

**THE STATE OF TEXAS  
COUNTY OF ZAPATA**

**IN THE COMMISSIONERS COURT OF ZAPATA COUNTY, TEXAS**

Be it remembered, that on this the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of January 2023, the Commissioners Court of Zapata County, Texas convened in **REGULAR SESSION** of said Court, at the regular meeting place thereof, in the Courthouse of Zapata, Texas, with the following members of said Court, to-wit:

**PRESENT:**

Hon. Joseph Rathmell	County Judge
Paco Mendoza	Commissioner, Precinct No. 1
Pedro Morales	Commissioner, Precinct No. 2
Jose A. Solis	Commissioner, Precinct No. 3
Roberto Garza	Commissioner, Precinct No. 4
Celica A. Rodriguez	Chief Deputy County Clerk

**ABSENT:**

Mary Jayne Villarreal-Bonoan	County Clerk and Ex Officio Clerk of Commissioners Court
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**VISITORS:** Julia Presco H., Ralph Treviño, Ramon Montes, Rebecca Y. Gutierrez, Roger Miller, Jesse Rodriguez, Cynthia Covarrubias, Delia Mendoza, Nelda Barrera, Javier Zambrano, Raymundo Del Bosque, Joseph Peña, Mike Chapa, and Daniel D. Arriaga.

**WHEREUPON,** the following Orders and Proceedings were had by said Court, to-wit:

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 9:00 A.M.**

**ROLL CALL BY CELICA A. RODRIGUEZ, CHIEF DEPUTY COUNTY CLERK  
INVOCATION BY REV. ROGER MILLER, COMMISSIONERS COURT CHAPLAIN  
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Judge Rathmell stated that IBWC was here; many ranchers and land owners have government leases along Falcon Lake. IBWC is doing a review of grazing lands and they are hosting 3 meetings; they are inviting the public to attend. Meeting will take place on January 31, 2023 at 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Laredo Public Library, February 1, 2023 at 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Zapata County Museum and February 2, 2023 at 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Roma Community Center. It is important for those who have grazing leases on government lands to attend. They have received notice that there is a possibility of not being able to continue those leases. These lands are beyond the 307<sup>th</sup> elevation.

**Covid -19 Report:**

Positive cases 2,614 +7  
Probable cases 1,828 + 48  
No additional deaths

Justice of the Peace Anna Guerra submitted her activity report from January – December 2022.

Texas Parks and Wildlife	107 cases
DPS	381
Zapata County Sheriff's Office	90
Zapata Independent School District Police	6
Civil	48
TOTAL	631 A total of \$112,692.53 were collected.

Tax abatement windfarm donations of \$125,000 have come in, except for 1. Grande Garbage settlement 3 of 4 of \$100,000 has also come in.

### **ORDER APPROVING INVOICES**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Solis, to approve invoices from January 6 – January 19, 2023 in the amount of \$886,782.07 as presented by Triunfo Gonzalez.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

### **ORDER APPROVING CHECKS ISSUED**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Morales, to approve invoices from January 6 – January 19, 2023 in the amount of \$886,782.07 as requested by Hon. Romeo Salinas, County Treasurer.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

### **NO ONE PRESENT FOR THE FOLLOWING ITEM**

8. Report by Laredo Medical Center as requested by Honorable Joseph Rathmell, County Judge.

### **REPORT OF CERTIFICATE OF COURSE COMPLIANCE FOR OPEN MEETINGS ACT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT FOR COMMISSIONER PEDRO MORALES**

Commissioner Pedro Morales reported that he has completed 20.5 hours of education training and has completed the Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act course as required.

### **REPORT OF CERTIFICATE OF COURSE COMPLIANCE FOR OPEN MEETINGS ACT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT FOR COMMISSIONER ROBERTO GARZA**

Commissioner Roberto Garza reported that he has completed 20.5 hours of education training and has completed the Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act course as required.

**TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION 2022 YEAR-IN-REVIEW PRESENTATION  
AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS AGENT  
CYNTHIA COVARRUBIAS**

Mr. Jesus F. Rodriguez, AgriLife Extension Agent, presented the year-in-review for 2022. He is starting his 6<sup>th</sup> year as AgriLife Agent. Mr. Rodriguez stated that it has been a one-person office since December of last year. They are actively trying to hire a new person. Mr. Rodriguez also introduced the Better Living for Texans Extension Agent Cynthia Covarrubias. She is splitting time with Laredo and Zapata; she will oversee community gardens. She is working on a garden at Villarreal Elementary.

