

**THE STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF ZAPATA**

IN THE COMMISSIONERS COURT OF ZAPATA COUNTY, TEXAS

Be it remembered, that on this the 28th day of May, A.D., 2020, 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
Olga M. Elizondo	Commissioner, Precinct No. 2
Norberto Garza	Commissioner, Precinct No. 4
Mary Jayne Villarreal-Bonoan	County Clerk and Ex-Officio Clerk of the Commissioners Court

ABSENT:

Eddie Martinez	Commissioner, Precinct No. 3
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VISITORS: Romeo Salinas, Triunfo Gonzalez, Monica Alanis, Juan J. Meza, Roger Miller, Leslie Becker, Jose Solis, Joyce Currington, Chris Rincon, Ralph Treviño, Ramiro Hernandez, Luis Arriaga, Alejandro Barrera, Jr., Vicki Benavides, Raymundo Del Bosque, Jose G. Alejandro, Melissa R. Cigarroa, and Luis Gonzalez.

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 MARY JAYNE VILLARREAL-BONOAN, COUNTY CLERK AND
EX-OFFICIO CLERK OF THE COMMISSIONERS COURT
INVOCATION BY REV. ROGER MILLER
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

COMMUNICATIONS

Judge Rathmell commented that the storm took a toll on Zapata, fortunately no injuries or fatalities. The Red Cross was here. Some people have homes that are not livable.

Chief Meza reported that what we had was straight-line winds, not a tornado. It was quick, we had 65 to 75 mph winds that covered almost 2 miles. About 17 blown roofs were reported and 31 calls that night for various incidents. South Elementary was open for shelter. COVID-19 testing was done in Falcon – 3 tests; and the nursing home tested 99 persons. There is testing going on today in San Ygnacio; and testing will be done at Kings Way Church. People are calling and asking if there assistance for the damages, Judge Rathmell is working with Congressman Cuellar to see about programs that may be able to assist with low interest loans or grants. (Zapata County Fire Department Weather Report is attached for the record.)

Commissioner Elizondo reported that 2-3 families had lost their mobile homes, in her precinct and the roping arena lost 2 light poles.

Commissioner Garza reported 7 families in his precinct lost their homes; he and his crew were out working from 2 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Chief Meza reported that crews did a tremendous job clearing the streets; streets were full of branches. He has been working with AEP; residents were out of power for 2 days.

Commissioner Mendoza stated that citizens are being told to place debris on the right of way so crews can pick it up. Priority is to clear roadways.

Jose Alejandro, of Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM), reported that he has been in contact from the get-go and is working with other communities; there has to be \$37,000,000 in damages for National Emergency Declaration. Assessments are being made for an approximation of damages. If numbers are met FEMA will send a representative. Those affected need to submit basic information along with pictures of damages, list of damages and losses.

Vicki Benavides reported on Falcon Nursing Home. They are fortunate to have everybody healthy, our communal spread is very low; 100% testing was done at the nursing home and turnaround time is 3 to 5 days. There is a lot of transparency because of what happened at New Jersey and New York. They are registred at CDC website and have to do inventory of PPE's and account for suspected covid cases. Chief Meza has been providing them with PPE's available. They also got supplies from Ford and Hanes.

Judge Rathmell also reported that Zapata County lost Martin Arredondo, an employee of Precinct 3 and extends our condolences to his family.

Ramiro Hernandez reported that he is working with two programs. One of the programs is for distribution of milk, the problem is the storage. An option is asking the school for assistance for storage. Judge Rathmell added that a refrigerated truck costs \$1,400 per month, it's a small truck that does not require a CDL driver. This program will end on June 30. Milk can be delivered to Falcon, Lopeño and Siesta shores together with meals provided for children by Mr. Hernandez. The other program is Farmers to Families Food Box, which consists of fresh fruit and vegetables, meat products and chicken at a small cost to the county. Again, the problem is refrigeration or would have to be distributed the same day. Mr. Hernandez recommended a large, refrigerated truck if these programs continue. In the meantime, the milk will be delivered by Mr. Hernandez along with the other meal programs. In April 6000 meals were served in Zapata and San Ygnacio.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Christopher Rincon, Executive Director of the River Pierce Foundation, stated that the last time he was at commissioner's court it was to discuss the Right of Entrance for the Border Wall. He has been working with the Border Wall Coalition and are asking the court to continue their stance with this issue. They are trying to slow this down and are working with the families and land owners that are opposed to the construction of the wall on the private lands. It is up to us to protect ourselves. It would be disastrous if they would disturb the habitat of the bird sanctuary. These families are facing intimidations; the process of the border wall has continued as if the global pandemic has never happened. He is here to back up the court in the position on the stance.

Melissa Cigarroa, Board President of the Rio Grande Study Center, and landowner in Zapata County is involved in negotiation in U.S. attorney southern district trying to prevent the right of entry. The long-term goal is to delay the actual take. They feel the leverage is the right of entry negotiation. Once it is signed, it allows the government to identify the land they will take. Once it is signed, it goes very quickly. Objections can be clearly heard. They want the government

to understand the impact that the wall will have on the historic content and negative impacts it will have for generations to come; and want to establish the historical independence we have.

