

The Honorable J. Edgar Ruiz, County Judge, called this meeting to order, whereupon the following items were had to wit:

## REGULAR AGENDA

### **ITEM 1. PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE HIDALGO COUNTY 1997 BUDGET**

Judge Ruiz opened this public hearing and addressed the public and stated them the procession of the items. They will have the public hearing to allow the audience present time to make some comments. They will adopt the budget primarily due to the outcome of that dictating the tax rate. He advised them that whoever was their for comments for the taxes, they will have to comment on the budget otherwise their tax comments will be moot. All departmental requests totaled \$46,634,906. He went on to explain how they broke down these requests. They take how much money they have and how much money will be generated in revenue. If they were to keep the same tax rate as 1996, they would bring in \$44,537,000. There is a difference of \$2,100,000. Of the total revenue, \$37,002,000 come from tax collected. The remaining amount comes from miscellaneous fees that are collected by departments. The budget will be balanced by generating more revenue and reducing cost by \$1,700,000. They plan to raise taxes 1.94 cents to produce more revenue. Of this tax hike, .94 cents goes into the General Fund. The remainder is to go into Road & Bridge. During further discussion, there was Q and A regarding the system of checks and balances as well as pay raises. Judge Ruiz went on to state some of the cuts that have been made. They have froze all new employment, all new capital outlay, they have raised all employees under minimum wage to bring them up to the new minimum wage, they have cut all new travel, all auto allowance. In terms of requests, they have increased the Purchasing Department approximately \$300,000, they have funded a visiting judge court, they made up for a deficit that was established by the Auditor in the enterprise fund, no monies have been put up for indigent health care over the 10%, no money has been put towards computerization. If these cuts were to happen, the general fund balance or 1997 will be \$957,638. At this time, Judge Ruiz gave the public a chance to voice their opinion on the budget or any department. Juan Fuentes addressed the Court in regard to be Auditor's budget. He felt that this budget should be increased just as the budget of the Purchasing Department is being increased. He felt that the Auditor's office should have more people as he has requested in the past and the Court turned him down. Ester Maria Sanchez and Yolanda Montemayor then addressed the Court with regards to the Health Department. She felt that the clinic in Hidalgo should be funded to remain open and also that health be a priority just like any other budget. Scott Stripling stated that he felt that the budget should be worked in a different manner as opposed to raising taxes. He felt that the tax base should remain low so that they can attract more businesses and address the money issues for the departments. Ramiro Castellano stated that he is trying to recoup some of the monies that the Commission is proposing to cut of his budget. He would like to at least like to increase his budget so that he can maintain and upgrade his fleet. Judge Ruiz addressed the Health care issue and stated that the cuts were a minimal. All staff that has been approved up to now, will be there in 1997. Rudy De la Vina addressed the Court and stated that he had requested additional employees which he did not get. A member of the audience felt that they should get those individuals to generate more revenue. She went on to state that she has seen boxes and boxes of bills that have not been processed. The Commission expressed their comments regarding the budget issues and expressed their overall contention with this. Judge Ruiz stated that he was not happy with the prioritizing of this budget. He felt that if certain departments would have been consolidated, primarily road and bridge and parks, they could have saved the tax payers half of what is being proposed. He is forming a petition to have a county would referendum to force the Commission to consolidate these funds. He also stated that there will be a deficit in the fund balance because of the order by the Board of Judges and them funding these other departments that just addressed the Court. He will call for Road and Bridge and Park Fund consolidation. He is recommending that the fund balance be zeroed out to fund these departments. Commissioner Garces commented on the Warrant Officers. He felt that these positions should be abolished. The Commission was split on the issue of these officers. After brief comments, **Judge Ruiz closed this public hearing.**

**NO ACTION****ITEM 2. ADOPT 1997 HIDALGO COUNTY BUDGET**

Judge Ruiz opened by proposing to the Court that they place \$200,000, \$200,000 more be placed into Indigent Health Care, \$278,000 the placed into the Sheriff's Office and that \$35,000 the placed into direct assistance for staff under Rudy De la Vina's department and also \$100,000 into be allocated for the purchase of hardware and software for computers in the County. This totals out to \$813,000 and this will come from the fund balance. Commissioner Garces was proposing to abolish the Warrant Officers as well. **Commissioner Sanchez was in favor of this. He then made a motion to accept the Judge's recommendation and fund the departments as requested to come from the anticipated fund balance and accept Commissioner Garces' recommendation to abolish the Warrant Officers. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rosel.** Commissioner Arcaute asked if this should be done at this time being that there was not enough information to make this type of decision. **Commissioner Sanchez then recanted the acceptance of the amendment to abolish the warrant officers.** There was some question as to what to vote on first. **Commissioner Arcaute clarified that they should vote on the amendment first even though the amendment is being rejected. At this time, Judge Ruiz called for a vote on the abolishment of the Warrant Officers.**

***MOTION DEFEATED******(COMMISSIONERS GARCES AND ROSEL IN FAVOR)******(JUDGE RUIZ AND COMMISSIONERS ARCAUTE AND SANCHEZ AGAINST)***

Judge Ruiz then called for a vote on the amended budget to include the Auditor \$200,000, Indigent Health Care \$200,000, staff \$35,000 and computer hardware and software \$100,000 and \$278,000 for the Sheriff's Office coming directly from the fund balance.

