

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

12:00PM WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 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 Norie Gonzalez Garza

Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza called the meeting to order at 12:12 p.m. Roll Call was taken, and as of 12:14 pm no quorum was attained.

Present: Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza

Mayor John Cowen, City of Brownsville
Mayor Ramiro Garza, City of Edinburg
Commissioner David Garza, Cameron County
Commissioner Ellie Torres, Hidalgo County
Mayor David Moreno, City of Donna
Mayor Alma Salinas, Sullivan City
Commissioner Edward Gonzales, City of Raymondville
Commissioner Tom Goodman, City of San Benito
Veronica Gonzalez, UTRGV Edinburg
Mr. Luke Lucio, TSTC
Mr. Troy Allen, Delta Lake
Ms. Ann Williams Cass, Member at Large
Ms. Lupita Sanchez Martinez, Grassroots

Absent :

Mayor Norma Sepulveda City of Harlingen
Judge Aurelio Guerra Willacy County
Mayor Adrian Gonzalez City of Weslaco
Mayor JR Garza, City of Alamo
Mayor George Guadiana, City of San Perlita
Mayor Alejandro Flores, City of Los Fresnos
Mayor Javier Villalobos, City of McAllen
Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez City of Pharr
Commissioner Marco Villegas, City of San Juan
Mr. Paul Hernandez, South Texas College
Mr. Ronald Mills, Willacy Co. Navigation Dist.
Mr. Jim Darling, Member at Large
Mr. Tony Chavez, Member at Large

There was no quorum attained for now, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza continued with the agenda.

Without no questions from the board, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Item #3

Item #3: Public Comment: No Public Comment, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Item #4.

Item #4: Administration

4A. Presentation for Age Friendly RGV Initiative; Update and Future Directions with Dr. Sudi. A Professor at UTRGV School of Social Work, has been leading the Age Friendly RGV Initiative after receiving a community engagement grant. This initiative, inspired by the World Health Organization and AARP, aims to assess and promote age-friendly environments in the RGV region, which has unique cultural identities and needs.

Key points:

Dr. Sudi started his presentation stating that a study was designed to evaluate age-friendliness, collecting 350 surveys from local cities. A roundtable of share results was postponed to March due to scheduling conflicts. Five cities—Edinburg, McAllen, Harlingen, Mission, and Pharr—have issued age-friendly proclamations, with Hidalgo County also adopting the proclamation. Efforts are ongoing to encourage other cities and counties, including Cameron and Willacy, to adopt similar proclamations. Students from his class are involved in raising awareness about age-friendliness and conducting assessments to identify areas for improvement. His initiative is to reschedule proclamations and has received multiple proclamations from cities. Virtual meetings have been organized to educate city representatives about the initiative and share the best practices. A partnership with AARP is in development, aiming for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to secure AARP volunteers for the initiative. The MOU will include a job description for volunteer roles. The goal is to conduct at least one focus group on age-friendliness in each precinct of the cities that have issued proclamations, gathering solid data to inform city planning. Plans are being made to develop training modules for individuals interested in age-friendliness, offering micro-credits and training to community volunteers. A resource center at UTRGV will be established to assist cities and support capacity-building efforts for age-friendly initiatives in the region. The initiative seeks to engage communities, assess their status, and guide future actions to enhance age-friendliness.

4B. Executive Director Report. Mr. Cruz began by introducing all the new hires and promotions. Then Mr. Cruz then moved on to The Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC) held its bi-annual training and board meeting last week in Austin, attended by staff and Commissioner David Garza. Acknowledgment and thanks were given to Commissioner Garza for his service on board. Commissioner Garza will not continue in this role, and the board will need to elect a new representative for future TARC meetings. Commissioner Garza announced his decision to step down from the Council of Governments (COG) at the end of the year due to personal time constraints. He expressed his enjoyment in serving at the state level but emphasized the need to focus on local priorities. Commissioner Garza highlighted the value of new ideas and collaboration at COG conferences and commended the staff for their active participation. He hopes to allow another commissioner the opportunity to take his place. Mr. Cruz then moved on to CDBG 50th Anniversary, Congratulations were extended to CDBG on their 50th anniversary. Attendees included Commissioner Sid Miller from the Texas Agriculture Department and Leslie Bradley from HUD's Southwest region. Regional councils will continue assisting non-entitlement communities in accessing CDBG funding.

