

**THE STATE OF TEXAS  
COUNTY OF ZAPATA**

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

Be it remembered, that on this the 28<sup>th</sup> day of September, 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
Eddie Martinez	Commissioner, Precinct No. 3
Norberto Garza	Commissioner, Precinct No. 4
Mary Jayne Villarreal-Bonoan	County Clerk and Ex-Officio Clerk of the Commissioners Court

**VISITORS:** Said A. Figueroa, Triunfo Gonzalez, Monica Alanis, Nellie Treviño, Javier Zambrano, Oralia Cardenas, Roger Miller, Rosalinda Gonzalez, Jose Solis, Joel Ruiz, Pete Alvarez, Fred Lopez, Frank Cantu, Joyce Currington, Joe Peña and Manuel Gonzalez, Jr.

**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**

Commissioner Elizondo commented that the Texas Jail Commissioner was here on September 25 and the Zapata County Jail passed all inspections. She added that there will be food distribution by Laredo Food Bank.

County Treasurer, Romeo Salinas, stated that this year's fund raiser for the Laredo Food Bank will be a raffle.

Commissioner Mendoza mentioned that the census deadline has been extended to the end of October. Judge Rathmell added that the response for the census has been very low for Zapata County.

Judge Rathmell reported on the COVID-19 cases as follows: 5,156 have been tested, 334 positive cases, 4,755 negative tests, 67 pending, 322 recovered (released from isolation) and 7 deaths.

**ORDER APPROVING INVOICES**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve invoices in the amount of \$1,297,936.31 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 \$1,297,936.31, 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 WAS PRESENTED – BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB IS CLOSED**

8. Boys and Girls Club Report as requested by Hon. Paco Mendoza, Commissioner, Pct. 1.

### **PRESENTATION BY ORALIA CARDENAS ON GRANT WORKS**

Oralia Cardenas, Grant Works Consultant, made a presentation on Grant Works. They do grant administration; the company was created in 1979 and has over 150 employees. They do community development and all types of grants. The company also applies for and manages grants. One of their clients has been TxDOT. Most fees are via grant application and there is no fee for applying.

### **PRESENTATION TO INTRODUCE NEW TXDOT ROMA AREA ENGINEER, FRANCISCO (FRANK) CANTU**

Pedro Alvarez, TXDOT District Engineer, has been with TxDOT for 26 years; his area covers the southernmost eight counties of Texas. He introduced Francisco (Frank) Cantu, who replaced Eddie Gracia. Also, introduced was Mr. Freddy Lopez, the supervisor. The District headquarters is located in Pharr, Texas. Mr. Alvarez commented that they are currently working on several projects. They recently completed a project North of San Ygnacio to the county line with the super 2's. They started in 2003 and 2004 with a 4-way divided Highway 83, then in 2007 and 2008 the economy went down and they had to pause and regroup. They decided they cannot forget about Hwy 83 and did a super 2 from Starr to Webb County, which has been completed. After ten years, they are re-evaluating and are going to continue and Hwy 83 because it is a very important corridor that connects us to the valley. The other four projects are approximately \$100,000,000, realistically this budget is going to go down, but they are going to continue with the process so that after Covid-19 they will implement construction. They will be doing mainly seal and coats in several parts of the county, such as Hwy 3169, Hwy 16, FM 2687 and other roadways. Seal and coat is the most inexpensive, but yet, the best preservation process that is in place and they will continue working on it. They are also going to address the speed limits. They usually set the speed limit to what it was before, they wait for a couple of months to pass, and once the traveling public is used to the new speed limit the traffic adjusts. Speed limits are set at the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile. If there is rolling terrain, they lower the speed by 5 mph. Maximum speed reduction that can be made is by 15 mph. The speed limit has to be set with segments of consistence.

Commissioner Mendoza asked about Highway 16; Mr. Alvarez responded that it is in the plans for expansion, however, it has not been funded. Highway 83 is a very important corridor and will eventually become part of Interstate 2.

