

# MINUTES

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

12:00PM WEDNESDAY, October 25, 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 Jim Darling

- DRAFT -

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

**Present:** Mr. Jim Darling

Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza, City of Mission  
Commissioner Ernesto "Ernie" Garcia, Willacy County  
Mayor John Cowen, City of Brownsville  
Commissioner David Garza, Cameron County  
Velinda Reyes, Hidalgo County  
Councilman Johnny Garcia, City of Edinburg  
Omar Quintanilla, City of McAllen  
Armando Garcia, City of Mercedes  
Commissioner Edward Gonzales City of Raymondville  
Mayor Ricardo Rick Guerra City of San Benito  
Ms. Veronica Gonzales, UT Rio Grande Valley  
Mr. Paul Hernandez, South Texas College  
Mr. Troy Allen, Delta Lake ID  
Ms. Ann Williams Cass, Member at Large  
Ms. Lupita Sanchez Martinez, Grass Roots ORG

**Absent:**

Mayor David Suarez, City of Weslaco  
Mayor Norma Sepulveda, City of Harlingen  
Commissioner 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 Indio's  
Mayor Ambrosio "Amos" Hernandez, City of Pharr  
Commissioner Marco "Markie" Villegas, City of San Juan  
Ms. Cledia Hernandez, TSTC  
Mr. Ronald Mills, Willacy Co. Nav Dist.  
Mr. Eleazar Garcia Jr, Member at Large

President Jim Darling moved to item # 2. Consideration and Action to Approve Meeting Minutes (September 27, 2023). *Troy Allen motioned to approve the presented minutes from September 27, 2023. Ms. Norie Gonzalez Garza seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously upon a vote.*

President Jim Darling next moved to Item # 3 Public Comment, there being none, he moved to item # 4.

#### **Item #4. Administration**

- A. Consideration and Action to Adopt Annual Investment Policy and Accept Quarterly Investment Report/Policy. Presented by Crystal Balboa, Finance Director, both the Policy and Report were presented in packet given to the members for review. With no further comment or questions, it was up for approval by Board Members. *Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve the Annual Investment Policy and Report. Troy Allen seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.*

Consideration and Action to Approve the LRGVDC to Request Proposals from Financial Institutions for Line of Credit and Executive Director to Execute Competitive Proposal for Future Acquisition of Real Property, Construction Sites and Administration Operations. Mr. Cruz explained that as the LRGVDC keeps expanding its operations within Willacy, Cameron, and Hidalgo Counties, a line of credit would greatly benefit the LRGVDC for the purpose of its operations. A line of credit provides the LRGVDC with a flexible solution to cover short-term cash-flow gaps whenever we are faced with unexpected challenges and hardships. Operations won't have to be paused, invoices to vendors are paid, and the lights continue to stay on. This opportunity would also build business credit and as the LRGVDC's credit score improves, we would potentially access more funding opportunities and better financing terms, other alternatives that would benefit the LRGVDC, and this would be an effective way to build a relationship with lenders. Jim Darling had a question, he asked under the City Law it's like a loan, you must have an interest in sinking fund, so how do you establish or is that the same requirement for a Council of Governments? If so, how do we establish the Sinking Fund or Guarantee that? Mr. Cruz then went on to explain to everyone that most of the funds are reimbursed by all the funding agencies. Mr. Cruz stated that they do have some local funds, which are membership contributions from Local Governments that participate in the LRGVDC. Any fees associated with these loans will be researched to make sure that the funding agency will allow it and when we request a line of credit it would be strictly for the programs that might need advance funds for operational/project costs. Mr. Cruz also explained that from time to time, state and federal agencies' seasonal downturns and delayed reimbursements have led to cash flow issues, which in turn impedes LRGVDC day to day business operations. Commissioner Garza stated that this would be a good idea due to not having a meeting in November and getting started on this ASAP.

*Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve Request Proposals from Financial Institutions for Line of Credit and Executive Director to execute Competitive Proposal for Future Acquisition of Real Property, Construction Projects, and Administrative Operations Norie seconded the motion, and upon vote the motion was carried unanimously.*

#### **B. Executive Report**

1. Mr. Cruz mentioned to the board that up next, was Staff Recognition for Years of service. Mr. Cruz asked Mr. Darling to step up to the Podium to take pictures with staff. They presented employees from 5-25 years of service with the LRGVDC.
2. Following was Staff Recognition Mr. Cruz then Introduced all New Staff Members.
3. There were no updates on Regional News, Funding Opportunities, Training or Legislation. But Mr. Cruz let everyone know that with the election coming up he mentioned Proposition 8. This is regarding the Texas Broadband Infrastructure Fund. This would be about \$1.5 billion that would be allocated to expand Internet availability in Texas. Currently, 7 million or more homes lack access. Also, a portion of money is being used to upgrade 911 systems throughout the State of Texas. He mentioned that there were currently 14 propositions out there and asked for everyone's support for prop 8.

Mr. Cruz Concluded his report and handed it over to other directors and gave them opportunity to present their action items and reports for their programs.

Without questions from the board, Mr. Jim Darling moved to Item # 5 Department Reports.

#### **Item #5: Department Reports**

#### **A. Community & Economic Development**

1. Consideration and Action to Approve Texas Commission on Environmental. Quality (TCEQ) Resolution for the FY 2024/2025 Regional Solid Waste Grants Program application. The LRGVDC shall submit the Signed resolution with the LRGVDC COG Application. Mrs. Melisa Gonzales states that this resolution is required as part of the application submittal to TCEQ, she asks the board if there are no further questions. Jim Darling then asked if this proposal for solid waste part of Solid Waste in underserved areas was. Melisa then stated it would be an addition to it. Mrs. Gonzales states that the RFP's will not open till January. This year they decided to increase it from 25-30,000 and that they will be giving out 4 awards, 2 per year. *Troy Allen made a motion to approve The Texas Commission on Environmental. Quality (TCEQ) Resolution for the FY 2024/2025 Regional Solid Waste Grants Program application. Mayor Rick Guerra seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.*
2. Consideration and Action to Approve Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) member. Mrs. Gonzales informed the board that Mr. Alan Williams who is now with Region One Education Service Center has stepped up to fill the Environmental vacancy. Melisa mentioned that once they get Mr. Alan on board, they will have 2 vacancies available, 1 for small cities and for the educational seat. Mrs. Gonzales will reach out to them and get these positions filled ASAP and will present them to the board for approval. Commissioner David Garza asked if Mr. Alan will qualify as Education Member, Mrs. Gonzales then replies with Yes but since he is an environmentalist, they would prefer him to stay as their environmental vacancy. During the discussion Commissioner David Garza would like Mr. Alan Williams to fill the Education and they will later find one for Environmental. *The Commissioner David Garza made motion to approve Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) Education member. Norie Gonzalez seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.*

#### Program Status Reports

Mrs. Melisa Gonzales announced to the board that The Partnership with UTRGV had submitted the RGV recompetete plan for funding. Mrs. Gonzales went on to the 2<sup>nd</sup> announcement. On Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Ken Jones Board Room they will be hosting the Texas Department of Agricultural Award Ceremony. She mentioned that the awards were for CDBG Cities, there will be about 7 communities that will be getting an award and have been asked to come in. Mrs. Gonzales extended the invitation to the board for whoever would like to attend.

Without questions from the board Mr. Jim Darling moved to Item B, Health and Human Services

#### **Health and Human Services**

Consideration and Action to Approve the Area Agency on Aging Citizens Advisory Council Rules of Function. Ms. Lopez explains to the board that the Document was revised to meet the goals and objectives set forth by the Area Agency on Aging Policies and Procedures relating to its citizens advisory committee. The Older Americans Act (OAA) and the Area Plan. *Troy Allen made motion to approve The Area Agency on Aging Citizens Advisory Council Rules of Function. Mayor Rick Guerra seconded the motion, upon vote the motion was carried unanimously.*

Consideration and Action to Approve the New Officers to the Citizens Advisory Council. Ms. Lopez announced that the Citizen Advisory Council members were present at the October 10, 2023, meeting and elected new officers: Ms. Connie Garza as Chairperson and Ms. Kendra Stein as Vice Chairperson Ms. Garza has been a member of the Council since February 2018 representing Hidalgo County. Both officers bring to the table leadership, experience, and commitment to serving the community. The newly elected officers will serve a one-year term. ***Commissioner Ernie Garcia made a motion to Approve the New Officers to the Citizens Advisory Council. Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza seconded the motion, upon vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

