THE STATE OF TEXAS \* COMMISSIONERS COURT

COUNTY OF KENEDY \* OF KENEDY COUNTY, TEXAS

On the 9th day of September, 2024, at 9:00 o'clock a.m., a regular meeting of the Commissioners Court of Kenedy County, Texas, was held in the Kenedy County Courthouse.

**Commissioner present:**

Charles E. Burns, County Judge

Joe Recio, Commissioner, Precinct No. 1

Israel Vela, Jr., Commissioner, Precinct No. 2

Sarita Armstrong-Hixon, Commissioner, Precinct No. 3

Jose Salazar, Commissioner, Precinct No. 4

**Also present:**

Veronica Vela, County & District Clerk

Grace Salinas, Administrative Secretary

Leo Villarreal, Administrative Assistant

Irma Longoria, County Tax Assessor/Collector

Cynthia Salinas, County Treasurer

Stephanie Garza, Elections Administrator

Seferino Gutierrez, Maintenance Supervisor

Jose E. Mendietta, Fire Chief

JP Patricia Fain

JP Cecilia Schulz

Jose E. Mendietta, Fire Chief

Tom Denney, Chief Appraiser

Andy Garza, Kenedy County GCD

Hector Castaneda, Ardurra

Kirsten Mendez

Captain Eddie Cruz

William Dieterle

Frank Escobedo, County Agent

Mr. Grogan, Revolution Data Systems

Denise Rodriguez, John Womack & Co., P.C.

**Absent**:

JP Jerry Miller

1. **Call Meeting to Order at 9:00 a.m.**

Judge Charles E. Burns called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

1. **Pledge of Allegiance.**

Judge Charles E. Burns led the Commissioners and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. **Receive Public Comments.**

No public comments were made.

1. **Discuss & Act on Increasing the Proposed 2025 Budget by $26,501.39 for a Total of $8,126,380.65.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider increasing the Proposed 2025 Budget of $8,099,879.26 by $26,501.39 for a new total 2025 Proposed Budget of $8,126,380.65.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the $8,099,879.26 2025 proposed budget be increased by $26,501.39 for a new total 2025 Proposed Budget of $8,126,380.65.

1. **Conduct a Public Hearing on the Proposed 2025 Budget.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court that the Public Hearing on the proposed 2025 Budget of $8,126,830.65 was now in session; that the Public Notice regarding the proposed Budget had been published in the Kingsville Record on August 20, 2024.

No member of the public came forward to address the Proposed 2025 Budget; therefore, the Public Hearing on the Proposed 2025 Budget be closed at 9:03 a.m.

1. **Discuss & Act on Adopting the 2025 Budget.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to adopt the 2025 Budget of $8,126,830.65.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the 2025 Budget be adopted in the amount of $8,126,830.65.

1. **Conduct a Public Hearing on the Proposed 2024 Tax Rate.**

Judge Charles E. Burns, at 9:04 a.m., informed the Commissioners Court that the Public Hearing on the proposed 2024 Tax Rate of $0.783700 per $100 valuation was now in session and that the Public Notice regarding the proposed tax rate was published August 29, 2024 in the Kingsville Record.

No member of the public came forward to address the proposed 2024 Tax Rate; therefore, the Public Hearing on the Proposed 2024 Tax Rate be closed at 9:05 a.m.

1. **Discuss & Act on Adopting the 2024 Tax Rate.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to adopt the 2024 Tax Rate of $0.783700 per $100 valuation.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the 2023 Rate be $0.783700 per $100 valuation be adopted as presented.

1. **Discuss & Act on the 3-2-1 Tax Discount.**

Irma Longoria, Tax Assessor/Collector and Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider whether the 3-2-1% tax discounts for October, November and December with no split payments is acceptable.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the 3-2-1% tax discounts for October, November and December with no split payments be approved.

1. **Discuss & Act on the Regular Minutes of August 12th, 2024.**

Judge Charles E. Burns presented the Commissioners Court Minutes of the regular August 12, 2024 meeting.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the Minutes of the regular August 12, 2024 meeting be accepted as presented.

1. **Presentation by Dr. Rodney Rodriguez of RPBS Consulting Regarding Grant Management for the County.**

Dr. Rodney Rodriguez of RPBS Consulting was not present at the Commissioners Court.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that this item be tabled.

1. **Presentation by Frank & Joseph of Protech, with the Estimate Regarding the Sheriff’s Office’s AC Issues and the HVAC of the County Buildings and Act If Necessary.**

Frank & Joseph of ProTech presented the Commissioners Court with the estimate regarding the Sheriff’s Office air conditioning issues and the HVAC of the County Buildings.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that ProTech’s $132,338.80 estimate regarding the Sheriff’s Office air conditioning and the HVAC for the county buildings be accepted.

