

THE STATE OF TEXAS           §

COUNTY OF CAMERON         §

BE IT REMEMBERED on the 9th day of SEPTEMBER, 1994, there was conducted a SPECIAL PUBLIC Session of the Honorable Commissioners' Court of Cameron County, Texas, at the Courthouse thereof, in the City of Brownsville, Texas, for the purpose of transacting any and all business that may lawfully be brought before the same.

THE COURT MET AT:

PRESENT:

1:30 P. M.

ANTONIO O. GARZA, JR.  
COUNTY JUDGE

LUCINO ROSENBAUM, JR.  
COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT NO. 1

CARLOS H. CASCOS  
COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT NO. 2

JAMES R. MATZ  
COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT NO. 3

NATIVIDAD VALENCIA  
COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT NO. 4

INELDA T. GARCIA                 Deputy  
COUNTY CLERK

ABSENT:  
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The meeting was called to order by Judge Antonio O. Garza, Jr. He then asked Mr. Dagoberto Barrera, resident, to lead the Court and the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

The Court considered the following matters as posted and filed for Record in the Office of the County Clerk on September 6, 1994, at 1:18 P. M.:

(1) **AUTHORIZATION TO HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING  
ON POSSIBLE PROPERTY TAX INCREASE**

Judge Garza clarified that the purpose of the Public Hearing was for the possible tax increase and added that the Hearing on the proposed Budget and the adoption of a proposed tax increase would be held on Tuesday, September 13, 1994, at 1:30 P.M., said announcement required by Statutes. He added that at the end of the Public Hearing, the Court would continue the Engineering Department Workshop that had recessed earlier in the day.

Upon motion by Commissioner Matz, seconded by Commissioner Rosenbaum and carried unanimously, the Hearing on the possible property tax increase was opened for public comment.

At this time, Ms. Rosemary Martinez, Budget Officer, stated that the Budget for Fiscal Year 1995 was filed September 8, 1994, at the Offices of the County Clerk and the County Auditor. She stated that the proposed tax rate for Fiscal Year 1995 being considered was .320483, or thirty-two (.32) cents for every hundred dollar valuation, and added that the tax rate for the current Fiscal Year was in the amount of .310707 cents, that being a penny difference in tax rates between Fiscal Year 1994 and 1995.

Ms. Martinez stated that the break down of the thirty-two (32) cents was as follows: twenty-three and a half (23½) cents were for the General Fund Operations, three (3) cents were for the Road and Bridge Operations, and five and half (5½) cents were to service the debt on the Limited Tax and Unlimited Tax Bond Issues.

She stated that the tax rate being proposed included the maximum three percent (3%) increase, that by law does not require a Public Hearing, and seven-tenths (7/10) of a penny to fund Project Road Map, and added that Project Road Map was successfully approved by a two thirds (⅔) majority vote on August 14, 1993.

Commissioner Cascos questioned whether seventy percent (70%) of the one (1) penny increase was directly attributed to Project Road Map and Ms. Martinez responded that it was, and explained that the increase would equate to dollars as follows: on a home valued at \$50,000.00, assuming no changes to the property value, the taxes would increase by the amount of \$4.89. She added that of the \$4.89; the amount of \$3.69 was directly attributable to Project Road Map and the other \$1.20 would be for the General Fund and the Road and Bridge Fund.

At this time, Ms. Martinez reviewed the Projects that were either initiated during the current year or Projects that would be completed the next year and would impact the Budget as illustrated in the following "Transmittal Letter" attached to the Proposed Budget:

She stated that the major Projects included the construction of the Darrel B. Hester Juvenile Detention Center, which was in response to a Court Order that deemed the present facility as an inadequate building for the type of service being provided.

Judge Garza clarified that the Court Order was issued by the Judges that were sitting, directing and mandating that certain actions take place, and not the Commissioners' Court.

Ms. Martinez explained that the Court Order was issued by the District Court, and added that the District Judges, County Court-at-Law Judges, and the County Judge served on the Board for the Juvenile Probation Department. She stated that the Project had been on the planning stages for about two (2) years and that 3.1 million dollars were to be used for the construction of the facility out of the 5.5 million dollar Bond Issue.

She stated that the Court determined that approximately 1.8 million dollars of the Bond Issue were to be used to either expand or construct a new Adult Jail Facility in order to relieve the over crowding situation.

She stated that \$600,000.00 of the Bond Issue was designated for the third Project, that being the Health Clinic on Iowa Street, and added that the Dancy Building was not adequate for the services being provided.

Ms. Martinez stated that in late April, 1994, the State responded to the jail over crowding situation by appropriating about 25 million dollars for emergency "temporary housing". She stated that several Counties were approached and offered about \$4,000.00 a bed, in order to help add beds to the existing facilities either as temporary or permanent beds. She stated that Cameron County was offered \$761,000.00 to add 192 beds to the existing facilities.

She explained that the Court directed staff to study the matter, and because there were 1.8 million dollars in Bond money for an Adult Jail, the Court decided to use the State money for operations in order to help reduce the burden on the local taxpayers.

She stated that the 20,000 square foot facility was built at a cost of \$900,000.00. She added that the Facility was opened and the necessary jail guards had been included in the Detention Center Budget, and added that the Commission on Jail Standards dictated the number of prisoners per floor guards; that being a ratio of one (1) guard for every forty-eight (48) prisoners.