***MOTION CARRIED******(EXHIBIT A)***

Judge Ruiz then moved on to the Road and Bridge Budget. He was proposing the consolidation of this budget. The current budget is \$6,796,365.47. He is also asking that 50% of the proposed tax increase of a penny for this fund be abolished. He feels that if they reduce this by this much, they can still achieve what they want to achieve through consolidation. **Commissioner Arcaute so moved and Judge Ruiz seconded the motion.** Commissioner Sanchez expressed his discontent with this consolidation. Judge Ruiz felt that this would work. **The motion was then put to a vote.**

***MOTION DIED (ROAD & BRIDGE NOT CONSOLIDATED)******(JUDGE RUIZ AND COMM. ARCAUTE IN FAVOR)******(COMM. SANCHEZ, ROSEL AND GARCES AGAINST)******(EXHIBIT A)***

Judge Ruiz then went to the park fund and he would also like to consolidate this fund for investment into parks vs. maintenance of parks. Judge Ruiz feels that if this is consolidated, there will be more parks for the County. **Commissioner Arcaute so moved and was seconded by Judge Ruiz.** Commissioners Sanchez and Garces agreed with this issue. Commissioner Sanchez felt that this might have a better effect that consolidating Road and Bridge. Judge Ruiz disagreed. **The motion was put to a vote.**

***MOTION CARRIED (PARK FUND CONSOLIDATED)******(COMM. ROSEL OPPOSED)***

Judge Ruiz is now requesting a motion for the debt of the County. There is currently a debt in the amount of .0168 total. **A motion was made by Commissioner Rosel and was seconded by Commissioner Garces to approve.**

***MOTION CARRIED***

**ITEM 3. SET TAX RATE FOR YEAR 1996**

Judge Ruiz stated that the tax rate would include other issues not discussed because they are set by other entities. The taxes are as follows: General Operation Fund - .4286, Road and Bridge - 1 penny, Certificates of Obligation - 1.68 pennies, Parks - 1 penny. Now these are debts that were incurred from previous years. Road District #5 - .25, Fire District #1 - 2.95, Fire District #2 - 3 pennies, Fire District #3 - 1.95, Fire District #4 - 2.86, Weslaco Interest and Sinking Fund - .3587, Weslaco M & O - .3647, La Villa - .4472, La Villa Maintenance & Preservation of improvements-.3610, Edinburg ISD - interest and sinking fund - .2454, Edinburg ISD Operations-\$1.1496, McAllen ISD interest and sinking - .2443, McAllen ISD maintenance and preservation - 1.2057, Sharyland ISD interest and sinking - .3040, Sharyland ISD maintenance - 1.1060, Weslaco ISD interest and sinking - .3576, Weslaco ISD maintenance - 1.0399, South Texas Community College interest and sinking - .20, South Texas Community College maintenance - .80, South Texas ISD - .370. All these rates will affect the county tax rate. **A motion was made by Commissioner Rosel and was seconded by Commissioner Garces to set the tax rate.**

**MOTION CARRIED (TAX RATE ADOPTED)**

**JUDGE RUIZ OPPOSED**

**(EXHIBIT B)**

**A motion was made by Commissioner Arcaute and was seconded by Commissioner Rosel to adjourn.**

***MOTION CARRIED***

**There being no further business to come before this Commissioner's Court, this meeting is adjourned.**

**DRAINAGE DISTRICT**

The Honorable J. Edgar Ruiz, County Judge, called this Drainage District Board Meeting to order, whereupon the following items were had to wit:

**ITEM 1. PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE HIDALGO COUNTY BUDGET**

Judge Ruiz stated that the proposed revenue for 1997 is \$3,576,858, proposed expenditure is \$3,106,785.24 and the proposed tax rate is 4.09 all to operations. There being no comments on this budget, Judge Ruiz moved on to the adoption of this budget.

***NO ACTION***

**ITEM 2. ADOPT 1997 HIDALGO COUNTY BUDGET**

**A motion was made by Commissioner Sanchez and was seconded by Commissioner Rosel to approve the 1997 Drainage District Budget as proposed.**

***MOTION CARRIED***

**ITEM 3. SET TAX RATE FOR YEAR 1997**

A motion was made by Commissioner Arcaute and was seconded by Commissioner Garces to set the tax rate at 4.09.

***MOTION CARRIED***

A motion was made by Commissioner Arcaute and was seconded by Commissioner Rosel to adjourn.

***MOTION CARRIED***

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS DRAINAGE DISTRICT BOARD, THIS MEETING STANDS ADJOURNED.**