

MINUTES

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

12:00 PM WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 2021
GLOBAL GOTOMEETING VIDEO CONFERENCE PLATFORM
INITIATED AND CHAIRED FROM
LRGVDC MAIN CAMPUS - 301 W. RAILROAD STREET, WESLACO, TEXAS
BUILDING B, KEN JONES EXECUTIVE BOARD ROOM

PRESIDING: MAYOR JIM DARLING, PRESIDENT

President Jim Darling called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared.

He then moved to item 2: Consideration and Action to Approve Meeting Minutes (February 24, 2021). *Mayor Oscar Montoya made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 24, 2021 meeting as presented. Commissioner David Garza seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.*

President Darling then moved to item 3: Public Comment and/or Report from Legislative Delegation and recognized Ms. Maricela De Leon. She introduced herself as the new Board Representative for Texas State Technical College (TSTC). She is the Regional Executive Director of Government Affairs and looks forward to collaborating with Board Members and being a part of the LRGVDC.

Executive Director Manuel Cruz was recognized and gave the sad news that one of our own has succumbed to the COVID-19 virus. Longtime employee Mary Villarreal passed away on March 2, 2021; she had been with the Area Agency on aging for 25 years. A moment of silence was observed.

President Darling next moved to item 4: Administration.

A. Consideration and Action to Approve Lease Agreement between LRGVDC and RGVMPPO

Recently the RGVMPPO has expressed interest in acquiring a larger office and relocating its operations to a facility that would be able to accommodate its staff. Since the merger of the Brownsville, Harlingen-San Benito, and Hidalgo County MPOs, more staff have been hired and its current location is not suitable for the overall number of staff required to efficiently conduct day-to-day operations. The new location, LRGVDC Valley Metro's Transit facility located at 617 W. University Drive in Edinburg, can accommodate the increased number of staff and allow for future growth. This lease is necessary because the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires this document to be in place to comply with the tri-annual audit requirements. The execution of the lease agreement by both parties is contingent upon the RGVMPPO receiving written approval from its funding agency; once approved, the LRGVDC Executive Director will execute the final document.

Commissioner Rick Salinas asked how much office space the RGVMPPO has at its current location in Weslaco. RGVMPPO Executive Director Andrew Canon stated that the Weslaco location has 2,000 square feet, and the office space at the Valley Metro Transit Terminal has 6,000 square feet. Mayor Jorge Ledezma asked if other locations would be considered. Mr. Canon clarified that both the Weslaco location and the Edinburg location are owned by the LRGVDC and that Edinburg is providing some furnishings. Upon conclusion of discussion *Mayor Oscar Montoya made a motion to approve the lease agreement between LRGVDC and RGVMPPO contingent upon FTA approval. Commissioner David Garza seconded the*

motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.

B. Presentation on Economic Development Administration Programs

Mr. Robert Peche, Economic Development Representative with the U.S. Economic Development Administration was recognized, however there were technical difficulties in starting the presentation, and it was the consensus of the Board to hear this presentation later in the meeting.

C. Executive Director Report

President Darling recognized Mr. Cruz to address the following:

1. Introduction of New Staff Members

Mr. Cruz announced that Ms. Olga Rodriguez joined the ECOMMS/9-1-1 Team as a Customer Service Representative, Ms. Vanessa Salinas and Ms. Karla Perez joined the Area Agency on Aging as Customer Service Representatives, Mr. Juan Pena joined the RGVMPPO as a GIS Specialist and Mr. Christopher Nelson and Mr. Javier Dominguez joined the RGVMPPO as Planners. Additionally, former receptionist Ms. Monic Galvan applied for and was hired as the Administrative Assistant for the Regional Police Academy, and former BikeShare Program Specialist Mr. Juan Macias applied for and was hired as a Purchaser for the Business Operations Department.

2. 87th Legislature Updates

Mr. Cruz reported that the legislature has filed almost 7,000 bills this session and he highlighted a few that are pertinent to the LRGVDC and this region. HB 5 relates to the expansion of broadband services for underserved areas including rural areas. Legislators are very interested in HB 3 that relates to electric power redundancy systems and upgrades to weatherization of power generators, transmission lines, natural gas facilities and pipelines which are two hot topics. We are also tracking bills that may impact LRGVDC programs. HB 2911 is related to Next Generation 9-1-1 services and the ability to increase the 50 cent fees for 9-1-1 that are charged to phone bills.

Previously President Darling requested staff to contact our legislators regarding a modification to the Texas Open Meetings Act that would include conducting hybrid in-person/virtual conference participation during public meetings. Mr. Cruz has been notified that approximately five bills on this topic have been submitted and sent to committee for review; he reminded the Board that this is a fluid situation, and these bills change on a weekly basis.

