

MINUTES

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

12:00PM WEDNESDAY, September 27, 2023

HELD IN-PERSON AND VIA 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: President Mayor David Suarez

- DRAFT -

President Mayor David Suarez called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m. Roll Call was taken, and a quorum was declared.

Present:

Mayor David Suarez, City of Weslaco
Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza, City Of Mission
Commissioner Ernesto "Ernie" Garcia, Willacy County
Mr. Jim Darling
Mayor John Cowen, City of Brownsville
Commissioner David Garza, Cameron County
Commissioner J.R Garza, City of Alamo
Councilman Johnny Garcia, City of Edinburg
Omar Quintanilla, City of McAllen
Mayor Ricardo "Rick" Guerra City of San Benito
Ms. Veronica Gonzales UT- Rio Grande Valley
Ms. Jennifer Olten, TSTC
Mr. Troy Allen, Delta Lake ID
Ms. Ann William Cass
Ms. Lupita Sanchez Martinez, Grassroots Org

Absent:

Mayor Norma Sepulveda, City of Harlingen
Commissioner Ellie Torres, Hidalgo County
Commissioner Betty Rodriguez, City of La Villa
Mayor Mike Carter, City of Laguna Vista
Mayor Jaime Gonzalez, City of Los Indio's
Mayor Oscar Montoya, City of Mercedes
Mayor Ambrosio "Amos" Hernandez, City of Pharr
Commissioner Edward Gonzales, City of Raymondville
Commissioner Marco "Markie" Villegas, City of San Juan
Mr. Paul Hernandez, South Texas College
Mr. Ronald Mills, Willacy County Nav. Dist.
Mr. Eleazar Garcia Jr

President David Suarez then moved to item # 2. Consideration and Action to Approve Meeting Minutes (August 30, 2023). Commissioner David Garza inquired if the attendance of members was reflected in the minutes. Mr. Cruz responded that an external attendance record is kept on file, however, future attendance will be reflected in future meeting minutes. *Commissioner David A. Garza motioned to approve the presented minutes from August 30, 2023. Ms. Norie Gonzalez Garza seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously upon a vote.*

Mayor David Suarez next moved to Item # 3 Public Comment, there being none, he moved to item # 4.

Item 4. Administration

A. Consideration and Action to approve Award of Landscaping Services Contract

Presented by Mr. Armando Perez, Assistant Director, this contract will be for one (1) year with the option of four 1-year renewals for lawn and landscape services to South Texas Landscapes Irrigation & Pest Control, LLC. The lawn and landscape services will be for all LRGVDC locations, including those in Weslaco, Harlingen, and Edinburg. The vendor was selected through the solicitation process. This was the only vendor to submit a proposal, however, they also met the requirements and staff requests approval for these services. *Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve the Landscaping Contract as presented. The Mayor Norie Gonzalez seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.*

B. Executive Reports

Mr. Cruz introduced the new staff members that have come onboard: Ms. Daniella Gonzalez joined AAA. Carlos Lopez, Juakin Garcia, and Jose R. Pena joined the Transportation/Valley Metro Team. Mr. Cruz then concluded his report and handed it over so the other directors had the opportunity to present their action items and reports for their programs.

Without questions from the board, Mayor David Suarez moved to Item # 5. Department Reports.

Item #5: Department Reports

A. Community & Economic Development

Consideration and Action to Approve Regional Water Resource Advisory Committee (RWRAC) Officers.

Mrs. Melisa Gonzalez stated that as per the RWRAC Bylaws, the Advisory Committee shall consist of the following officers elected by the RWRAC. Officers shall begin term upon RWRAC approval. Officers may only be selected from current committee representatives. The appointment of an officer shall only be granted to a specific individual (not a membership composition category representative). Only individuals elected may carry out the functions of the office. At the September 13, 2023, RWRAC meeting, the committee recommended the following members as Officer. Vice Chairman: Commissioner Ernie Garcia, Willacy County and the Chairman position will be taken back to the RWRAC for further review and nominations at a later date. *Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve the Regional Water Resource as Presented. Mr. Jim Darling seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.*

Program Status Reports

Mrs. Melissa Gonzalez announced to the board that they will be hosting public meetings for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs) on October 24, in Hidalgo County in the Ken Jones Board Room. October 25, at the Cameron County Annex Building and October 26 at the Willacy County Raymondville EDC Facility. Starting at 10:00am, they will send out flyers in the first week of October.

