

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

12:00PM Wednesday May 28, 2025

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 Norma Sepulveda called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. Roll Call was taken, and as of 12:12 pm a quorum was attained.

Present: Mayor Norma Sepulveda

Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza, City of Mission
Judge Auerlio Guerra, Willacy County
Mayor John Cowen, City of Brownsville
Mayor Ramiro Garza, City of Edinburg
Commissioner Pete Garcia, City of Weslaco
Commissioner Ellie Torres, Hidalgo County
Mayor George Guadiana, City San Perlita
Commissioner Edward Gonzales, City of Raymondville
Ms. Veronica Gonzales, UTRGV Edinburg
Mr. Paul Hernandez, South Texas College
Mr. Luke Lucio, TSTC
Mr. Ron Mills, Willacy Co. Nav. Dist.
Mr. Jim Darling, Member at Large
Ms. Ann Williams Cass, Member at Large
Ms. Lupita Sanchez Martinez, Grassroots Org
Mr. Troy Allen, Delta Lake

Absent :

Commissioner Joey Lopez, Cameron County
Mayor JR Garza, City of Alamo
Mayor David Moreno, City of Donna
Mayor Alma Salinas, City of Sullivan
Mayor Alejandro Flores, City of Los Fresnos
Mayor Javier Villalobos, City of McAllen
Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez City of Pharr
Mayor Rick Guerra, City of San Benito
Commissioner Marco Villegas, City of San Juan
Mr. Tony Chavez, Member-at-large

Mayor Norma Sepulveda moved on to Item#2 for the Board of Directors Meeting.

Item #2: Consideration and ACTION for approval of April 30, 2025, meeting minutes. ***Jim Darling made a motion to approve Meeting Minutes for April 30, 2025. Lupita Sanchez seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***

Item #3: Public Comment – Jorge Cruz Saenz

Mr. Jorge Cruz Saenz, a business owner from McAllen, Texas, provided public comments outlining several recommendations and concerns related to governance, transparency, and regulatory practices. He expressed a desire to see improvements in stakeholder engagement and accountability across various industries, citing concerns about inadequate professional counsel and negligent practices.

Mr. Saenz recommended that the Council consider modernizing its rules and increasing opportunities for citizen participation, particularly through training in the Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act. He emphasized the importance of including more concerned citizens in policy discussions and addressing the impact of technological advancements on public accountability.

He referenced recent federal developments, including the "Take It Down Act," and court rulings—specifically the April 21, 2023, remand order related to a liquefied natural gas project—to illustrate the need for improved environmental impact assessments and better adherence to federal standards such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Architectural Barriers Act.

Mr. Saenz urged the Council to evaluate how administrative and legislative processes can be enhanced to support transparency, public participation, and fair business practices. He advocated for improved emergency response training, environmental staff development, and research planning that incorporates economic impact analysis and robust public engagement strategies.

With no further comments and questions, Mayor Norma Sepulveda moved on to Item #4 Administration.

Item #4: Administration

4.A. Mr. Cruz then moved on to the first action item for Administration. Consideration and ACTION on Recommendations from Nominations Committee.

1. Selection of (5) Persons for election as Members-at-large to General Membership. Mr. Cruz stated that the following were selected for 2025-2026 term:

<i>NAME:</i>	<i>CITY:</i>	<i>COUNTY:</i>
Helen Ramirez	Brownsville	Cameron
Chris Gonzalez	Mission	Hidalgo
Sergio Contreras	Mission	Hidalgo
Andres Chavez	Raymondville	Willacy
Oscar Garcia	Harlingen	Cameron

Commissioner Ellie Torres made a motion to approve the following nominations for 2025-2026 term; Mr. Troy Allen seconded the motion and upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.

2. Selection of Three (3) At-Large members to be selected to the 2025-2026 Board of Directors.

NAME:	CITY:	COUNTY:
Oscar Garcia	Harlingen	Cameron
Jim Darling	McAllen	Hidalgo
Andres Chavez	Raymondville	Willacy

Commissioner Ellie Torres Approved the At-Large members, Mr. Troy Allen seconded the motion upon a vote; the motion was carried unanimously.

