

AGENDA ITEM
BRIEFING

Commissioners Court – June 15, 2021

AI Number: 81234

Information: Requesting authority to pay adult detention room and board expenditures in response to the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis as necessary and eligible under the America Rescue Plan Act Fund for the period in which the COVID-19 economic crisis is in effect.

Description of AI: (A) Approval of expenditures

Funding Source: America Rescue Plan Fund

Account No.: 1-1290-441-42-115-1014-1-590

Requested by: Sergio Cruz, Budget Officer

Department: Budget & Management

Prepared by: Damaris SanMiguel, Division Manager III, Budget and Management

Department: Budget & Management

Background:

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, the Hidalgo County District Courts and County Courts at Law have been under limited operations during the COVID 19 Emergency Declaration causing a delay on the number of cases heard. The reduced number of case hearings contribute to the increase of the jail population to a level that surpassed the capacity of the County's Adult Detention facility and forced our county to send inmates to other out of the county detention facilities. As a result, the county's room and board expenditures have drastically increased and have placed a substantial burden to the county's operating budget.

On May 10, 2021 the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced the launch of the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, established by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, to provide \$350 billion in emergency funding for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments.

Compliance:

The decision to suspend the operations of the Hidalgo County District Courts and County Courts at Law was approved by the State of Texas Office of Court Administration in an effort to protect public health.

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 adult detention room and board expenditures for a period in which the COVID-19 Public Health and Economic crisis is in effect, as necessary, use America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds 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 and economic crisis; the Court having reviewed the Agenda Item Briefing, herein finds that such continued expenditure is reasonable and necessary for the intended use.

Recommendations:

The Department of Budget and Management recommends approval of the used of ARPA funds for the continued payments of the room and board expenditures as they are reasonable and necessary to address the increase cost of housing of inmates due to a reduction in judicial operations resulting from the COVID-19 public health crisis. Expenditures will be charged to the American Rescue Plan Act Fund.