Without questions from the board Mayor David Suarez moved to Item B., Health and Human Services

B. Health and Human Services

Program Status Reports

Ms. Margarita Lopez with Health and Human Services did not have any action items but did take the time to thank the board for all their support and all the recommendations that they had considered for the department. In the past year and a half, they have approved 20 action Items. She mentioned that they just submitted the Area Plan for states review and approval and currently await responses. She also went on to mention that while analyzing that data they learned that during the past 3-4 years up to where the pandemic ended Health and Human Services helped or assisted over 5000 people. In a year and a half, they have already helped 7371, which says that their outreach activities and their services are going further than we have seen in the past 5 years all with the support and consideration from this board.

Ms. Lopez also thanked the Mission Housing Authority, City of Rio Hondo, City of La Joya, City of Primera, and City of Los Fresno's for their support and for being a sub-recipient and for helping the aging population. She expressed that their vendor contractors are up to 103, and the board made it happen with their considerations and approvals. She also mentioned an update on the Community Development Block Grants. They were awarded \$20,000 from Harlingen and were able to provide much needed assistance to 66 Clients within the Harlingen area. They also assisted 33 with \$8,000 with what they received from Edinburg. We received Another \$8,000 from McAllen and was able to help other clients within Pharr and Mission area. AAA exhausted every single one of the dollars received and did not leave anything on the table and accomplished deliverables before the time. Ms. Lopez also stated that they have gone through several audits and have not had and/or noted any discrepancies of these community development block grants.

Finally, the ADRC program in the last year and a half brought onboard a Housing Navigator, one Special Initiative, and two Customer Service Representative. With that said, today the ADRC is fully staffed. We have a case manager to provide respite services where assistance is needed. We have another case manager that provides benefit counseling services to anyone 59 and below. Our housing navigator has extended his relationships and collaborations with housing authorities and anyone that works with affordable housing. Health and Human Services staff are also working hard with hospitals and rehab centers to ensure that they don't have homeless or adults here in the valley. She also goes to mention that they have hosted one conference, one Veteran's fair and working hard on the next Veteran's Fair that will take place in November. Ms. Lopez then closed with no action item needed but thanks the board once again.

Mr. Jim Darling asked Ms. Lopez if there were any request for AC units and fans this summer. She then explained the in-take process that goes through the Information Referral Assistance (IR&A) team for everyone or anyone that calls for services. They do ask if they have any additional needs. Additionally, when they conducted their clinics and outreach activities they always asked if there are any additional needs they can assist with. They did not receive any assistance with air conditioning or fans. She did mention that most of the people they came across were asking for more safety items, such as flashlights and consumables and the clinics accommodated to those needs. They are working with bigger companies with larger amounts of dollars to contribute when they become sponsors to see how much they can get next year.

Mayor David Suarez mentions that yes, with this heat wave he knew some people that were asking for cooling stations due to not having AC. Ms. Lopez stated that no requests were received for fans and AC. She did go on to let them know that years ago they did provide AC and Fans but does not know why it stopped and will investigate it for next upcoming year. She stated that they did give out 60-65 Heaters during last year's Vet Fest. They will work on AC and Fans for next year.

C. Public Safety

Criminal Justice and Homeland Security

1. Consideration and Action to approve the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC) Recommendation of Appointment of New Committee Member Mark Perez, Chief of Police, City of Alton, Texas.