4.B. Consideration of the RATIFICATION of Executive committee ACTION on the following item.

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve the Overhaul of Vehicles under TXDOT Section 5539-Rural Bus and Bus Facilities Program and approved Grant 5539-R-2024 LRGVDC-00029 for LRGVDC Valley Metro. ***Commissioner Ellie Torres made a motion to approve the Overhaul of Vehicles under TXDOT Section 5539-Rural Bus and Bus Facilities program and approved Grant 5539-R-2024 LRGVDC-00029 for LRGVDC Valley Metro. Luke Lucio seconded the motion and upon a vote; the motion was carried unanimously.***

Before moving on to Action item 4.C Mayor Sepulveda wanted to give a few words. Following the approval of elections and nominations, the outgoing President briefly addressed the membership to express gratitude for the opportunity to serve. She acknowledged that her term was extended due to filling an unexpired term and shared that it had been a pleasure to serve in the role. She thanked the staff—particularly Manny—and commended the organization's region-wide impact and the dedication of everyone involved.

Although stepping down as President, she noted she will continue to serve as Treasurer and looks forward to remaining engaged. She concluded by expressing confidence in incoming President Mayor Norie and formally passed the gavel. Mr. Cruz then states. Before formally introducing incoming President Mayor Norie Garza, a parting gift of a plaque of service was presented and letter of appreciation was presented to outgoing President, The Honorable Mayor Norma Sepulveda.

On behalf of the LRGVDC Board of Directors and staff, Mayor Sepulveda was thanked for her year and a half of dedicated leadership. It was noted that she assumed the presidency mid-term and stepped up to lead with grace, seriousness, and a strong commitment to advancing the Council's goals and regional impact.

In recognition of her faithful participation, loyal dedication, and outstanding service, a token of appreciation was presented. The Board and staff expressed sincere gratitude for her guidance, leadership, and contributions in helping the organization move forward. Mayor Sepulveda was commended for a job well done.

4.C. Consideration and ACTION to approve Agreement between AARP Foundation Senior Community Service Employment Program and the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council, allowing the LRGVDC to become a Host Agency for the program. ***Mayor Norma Sepulveda approved the Agreement between AARP Foundation Senior Community Service Employment Program and the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council, allowing the LRGVDC to become a Host Agency for the program. Jim Darling seconded the motion upon a vote; the motion was carried unanimously.***

Mr. Jose Luis Gonzalez, director for AARP Foundation, stated that the representative from the AARP Back to Work Program provided an overview of the initiative, which serves individuals aged 55 and older. The program currently operates in partnership with several Rio Grande Valley cities—including Edinburg, McAllen, Pharr, and Mission—as well as various nonprofit organizations. It is part of a nationwide network of 100 offices.

The Back to Work Program supports older adults who are actively seeking employment by covering their wages while they gain experience through placements with local governments and nonprofits. This helps participants enhance their job skills while continuing their job search. Program participants are covered under AARP's workers' compensation, and there is no cost to host agencies.

Participants are typically reassigned every six months to encourage continued job-seeking efforts. While host agencies are not obligated to hire individuals, the program provides valuable support at no financial cost. Additional partnerships are being explored, including with the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's School of Social Work.

The program was described as a "win-win" for both senior job seekers and partnering organizations.

4.D Consideration and ACTION to review, Discuss, and Approve to accept the Request from Mr. Jim Darling, General Manager/President of Rio Grande Regional Water Authority (RGRWA) to Transfer the RGRWA, upon meeting Compliance Standards to the LRGVDC as its Fiscal Agent and Execute any Applicable Management Agreement. Jim Darling provided background and updates regarding the Rio Grande Regional Water Authority (RGRWA). He explained that the board is primarily composed of agricultural representatives. Several years ago, following a lawsuit filed by agricultural stakeholders against the State of Texas—related to TCEQ allowing Mexico to partially repay its water debt through the San Juan River—the Governor's policy barred appointments to boards that had sued the state. As a result, the RGRWA lost its quorum approximately six years ago. The board's final action was to designate Mr. Darling as Executive Director to ensure continuity.