3. COVID-19 Vaccinations

Mr. Cruz was recognized and informed the Board that in January, when COVID-19 vaccines were being developed, President Darling identified the issue of how to vaccinate our vulnerable elderly homebound population who could not get out and go to the mass vaccination clinics that were being held. A work group was developed that identified 2,937 elderly homebound individuals. LRGVDC staff were able to assist some of the city and county vaccine providers with program resources. The ECOMMS/9-1-1 department developed and provided a GIS map that plotted the location of all the individuals identified. The Valley Metro program provided transportation to vaccination clinics for some senior citizen communities in Weslaco. The Area Agency on Aging staff identified their Case Management clients who are homebound, and their staff was provided vaccination information they were able to pass on to callers. Mr. Cruz thanked all those that have been involved for the great effort that has been put forth for this needed service. He added that this is an ongoing effort and the LRGVDC stands at the ready to continue providing support as needed. President Darling also expressed his appreciation to all those involved in this effort.

4. American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

Mr. Cruz reported that the LRGVDC will receive funding allocations from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 for the Health & Human Services Department, the Transportation Department, the Economic Development Program, and the Homeland Security Program. Texas will receive approximately \$16.7 billion; in addition to that, \$10 billion will be allocated to local jurisdictions in Texas. Other than the total amount of funding, there currently is not much guidance as far as the actual programmatic allowable costs. Staff anticipates that guidance will be developed as the funding is allocated.

Upon conclusion of Administration items President Darling moved to item 5: Department Reports.

A. Community & Economic Development

Director Rick Carrera was recognized and informed the Board that the earlier technical difficulties had been resolved and he yielded the floor to Mr. Peche to address item B – Presentation on Economic Development Administration Programs. Mr. Peche introduced himself as the Economic Development Representative for the Southwestern area of Texas. He serves this region by helping economic development non-profit organizations put together projects that can be funded by the EDA. The EDA is a small agency within the Department of Commerce, and they work closely with their districts which are the councils of government. His presentation will be available for review on the LRGVDC website, and it has information on EDA Disaster Assistance, EDA Cares Act Disaster Assistance, and the American Rescue Act. He encouraged the Board and staff to think about projects for which they can request funding at the local level. They would like to see projects for significant economic development initiatives that could bring up segments of the economy that perhaps are not as strong as they could be. He asked that they look for projects that will impact not only a local community, but the greater Rio Grande Valley area and bring in new job creation opportunities to the local level. President Darling thanked Mr. Peche for his presentation and suggested the Board and staff meet to consider regional projects and take advantage of this funding.

Program Action Items

1. Consideration and Action to Approve Road-to-Recycling Tire Disposal Services Request for Proposals (RFP) Award (Tabled 2/24/2021)

Commissioner Rick Salinas made a motion to remove this item from the table. Commissioner David Garza seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Carrera reminded the Board that the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) met on February 23 and reviewed vendor proposals submitted in response to the RFP for the Road-to-Recycling Tire Disposal Services. Two (2) proposals were submitted, however only one met the qualifications specified in the request. The SWAC unanimously approved the proposal from Republic Services.

Additionally, since the February 24 LRGVDC Board Meeting, the SWAC met on March 16 to consider an additional provider of tire disposal services, the Brownsville Landfill. This addition will better serve our region during this event by providing an additional option for the participating communities. The Brownsville Landfill has provided these services to the LRGVDC for several previous Road-to-Recycling events. The SWAC unanimously approved the Brownsville Landfill to continue to implement these services. ***Commissioner Rick Salinas made a motion to approve both proposals as presented. Commissioner David Garza seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

2. Consideration and Action to Approve Resolution 2021-01 Proclaiming April as National Fair Housing Month and Supporting Awareness of Fair Housing

Mr. Carrera reported that the principles of fair housing are not only a national law and national policy, but a fundamental human concept and entitlement for all Americans. National Fair Housing Month in April provides an opportunity for all Americans to recognize that complete success in the goal of equal housing opportunity can only be accomplished with the help and cooperation of all Americans. **Mayor Trey Mendez made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-01 as presented. Ms. Maricela De Leon seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.**

Program Status Reports

The status reports were provided in the meeting packet for review, and Mr. Carrera announced the following meetings:

- Region M meeting will be held virtually on Wednesday, April 7 at 10:30 am
- LRG-15 Flood Planning Group meeting has been moved from April 1 to April 21
- Regional Water Resource Advisory Committee meeting will be held virtually on April 21 at 2:30 pm

He brought the reservoir level report to the Board's attention and noted that our region is currently in a drought situation. President Darling stated that for those cities that have ordinances, we have now moved into another level and encouraged those city leaders to be aware of water conservation and drought contingency procedures.