Mr. Cesar Merla stated that Mark Perez, a US Army Veteran, proudly serves as the Chief of Police for the City of Alton, Texas. His impressive credentials include a Texas Master Peace Officer license, Mental Health Peace Officer certification, and recognition as a TCOLE Firearms and Proficiency Instructor. Additionally, he has earned a Public Manager certification from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Chief Perez recently completed his certification from the prestigious Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas and has also successfully graduated from the FBI-LEEDA and Trilogy Courses. His extensive experience, unwavering leadership, and profound knowledge of law enforcement makes him an asset to the Criminal Justice Advisory Council. ***Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve the Criminal Justice Advisory committee recommendation of appointment of new committee Member Mark Perez, Chief of Police, City of Alton. Mayor Norie Gonzalez Seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.***

2. Consideration and Action to approve the Criminal Justice advisory Committee recommendation on appointment of New Committee Member, Rosa Hernandez, Nurse Manager Doctor's Hospital Renaissance. ***Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee recommendation on appointment of New Committee Member, Rosa Hernandez, Nurse Manager Doctor's Hospital Renaissance. John Cowen Seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***

Program Status Report

Criminal Justice Program

Mr. Cesar Merla then went on to report all status reports for Homeland Security and Criminal Justice. Staff attended the Texas Association Regional of Councils (TARC) Bi-Annual Staff Training on Criminal Justice from September 6-8, 2023, in Austin, TX. Staff hosted the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC) on September 13, 2023, at the Ken Jones Executive Board Room.

Homeland Security Program

Staff attended the Cradle point Mobile Networking Summit on September 12, 2023, at the McAllen Central Fire Station Board Room.

Staff attended the 1st Annual Public Safety Wellness Seminar in September 14, 2023, at the McAllen Convention Center.

Staff hosted the HAZMAT Workshop on September 20, 2023, at the Ken Jones Executive Board Room. Staff hosted the Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) Session 2: Border Violence and Pandemic on September 28, 2023, at the Ken Jones Executive Board Room.

Finally, Mr. Cesar Merla announced that his department will be having the first Annual Ready RGV that will take place on May 9-10th in South Padre Island, Texas. The goal is to also provide continuing education credits for law enforcement, first responders, firefighters, educators, and those in the Mental health field. More information of this event is to follow and the first planning meeting will take place October 19, 2023.

With no questions from the board Mayor David Suarez moved on to the Regional Police Academy.

Regional Police Academy

3. Consideration and Action to approve revisions to LRGV Academy Instructor Contract for Professional Services.

Mr. Cruz reported that in June 2023, the Regional Police Academy Advisory Committee convened to review and revise the Lower Rio Grande Valley Academy Instructor Contract. This is necessary to provide updates related to compliance and accurately delineating the responsibilities and duties of each party and ensure the successful services are rendered to benefit the education of cadets and peace officers in the region. These updates include rate adjustments to be competitive with market value within the discipline. The changes made are highlighted in yellow. A copy of the previous contract is attached for comparison purposes.

Mr. Cruz then mentioned that he did provide a copy of the new version and old one so that the board can see all the changes that had been made. He stated that the first two pages were the recommendations that were made by the advisory committee. On the third page he mentioned that they provided information that was required and normally used with all documents. On page 4, updated the term, termination, and severability. He advised the board that the contracts do not automatically renew every year. Mr. Cruz mentioned that the Police Academy operates on a biennium, two-year cycle grant so contracts must end at the end of the performance period. He stated that the other items that were added (as shown on the BOD packet that were not listed. He let the board know that they do contract with subject matter experts, law enforcement professionals to come in and conduct training for Police Academy Cadets. They only use instructors for specialized training courses or to fill in. He explained that if they were to have an in-house instructor, they would not have all the qualifications needed to take on the 720-hour Police Academy to include practical exercises. The EVOC – Emergency Vehicle Operation Course or driving course, was used as an example as a specialized course and can't be presented by a basic instructor. Mr. Jim Darling then asked if the instructors are with another entity and Mr. Cruz answers yes, they are or retired. Mr. Darling asked how they vetted and if there is a process to make sure that they qualify, or, background check is done. Mr. Cruz explained that the program requires certain information that must be submitted to staff before, and it is verified by staff on the TCOLE database to make sure it is accurate and the most current information. Commissioner David Garza asked to elaborate in double duty and asked if this means that they are in night class and have a job as well. Mr. Cruz then explains that they address as much as possible and rely on them to make sure they're not on duty. He mentioned that they do have day classes as well, however, the police departments of Mission and Edinburg, as an example, are not contracted or paid for instruction. The resources are shared between the COG and Police Dept. and since they have a training division their officers/instructors fill this gap on their time.