**PRESENTATION TO RECORD IN THE COMMISSIONERS COURT MINUTES  
THE DISTRICT CLERK'S CERTIFICATION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF  
TRIUNFO GONZALEZ, AS COUNTY AUDITOR FOR  
ZAPATA COUNTY, TEXAS**

Presentation to record in the Commissioners Court minutes the District Clerk's certification of the appointment of Triunfo Gonzalez, as County Auditor for Zapata County, Texas pursuant to Texas Local Government Code 84.003(b) and 152.031 (b) as requested by Triunfo Gonzalez, County Auditor.

**ORDER APPROVING PAYMENT TO REP & P INC. FOR WORK DONE AT  
ZAPATA COMMUNITY CENTER**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve payment of invoice in the amount of \$5,655.00, for parts and labor, to REP & P Inc. for work done at the Zapata Community Center as requested by Hon. Joe Rathmell, County Judge.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER APPROVING PAYMENT OF PAYROLL, INCLUDING BACK PAY,  
FOR OPERATION LONE STAR EMPLOYEES**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Solis, to approve the payment of payroll (including back pay) for Operation Lone Star employees up to the end of January 2023 at their OLS rate as requested by Hon. Joe Rathmell, County Judge.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER TO SELECT COMMUNITY CENTER AS PROJECT FOR  
THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE 2023-2024 TxCDBG PROGRAM**

Motion was made by Commissioner Solis, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to select the community center as the project for submission to the Texas Department of Agriculture 2023-2024 TxCDBG Program as requested by Hon. Joe Rathmell, County Judge.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER AWARDING ADMINISTRATION SERVICES TO ESSER AND COMPANY  
TO COMPLETE APPLICATION AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION  
FOR 2023-2024 TxCDBG PROGRAM**

Motion was made by Commissioner Solis, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to award administration services to Esser and Company, to complete application and project implementation

for the 2023-2024 TxCDBG Program from the Texas Department of Agriculture as requested by Hon. Joe Rathmell, County Judge.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER AWARDING ENGINEERING/ARCHITECTURAL/SURVEYING SERVICES TO PREMIER ENGINEERING TO COMPLETE APPLICATION AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION FOR 2023-2024 TxCDBG PROGRAM**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Solis, to award engineering/architectural/surveying services to Premier Engineering, to complete application and project implementation for the 2023-2024 TxCDBG Program from the Texas Department of Agriculture as requested by Hon. Joe Rathmell, County Judge.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER ESTABLISHING GUIDELINES FOR USE OF ZAPATA 4-H ARENA**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Solis, to establish guidelines for the use of the Zapata County 4-H Arena as requested by Hon. Pedro Morales, Commissioner Pct. 2.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER APPROVING TO REQUEST PROPOSALS FOR DEMOLITION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF OPEN PORCH AT ZAPATA COUNTY SHOP**

Motion was made by Commissioner Solis, seconded by Commissioner Morales, to approve demolition and reconstruction of the 60' x 100' open porch at the Zapata County Shop as requested by Hon. Roberto Garza, Commissioner Pct. 4.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER APPROVING ESTIMATE FOR CONSTRUCTION OF 1,300 LINEAR FT. OF 8 FT. FENCE AT ZAPATA COUNTY AIRPORT**

Motion was made by Commissioner Garza, seconded by Commissioner Solis, to approve estimate submitted by Refugio Garcia in the amount of \$13,176.30 for construction of 1,300 linear ft. of 8 ft. fence at the Zapata Co. Airport using grant funds as requested by Ramon Montes, Airport Manager.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER APPROVING ESTIMATE FOR CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ENTRANCE AT ZAPATA COUNTY AIRPORT**

Motion was made by Commissioner Solis, seconded by Commissioner Morales, to approve estimate submitted by Jose Romero in the amount of \$2.600 for the construction of 2 double 8 ft. gates sand one pedestrian gate at the Zapata County Airport using grant funds as requested by Ramon Montes, Airport Manager.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER APPROVING ESTIMATE FOR PAINTING OF LARGE HANGAR AT ZAPATA COUNTY AIRPORT**