Mr. Darling noted that the RGRWA performs two key functions:

1. **El Muro Drain Funding** – The Authority collects funds from Willacy, Cameron, and Hidalgo Counties to pay for the El Muro Drain, an IBWC (International Boundary and Water Commission) project. The drain helps mitigate pollution from Mexican agricultural runoff. RGRWA receives the bill from IBWC, coordinates with counties, and facilitates payment.
2. **Water Rights Sales** – The Authority sets rates for water rights sales when irrigation districts exclude property. Cities can acquire water rights from these exclusions, and RGRWA calculates the rate based on previous sales data provided by the Texas Water Development Board, TCEQ, and IBWC.

Mr. Darling currently performs these duties in an unpaid capacity due to the lack of a functioning board. He proposed that the LRGVDC consider assuming administrative responsibility for the RGRWA. Funding is available to support administrative fees, and he suggested negotiating a contract like previous arrangements, adjusted for inflation.

He emphasized that having the Council of Governments involved would strengthen efforts to restructure and diversify RGRWA's membership—efforts which have so far been unsuccessful. He believes LRGVDC's support would help move the initiative forward, including with the Governor's Office. Mr. Manuel Cruz states that the LRGVDC would be willing to house the Rio Grande Regional Water Authority (RGRWA), provided that all actions follow proper protocol and most importantly meet compliance with applicable procedures before transferring. It was noted that, in the absence of an official RGRWA board to take formal action, any transition would need to be carefully managed to ensure legitimacy and transparency.

It was further explained that the program was previously managed by LRGVDC but was transferred to the Rio Grande Valley Partnership in or around 2010. The reason is unknown. Since that transfer occurred prior to the current administration, historical records, including meeting minutes and budgets—were also transferred, leaving no information about the program's status at the LRGVDC. However, it appears the program has not been active in recent years due to the vacant seats.

Staff proposed resuming oversight from where the program was left off and noted the alignment with existing work being done through the Region M Water Planning Group. LRGVDC staff already contribute significantly to regional water initiatives, making this a logical and complementary extension of their efforts whether the RGRWA is once again commissioned or not. ***Ron Mills made a motion to approve the Request from Mr. Jim Darling, General Manager/President of Rio Grande Regional water Authority (RGRWA) to Transfer the RGRWA, upon meeting Compliance Standards to the LRGVDC as its Fiscal Agent and Execute any Applicable Management Agreement. Mayor Ramiro Garza seconded the motion upon a vote; the motion was carried unanimously.***

No questions or comments, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza then moved on to Item 4.E Executive Report.

4.E. Executive Report Mr. Cruz stated that a legislative update, including a summary of bills that may or may not impact the Council of Governments across various departments. A status report was included as the first page of the packet for review, outlining bills that could have either positive or negative effects on the organization.

Additional pages with detailed legislative information were also provided. The Executive Director noted that a more in-depth overview would be given by Mr. Javier Dominguez, who has conducted further analysis, particularly on legislation related to annexation and local government debt.

It was mentioned that the legislative session has been progressing slowly, with efforts underway to revive or advance several bills through amendments. Mr. Javier Dominguez provided a detailed overview of the legislative tracking report included in the meeting packet. The report contains nearly 70 bills, with a focus on legislation related to municipal debt accumulation and annexation authority. Bills were reviewed using targeted keyword searches to identify relevant impacts to local governments.

A color-coded system was used to categorize the bills:

- **Light green** indicates bills that have passed their respective House or Senate committees but have not yet been sent to the Governor for signature.

Mr. Javi Dominguez emphasized that, as of the latest update (last Thursday), only **one bill** had been sent to the Governor for signature—pertaining to the dissolution of a hospital district in Cedar Creek, which has no impact on the Rio Grande Valley region.