Broadband Development, The Broadband Development Office (BDO) provided updates on ongoing projects and requested assistance from COGs to secure tier licenses (A, B, C, D, E). They emphasized the need for Tier D and E licenses, with only 22 local governments having secured them, as this will impact future grant processes. Tier Licenses, to apply for upcoming broadband funding (BEAT), municipalities must secure tier licenses. Details will be emailed for dissemination from relevant departments. Texas Broadband Development Office, Monthly virtual roundtable meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month. The next meeting is on October 3rd from 10 to 11 AM, providing updates on broadband funding.

Mr. Cruz then moved on to the Texas Water Development Board, Updates were given to water planning groups, including Region M and flood planning in region 15, chaired by Commissioner Garza. Flood plans for all regions and the state plan were approved on August 15.

Next was the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), There has been a decline in grant applications, prompting TDA to enhance technical assistance for small municipalities. Two new grant opportunities are available, closing on December 9th: 2025-2026 Community Development Fund, Max award of \$750,000 for water, wastewater, and drainage improvements. 2025 Colonial Fund Construction, Max award of \$1 million for water, wastewater, and housing rehabilitation for low- to moderate-income households. A revamped two-phase application process aims to simplify grant applications.

Lastly Mr. Cruz mentioned the Texas General Land Office (GLO), Six amendments for public comment were released, including a new disaster recovery reallocation program for de-obligated funds. Two key projects are available for funding reallocation: Hurricane Ike and Dolly, approximately \$20 million remains available for reallocation, with awards ranging from \$500,000 to \$20 million. 2018 and 2019 South Texas Floods, about \$14 to \$20 million is available for reallocation under this program. Other amendments pertain to projects not directly impacting our region.

No further discussion or comments. Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Item #2. After Quorum was attained.

2. Consideration and ACTION to Approve Meeting Minutes for August 28, 2024. ***Mayor David Moreno made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for August 28, 2024. Commissioner Ellie Torres seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***

No further questions or discussion Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Item #5.

Item #5 Department reports

A. Community & Economic Development

Ms. Melisa Gonzales had no action items on the agenda.

Program Status Reports

Data Collection for Economic Development Strategies, a QR code card was distributed for collecting input on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies. Attendees are asked to complete a nine-question survey ranking five strategies per question in order of importance. QR codes are provided for easy access. Feedback is crucial for ensuring a robust regional update. Ms. Melisa Gonzales wanted to congratulate the City of Mission, for being nominated for the 2022-2023 TARC Regional Solid Waste Grantee Program. City of Mission will be featured in the state publication, highlighting its outstanding standalone facility. A quote may be requested from the mayor for inclusion in the publication. Upcoming CDBG Meeting on October 1st A meeting with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program will be held on October 1st, starting at 9 AM. non-entitlement cities are encouraged to attend the stakeholder meeting to provide input for the 2025-2029 consolidated plan.

Following this, there will be an award ceremony for the 2024 Community Development Awardees, including Los Indios, San Perlita, La Feria, Cameron County, Hidalgo County, and the City of Rio Grande City, which is being hosted this year. Melisa expressed to the board to please make plans to attend and participate in these important events.

No further questions Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Health and Human Services.

B. Health and Human Services

Ms. Lopez had no action items on the agenda, so she proceeded with her status reports.

Program Status Reports

Ms. Lopez started off with an important announcement, Ms. Lopez mentioned that open enrollment season for Medicare is from October 15 to December 7, crucial for the aging and disabled communities. Next, Health Fair, A kickoff health fair will be held in Los Fresnos on October 1, 2024. Benefit Counselors Business cards are provided for all those needing help with Medicare and related services. Last year, we assisted around 200 individuals. Fraud Prevention, it's important to take time with clients to help them avoid fraud and make informed decisions regarding their health plans. Housing Initiative, In August, we partnered with the Mission Housing Authority to secure housing for over 20 individuals facing rent issues, supported by a housing bond grant. Lastly, Ms. Lopez expresses her gratitude to Mayor Norie from the City of Mission for enabling these initiatives.