She stated that in addition to the Construction Projects, Cameron County sold \$2,000,000.00 for Phase One of Project Road Map, in order to begin the Right-of-Way acquisitions that would be donated to the State. She added that the State would pay for the construction of the infrastructures.

She stated that an additional \$1,500,000.00 in Certificate of Obligations were sold to begin Phase 1 of the renovation of the Dancy Building and added that the Projects were "phased" in order to keep the impact on the Tax Rate at a minimum.

Ms. Martinez stated that the Cameron Park Community Center was also completed, and added that Texas A & M University provided the Architect students and the funding to construct the building and Cameron County purchased the land. She stated that the Center was currently servicing about 3,000 people on a monthly basis.

Ms. Martinez reviewed the major initiatives for the future, including the Bridge Improvement Projects in connection with the creation of Drainage District No. 5, and the proposed Los Tomates Bridge.

At this time, she reviewed the major Budget changes to the General Fund as detailed on Pages No. 6 and No. 7 of the Budget "Transmittal Letter". She stated that the Budget revenues were expected to increase by the amount of \$1,736,828.00 and the expenditures were projected to increase by \$1,787,254.00, and added that seventy-two percent

(72%) of the increase was directly attributable to Law Enforcement expenses. She stated that of the forty-five (45) position being added to the General Fund Budget, thirty-nine (39) positions were for law enforcement.

Ms. Martinez briefly reviewed the following Funds included in the Budget: the Road and Bridge Fund, Law Library Fund, Lateral Road Fund, Drug Task Force Fund, and the Enterprise Funds which included the Bridge Systems and Parks Systems Funds.

Commissioner Cascos asked Ms. Martinez to relate the comparisons done of other Counties of similar situations and sizes, regarding their County Taxes, noting that Cameron County was the only County in South Texas with an "A" Bond rating.

Commissioner Matz compared Brazoria County with one hundred (144) less employees and their tax rate fifteen percent (15%) higher than Cameron County, that being .3575 per hundred dollar valuation and Jefferson County with a tax rate of .341 per hundred dollar valuation.

Judge Garza remarked that Cameron County has raised the tax less during the past five (5) years, than most entities have done in the past Fiscal Year. He added that "there ought to be a rule against anybody that wears a robe to work, spending our money". He stated that Federal and State District Judges were issuing mandates without funds attached to them, and added that problems were being solved in Austin and Washington and creating them in the communities like Cameron County.

Commissioner Matz stated that the increase being considered was three tenths (3/10) of a cent and added that the seven tenths (7/10) of a cent was mandated by the voters with the approved Project Road Map.

Ms. Martinez stated that "if Project Road Map had not been approved, the Court would not be having the Public Hearing because the portion of the tax that triggered the hearing was the tax for Project Road Map".

Commissioner Matz noted that "the difference of the seven tenths (7/10) of a cent, that being less the three tenths (3/10) of a cent, that probably eighty five percent (85%) to ninety percent (90%) of that income was directly attributable to 'unfunded mandates', at the Federal, State and Local levels".

At this time, the following individuals expressed their concerns regarding the proposed tax increase:

Mr. Dagoberto Barrera, Brownsville,

Ms. Ruth Remeur, La Feria, and

Mr. Jaerl William, La Feria.

**NOTE: Judge Garza and Commissioner Rosenbaum left the Court Room.**

Mr. Woody Peoples, People Against Violent Crimes, expressed his support for the tax increase and the proposed Budget.

Hearing and sensing no further comments, upon motion by Commissioner Matz, seconded by Commissioner Valencia and carried unanimously, the Public Hearing was closed.

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# WORKSHOP

(1) **DISCUSS THE COUNTY ENGINEERING OFFICE  
ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE  
THOROUGHFARE PLAN, OFF SYSTEM BRIDGE  
INVENTORY, AND WATER AND WASTEWATER  
PLAN**

Upon motion by Commissioner Matz, seconded by Commissioner Valencia and carried unanimously, the Workshop was reconvened.

At this time, Mr. Rolando Martinez, Health Administrator, requested clarification from the Court regarding the Nuisance Order dealing with "dilapidated" buildings.

He indicated that his Department did not have the expertise to condemn dilapidated structures and that the County Engineering Department did not have the "authority" to handle the condemnations of dilapidated buildings.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the matter and the suggestion was made to have the County Auditor, the County Counsel, the Health Department and the County Engineer meet and prepare recommendations and procedures for the Court to consider.

At this time, Mr. Ray Rodriguez, Chief Sanitarian, gave a brief report as to the activities regarding illegal dumping as well as the activities being conducted in Hidalgo County.

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There being no further business to come before the Court, upon motion by Commissioner Matz, seconded by Commissioner Valencia and carried unanimously, the meeting was **ADJOURNED**.

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APPROVED this **18th** day of **OCTOBER, 1994**.

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**ANTONIO O. GARZA, JR.**  
**COUNTY JUDGE**

**ATTEST:**

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**JOE G. RIVERA,**  
**COUNTY CLERK AND EX-OFFICIO CLERK**  
**OF THE COMMISSIONERS' COURT OF**  
**CAMERON COUNTY, TEXAS**