

**MINUTES**

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

12:00PM Wednesday February 25, 2026

HELD IN-PERSON AND BROADCAST VIA YOUTUBE VIDEO CONFERENCE.  
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 12:03 p.m. Roll Call was taken, and as of 12:09 p.m. quorum was attained.

**Present:** Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza

Commissioner Henry De La Paz, Willacy County  
Mayor Omar Ochoa, City of Edinburg  
Mayor Norma Sepulveda, City of Harlingen  
Mayor Pro Tem Pete Garcia, City of Weslaco  
Commissioner Ellie Torres, Hidalgo County  
Mayor Rosa Perez, City of La Villa  
Mayor David Moreno, City of Donna  
Mayor Sylvia Castillo, City of Sullivan City  
Commissioner Pepe Cabeza de Vaca, City of McAllen  
Commissioner Edward Gonzales, City of Raymondville  
Mayor Rick Guerra, City of San Benito  
Mr. Ron Garza, UTRGV  
Mr. Paul Hernandez, South Texas College  
Mr. Luke Lucio, TSTC  
Mr. Troy Allen, Delta Lake  
Mr. Ernesto Cavazos, Willacy Co, Navigation District  
Mr. Jim Darling, Member-at-Large  
Mr. Oscar Garcia, Member-at-Large  
Mr. Andres Chavez, Member-at-Large  
Ms. Lupita Sanchez Martinez, Grassroots Org

**Absent:**

Mayor John Cowen, City of Brownsville  
Commissioner, Joey Lopez, Cameron County  
Mayor Oscar Montoya, City of Mercedes  
Mayor Alejandro Flores, City of Los Fresnos  
Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez City of Pharr  
Commissioner Marco Villegas, City of San Juan

Another important item is upcoming funding through the Public Utility Commission. Approximately \$1.8 billion will be made available statewide for backup generator systems and related infrastructure. Cities and counties will be eligible to apply, particularly for critical infrastructure such as police and fire departments, emergency operations centers, and other essential facilities. However, this funding follows a three-pronged approach, meaning that the projects must include three systems: a generator, solar power, and battery backup system. The goal is to ensure multiple layers of redundancy so that critical infrastructure remains operational during disasters or emergencies. The resource is located at the PUC website <https://www.puc.org> and the application process is set to commence in late 2026. We will distribute more details once we receive official guidance.

Lastly, the materials provided also include information from the Texas Water Development Board outlining available financial assistance programs. These funding opportunities focus heavily on flooding mitigation and water conservation, reflecting priorities from the most recent legislative session. The information outlines eligible applicants, project types, and program requirements, so you are prepared to apply when funding becomes available.

If you have any questions about any of these items, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We are happy to assist and coordinate directly with the Texas Water Development Board or any other agencies to help clarify funding opportunities.

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

## **Item #5 Department Reports**

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

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve RGV Economic Development Advisory Committee (RGVEDAC) membership. On February 18th, we held an EDAC meeting, during which the committee approved the nomination for a Special EDO, specifically the RGV Lead. **Commissioner Ellie Torres made a motion to approve the RGV Economic Development Advisory Committee (RGVEDAC) membership. Commissioner Edward Gonzales seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**
2. Consideration and ACTION to approve Rider 7 PM 2.5 Local Air quality Planning Request for Proposal (RFP) Award to All 4 INC. **Jim Darling made a motion to approve the Rider 7 PM 2.5 Local Air Quality Planning request for Proposal (RFP) award All 4 INC. Commissioner Ellie Torres seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**

Program Status Reports - We are currently accepting nominations for the Region M Board through March 20th. At this time, we have one vacancy in the municipal category, one in the water district category, and one in the "other" category. The Board report includes full details for anyone interested in serving.

Additionally, our Solid Waste Advisory Scoring Committee meeting is scheduled for March 10th at 10:00 a.m. We have received eight applications from across the region for solid waste funding, and seven will move forward for scoring. One application was deemed ineligible due to an issue with the required resolution. We have noticed recurring confusion regarding the resolution requirements, so we may review and clarify that process for the next funding cycle. Our next RWRAC meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2026, at 2:00 p.m., and it will be held in a hybrid format.

