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## **AGENDA ITEM BRIEFING**

### **Commissioners Court – August 11, 2020**

**AI Number: 76802**

**Project Number: 2020-210**

**Project Name: Hidalgo County Public Wi-Fi 2020 Project**

**Description of AI: Award County-wide Wi-Fi Project & Approve Agreement**

**Funding Source: CARES Act Relief Fund (TBD)**

**Requested by: Daniel Salinas**

**Department: IT**

**Prepared by: Heidi Garcia Ortiz**

**Department: Purchasing Dept.**

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#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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 418.408(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.

The Hidalgo County Information Technology Department in response to the COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency, and to identify and pursue the development of innovative learning strategies, will implement a solution for a Public Internet Access Wi-Fi network. The Public Internet Access Wi-Fi Network will provide free internet access to identified areas within each precinct that will enable online distance learning as well as improving telework capabilities for families that do not have the means to provide internet access. The system will be designed to support all wireless devices, including laptops, iPads, and other personal devices used to access online classes and telework capabilities. Online learning will assist in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in classrooms and schools, protecting our children, our teachers, and all school staff.

In an effort to facilitate compliance with current public health measures related to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the County of Hidalgo established the Hidalgo County Public Wi-Fi 2020 Project to assist the citizens of the County with distance learning, including technological

improvements, as well as improving telework capability, in connection with school and business closings.

## **COMPLIANCE**

In compliance with the national preparedness goal under the Presidential Policy Directive (PPD-8), the Homeland Security Presidential Directives 5 (HSPD-5) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Capability 12 and pursuant to the 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, requests the Court's approval for the necessary services to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Approval of this item is consistent with Hidalgo County's intended purpose to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and continue to provide necessary services to Hidalgo County residents in a safe, clean, hygienic environment.

## **AGENDA ITEM CAPTION**

- A. "Discussion, consideration, and action to approve a necessary CARES Act Relief Fund expenditure to cover cost not accounted for in the current budget and cannot be lawfully funded by line item, allotment or allocation, for Hidalgo County in order to assist with County functions and compliance with public health measures related to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency with establishing a Wi-Fi Project to assist the citizens with distance learning, including technology improvements, as well as improving telework capability; the Court having reviewed the Agenda Item Briefing herein find that such expenditure is reasonable and necessary for the intended use.";
- B. Requesting exemption from competitive bidding/procurement requirements under Texas Local Government Code, 262.024 (a)(1) and (2) attached herein;
- C. Approval to submit a Wireless Pole Attachment License Agreement between Magic Valley Electric Cooperative (MVEC), Inc. and Hidalgo County for the installation of equipment supporting the Hidalgo County Wi-Fi Project subject to legal review.
- D. Approval to submit a Wireless Pole Attachment License Agreement between American Electric Power (AEP) and Hidalgo County for the installation of equipment supporting the Hidalgo County Wi-Fi Project subject to legal review.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Approval of the item will allow Hidalgo County to proceed with the current public health directive emphasizing the importance of preventing and mitigating the spread of COVID-19. Expenditures will be charged to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and/or other assistance available to address the COVID-19 public health emergency.