1. **Presentation by Elections Administrator, Stephanie Garza, Regarding the Formal Invitation from Secretary of State to Participate in the House Bill 246 Pilot Program.**

Stephanie Garza, Elections Administrator, informed the Commissioners Court that she had received a formal invitation from the Secretary of State to participate in the House Bill 246 Pilot Program. She stated that the Secretary of State has established a Pilot Program to a video of the voting process to ensure the integrity of the voting process; that the cameras will not be on during early voting; and that the cost of the cameras is reimbursable, but the labor is not.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Israel Vela, Jr. seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that Stephanie Garza, Elections Administrator accept the formal invitation from the Secretary of State to participate in the House Bill 246 Pilot Program.

1. **Discuss & Act on Treasurer’s Monthly Report and Transfers.**

Cynthia Salinas, County Treasurer, presented the Commissioners Court with the Treasurer's Monthly Report and Transfers for the month of August 2024.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Israel Vela, Jr. seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the Treasurer’s Monthly Report and Transfers for the month of August 2024 be approved as presented.

1. **Discuss & Act on the Sheriff’s Monthly Report.**

Captain Eddie Cruz presented the Commissioners Court with the Sheriff’s monthly and Chapter 59 reports for the month of August 2024. He reported that the Sheriff’s office had 397 calls for service, 5 major and 4 minor accidents, had recovered 3 stolen vehicles and made 12 total arrests.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Israel Vela, Jr. seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the Sheriff’s monthly and Chapter 59 reports for the month of August 2024 be approved as presented.

1. **Discuss & Act on Fire Chief’s Monthly Report.**

Jose E. Mendietta, Fire Chief, informed the Commissioners Court that he had made all of the hurricane preparations, that Smokey the Bear would be attending the National Night Out and at the Fire Prevention Week at the school; that he had met with the Kenedy Memorial Foundation and Acme Water Works, had answered 6 calls, 4 accidents and 1 structure fire.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the Fire Chief’s report be approved as presented.

1. **Discuss & Act on the Maintenance Department Monthly Report.**

Seferino Gutierrez, Maintenance Supervisor presented the Commissioners Court with Maintenance Department report for the month ending August 31, 2024.

He reported that lights were installed at the park, mowing had been done in the cemetery and throughout the county, trees trimmed, sprinklers repaired at the Courthouse and JP building; needed to train employees on how to set the timers on the sprinkler systems; that Rosales Landscape would be in the county this week; and that all lots in Sarita needed to be renumbered for EMS purposes.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the Maintenance Department monthly report be accepted as presented.

1. **Discuss & Act on Terminating the Contract with Shindler Elevator.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider terminating the contract with Shindler Elevator because the contract had expired and Shindler was no longer servicing the elevator; therefore, a termination notice will be sent to Shindler.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the Schindler Elevator contract be terminated.

1. **Receive Dave Furzer and Act on the Sewer & Water System Monthly Report.**

Dave Furzer was not present at the Commissioners Court meeting; therefore, no action was taken.

1. **Receive Hector Castaneda, with Ardurra, Regarding the Update and Public Input on the Master Drainage Study.**

Hector Castaneda with Ardurra presented the Commissioners Court with an update and the public input on the Master Drainage Study. He stated that they have addressed a culvert on the south side of the Sarita townsite and that the program’s termination date is November 2025.

Judge Burns inquired whether he could assist the engineers with the new overpass that is being built. Hector Castaneda stated that he will keep the Judge informed.

This being a report only, no vote was needed and none was taken.

1. **Discuss & Act on the Consent Agenda:**

**(A) Approve Registration and Travel Expenses for Jose Lopez to Attend the 2024 Pesticide Applicator Training in Rosenburg, Tx on September 23- 26th, 2024. ($589.82 within budget)**

**(B) Approve Registration and Travel Expenses for Johnny Hernandez to Attend the 2024 Pesticide Applicator Training in Rosenburg, Tx on September 23- 26th, 2024. ($589.82 within budget)**

**(C) Approve Registration and Travel Expenses for Charles Burns to Attend the 102nd  CJCA of Texas Conference in San Marcos, Tx on October 21st- 24th, 2024. ($1,725.11 within budget)**

**(D) Approve Registration and Travel Expenses for Jose Salazar to Attend the 102nd CJCA of Texas Conference in San Marcos, Tx on October 21st -24th, 2024. ($1,567.92 within budget)**

**(E) Approve Hotel Expenses for Stephanie Garza to Attend the Risk Limiting Audit Training in Brownsville, Tx on August 22-23, 2024. ($215.11 within budget)**

**(F) Approve Travel Expenses for Irma Longoria to Attend the 42nd Annual V.G. Young Conference in San Marcos, Tx on November 19th- 21st, 2024. (within budget)**