Commissioner Ernesto Garcia from Willacy County and former peace officer introduces himself and states that some of the questions that were being asked about double dipping had allot to do with agency the officers work for. Everything is run through TCOLE; they would need to provide a CV curriculum. He also states that every class would have to be provided through TCOLE. Once submitting the form will have the instructor's name, the course, and the curriculum. All must be approved if not they will get kicked out. Just because police officers are on call 24/7, and if called upon they must leave and respond to any emergency. Mr. Cruz then states, that is correct, if there is an incident that happens that requires an all-hands-on deck then they will postpone classes until they can return. Mr. Jim Darling states that he would to thing that most all larger departments have their own training centers and certification centers, do we? Mr. Cruz stated that that might be the case, however, the missing component would be the TCOLE Academy License or Training Provider Certification required. Mr. Cruz states that there are a total of 5 academies and that this is the only regional academy available to all three counties, they do rely on Mission and Edinburg and also have TSTC as a site. Mr. Cruz states that within any given year we have about 35-40 folks contracted to teach, but not all are utilized. Mayor David Suarez called for a motion; ***Commissioner Ernesto Garcia made a motion to approve revisions to the LRGV Academy Instructor Contract for Professional Service, Mr. Jim Darling Seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.***

Program Status Reports

On Thursday, September 9, 2023, 16 cadets from the 222nd Weslaco Night Academy and Project Management Specialist Monic Galvan actively participated in the Weslaco Firefighters Association L3207's 911 Memorial 5K. As of Wednesday, September 13, 2023, the 26 cadets from the 221st Edinburg Days, the academy have completed Chapter 41 firearms training. On Friday, September 15, 2023, the LRGV Academy, in collaboration with the Mission Police Department, conducted an orientation session for the 223rd Basic Peace Officer Course with 22 cadets. As of Wednesday, September 27, 2023, the 26 graduates from the 221st Edinburg Day Academy are scheduled to graduate, and the ceremony will take place at the Edinburg Conference Center at Renaissance. The LRGV Academy is not currently offering entrance exams, as both academies scheduled for September and November have already reached the maximum number of applicants.

Rio Grande Valley Emergency Communication District

Program Status Report

No action items were presented but Mr. Dennis Moreno did go on and mention the highlights in the GIS Division. They are working on the emergency response map that is currently being utilized by the local 911 agencies, EMS and along with the local firefighters in Hidalgo and Willacy County. He went on to explain the Geographic Information System plan. They have submitted a based routing that's an LBR Request through Version Wireless in early September it will for cell phone to turn on GPS services and reduce the need to transfer 911 calls. It will help in the rural areas from getting caught up in towers. He mentioned that they have begun testing here in the Rio Grande Valley and turning up the location-based routing LBR to allow the first responders to respond more accurately. Especially when in a moving vehicle, they will accurately locate for the emergency. He states that this is something that they are pushing on throughout the year and will go on to the next year. This will be something that will help improve emergency services throughout Hidalgo and Willacy Counties.

In addition to that also hosted the First Annual Public Safety Wellness Seminar. It was more of a dispatcher and TC driven event. We did open the event to all public safety. Glad to say that they had people attending from Starr, Falfurrias, Cameron, Willacy, and Hidalgo. He states that they wanted this to be more for our TC. Mr. Moreno mentions that they had about 96 telecommunications from the Rio Grande Valley register, 326 people attended the event. He stated that they were fortunate to provide awards the Telecommunicators for their years of service and commitment. We had 5 yrs., 10 yrs., 20 yrs., and 40 yrs of service. Mr. Moreno mentioned that they had a master of ceremonies and explains the photos provided. Mr. Trey Cerna from KRGV was there and was the MC. Mr. Cruz and Sheriff Guerra were the ones providing awards to the telecommunicators. This was opened to all police departments to submit their recognition for their TC. We had TC of the year, JJ Marquez from City of Edinburg. In addition, we also were able to Honor Ms. Marissa Figueroa from City of Alton she was recognized for Supervisor of the year as well. Mr. Moreno explains that this is just something that they do to recognize all the hard work that the telecommunicators do 365 days a year.