#### Program Status Reports

Ms. Lopez mentioned that all her quarterly reports were attached to the board packet and if anyone had any further questions, she would gladly answer them. Ms. Lopez announced two major events coming up this month, 1st on November 16, 2023. The Second Annual Vet Fest is happening in Brownsville Texas. She mentions that she truly is humbled for all the support they have been receiving for this event. Tom Hushen from Cameron County Emergency Management as well as Brownsville Emergency Management Team and Hector Martinez from Brownsville Fire Department have really gone above and beyond to help. Gives a huge thank you to the Public Health Department, and Cameron County Department of Veterans from the Veterans Center in Brownsville. Department of Veterans Affairs, Suicide Prevention Department of Veterans Caregiver, Support, females unite, and the list goes on she mentions. The second announcement is for Save the Date tentative for November 30<sup>th</sup> in Celebration of Veterans Appreciation Celebration that will be held in Harlingen at the Harlingen Convention Center.

#### Public Safety

#### Criminal Justice and Homeland Security

1. Consideration and Action to Approve the Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) Recommendation of Appointment of Parliamentarian, Mrs. Odee Leal, EMC from Brownsville, Texas. Mr. Cesar Merla started off by thanking Ms. Lopez and Vanessa Salinas from the HHS Dept. for all that they have done for the Veterans in the community and surrounding areas. Mr. Merla then proceeded with his action item. Mr. Merla stated that The HSAC convened on October 5, 2023, to consider the appointment of Mrs. Odee Leal, the City of Brownsville Emergency Management Coordinator, as Parliamentarian for the committee, and therefore this recommendation requires Board Approval. ***Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza made a motion to approve the Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) Recommendation of Appointment of Parliamentarian Odee Leal, EMC from Brownsville Texas. Mr. Troy Allen Seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.***
2. Consideration and Action to approve the Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) Recommendation on the current Homeland Security Advisory Committee Members for FY 2024. Mr. Merla further explained that the HSAC convened on October 5, 2023, to discuss and approve the current membership roster along with all current and elected members for 2024. This recommendation requires board approval as well. ***Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza made a motion to approve the Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) Recommendation on approval of the current Homeland Security Advisory Committee Members for FY 2024, Mr. Troy Allen Seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***

#### Program Status Report

#### Criminal Justice Program

Mr. Merla explained to the board that the Criminal Justice Staff attended the UTRGV Vaqueros Stand up against Domestic Violence on October 4, 2023 in Edinburg Texas. And that the staff also hosted the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee on Oct. 11, 23 at the Ken Jones Board Room.

## Homeland Security Program

Mr. Merla showed the board the list of all the Homeland Security Advisory Committee for FY 2024 which he mentioned was in the packet provided to the board. He summarized all the events that staff from Homeland Security attended. They are as follows: Our staff attended the City of Weslaco Fire Department Ribbon Cutting on the Firehouse on September 27<sup>th</sup> in Weslaco, attended webinar Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC) eLearning Grant Ethics on October 4, 2023. They also hosted the Homeland Security Advisory Committee meeting on October 5, 2023, at the Ken Jones Board room. They attended the webinar for School Safety Audits: Accessing and Enhancing your Campus Security on October 11, 2023. Virtual the Homeland Security Grant Division (HSGD) Regional Conference call on October 12, 2023. The Willacy County National Night out 2023 in the cities of Sebastian, San Perlita and Lasara Tx, On October 17-19, 2023. Attended the Cameron County Sheriff Office Trick or Treat Festival at Bass Pro Shop in Harlingen, TX on October 26, 2023. Staff also hosted the RGV Emergency Training Alliance Board Meeting on October 26, 2023, at the Ken Jones Board Room.

With no further updates to Homeland Security, Mr. Cruz then moved on to the Regional Police Academy.