**(G) Approve Travel Expenses for Norma Zavala to Attend the 42nd Annual V.G. Young Conference in San Marcos, Tx on November 19th-21st, 2024. (within budget)**

**(H) Approve Travel Expenses for Linda Anderson to Attend the 42nd Annual V.G. Young Conference in San Marcos, Tx on November 19th-21st, 2024. (within budget)**

**(I) Approve Meal Expenses for Ashley Gonzalez to Attend the New Supervisor Course in Corpus Christi, Tx on September 25th- 28th, 2024. ($150.00 within budget)**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court that the following Commissioner, employees and/or officials needed to attend the below seminars and conferences and costs be advanced thereon, as follows:

Employee’s Name: Jose Lopez

Training/Seminar: 2024 Pesticide Applicator Training

Location: Rosenburg, Texas

Date: September 23-26, 2024

Cost: $589.82 within budget

Employee’s Name: Johnny Hernandez

Location: Rosenburg, Texas

Date: September 23-26, 2024

Cost: $589.82 within budget

Official’s Name: Charles E. Burns

Training/Seminar: 102nd CJCA of Texas Conference

Location: San Marcos

Date: October 21-24, 2024

Cost: $1,725.11 within budget

Official’s Name: Jose Salazar

Training/Seminar: 102nd CJCA of Texas Conference

Location: San Marcos

Date: October 21-24, 2024

Cost: $1,725.11 within budget

Employee’s Name: Stephanie Garza

Training/Seminar: Risk Limiting Audit Training

Location: Brownsville, Texas

Date: August 22-23, 2024

Cost: $215.11 within budget

Official’s Name: Irma Longoria

Training/Seminar: 42nd Annual V.G. Young Conference

Location: San Marcos, Texas

Date: November 19-21, 2024

Cost: within budget

Employee’s Name: Norma Zavala

Training/Seminar: 42nd Annual V.G. Young Conference

Location: San Marcos, Texas

Date: November 19-21, 2024

Cost: within budget

Employee’s Name: Linda Anderson

Training/Seminar: 42nd Annual V.G. Young Conference

Location: San Marcos, Texas

Date: November 19-21, 2024

Cost: within budget

Employee’s Name: Ashley Gonzalez

Training/Seminar: New Supervisor Course

Location: Corpus Christi, Texas

Date: September 25-28, 2024

Cost: $150 within budget

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Israel Vela, Jr. seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the above officials are authorized to attend their respective trainings and that the County advance the costs thereof provided that proper receipts be provided to the County Treasurer.

1. **Discuss & Act on Approving the Notice of Election Regarding the November 5th General Election.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider approving the Notice of Election regarding the November 5th General Election.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the Notice of Election regarding the November 5th General Election is approved.

1. **Discuss & Act on Approving the Emergency Operations Plan for the Election’s Office as Required by Secretary of State.**

Stephanie Garza, Elections Administrator, informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider approving an Emergency Operations Plan for the Election’s Office as required by the Secretary of State. She stated that the Secretary of State requires a written emergency plan for each county because the Elections Administrator needs to know what needs to be done in the event of an emergency regarding the polling places and the voting procedures.

She further stated that Early Voting is mandated to be held on Saturday and Sunday and that a flyer will be mailed to the voters once the Judge signs the Emergency Operations Plan.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the Emergency Operations Plan for the Election’s Office, as required by the Secretary of State, is approved.

1. **Report on the Conference with Texas A&M Medical Program.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the conference that was held with the Texas A&M Medical Program and Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon informed the Commissioners Court that the permanent container would arrive in March or April 2025.

Judge Burns stated that one of the program’s mission is to encourage more children interested in the medical profession and Governor Abbot would like to be present when the program is started. Also, that the more that residents use the facility, medical personnel will be present more often.

This being a report only, no vote was needed and none was taken.

1. **Discuss & Act on Revolution Data Systems’ Proposal Regarding Digitizing the Land Records for the Clerk’s Office.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider Revolution Data Systems’ proposal regarding digitizing the Land Records for the County Clerk’s office.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that bids be sought regarding the digitizing of the land records for the County Clerk’s office.

1. **Discuss & Act on Approving a Resolution Regarding the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA).**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider approving the Resolution regarding the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA). He read the Resolution to the Commissioners Court and that the applications were available in his office.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the Resolution regarding the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) be approved as presented.

1. **Discuss & Act on Allowing Brush Country CASA to Block Off La Parra Street in Front of the Courthouse to Host a Trunk or Treat Event on October 11, 2024, from 6-8 p.m.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider allowing Brush Country CASA to block off La Parra Street in front of the Courthouse to host a trunk or treat event on October 11, 2024 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that Brush Country CASA be allowed to block off La Parra Street in front of the Courthouse to host a trunk or treat event on October 11, 2024 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

1. **Discuss & Act on Accepting Fiber Optic High Speed Internet Prices for All County Buildings.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider accepting fiber optic high speed internet prices for all county buildings and all personnel that received this material are pleased with it.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the fiber optic high speed internet prices for all county buildings be accepted as presented.