Luis Arriaga, also concerned about the border wall and effect it can have on the bird sanctuary, it's an extra source on tourism for the county. The historical cemetery and architecture along the river will be greatly affected. There are heritage connections among Webb, Zapata and Starr Counties.

ORDER APPROVING INVOICES

Motion was made by Commissioner Garza, seconded by Commissioner Mendoza, to approve invoices in the amount of \$916,515.94 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 Garza, to approve checks issued in the amount of \$916,515.94, 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 REPORT – BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB IS CLOSED

8. Boys and Girls Club Report as requested by Hon. Paco Mendoza, Commissioner, Pct. 1. The club is closed, employees are working. They have a grab and go program for kids.

ORDER APPROVING THE OPENING OF ZAPATA COUNTY FACILITIES AT 50% CAPACITY

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve to open Zapata County facilities at 50% capacity, including library and museum on June 1, 2020; nutrition center will continue with home deliveries. Swimming pools will tentatively open on June 15 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 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN ZAPATA COUNTY AND EXPERIENCE WORKS

Motion was made by Commissioner Elizondo, seconded by Commissioner Mendoza, to approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Zapata County and Experience Works 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 TO GO OUT FOR BIDS FOR VIDEO EQUIPMENT FOR LIVE STREAMING OPTIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF RULES FOR VIDEO RECORDING OF ALL ZAPATA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT MEETINGS

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve to go out for bids for video equipment for live streaming options and development of rules

for video recording of all Zapata County Commissioners Court meetings, allowing greater public access to the community as requested by Hon. Olga Elizondo, Commissioner Pct. 2.

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

**ORDER ACCEPTING RETIREMENT OF MANUEL A. URIBE,
VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve the retirement of Manuel A. Uribe, Veterans Service Officer, effective May 29, 2020 as requested by Nellie R. Treviño, Personnel Director.

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

ORDER ADOPTING UPDATE OF 2020 WATER CONSERVATION PLAN

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to adopt an updated 2020 Water Conservation Plan as requested by Ralph Treviño, Water Plant Manager.

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

ORDER APPROVING LINE ITEM TRANSFER

Motion was made by Commissioner Garza, seconded by Commissioner Mendoza, to approve the following line transfer to meet departmental needs:

	DEPARTMENT	LINE-ITEM	FUND	AMOUNT
FROM	Zapata County Public Library	10-650-427	Workshops & Travel	\$2,500.00
TO	Zapata County Public Library	10-650-463	Books	\$2,500.00

as requested by Amalia Navarro, Zapata County Librarian.

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

**ORDER APPROVING RESOLUTION TO APPLY TO 2020 HELP AMERICA
VOTE ACT (HAVA) CARES ACT SUB GRANT TO TEXAS COUNTIES AND
APPOINT MARY JAYNE VILLARREAL-BONOAN AS THE SINGLE POINT OF
CONTACT (SPOC) TO ACT ON BEHALF OF THE COUNTY IN COMMUNICATING
WITH THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE
INCLUDING SUBMISSION OF ALL NECESSARY REPORTS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve Resolution to apply to the 2020 Help America Vote Act (HAVA) CARES Act Sub grant to Texas counties and appoint Mary Jayne Villarreal-Bonoan as the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to act on behalf of the county in communicating with the office of the Secretary of State, including submission of all necessary reports 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.

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

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

**ORDER TO DENY REQUEST FROM U.S. CUSTOMS AND
BORDER PROTECTION FOR PERMISSION TO ENTER ONTO COUNTY LAND
FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONDUCTING ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS,
PROPERTY SURVEYS, APPRAISALS, ETC., FOR POSSIBLE ACQUISITION
FOR CONSTRUCTION OF BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Elizondo, to deny request from U.S. Customs and Border Protection for permission to enter onto county land for the purpose of conducting environmental assessments, property surveys, appraisals, etc., for possible acquisition for the construction of border infrastructure 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 AUTHORIZING COUNTY ATTORNEY TO RESPOND TO WAIVER
OF SERVICE OF JUDICIAL PROCESS FOR CASE NO. 5:20-CV-007 AND
TAKE ANY AND ALL STEPS NECESSARY**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to authorize County Attorney to respond to the Waiver of Service of Judicial Process for Case No. 5:20-CV-077 that was filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas Laredo Division and take any and all steps necessary as requested by Hon. Joe Rathmell, County Judge.

Closed Session/Executive Session is requested pursuant to Texas Government Code Title 5, Subchapter D, Section 551.071 (A)(B) Consultation with Attorney.

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

**ORDER TO TABLE ITEM AND APPROVE REQUEST OF
REBIDDING FOR THE ZAPATA COUNTY JAIL REPAIRS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Garza, seconded by Commissioner Mendoza, to table item and approve request for the rebidding for the Zapata County Jail repairs 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.

ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, 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.

JOSEPH RATHMELL, COUNTY JUDGE
OF ZAPATA COUNTY, TEXAS

ATTEST:

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