No further questions or comments, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Public Safety.

C. Public Safety

Criminal Justice and Homeland Security Program Action Items.

Mr. Cesar Merla started off with the 5 Action Items he had on the agenda.

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve Criminal Justice Advisory Committee's (CJAC) recommendation on application score sheets for FY2025-2026 Grant Cycle. ***Ellie Torres made a motion to Approve the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee's (CJAC) recommendation on application score sheets for FY 2025-2026 Grant Cycle. Troy Allen seconded the motion upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***
2. Consideration and ACTION to approve Criminal Justice Advisory Committee's (CJAC) recommendation on current membership roster for the FY 2025-2026 Grant Cycle. ***Ellie Torres made a motion to approve the Criminal Justice Advisory committee's (CJAC) recommendation on current membership roster for the FY 2025-2026 Grant Cycle. Mayor Ramiro Garza seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***
3. Consideration and ACTION to Approve Criminal Justice Advisory Committee's (CJAC) recommendation on the LRGVDC Regional Criminal Justice Strategic plan for 2025-2030. ***Commissioner Ellie Torres made a motion to Approve Criminal Justice Advisory Committee's (CJAC) recommendation on the LRGVDC Regional Criminal Justice Strategic plan for 2025-2030. Mayor Ramiro Garza seconded the motion upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

4. Consideration and ACTION to Approve Homeland Security Advisory Committee's (HSAC) Current Membership Roster for the FY 2025-2026. **Commissioner Ellie Torres made a motion to approve Homeland Security Advisory committee's current membership roster for FY 2025-2026. Mayor Ramiro Garza seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.**
5. Consideration and ACTION to approve Homeland Security Advisory Committee's (HSAC) Application Score Sheet for FY 2025-2026 Grant Cycle. **Commissioner Ellie Torres made a motion to approve Homeland Security Advisory Committee's (HSAC) Application score sheet for FY 2025-2026. Mayor Ramiro Garza seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**

Program Status Reports

Cesar started off with 3 important training sessions coming up. Support That Saves, Hosted with the Mercedes Police Department, October 21-23. Focused on mental health for police officers, open to all officers and eligible for TCOLE credit. Registration is still open. Naloxone (Narcan) Training, scheduled for October 25 with sessions at 9:30 AM, 11 AM, 1 PM, and 2 PM. Participants will complete a one-hour course and receive a Narcan kit. Previous sessions attracted attendees from Webb County. De-escalation Training for Law Enforcement, One-day training on November 21, from 8 AM to 5 PM, offering eight hours of TCOLE credit. In partnership with LEMIT and COPS, this training is open to all law enforcement personnel.

No further Questions or Comments Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Police Academy.

LRGVDC Police Academy

Mr. Javier Solis with the Police Academy had 1 Action item on the agenda.

1. Consideration and ACTION to Approve an Interlocal Agreement as authorized by the Interlocal Cooperation Act Chapter 791 Texas Government Code, with County of Hidalgo, Texas by and through the Hidalgo County Constable Precinct 2 office, for the purpose of reporting law enforcement training to the Texas Commission of Law Enforcement and with the authority to have the LRGVDC Executive Director Manuel Cruz sign and finalize the agreement. **Commissioner David Garza made a motion to Approve an Interlocal Agreement as authorized by the Interlocal Cooperation Act Chapter 791 Texas Government Code, with County of Hidalgo Texas, by & through the Hidalgo County Constable Precinct 2 office, for the purpose of reporting law enforcement training to the Texas Commission of Law Enforcement and with the authority to have the LRGVDC Executive Director Manuel Cruz sign and finalize the agreement. Ms. Veronica Gonzales seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.**

Program Status Report

Mr. Solis started his status report by letting the board know that the LRGV Academy Graduation was on September 20. The LRGV Academy celebrated its 225th Basic Peace Officer Academy graduation in Harlingen, with ten cadets now eligible for licensing. Notably, this academy achieved a 100% pass rate on the Texas State Licensing exam. 224th Weslaco Police Academy, currently in its final training month, preparing 15 cadets for state licensing and future placements in local police departments. 226th Mission Police Academy, Completed crisis intervention and de-escalation training, along with scenario-based training for mental health issues.