1. **Report on the Surplus Distribution Payment from TAC in the Amount of $21,454.29.**

Cynthia Salinas, County Treasurer, informed the Commissioners Court of the surplus distribution payment from TAC in the amount of $21,454.29 had been received and distributed to the employees in the amount of $388 per employee.

This being a report only, no vote was needed and none was taken.

1. **Discuss & Act on Transitioning the County Website and All County Emails to .GOV.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider transitioning the county website and all county emails to .GOV.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that all county websites and emails be transitioned to .gov.

1. **Discuss & Act on the Estimate from G&S Property Services for 6 Cement Water Run Off Slabs at the Justice of the Peace/ Hurricane Shelter.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider the estimate from G&S Property Services for six cement water run off slabs at the Justice of the Peace/Hurricane Shelter for the amount of $3,680.00.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that G&S Property Services $3,680.00 bid for six cement water run-off slabs at the Justice of the Peace/Hurricane Shelter be approved.

1. **Discuss & Act on the Estimate from G&S Property Services to Replace the Galvanized Rails with Stainless Steel Railing at the JP Building/Hurricane Shelter to be Paid with GOMESA Funds.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider the $32,480.00 estimate from G&S Property Services to replace the galvanized rails with stainless steel railing at the JP Building/Hurricane Shelter to be paid with GOMESA funds.

Commissioner Joe Recio moved and Commissioner Israel Vela, Jr. seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that G&S Property Services $32,480.00 estimate to replace the galvanized rails with stainless steel railing at the JP Building/Hurricane Shelter be approved and paid with GOMESA funds.

1. **Discuss & Act on the Estimate from G&S Property Services to Provide a Stainless-Steel Ladder Attached to the JP Building/ Hurricane Shelter to Access the Top of the Building to be Paid with GOMESA Funds.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court that the bid from G&S Property Services for the stainless-steel ladder had not been received; therefore, Commissioner Joe Recio moved and Commissioner Israel Vela, Jr. seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that this item be tabled.

1. **Discuss & Act on the Estimate from G&S Property Services to Build a New Sign for the Kenedy County Sheriff’s Office.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider a $35,752.00 estimate from G&S Property Services to build a new sign for the Kenedy County Sheriff’s Office.

Commissioner Joe Recio moved and Commissioner Israel Vela, Jr. seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that G&S Property Services $35,752.00 estimate to build a new sign for the Kenedy County Sheriff’s Office be approved.

1. **Discuss & Act on Approving the Purchase of 2 Laptops for the Sheriff’s Office in the Amount of $6,200.00.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider the purchase of two laptops for the Sheriff’s Office in the amount of $6,200.00.

Commissioner Joe Recio moved and Commissioner Israel Vela, Jr. seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that two laptops for the Sheriff’s office be purchased for the amount of $6,200.00.

1. **Discuss & Act on Selecting a Committee to Review the Kenedy County Personnel Policy Manual and Amend If Necessary.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider selecting a committee to review the Kenedy County Personnel Policy Manual and amend it, if necessary.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that Judge Charles E. Burns, Leo Villarreal, Cynthia Salinas, Joe Recio, Irma G. Longoria, Eddie Cruz and Allison Strauss are appointed as the Committee to review and, if necessary, amend the county’s Personnel Policy Manual and present its amendments to the County Commissioners Court for approval.

1. **Discuss & Act on Rescheduling the Grand Opening of the JP Office/Hurricane Shelter.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to consider rescheduling the grand opening of the JP Building/Hurricane Shelter

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Israel Vela, Jr. seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the grand opening for the JP Building/Hurricane Shelter be rescheduled for November 12, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. and to appoint the Justices of the Peace to organize the grand opening ceremony.

1. **Discuss & Act on Payment of Bills.**

Judge Charles E. Burns informed the Commissioners Court of the need to pay the bills for the month ending August 31, 2024.

Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the bills be paid.

1. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE, § 551.071, § 551.072, § 551.073,**

**§ 551.074**

There was no need to hold Executive Session; therefore, none was held.

1. **Open Session: Discuss & Act on Items Addressed in Executive Session.**

No action was needed.

1. **Adjournment.**

There being no further business at this time to come before the Commissioners Court, Commissioner Sarita Armstrong-Hixon moved and Commissioner Joe Recio seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously passed that the Kenedy County Commissioners Court be adjourned at 11:14 a.m.

/s/ Charles E. Burns

Charles E. Burns, County Judge

/s/ Veronica Vela

VERONICA VELA

Clerk of Commissioners Court