The program status reports were provided in the meeting packet for review.

B. Health & Human Services

Director Jose Gonzalez was recognized to address the following items:

Program Action Items

1. Consideration and Action to Add Vendors (Contractors) to the Vendor Pool

Mr. Gonzalez informed the Board that in response to the open enrollment for the Direct Purchased Services contractor pool, the Area Agency on Aging received one (1) additional application. The Advisory Council recommends the addition of Progressive Skill Home Health Services from Pharr to provide Homemaker and Respite In-Home care. **Commissioner Edward Gonzalez made a motion to approve Progressive Skill Home Health Services as a vendor (contractor) to the Area Agency on Aging Vendor Pool. Mayor George Rivera seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.**

2. Consideration and Action to Amend Amigos Del Valle Budget

Mr. Gonzalez informed the Board that the Advisory Council recommends an amendment to the Amigos Del Valle Budget. The recommended budget change includes prior year, prior year COVID, and the COVID supplemental funding approved in December. The amendment will affect congregate meals and home delivered meals. **Ms. Veronica Gonzalez made a motion to approve the amended Amigos Del Valle budget as presented. Commissioner David Garza seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.**

President Darling asked for a report at the next meeting on how the Meals on Wheels program works in order to help answer some of the questions posed by Board Members.

Program Status Reports

The status reports on Senior Centers/Nutrition Sites and the American Rescue Plan Act funding were available for review in the meeting packet.

C. Public Safety

Program Action Items

Director of Public Safety Randall Snyder was recognized to report on the following items:

1. Consideration and Action to Approve Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) Prioritization List of FY 2021-22 Homeland Security Grants Division Regional Grant Applications

Mr. Snyder reported that the HSAC met on March 24 and recommends approval of the prioritization list for the FY 2021-22 Homeland Security Grants Division Regional Grant Applications. ***Ms. Maricela De Leon made a motion to approve the HSAC prioritization list of FY 2021-22 Homeland Security Grants Division Regional Grant Application as presented. Commissioner Rick Salinas seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

2. Consideration and Action to Approve Purchase of Telecommunicators Week Items

Mr. Snyder informed the Board that the week of April 11-17 is National Telecommunicators Week. The 9-1-1 program has consistently recognized our local tele-communicators for their dedication and hard work. This year staff would like to recognize them with tokens of our appreciation that feature the LRGVDC Public Safety 9-1-1 tele-communicator logos. The estimated cost for these items is \$46,634.97. This is a previously budgeted item approved by the Commission on State Emergency Communication (CSEC). As required by LRGVDC Procurement Policy, all procurements exceeding \$25,000 require approval from the Board of Directors. ***Ms. Maricela De Leon made a motion to approve the purchase of Telecommunicators Week Items as presented. Commissioner Edward Gonzalez seconded the motion and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

Upon conclusion of action President Darling thanked the ECOMMS/9-1-1 staff for their assistance in the homebound vaccination project by creating an interactive map of their locations and the locations of vaccination clinics.

Program Status Reports

The program status reports were provided in the meeting packet for review.

D. Transportation

Valley Metro Program Director Tom Logan was recognized to address the following:

Program Action Item

1. Consideration and Action to Approve Amendment Number 5 to Interlocal Agreement for Joint Development of Edinburg Transit Terminal

Mr. Logan stated that staff requests approval to finalize this project which will complete the terminal's first floor mixed use area, fulfill parking requirements, and implement necessary minor improvements. This second project of the Downtown Revitalization Streetscape will ensure the visibility and use of transit service, provide increased mobility and access for the elderly and disabled, improve safety, generate economic activity, and enhance the value of local property.

The amendment to the Interlocal Agreement reflects the updated expiration date of June 30, 2022 and includes additional funds that have been awarded through the FTA in the amount of \$800,000 with a \$200,000 local match from the Edinburg EDC. All other provisions of the Amendment dated December

2, 2014, not specifically in conflict with this amendment Number 5 shall remain the same.
Commissioner Rick Salinas made a motion to approve amendment number 5 to the Interlocal Agreement for joint development of the Edinburg Transit Terminal as presented. Ms. Maricela De Leon seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.

Program Status Reports

Upon conclusion of action Mr. Logan informed the Board that the program status reports were provided in the meeting packet for review.

RGVMPO Executive Director Andrew Canon was recognized and reported on transportation related legislation that is being considered.

Item 6. - New or Unfinished Business

Mr. Cruz announced that the Public Safety Program Orientation will be scheduled on Wednesday, April 28 at 11:30 am, prior to the Board Meeting. There being no further business to come before the Board, ***President Darling adjourned the meeting at 1:09 pm.***



FOR: Mayor Jim Darling, President

ATTEST:


Deborah Morales, Recording Secretary