He noted that while most of the tracked legislation has not advanced significantly, activity may increase in the final days of the legislative session. As such, changes are still possible.

An updated link to the full legislative packet was provided, including bill numbers, filing dates, and current committee assignments. Mr. Javier Dominguez concluded by stating that, as of now, there are no bills directly affecting local annexation powers or debt accumulation for jurisdictions in the region, but continued monitoring is recommended.

Mr. Cruz then moved on to present all the new hires.

No questions or comments, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza then moved on to Item #5 Department Reports.

Item #5: A. Community & Economic Development: Melisa Gonzalez had no Action items on the agenda for her department.

Status Reports: Mrs. Gonzales shared a few announcements. **Economic Development Administration Committee (EDAC):** It was noted that the upcoming EDAC meeting originally scheduled for June 10, 2025, has been rescheduled to June 17, 2025. This correction is reflected in the updated report. Currently, there are two vacancies on the EDAC for special Economic Development Organizations (EDOs). Staff have reached out to members for assistance in identifying potential candidates. Members are encouraged to recommend EDO representatives from their communities. Interested individuals will be provided with an application for consideration.

Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC): There is one vacancy on the SWAC for a private citizen representative. Nominations are now being accepted. The selected nominee will be presented at the September SWAC meeting for approval, after which the recommendation will be brought before the Board.

Region N Water Plan: Region N is currently in the process of updating its water plan. Public comments will be accepted through July 22, 2025. Members are encouraged to review the plan and provide input. While the document is lengthy (approximately 900 pages), summaries and key sections are available for easier review.

Road to Recycling Program: Staff are still compiling final numbers for the Road to Recycling event. An additional contribution came from the Cameron County Irrigation District, which requested assistance with tire disposal following a hurricane cleanup. With approval from TCEQ, these tires will be included in the final count. Updated figures will be provided at the August Board meeting, as there is no regular meeting scheduled for June.

No further questions or comments, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to B. Health and Human Services.

B. Health & Human Services: Margarita Lopez had 2 Action Items on the agenda.

Ms. Margarita Lopez just wanted to express sincere gratitude to the Board and stakeholders for their continued support, highlighting the numerous phone calls and over 500 letters of support received. These letters are ready to be distributed to each district representative. Board members were provided with a packet for reference.

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve the Letter of Support on behalf of the LRGVDC Board of Directors for Congressional offices addressing the proposed FY 2026 Federal Budget impacts to Older Americans Act programs. This action item originates from a request made by the LRGVDC Board of Directors during last month's meeting. The Board requested the development of a formal letter of support to be sent to congressional offices, advocating against proposed federal budget cuts for Fiscal Year 2026 that would impact programs under the Older Americans Act, Medicaid, Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), and Adult Protective Services. An updated packet was provided to Board members, which includes previously shared information as well as additional data requested at the prior meeting. A draft of the proposed letter is included in the packet and is now presented for the Board's consideration and approval. ***Jim Darling made a motion to approve the Letter of Support on behalf of the LRGVDC Board of Directors for Congressional Offices addressing the proposed FY 2026 Federal Budget impacts to Older Americans Act Programs. Commissioner Ellie Torres seconded the motion, upon a vote; the motion was carried unanimously.***

Jim Darling states that it was noted that the House of Representatives has approved its version of the Fiscal Year 2026 federal budget. The budget proposal is now under consideration in the Senate. Further updates will be provided as the legislative process progresses.

Ms. Lopez then responds with It was noted that some changes to Medicaid have been made, but final information on other related programs is still pending. Further updates will be provided as additional details become available. Mr. Cruz mentioned that they noted that efforts have been made to ensure alignment with national messaging. Margarita and staff collaborated to ensure that all communications, including the drafted letter, reflect the same messaging and cadence as national associations, such as US Aging and NADO affiliates. This alignment ensures consistency, credibility, and reinforces the collective advocacy effort, especially regarding the significant impact on senior citizens.

Status Reports: Ms. Margarita Lopez mentioned Staff provided clarification that while a general draft letter was included, **four personalized letters**—each addressed to an individual district representative—will be prepared and distributed accordingly.