225th Edinburg LRGV Academy, finished phase one training covering ethics, professional policing, and Texas penal codes, now entering traffic code training. Training Statistics, Since January 1, 48 police officers have been deployed locally. The state set a target of 54 in-service courses; 102 have been conducted this

year. The training goal was 444 officers, and 1,433 have been trained to date. Current contact hours stand at 135,152, compared to the target of 168,686. Senate Bill 1852, Requires all Texas peace officers to receive 16 hours of active shooter training within two years. So far, 341 officers have been trained in the region. Acknowledgments, Gratitude expressed to various city and county partners for their collaboration in training efforts.

No further comments or questions Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to the Rio Grande Emergency Communication District.

Program Status Reports

Mr. Dennis Moreno started by letting the Board know that there were no Action Items and then proceeded with the GIS Division, 911 and Information Technology, and community Engagement reports that were all in the packet provided to everyone for review. Mr. Dennis Moreno then mentioned the Wellness Seminar; the second Annual Public Safety Wellness Seminar featured Doug Monda, Chris Gallin, and the Nueva Luz Foundation, who shared mental health resources and personal experiences. Attendance increased to approximately 425 participants, and plans are in place for a third annual seminar next year. Team Effort, Acknowledgment of the team's collaboration in supporting dispatchers and enhancing wellness through the seminar. Mr. Cruz then Mentioned the Awards Presented, Awards were given to five veteran telecommunicators and the Supervisor of the Year. The Sandra Coronado Award, named after a dispatcher, killed in 2018, was also presented to recipients from the Sheriff's Office. Mr. Dennis Moreno mentions the Open Call for Nominations, All PSAPs are encouraged to submit nominations for recognition of their staff's contributions to their communities. Further efforts will be made to honor deserving individuals.

No Further Comments or concerns, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved to Item D

D. Transportation Valley Metro Action Item

Mr. Tom Logan was recognized and had 1 action item on the agenda.

1. Consideration and ACTION to Approve Acquisition of Vehicles under a State approved Grant for LRGVDC Valley Metro. ***Commissioner Ellie Torres made a motion to approve Acquisition of Vehicles under State approved Grant for LRGVDC Valley Metro. Mayor Alma Salinas seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***

Program Status Reports


Mr. Logan then moved on to the Status Reports. System Report, for fiscal year 2024, we transported \$631,000. In the state fiscal year 2024, transportation increased to \$797,000, marking a \$166,000 increase (approximately 21%). There is significant demand for more services, and efforts are underway to meet this demand, as overall numbers continue to rise. Ann Cass had a question for Mr. Logan regarding the potential use of school buses for rural transportation during the day when they are not in use. This topic was discussed unofficially and was also brought up at the Hidalgo County Prosperity Task Force. Has this been considered in your department? Tom Logan then responded Last week, a meeting was held with Edcouch ISD and UTRGV, where the topic of using school buses for transportation was discussed. There is a need to transport students from the Delta area to the Edinburg campus. The ISD is researching the limitations of using their fleet for this service, and the insights gained may be applicable across the RGV region.

Rio Grande Valley MPO Status Reports

Luis Diaz started off with a quick report, Public Involvement Update, we are currently engaging the public for our 25-year and four-year plans, including the MTP and TIP for all listed projects. Public involvement began on September 9 and will continue through October 9. Upcoming Events, we held an event at the Metro McAllen Transit Station on September 17. Another session is scheduled for tomorrow in the Ken Jones Small Boardroom from 2 to 4 PM. Future events are planned for the Brownsville area at the La Plaza Transit Station, with details to be posted on our website. They will be having Public Involvement. More information will be posted in our website on the event section of our homepage. We're hosting a public involvement event this Friday for our Safe Streets for All initiatives. Join us at the Harlingen Market at Wild August from 6 to 9 p.m. Additionally, on Saturday, we'll be in Brownsville from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Brownsville Farmers Market for our SS4A initiative. I wanted to share these upcoming events and public engagements we're organizing for the MPO.

Item #7 New & Unfinished Business

There being no further business to come before the board, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza made a motion to adjourn at 1:02 PM



President Mayor Norma Sepulveda

ATTEST:



Liza Alfaro, Recording Secretary