Studies are being conducted and bridges will also be replaced and converted to nice wide structures, but it will take time to get there.

Joel Ruiz, addressed the court regarding the speed limit and has an item requesting a speed limit increase from Zapata to San Ygnacio to 70 mph and from San Ygnacio to Webb County Line to 75 mph and asked about converting to 4 lanes.

**ORDER ADOPTING SHERIFFS’ AND CONSTABLES’ FEES FOR ZAPATA COUNTY**

Motion was made by Commissioner Garza, seconded by Commissioner Mendoza, to adopt the 2020 Sheriffs’ and Constables’ Fees for Zapata County, to remain the same, 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 FOR MEMBERSHIP TO TEXAS BORDER COALITION**

Motion was made by Commissioner Martinez, seconded by Commissioner Mendoza, to approve payment of \$701.00 for membership to the Texas Border Coalition, 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 IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM**

13. To purchase two patrol units using COVID-19 funds; quotes obtained through Buy Board as requested by Hon. Joe Rathmell, County Judge.

**ORDER APPROVING TO PURCHASE VAN FOR NUTRITION CENTER FOR HOME DELIVERED MEALS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Garza, seconded by Commissioner Mendoza, to approve to purchase a van for the Nutrition Center for the home delivered meals program; to be paid using COVID-19 funds, at the lowest price obtained through Buy Board 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 PURCHASE A BOX TRUCK FOR FOOD PANTRY**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve to purchase a box truck for the Food Pantry using COVID-19 funds; quotes obtained through Buy Board; must be single axle – no CDL required to operate vehicle, 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 COUNTY TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE FUND GRANT AGREEMENT BETWEEN ZAPATA COUNTY AND TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION – \$188,673.00 TO BE DIVIDED EQUALLY AMONG PRECINCTS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve the County Transportation Infrastructure Fund Grant Agreement between Zapata County and the Texas Department of Transportation. Zapata County was awarded \$188,673.00; to be divided equally among the 4 precincts, 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 REPAIRS TO LITTLE LEAGUE BLEACHERS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Martinez, to approve repairs to the Little League bleachers, in the amount of \$5,124.00; to be paid from storm damages insurance reimbursement as requested by Hon. Norberto 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 REPAIRS TO LITTLE LEAGUE AND  
SOFTBALL FIELD LIGHTS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve repairs the Little League and Softball field lights due to storm damages, in the amount of \$22,000, as requested by Hon. Norberto 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 BIDS FOR REPAIRS OF PRECINCT 4 COMMERCIAL  
HEAVY-DUTY DOORS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Martinez, to approve bids for the repairs of Precinct 4 commercial heavy-duty doors; to be paid from the storm damages insurance reimbursement as requested by Hon. Norberto 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 REPAIRS AT PRECINCT 4 PARK**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Martinez, to approve repairs at Precinct 4 Park, to include the canopy shades and structure, in the amount of \$5,500; to be paid from the storm damages insurance reimbursement, as requested by Hon. Norberto Garza.

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

**ORDER ACCEPTING RESIGNATION/RETIREMENT OF SIXTO VIDAL AND  
ORDER APPROVING TO HIRE LETICIA DOMINGUEZ AS REPLACEMENT**

Motion was made by Commissioner Garza, seconded by Commissioner Mendoza, to accept the resignation/retirement of Sixto Vidal, I & A Driver/Attendant, 37-645-slot #2 and approve to hire Leticia Dominguez as his replacement as requested by Rosalinda S. Gonzalez, Nutrition Center Director.

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

**ORDER APPROVING TO HIRE HECTOR MARIO GUERRA AT RECYCLING  
DEPARTMENT**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve to hire Hector Mario Guerra, at the Recycling Department; slot #2 at \$9.00 per hour as requested by Guillermo Saenz, Environmental Department.