Motion was made by Commissioner Solis, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve estimate submitted by Tomas Chapa in the amount of \$15,200.00, of which \$7,600.00 will be paid upfront, for the painting of the large hangar at the Zapata County Airport using Grant Funds as requested by Ramon Montes, Airport Manager.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER TO TABLE REQUEST BY TRIUNFO GONZALEZ ON PROVISION OF \$527.618 IN IGT FOR LAREDO MEDICAL CENTER FOR THE DY12 UC ADVANCE IGT DUE FEBRUARY 1, 2023**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Solis, to approve to table request by Triunfo Gonzalez on provision of \$527,618 in IGT for Laredo Medical Center for the DY12 UC Advance IGT due February 1, 2023 as requested by Triunfo Gonzalez, County Auditor.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER APPROVING PROMOTION OF BALDEMAR CANTU TO PLANT SUPERVISOR – ZAPATA OFFICE**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Morales, to approve the promotion of Baldemar Cantu to Plant Supervisor-Zapata office at \$17.93 per hour. Monies are within budget as requested by Ralph Trevino, Water Plant Director.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER APPROVING PURCHASE OF 36 LAPTOPS FOR PATROL UNITS WITH TICKET WRITERS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Morales, to approve the purchase of 36 Laptops for Patrol Units with ticket writers from Peacemaker Technologies for \$248,427.00 from Operation Lone Star grant as requested by Joe Peña, Sheriff's Office.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER APPROVING TRANSFER OF \$25,000 FROM TOBACCO FUND TO MEDICAL SUPPLIES**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Morales, to approve a transfer of \$25,000 from Tobacco Fund Line Item 67-800-352 to Medical Supplies line-item 10-543-460 as requested by Chief Daniel Arriaga, Fire Chief.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER APPROVING FINAL PLAT FOR CARLA STREET**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Solis, to approve final plat for Carla Street as requested by Manuel Gonzalez, Premier Engineering.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER APPROVING ADDITIONAL \$10,000 FOR SUPPLIES FOR SEWER AND WATER CONNECTIONS AND STATUS REPORT ON CARDINAL AND CRANE STREET CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Garza, seconded by Commissioner Solis, to approve additional \$10,000 for supplies for sewer and water connections as requested by Manuel Gonzalez, Premier Engineering.

Mr. Gonzalez reported on Cardinal and Crane construction progress. They are working on moving existing 2” line and going to 4”. Brought cost estimate from contractor used in 2019 when they worked on Pelican and Raven Streets. Contractor agreed to do labor at the same cost. But materials almost doubled. Estimate from supplier that provides materials to the county came in at \$25,000 for everything. Mr. Gonzalez told him to bring pipe and services and they probably have valves at the shop that can be used. This brought the cost closest to the budgeted materials in the amount of \$10,000.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**REVIEW OF EOC PLANS**

Mr. Manuel Gonzalez reviewed EOC plans and stated that he brought a set of plans and met with Fire Chief Arriaga and his staff to get a clear understanding of how the building will be utilized. The main use of the building is for Sheriff’s Office dispatch to take in calls from that location; they will also have offices there. The Fire Department will not have staff permanently stationed there because they are going to get upgrades to the fire station. There will be a conference room to have press conferences and meetings during emergency situations. There is a private meeting room for the judge, sheriff, fire department and any other personnel. There is a larger room for disseminating information to the public. The judge asked if there was going to be a siren to alert the people of emergencies. Mr. Gonzalez stated that one could be installed at the top of the building. They will also be moving the Sheriff’s Office antenna to that location. They will be adding showers, lockers, and sleeping quarters. There will be a training room and a break room. Dispatch area has 3 control stations and offices for Chief and Sheriff’s Office. Mr. Gonzalez will be sending off plan for ADA approval and agency approval for notice to proceed. A wall will be dividing the clinic from the new area; there will be no interconnecting between the 2 areas. A new façade will also be added plus a new roof and A/C unit. Also, a back generator for first responders.

Judge Rathmell asked about the reimbursement and stated that it should be a priority as the county cannot carry a 1.3M project. Mr. Gonzalez stated that he would visit with FEMA in terms of reimbursement.

**REVIEW OF CDBG DRAINAGE PLAN AND SPECS**

Mr. Gonzalez reviewed the CDBG Drainage plans and specs and stated that it is a CDBG Colonia Drainage Plan. He added that an archeologist is coming in to do a study on the creek to see if there are any significant findings. The majority is part of a flooded subdivision where the Medina area is considered 5<sup>th</sup> street going South. Additional easements had to be attained; easements will not be filed until they get cleared on archeological findings. Plans are going up for bids as soon as he gets the okay.