Executive Report and Supporting Documents

Board members were directed to the **Executive Report** included in the meeting packet, which contains updated data presented at the previous meeting. The report outlines the **number of individuals served over the past five years**, organized by county and city. This data is provided for board members' reference and can be used to support ongoing advocacy efforts for senior services in the region.

The packet also includes:

- **Confidential testimonials** from the Ombudsman Program
- **Examples of letters of support** received from the community, including from participants in the **WellMed community**
- **Photographs and community input** from across the tri-county service area

Federal Advocacy Update

Staff shared that they are awaiting scheduling confirmation from Congressman Gonzalez's Team to arrange a **virtual meeting with the Washington delegation**, where they plan to brief them on the current issues and provide updates.

Funding and Carryover Update

Staff reported the following funding figures:

- **FY 2024 Carryover:** \$3,567,004
- **FY 2025 Award:** \$10,619,257
- **20% Hold (Pending Spending Authorization):** \$1,239,379

While the **full FY 2025 allocation has been received**, the 20% portion remains **unavailable for use pending federal authorization**. Despite the delay, staff expressed no concern over spending timelines, as they currently have:

- Approximately **540 individuals awaiting service approval**
- An additional **120–200 individuals on a waitlist** pending intake

Once authorization is granted, funds will be utilized promptly to serve eligible individuals. If delays persist, the **unspent amount will roll over into FY 2026**. Staff expressed hope that the organization will continue to serve as the **Area Agency on Aging** in 2026 to ensure continuity of services.

Ms. Veronica Gonzalez stated, it was noted that several testimonials included in the packet referenced dementia. A recent bill, Senate Bill 5 (SB5), has passed and been sent to the governor for approval. This legislation establishes the Dementia Research and Treatment (DRT) initiative, modeled after the Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas.

The initiative will allocate \$3 billion over 10 years to support dementia care and research. Voters will have the opportunity to approve this funding in the upcoming November ballot.

Additionally, it was shared that the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) Institute of Neuroscience in Harlingen offers research and clinical care services for individuals affected by dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Board members and staff were encouraged to utilize this local resource for referrals and support as needed. Margarita then mentioned that in continuation of the dementia-related initiatives, it was reported that US Aging has conducted interviews with staff, including Letty Gonzalez from the WellMed Charity Foundation, which provides care for older adults in our community.

It was noted that due to the Valley's high incidence rates of dementia and Alzheimer's, our region is being considered as a candidate to receive a pilot grant. Early conversations at the national level have already begun, and there is optimism about being selected for this funding.

The team looks forward to continuing to serve the community through this opportunity, in whatever capacity it may take.

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

C. Public Safety: Criminal Justice & Homeland Security. Mr. Cesar Merla was recognized and mentioned that he had no action items on the agenda.

Status Reports: Mr. Cesar Merla provided an overview of upcoming trainings:

- **Law Enforcement De-escalation Training:** Scheduled for June 20 and June 26, this one-day, 8-hour TCOLE-approved training will be held locally and marks the start of the summer training series.
- **Active Shooter Response Training:** A three-day training from August 12 to 14 at the KNAPP Conference Center in Weslaco. This important training is open to the public, free of charge, and all jurisdictions are encouraged to send police, fire, EMS personnel, and leadership to attend. It is one of the first of its kind in the Valley in recent years.
- **Listo RGV Conference:** Scheduled for September 24–26, registration is currently \$100. The goal is to make the conference free to attendees next year by increasing sponsorships and fundraising efforts.

Additional updates included:

- The region has responded effectively to recent flooding events in March, with focus now shifting to long-term recovery, which involves fire, EMS, law enforcement, mental health, and legal sectors.
- Volunteer training sessions will be held June 4–6 in collaboration with the Texas Division of Emergency Management. These sessions prepare volunteers for disaster response, covering volunteer organization setup and donation management. Ms. Leslie Sanchez-Seaton is the training coordinator.