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

**ORDER APPROVING TO HIRE MANUEL MARTINEZ, JR. AT ENVIRONMENTAL DEPARTMENT**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve to hire Manuel Martinez, Jr., at the Environmental Department; slot #11 at \$9.00 per hour as requested by Guillermo Saenz, Environmental Department.

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

**ORDER APPROVING TO MOVE ISMAEL MORALES, JR. FROM SLOT #11 TO SLOT #15**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve to move Ismael Morales, Jr. from slot #11 to slot #5 at \$9.68 per hour as requested by Guillermo Saenz, Environmental Department.

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

**ORDER APPROVING ESSER & ESSER COMPANY CONSULTING LLC CONTRACT FOR MANAGING ZAPATA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE FUND AND COORDINATE WITH TXDOT PHARR DISTRICT OFFICE**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Martinez, to approve Esser & Esser Company Consulting LLC Contract for managing the Zapata County Transportation Infrastructure Fund and to coordinate with the TxDOT Pharr District Office as requested by Carl Esser, Esser and Company Consulting LLC.

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

**ORDER APPROVING FINAL PLAT OF LA LEGION PHASE I ON U.S. HIGHWAY 83**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve final plat of La Legion Phase I on U.S. Highway 83 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 FINAL PLAT OF RAMIREZ ADDITION UNIT III ON RAMIREZ ROAD**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve final plat of Ramirez Addition Unit III on Ramirez Road 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 FINAL PLAT OF LEO CUELLAR ADDITION UNIT II ON OAK STREET**

Motion was made by Commissioner Garza, seconded by Commissioner Mendoza, to approve final plat of Leo Cuellar Addition Unit II on Oak 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.

**NO ACTION WAS TAKEN IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM**

29. to approve the use of the Zapata County Pavilion on October 17, 2020 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for a Daniel's Round Up Event as requested by David Vasquez, Office Director.

**NO ACTION WAS TAKEN IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM**

30. To address the condition on Cardinal Street and the lack of proper drainage and paving as requested by Gerald Castillo, County Resident.

Commissioner Martinez will take caliche; will also switch from Cardinal to Pelican Road for improvements with CERTZ grant funds.

**ORDER TO DENY REQUEST BY JOEL RUIZ REGARDING MANDATE ON LANDLORD/TENANT PAYMENT RESPONSIBILITY TO ZAPATA COUNTY WATERWORKS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Garza, seconded by Commissioner Mendoza, to deny request by Joel Ruiz, regarding the mandate on landlord/tenant water payment responsibility to the Zapata County Waterworks. Mr. Ruiz asked for the Court to rescind the current requirement of water utility to be under landlord's name.

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

**NO ACTION WAS TAKEN IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM**

32. To request that TxDOT increase the speed limit from Zapata to San Ygnacio to 70 mph and from San Ygnacio to the Zapata/Webb County line to 75 mph as requested by Joel Ruiz, Zapata County Resident.

**ORDER APPROVING RESOLUTION AND ORDER APPROVING COUNTY TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE FUND GRANT PROGRAM AGREEMENT**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve resolution and order approving the County Transportation Infrastructure Fund Grant Program Agreement designating authorized representative and making specific findings required by the Texas Department of Transportation 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 PROCLAMATION ON NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION AND RECOVERY MONTH**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to approve Proclamation on National Suicide Prevention and Recovery Month as requested by Annette Arambula, Border Region Behavioral Health Center.

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

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

**ORDER ALLOWING COUNSEL TO HIRE ADDITIONAL EXPERT**

Motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza, seconded by Commissioner Garza, to allow counsel to hire additional expert for the Border Wall case as requested by Said Figueroa, County Attorney.

*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.

**NO ACTION WAS TAKEN IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM**

34. to address personnel matters for workers compensation as requested by Nellie R. Treviño, Personnel Director.

*Closed Session/Executive Session is requested pursuant to Texas Government Code Title 5, Subchapter D, Section 551.0074 (B) Personnel Matters.*

**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.

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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