

AGENDA ITEM BRIEFING

Commissioners Court – July 14, 2020

AI Number: 76343

Information: Requesting authority to pay online transaction convenience fees in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency as necessary and eligible under the CARES Act Relief Fund for the period in which the County COVID-19 Emergency Declaration is in effect.

Description of AI: (A) Approval of expenditures; (B) Approval of funds transfer

Funding Source: CARES Act Relief Fund

Account No.: 0-1287-441-42-115-096-0-855

Requested by: Sergio Cruz, Budget Officer

Department: Budget & Management

Prepared by: Merlen Munoz, Budget Analyst

Department: Budget & Management

Background:

On March 17, 2020, pursuant to the authority under Texas Government Code Section 418.108, Hidalgo County Judge Richard Cortez issued a Declaration of Local Disaster for Public Health Emergency due to the imminent threat arising from the Coronavirus (COVID-19). On March 22, 2020, in accordance with Texas Government Code Section 418.108(b), the Commissioners Court of Hidalgo County issued an Order of Continuance of Declaration of Local Disaster for Public Health Emergency that affirmed the activation of the Hidalgo County Emergency Management Plan and extends the Declaration of Local Disaster.

On March 24, 2020, in an effort to minimize group gatherings in County Facilities which could spread viruses and endanger the health and safety of the public and employees and encourage alternative means of making payments during the period in which the County COVID-19 Emergency Declaration is in effect, Commissioners' Court approved to pay the online transaction convenience fees. The credit card transaction convenience fees were further extended on May 12, 2020 to include all transactions assessed through the eScofflaw hosted application portal (Tax Office/JP/DC/CC Courts and Interlocal Agreement Cities).

Compliance:

The continued payments of online transaction convenience fees referenced herein were approved by Hidalgo County in an effort to protect public health. The County Judge was authorized to sign any required documents and contracts were amended with Third Party Vendors authorizing the County to pay for online transaction convenience fees and are in effect via monthly billing.

Administration:

Approval of the item is consistent with Hidalgo County's intended purpose to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The goal is to provide efficient and effective delivery of services in light of change in technology, the public's expectations, and the area's population and economy. Hidalgo County is taking the lead in responding to the COVID-19 health emergency for our community as a whole.

Agenda Item Caption

1. Discussion, consideration, and action to approve the ongoing payment of online transaction convenience fees for a period in which the County COVID-19 Emergency Declaration is in effect, as necessary CARES Act Relief Fund expenditures to cover costs not accounted for in the current budget and cannot be lawfully funded by line item, allotment or allocation in connection with the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency; the Court having reviewed the Agenda Item Briefing, herein finds that such continued expenditure is reasonable and necessary for the intended use.

2. Approval of intradepartmental transfer to fund projected expenditures.

Recommendations:

The CRF – Incurred Cost Committee recommends approval of the continued payments for online transaction convenience fees, as they are reasonable and necessary expenditures to address the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency. Expenditures will be charged to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Relief Grant Fund available to address the COVID-19 public health emergency.