- Disaster Recovery Centers are currently open to assist those affected by the March flooding in the region:
 - Cameron County: 701 Harlingen Heights, Harlingen, Texas
 - Hidalgo County: 255 S Kansas Ave, Weslaco Texas
 - Starr County: 100 N FM 3167, Rio Grande City Texas 78582
 - Willacy County: Sebastian Community Resource Center @ 434 W 8th St Sebastian, Texas
Centers operate from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., sometimes longer, and residents and businesses affected by flooding are encouraged to visit.

No further questions or comments Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to LRGV Police Academy.

Mr. Javier Solis started off with the first action item on the agenda for his department.

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve an MOU between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and the County of Hidalgo County Constable Precinct 4 Office to the Lower Rio Grande Valley Academy. ***Commissioner Ellie Torres made a motion to approve the MOU between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and the County of Hidalgo County Constable Precinct 4 Office to the Lower Rio Grande Valley Academy; Mayor Ramiro Garza seconded the motion upon a vote; the motion was carried unanimously.***

2. Consideration and ACTION to approve an MOU between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and the County of Hidalgo, Texas to accept the transfer of two 2016 Dodge Ram Police vehicles from the Hidalgo County Constable Precinct 4 Office to the Lower Rio Grande Valley Academy. ***Commissioner Ellie Torres made a motion to approve an MOU between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and the County of Hidalgo, Texas to accept the transfer of two 2016 Dodge Ram Police vehicles from the Hidalgo County Constable Precinct 4 Office to the Lower Rio Grande Valley Academy. Mayor Ramiro Garza seconded the motion upon a vote; the motion was carried unanimously.***

Status Reports: The report began with updates from the regional police academies:

- **Mission 228th Academy** completed emergency vehicle training on May 9, 2025, and has entered its final month of instruction. Firearms training is currently underway. Graduation is scheduled for **July 11**.
- **Weslaco 229th LRGV Academy** completed traffic enforcement and Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST) training. Cadets are now certified in the National Traffic Incident Management System and will begin Use of Force training. Graduation is set for **October 2025**.
- **Rio Grande City 230th LRGV Academy** is in its second month of training and has completed modules on the Texas Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, and Arrest, Search, and Seizure. They will now begin training on the Texas Traffic Code.

During **May**, in-service training was scaled back to allow staff to prepare for upcoming conferences and events. Only **one in-service course** was held, training **12 officers** over **16 hours**, resulting in **192 total contact hours**.

Staff are actively preparing for the following major upcoming events:

- **2025 Liso RGV Conference**
- **2025 RGV 911 District Wellness Seminar**
- **2nd Annual Cameron County–Willacy County Child Advocacy Centers Conference**

Major Training Announcement:

The Texas Narcotic Officers Association, in collaboration with the National Narcotic Detector Dog Association (NNDDA), will host the **first-ever fentanyl detection training for police K-9 units in the Rio Grande Valley**. This three-day course will be held **August 16–18 in Brownsville, Texas**, and will include the use of **real fentanyl samples** for imprinting detection dogs. The training will also provide the best practices and safety protocols. Currently, no K-9 units in the Valley have access to this level of fentanyl-specific training. The course will be **offered at no cost** and is open to **all local law enforcement and school district K-9 teams**. Departments are encouraged to participate.

Special Recognition:

Mr. Roland Pérez, Master Instructor for the LRGVDC Police Academy, was recognized for his accomplishments and service:

- Mr. Pérez was a member of the **1977 Edinburg High School Bobcat Boys Cross Country Team**, which won the **first-ever state championship title** for Edinburg in cross-country.
- He later served as a **police officer** and as a **combat veteran** in the United States Army, where he earned **two Purple Hearts** for injuries sustained during multiple deployments in Iraq.
- After a distinguished 40-year career in law enforcement, he continues to train and mentor police cadets throughout the region.
- In recognition of his legacy, Mr. Pérez will be **inducted into the Rio Grande Valley Sports Hall of Fame** on **June 28** as part of the historic 1977 cross-country team.