Mr. Moreno stated that they brought in some wellness speakers. Mr. Atkins keynote speaker and Author of the Leveled-up life book and Mr. Raul Rivas presenting Trauma Behind the Badge, shares with the Board that he was one of the first responders for the Pulse Nightclub. Mr. Rivas recognized through the event and the incident as well that nobody went back to the telecommunicators to check their mental state from all the violence they were exposed to during these calls. Just because they are behind the phone and not seeing it directly as our first responders but pointed out that everyone is involved, even those just outside were impacted by those incidents.

In addition, Mr. Moreno states that they flew a State Flag at the State Capitol. The telecommunicators of the Year will now be known and named in honor of Sandra Coronado and explains that she was killed by a drunk driver on December 9, 2018, in the morning while on her way to work her shift as a TC at the Hidalgo County Sheriff's office. So, with that said the TC of the Year will now be known as the Sandra Coronado award.

Mr. Cruz thanked the City of McAllen, McAllen Fire Department and the Police Department for their assistance

and contributions in providing the venue for the event. He states that he was very appreciative of that and mentioned that it was quite an event. Mr. Cruz explains that when Mayor Darling was president, they ventured into separating from the state 91 I program to becoming a district. Stated that telecommunicators are the Lifeline for all police departments, firefighters, and the community. It is time we took that initiative to recognize them and all the hard work that they do.

Transportation Valley Metro

Consideration and Action to Approve procurement of Transportation vehicles for Valley Metro.

Staff requests Board approval to purchase Transportation vehicles. Vehicles will be incorporated into the Valley Metro Fleet expansion. Purchase of these vehicles will be made with 100% TxDOT and FTA Funding with Transportation Development Credits. ***Mr. Jim Darling made motion to approve procurement of Transportation vehicles for Valley Metro, Commissioner David Garza seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously upon a vote.***

Program Status Report

Mr. Tom Logan started off with mentioning that they are closing out the Fiscal Year 2023 with 631,000 riders, which would be a 47% increase from the previous year. He mentioned that the previous year they had 430,000. We are heading in the right direction; pre pandemic they were over 800,000 but considering that they introduced fares this past year, they are doing well.

Rio Grande Valley MPO

Program Status Report

Mr. Canon stated that there wasn't a lot to talk about just that, last month they had been doing their rounds visiting local governments. \$142 billion, 9,000 projects have been impactful to the area. Mr. Canon stated that before the merger they went from about \$500 Million in funding for the area to 3.5 billion dollars as the RGVMPPO. A lot of projects are moving forward. A couple of projects didn't get picked up the way we wished they had E Loop was overlooked in Cameron County. He stated that they are still working with Federal Highways on functional classification. He states that he knows that this is an important project for them and the region. He then mentions that they have funding for Nolana, for the development of the I 69 connector and 69C. That project will be in the next year and a half. They will continue the inter-state facility all the way to the county line. He stated that most of 77 is cleared and ready to go, we are working on 3 portions and trying to get fully funded to make the connectivity all the way to Kennedy County. Mr. Canon stated that they are working on revision for the four-year plan that will be brought to the board next month and next month also Bike Ped Advisory Committee went through a process with all the local governments on the TASA funding of \$9 million. He states that they will come back in October to get approved on projects that were selected.

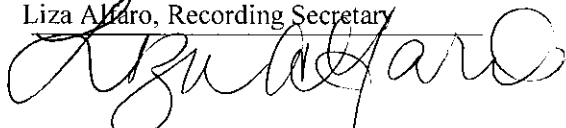
Item #6 New and Unfinished business

There being no further business to come before the Board, ***Mayor David Suarez made a motion to adjourn at 12:57pm.***

Jim Darling

ATTEST:

Liza Alvaro, Recording Secretary



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