Lastly, to follow up on the Texas Water Development Board packet that Mr. Cruz mentioned, we are coordinating with Cueta Caballero from the local office to host a webinar focused specifically on the application phase. She has offered to walk through the application page by page, as incomplete applications often do not advance to the scoring stage. We are aiming to schedule this webinar during the first week of April and are currently finalizing the date. Once confirmed, we will share the details. The session will also be hybrid to allow applicants and grant writers the opportunity to participate and ask questions directly regarding the application process.

Approval of this resolution will authorize the Development Council to apply for grants through the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) Office to enhance radio infrastructure throughout our region. As you are aware, our area continues to experience significant interference issues affecting emergency radio communications. This grant application will help address those challenges and strengthen the reliability and resilience of our emergency communications systems for years to come. **Mr. Jim Darling made a motion to approve the Resolution for Statewide emergency Infrastructure for the calendar years 2026-2028. Mayor Sylvia Castillo seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**

3. Consideration and ACTION to approve the Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) FY2026-2027 Regional Budgetary Expenditure for the FY 2026 Grant Application Cycle. As you can see, the committee selected Option 4, prioritizing \$1.1 million for our region. This represents the amount we are requesting from the state. Ultimately, the final allocation will depend on federal funding decisions made between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State of Texas. Our goal is to clearly demonstrate the region's need to strengthen public safety and security efforts. The proposed funding would support law enforcement training, Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities (LETPA), as well as our standard public safety projects. These initiatives will be moving forward over the next several months. **Mayor Omar Ochoa made a motion to approve the Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) FY 2026-2027 Regional Budgetary Expenditure for FY 2026 Grant Application Cycle. Mr. Paul Hernandez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**

Program Status Reports - Currently, the State Homeland Security Program is open and accepting applications from eligible jurisdictions. The application window will close on Thursday, March 12, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. A webinar is available on our Homeland Security webpage that outlines the application process, key deadlines, and the required two-step submission and certification process.

The final item relates to the 2026 application cycle. We are setting ambitious goals and remain hopeful that we will secure significant funding for the region. Please be aware that the turnaround time will be very short.

The Homeland Advisory Committee, along with our staff, is fully prepared to manage the application process and related requirements. Our full report is included for your review, and we will continue to serve the region to the best of our ability. I am happy to answer any questions.

Mr. Cruz went ahead and added to note that the Executive Committee of the Board may need to convene for an emergency meeting due to the grant deadline imposed by the state. As Mr. Merla mentioned, the submission deadline is in early April, anticipated to be April 4th or 5th—and prioritization list of the applications must be submitted on or before that date. Unfortunately, this timeline does not align with our regularly scheduled April Board meeting, so action will need to be taken quickly. It will be a very tight turnaround following the March 12th deadline.

Additionally, regarding the generator items, there are three eligible options for supporting critical infrastructure. Applicants may choose between solar-powered systems, natural gas generators, or diesel generators, and batteries. Each option provides flexibility depending on the facility's needs; however, there are significant upfront costs associated with these purchases. This is simply for everyone's awareness as we move forward.

### **C.1B Rio Grande Valley Emergency Communication District.**

All reports for the Rio Gande Valley Emergency Communication Districts reports are included in packet.

In addition, we are currently evaluating our routes to ensure we are maximizing the efficiency of our drivers and bus fleet, particularly as we continue to navigate driver shortages and delayed vehicle deliveries. This review also allows us to update and improve route materials for both internal staff and external stakeholders.

That concludes my report.

**Rio Grande Valley MPO** – No reports to report at this time.

Item #6 New & Unfinished Business – None at this time

Mr. Cruz added I would like to share that, for those of you who are able and interested, we encourage you to take a moment to walk along the front area. You won't need to go far—simply walking along the front of the building will allow you to see the difference in what we have planned and get a better sense of what the potential outcome may look like.

Item #7 Adjourn - Meeting was adjourned at 12:39PM

  
President Norie Gonzalez Garza

ATTEST:

  
Liza Alfaro, Recording Secretary