## Regional Police Academy

3. Consideration and Action to Approve revisions to the BPOC Rules Handbook, The Lower Rio Grande Valley Academy Basic Peace Officer Course Handbook (BPOC) is provided to all the cadets entering the Academy. This document provides the rules, policies and procedures providing the overall qualifications, grading procedures, entrance requirements, etc. This document is a TCOLE compliance requirement. The revisions in this document are highlighted in yellow and gray to showcase new or revised language. Mr. Cruz then explained that the BPOC handbook will be available to all cadets. He mentioned a notable change, that in the past they had a Makeup Assignment Policy, explained that by TCOLE rules and regulations that does not exist anymore and was removed. As a cadet, qualifying to be a Peace officer, all must attend the full course. This is the most significant item that we did clarification based on TCOLE. ***Commissioner Rick Guerra made a motion to approve revisions to the BPOC Rules Handbook. Troy Allen Seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.***
4. Consideration and Action to approve revisions to Interlocal Agreement for Cooperative Extension Services for LRGV Academy Site(s). The Interlocal Agreement for Extension services for Academy site(s) was last updated in FY 2019. This ILA is an agreement between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and the local law enforcement agency as an Academy Site. As a result, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Academy requests approval for the revisions in the ILA, to address the number of cadets per class, compliance requirements through TCOLE, determine minimum and Maximum enrollment class size, and other details. The changes are noted in yellow and to the right side of the document. Mr. Cruz states that they are going to execute the revised ILA with local agreements that they currently have partnership with, then explains for example the following City of Mission and Edinburg Police Depts, future expansion if need into Cameron County Area possibly Harlingen. He then summarized that this did go before the advisory committee, there were only minor additions, such as clarification on the roles or responsibilities for both entities, the actual PD and the LRGV Academy. Jim Darling asked Mr. Cruz if these changes will need to be approved by whoever enters in to an agreement with us and for us to provide the service or date request to be approved by city commission with the LRGVDC, answer was yes. ***Commissioner Rick Guerra made motion to approve Revisions to Interlocal Agreement for Extension Services for LRGV Academy. Troy Allen seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

## Program Status Reports

Mr. Cruz states that the TCOLE conference is going on this week, and he had the opportunity to attend Monday and Tuesday.

With no further updates for the Regional Police Academy, they then moved on to Rio Grande Valley Communication District. Mr. Dennis Moreno

## **Rio Grande Valley Emergency Communication District**

### **Program Status Report**

#### **GIS Division**

Mr. Dennis Moreno started off by providing a status report for as follows: The GIS Data Hub is now our primary website and can be found at [www.rgv911.org](http://www.rgv911.org). The GIS team has uploaded several informational maps that other public entities, and the public can readily download. This data has streamlined our general information request process. We have created an Emergency Response map that will aid our local 9-1-1 call responding Fire Departments and EMS agencies to respond using 9-1-1 address data. We will do the same for local Police departments that do not host a PSAP in the RGV9-1-1 District. In August team members Jacob and Monica took a Managing Geospatial Data class to learn intermediate level ArcGIS data management.

In early September we submitted Location Based Routing (LBR) request to Verizon Wireless. This new technology will begin the process of switching from traditional Cell phone tower routing to LBR routing. LBR routing is achieved by activating a service that will force the cellphone to turn on GPS services and automatically send location data with the call. It is a vital service as it will make it, so the 9-1-1 system knows exactly what PSAP to send the call to instead of first sending the call to the PSAP that is assigned to the tower. It significantly reduces the need for transfer of 9-1-1 calls. As of today, Verizon is the only major carrier to start making the switch. AT&T will make the switch across the board next year, and T-Mobile has not yet defined a timeframe.

On October GIS team members Jacob and Joe worked with Weslaco Fire Captain Richard Stubbs to create a fire district map for their new Fire Station. A map can be found online in our HUB at [www.rgv911.org](http://www.rgv911.org). On October 19th – 20th Team members Monica and Jacob attended an ESRI training called Deploying and Maintaining a Multiuser Geodatabase training.

In August, the GIS team met with our ESRI account team to plan for next year's GIS activities starting on September 2023 ending August 2024. Below is our Geospatial Strategic plan.

#### **Community Engagement Division**

Mr. Moreno then informed the board that the report is an all-encompassing summary of the community engagement endeavors undertaken in September 2023. It provides an intricate depiction of our interactions and projects designed to foster connections with the local community during this specific timeframe.