A small token of appreciation was presented to Mr. Pérez by the board, with special acknowledgment from Mayor Ramiro Garza and Mr. Manuel Cruz.

No questions or comments, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza proceeded to Item C.3 RGV – 911 District.

Status Reports: Mr. Dennis Moreno Mentioned that it has reported an increase in both page views and address submittals through the regional portal. Cities and counties are encouraged to utilize this portal, particularly when new subdivisions are submitted and approved by their respective boards. The portal allows for timely updates to address points, which directly support the accuracy of 911 mapping services.

Planning departments across the region have been actively coordinating with the GIS team to ensure data remains current. Additionally, for residents outside city limits, the division is offering free address plates. These can be requested through the same portal and are currently available in Hidalgo and Willacy Counties only. Staff remain available by phone for assistance, but the online platform provides a convenient and efficient option for address updates and services.

No further questions or comments from the board, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Item D Valley Metro.

D. Transportation Valley Metro: Mr. Tom Logan states that today he will have 1 action item on the agenda.

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve the revised LRGVDC Regional Transit Service Department's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy. Revisions have been made in accordance with the Executive Order to align with current Federal definition and requirements. ***Jim Darling made a motion to approve the revised LRGVDC Regional Transit Service Department's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy. Revisions have been made in accordance with the Executive Order to align with current Federal definition and requirements. Commissioner Ellie Torres seconded the motion upon a vote; the motion was carried unanimously.***

Status Reports: Mr. Tom Logan states that Valley Metros' status reports are in the package for their review and if they have any questions feel free to give him a call.

No further Questions or comments, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza then moved to Rio Grande Valley MPO.

Status Reports: A quarterly update was provided on the activities of the RGV Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Board. The key item discussed was the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) revision, which is the state's short-range transportation plan. The process includes a 30-day public comment period, presentation to the MPO Policy Board for formal approval, and subsequent review and action by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Final approval is subject to acceptance by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Additionally, it was announced that the RGV MPO successfully completed a federal review conducted by FHWA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in late 2024. The certification was granted, ensuring continued funding flow for transportation initiatives.

An update was also provided on the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Action Plan, which serves as a guiding tool for all jurisdictions within the MPO's region. The plan supports the identification and nomination of safety-related projects, which may now be eligible for flexible federal funding. The MPO Policy Board is scheduled to meet later in the day to discuss potential project funding opportunities under this plan.

Stakeholders were encouraged to review the plan, submit nominations, or attend the MPO meeting to participate in the ongoing planning process. For further information, contact was encouraged through the MPO office.

Item #6: New & Unfinished Business: Lastly Mr. Cruz added congratulations to the new members that are joining the board of directors as the 27 members. Attendees were encouraged to reach out with any questions regarding the board's processes or documentation. Staff offered to provide business cards after the meeting and committed to sharing relevant materials via email, including information on board responsibilities, bylaws, and procedures, to help ensure a smooth and informed meeting experience.

Ms. Ann Cass made a request for the Board to consider sending letters of condolence to *the Affordable Homes of South Texas* and to the organization formerly coordinated by *Nedrick Kinnick*, both of whom recently lost key leaders. She noted the significant contributions of these individuals in advancing affordable housing and civic education in the Rio Grande Valley.

Ms. Cass also highlighted concerns raised during a recent emergency management workshop regarding anticipated funding cuts to key nonprofit organizations—impacting services such as Medicaid, the food bank, and affordable housing. She emphasized the urgent need for increased support from the private sector and urged the Council of Governments (COG) to take a more active role in encouraging public and private donors to step up during times of need. She stressed that while nonprofit agencies often carry much of the response burden, especially in disasters, private sector engagement remains limited. She called for proactive support to ensure these essential services can continue.

With no further questions or concerns, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Item #7.

Item #7: Adjourn: There being no further business to come before the board, Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza made a motion to adjourn at 1:15pm


President, Norie Gonzalez Garza

ATTEST:


Liza Alfaro, Recording Secretary