Proclaiming April as National Fair Housing Month and Supporting the Awareness of Fair Housing. Melisa mentioned to the board that once this resolution was signed, she would be emailing it out to all Housing Authorities in the area. As well as the cities and asking everybody to promote fair housing requirements for the region. **Ron Mills made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-01 Proclaiming April as National Fair Housing Month and Supporting the Awareness of Fair Housing. Mayor Norie Garza seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.**

Lastly, Melisa mentioned to the Board that they will have a kickoff meeting for the Rio Grande Valley Economic Development Advisory Committee which she noted that they were calling the RGVEDAC Meeting on Tuesday, April 30th, 2024 @ 10:00 am. Melisa stated that it would take place in the Ken Jones Board Room. She will be sending out flyers and would like all Economic Development people to be aware that it's coming and wants everyone to join, and this time it will be in person. Melisa mentioned that she wants everyone to be on board for the first time and will be discussing, approving, and creating the bylaws to bring back to the board for approval.

B. Health and Human Services Action Item:

Margarita Lopez was recognized and stated that an annual window allocated for contract amendments with our sub-recipients as well as our vendor contractors is essential for ensuring compliance with our contract obligations considering this and presenting the following action items as outlined by the respective contractors. She stated that she had the following Action item for the board's approval.

1. Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve Vendor request to amend contract rates from Sunglo Home Health Services and D'Oro Home Health Services. She stated that Home Health Services is requesting to amend the contract rate for respite services from \$8.50 to \$13.24. She explained that a rate error was submitted in the initial application although when they honored the initial rate, they are now requesting an amendment to match the market cost. D'Oro Home Health Services is requesting to amend the contract from \$14.00 to \$14.75. The request is also due to Market Cost. **Ron Mills made a motion to approve the vendor request to amend contract rates from Sunglo Home Health Services and D'Oro Home Health Services. Commissioner Ernie Garcia seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.**

Program Status Reports

The detailed program status reports are available for review in the meeting packet.

With no further questions or comments, Mayor Sepulveda moved on to C Public Safety.

C. Public Safety

Criminal Justice and Homeland Security Program Status Reports

Cesar started by giving the board a quick highlight on the Resolution for funding as Mr. Cruz had mentioned at the start of the meeting. Cesar mentioned that the number submitted was \$988,700. 95 for the region, and that it was for Homeland Security projects. I explained that they are currently pending

the Governor Public Safety Office QA & QC on that. Also stated that they should be getting an announcement by the end of April or early May and mentioned that once it was out the Board would be the first to know. Lastly, Cesar mentioned their 1st Annual LRGVDC-ready RGV regional conference. This will include 7 exhibitors. 3 keynote speakers. Cesar also thanked Mayor Sepulveda for being the honoring guest. We look forward to seeing everyone out there.

Police Academy Program Status Report

Javier Solis started by letting the Board know that he is happy to say that this morning the 223rd Mission Police Academy graduated. That academy had 21 cadets. 6 were hired that morning and were sworn in at the ceremony. 3 were hired at the Palm View Police Department. 2 by the Starr County Sheriff's Office and 1 hired by the Elsa Police Department. Mr. Solis also thanked Mayor Garza for her attendance this morning at the Graduation. Javier also mentioned to the board that last month the Texas Commission Law enforcement came in and conducted an audit of all training records. Mr. Solis was happy to announce that they passed the audit and got to extend the contract. Mr. Solis stated that the 224th Weslaco Basic Peace Officer Academy has completed Texas Penal Code training. Mr. Solis also mentioned that on April 5th they will commence their 225th Harlingen Basic Peace Officer Course Academy. Mr. Solis stated that they are anticipating about 15 cadets to be enrolled in that academy. Mr. Solis expressed that in March they provided alert active shooting training to 85 officers, he then thanked Tom Logan for collaborating with the academy and coordinating their first-ever Lower Rio Grande Valley Academy Police K9 Training Course. All in attendance were as following Mission Police Department, PSJA ISD Police Department, Hidalgo County Precincts 1 & 4, and lastly Hidalgo County ISD. Mr. Solis mentioned that they are finalizing Interlocal Agreements as well with the City Alton Police Department, The City of La Joya Police Department, and the Hidalgo County Constable Precinct 4 office. All agreements will expand the number of training sites and courses offered to all law enforcement officers in the region. Lastly, the LRGV Academy is in negotiations with the Rio Grande City Police Department to establish an Interlocal Agreement for TCOLE Reporting Services for Law Enforcement Agencies in the Starr County area. We hope to bring them on board as the TCOLE reporting site so that they can serve as a HUB to provide training to the Region and in Starr County.

No further Comments or concerns they then moved on to Rio Grande Valley Emergency Communication District with Joe Garcia.

Program Status Reports

GIS, 911 IT & Community Engagement:

Mr. Joe Garcia started with the GIS Department, he stated that the team has begun the creation of a dashboard that will make their ticketing system easier to search and display statistics to our ticket takers. Mr. Garcia then moved on to the Status reports for their IT department. He mentioned that the IT team held 6 Power 911/Map flex training courses for 64 regional telecommunicators. They will also be teaching Disaster Planning in PSAP's class at the All-Hazards conference at the McAllen Convention Center. Mr. Garcia then moved on to the Public Education Team, He stated that they attended several events and are now getting ready for one of the most important events of the year, which is National Public Safety Telecommunications Week which starts on April 14th – 20th. He explains that that week they took the time to recognize our telecommunicators for all their hard work and efforts. Our team will travel to all our PSAPs and distribute appreciation packages to all the Telecommunicators in the Region.

With No Further Comments or concerns, President Sepulveda then moved to Item D Valley Metro

D. Transportation Action Item:

Consideration and **ACTION** to Approve the purchase of Fare Collection Equipment and associated parts from GENFARE, LLC provider of the Valley Metro fare collection system. Mr. Logan stated that this is their Vendor that provides their equipment and parts, and staff recommends approval, he also mentioned that the funding will come from TxDot Grant at 100%. He explained that these are parts that are required for their day-to-day maintenance. There are also spare parts to have in storage as we conduct preventive maintenance around equipment. **Ron Mills made a motion to approve the purchase of Fare collection equipment and associated parts from Genfare, LLC provider of the Valley Metro fare collection System. Troy Allen seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.**

Program Status Reports

Mr. Logan then moved on to the Ridership report where he mentioned to the board that as of right now, they are at 465,000 year to date. He stated that there has been an increase of over 1118,000 from the previous year.

With no further comments or concerns, they then moved on to RGV MPO.

Rio Grande Valley MPO Status Reports

RGV MPO could not make it to the meeting so therefore there was no status report on that department.

Item #7 New & Unfinished Business

Mr. Cruz wanted to remind everyone that the South Texas All Hazards Conference was going on at the McAllen Convention Center and stated that it was going on its 10th year. Mr. Cruz let everyone know if they had time to stop by and show support and mentioned that it was the second biggest conference in the State of Texas next to the Texas Division of Emergency Management Conference. Lastly, Mr. Cruz reminded the board about the ready RGV that is taking place on the Island in May.

There being no further business to come before the board, Mayor Norma Sepulveda made a motion to adjourn at 12:57 PM



Mayor Norma Gonzalez Garza

ATTEST:



Liza Alfaro, Recording Secretary