Award Special Delivery for 911 Telecommunicators. September 22, 2023, being a 9-1-1 telecommunicator is a selfless and demanding role that often requires individuals to sacrifice precious moments with loved ones. These dedicated professionals frequently miss birthdays, holidays, and special events, where they could be celebrated for their invaluable work in emergency response. Their commitment to public safety often means putting the needs of others before their own, making their contributions more commendable and deserving of recognition. On this, we made unique visits to McAllen PD and Hidalgo PD to personally deliver awards to the dedicated 9-1-1 telecommunicators who couldn't attend the wellness seminar due to their essential work commitments. These gestures of appreciation highlight our gratitude for their unwavering service and the sacrifices they make to ensure the safety of our communities.

Staff attended the following events. Mission Police Department Block Party, September 22, 2023, we were delighted to sponsor the Mission Police Department by providing coloring books and crayons for a community block party. It was a great event, and we were thrilled to contribute to the enjoyment of local children. Supporting such community initiatives brings us immense joy and reinforces our commitment to promote constructive connections within our local community.

H.E.E.L.S (Helping Empower Entrepreneurial Ladies to Succeed) September 26, 2023, The RGV9-1-1 Community Engagement Department participated in the HEELS luncheon hosted by the Raymondville Chamber of Commerce. This event celebrated women's leadership and their significant roles in various fields. It provided an excellent networking platform and highlighted women leaders' contributions to the community.

Weslaco Police Department National Night Out September 30, 2023. It was a fantastic experience, and we genuinely appreciated the opportunity to participate. The turnout was incredible, and we were thrilled to engage in meaningful conversations and share valuable insights about 9-1-1 services with the community. The positive response and enthusiasm from the attendees were heartwarming, reaffirming the importance of such outreach efforts. We look forward to future collaborations and the chance to continue educating and connecting with our community.

With No further updates on Rio Grande Valley Emergency District they then moved on to Valley Metro. With Mr. Tom Logan.

### **Transportation Valley Metro**

#### **Program Status Report** Ridership Report:

Tom Logan started off by providing the BOD with the following, Valley Metro provides regional transportation service of both **Rural** and **Urban** transit systems in the five-county region of the Rio Grande Valley. The **Urban System** is provided in Cameron, Hidalgo, and Starr Counties and includes UTRGV Ridership. Services run Monday – Saturday from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm. The **Rural System** operates in the rural areas of Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, Starr, and Zapata Counties. Services run Monday – Sunday from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm

#### Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP) Activity:

RTAP Sub-committee held a workshop September 26, 2023. A review of the Short/Mid/Long Term goals of 5-Year Transit Plan was discussed in detail and members provided input and suggestions on how to accomplish those needs. LRGVDC Valley Metro was awarded a TXDOT grant in the amount of \$40,000 to continue assessing and meeting the needs and gaps of the 5-year Transit Plan. The sub-committee meets bi-monthly.

Mr. Logan then ended by explaining that Valley Metro's Planning Department staff continues to hold public involvement events. The events highlight the modes of travel available to the public within their perspective city and region. We are currently working on realigning routes to incorporate the new San Juan Terminal.

With no further updates to Transportation Valley Metro. They then moved on to RGV MPO. With Mr. Canon.

### **Rio Grande Valley MPO**

#### **Program Status Report**

Mr. Canon Started off with this afternoon at the MPO meeting following this meeting, we will have a change in command. He mentioned that Mr. Fuentes from Precinct 1 will be the new Chairman for the two-year term. The board will be electing a Vice Chair from the Cameron County region, also asking the board to take action on \$9 million for one of the programs. For our hiking bike trails and non-motorized pedestrian projects that are out there. The staff has good recommendations and a lot of good applicants this year. Then he mentioned that they will talk about presenting our congestion study. Mr. Canon states that they were able to show that the return on investment throughout the region that have been done average around 40 to 1 on lights. McAllen is very aware of this with all the money that they did though your bond issuance and updating that. He summarizes that it is important to share that with the board as they talk about projects. HE states while adding capacity projects are important you never get a return on that investment. He says that it is dynamic to be able to show and or consult and share with board.

Jim Darling then closes out the meeting by telling Mr. Canon on behalf of the board thank you for your service and appreciate all you have done. Your leadership has been very important.

**Item #6 New and Unfinished Business**

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



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Mayor Norma Sepulveda

ATTEST:-



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Liza Alfaro, Recording Secretary