**REVIEW OF ZAPATA COUNTY BOAT RAMP PLANS**

Mr. Manuel Gonzalez reviewed the Zapata County Boat Ramp plans and stated that they have looked at restroom facilities that are being added and for water and sewer to be added they are looking at the elevation and the restrooms will have to be higher. An ADA accessible ramp will be installed. He stated that they want restrooms as close as possible to the parking lot. Mr. Gonzalez handed the plans to the court. Judge Rathmell stated for the public that there will be an additional boat ramp on the West side/North side of the paved area. We will also have additional restrooms, additional docks, a filleting station, and more lighting.

**ORDER APPROVING USE OF COMMUNITY CENTER FOR WINTER TEXANS APPRECIATION DAY**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Solis, to approve the use of the Zapata Community Center for the Winter Texans Appreciation Day on February 23, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. as requested by Karran Westerman, Zapata County News.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

Commissioner Mendoza rescinded his motion due to conflict of interest. Motion was made by Commissioner Solis, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve the use of the Zapata County Community Center for the Winter Texan Appreciation Day on February 23, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. requested by Chamber of Commerce.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of Commissioner Solis, Garza, and Morales and Judge Rathmell, Commissioner Mendoza abstained. Motion carried 4/0.

**MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER MENDOZA,  
SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SOLIS,  
TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER SOLIS,  
SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER MENDOZA,  
TO RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION**

**ORDER TO TABLE REQUEST BY JUDGE RATHMELL ON HIRING OF CLERK POSITIONS AT OLGA V. FIGUEROA PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Motion was made by Commissioner Solis, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to table request by Judge Rathmell on the hiring of the two clerk positions Slot #2 and Slot #3 at the Olga V. Figueroa Public Library at \$10.00 per hour as requested by Hon. Joe Rathmell, County Judge.

Judge Rathmell stated that there was an overwhelming response of highly qualified candidates. He would like for Friends of the Library to get involved and help interview individuals and give their recommendation.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ORDER APPROVING TO HIRE PATRICIA ANTONIA GONZALEZ FOR THE INDIGENT CARE AND PAUPER EXPENSE DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATOR**

Motion was made by Judge Rathmell, seconded by Commissioner Solis, to approve to hire Patricia Antonia Gonzalez as the Indigent Care & Pauper Expense Department Administrator at \$32,040.00 salary as requested by Hon. Joe Rathmell, County Judge.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**NO ACTION WAS TAKEN ON THE FOLLOWING ITEM DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION**

36. Consultation with attorney regarding legal actions against Zapata County as requested by Hon. Joe Rathmell, County Judge.

**ORDER APPROVING TO HIRE STEWART TITLE TO PERFORM TITLE SEARCH TO MAKE SURE PROPERTIES ARE OWNED BY INDIVIDUAL WANTING TO DONATE PROPERTY**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to hire Stewart Title and Abstract to perform the title search to make sure that properties are owned by individual wanting to donate four properties at which time they will authorize the County Attorney to prepare the paperwork needed to move forward with acquisition. Properties are in the Lakeview Subdivision and they are empty lots.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

*Executive Session is requested pursuant to Texas Government Code Title 5, Sub Chapter D, Section 551.071, Consultation with Attorney.*

**ORDER APPROVING LINE-ITEM TRANSFERS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Solis, to approve line-item transfers to meet departmental needs.

	DEPARTMENT	LINE-ITEM	FUND	AMOUNT
FROM	Nutrition Center Congregate C1	038-33664-647	Raw food	\$974.81
TO	Nutrition Center Congregate C1	038-46764-647	Non-food consumable	\$974.81

as requested by Berta Lopez, Nutrition Director.

The above motion, being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

**ADJOURN**

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Solis, seconded by Commissioner Morales, and being put to a vote, was approved by the affirmative vote of all members of the Court.

There being no further business for disposition at this term, the Court adjourned.

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JOSEPH RATHMELL, COUNTY JUDGE  
OF ZAPATA COUNTY, TEXAS

ATTEST:

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MARY JAYNE VILLARREAL-BONOAN,  
COUNTY CLERK AND EX-OFFICIO  
CLERK OF THE COMMISSIONERS  
COURT OF ZAPATA COUNTY, TEXAS