



**THE STATE OF TEXAS §
CITY OF BROWNSVILLE §
COUNTY OF CAMERON §**

MINUTES of a Regular Meeting of the City Commission of the City of Brownsville, Texas, held on Tuesday, August 4, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. at the City Commission Chambers, located at 1001 East Elizabeth Street and via Webex Teleconference Meeting by logging on at:

<https://brownsvilletx.webex.com/brownsvilletx/j.php?MTID=mb0f8d1240d8f166059ae34c036f78f88>

The following City Commission members were present:

JOHN COWEN, JR. Mayor

COMMISSIONERS:

TINO VILLARREAL, At-Large “A”

BRYAN L. MARTINEZ, District 1

LINDA C. MACIAS, District 2

PEDRO E. CARDENAS, District 4

NURITH GALONSKY, At-Large “B”

GUSTAVO DE LEÓN, District 3

The following staff members were present:

ALAN GUARD City Manager

FELIX SAUCEDA Deputy City Manager/Chief of Police

DOROTEO GARCIA Deputy City Manager

WILL TREVINO, City Attorney

JENNIFER AVENDANO, First Assistant City Attorney

MARINA ZOLEZZI, Interim Assistant City Manager

EFREN TRUJILLO, Interim Chief of Staff

MAYRA A. RIOS City Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

a) ROLL CALL

A quorum being present, Mayra Rios, City Secretary, read the call to order to consider the matters as posted and filed for the record in the Office of the City Secretary pursuant to the Texas Open Meetings Act.

Mayor John Cowen, Jr., called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.
Mayor John Cowen, Jr., Commissioner Tino Villarreal, Commissioner Bryan L. Martinez, Commissioner Linda C. Macias, Commissioner Gustavo De Leon, and Commissioner Pedro Cardenas attended the meeting in person.
At 05:00 p.m., Commissioner Nurith Galonsky attended the meeting virtually.

b) INVOCATION

Pastor Brad Burkes delivered the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAGS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND STATE OF TEXAS

The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag and the Texas Flag was led by member of the Boy Scouts Troop 11 Allen Hobbs, Mayor and City Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mayra Rios City Secretary noted that 30 preregistered speakers were identified, with five indicating they did not wish to speak.

Motion: Motion was made by City Commissioner Bryan Martinez, seconded by City Commissioner Linda Macias, to approve to suspend the speaker limit and allow the remaining 25 individuals to address the council, each with a three minute time limit. The vote was cast 7 for, 0 against . The motion carried unanimously.

Yolanda Speece, 305 W. Madison St., Brownsville, Texas, expressed concerns about her previous interactions with city and police leadership, stating . She urged officials to consider how decisions affect residents and reelection prospects.

Raul Juarez, 2425 Barnard Rd, Brownsville, Texas submitted a Public Comment Form but wished to register his comments directly to the Commission expressing opposition to the Data Center.

Hugo Izaguirre, 7006 Laguna Del Rey Dr., Brownsville Texas , a lifelong Brownsville resident, stated deep concern about the proximity of the proposed data center to homes, schools, and businesses.

Luis Segure, 7360 Abelard Dr., Brownsville, Texas, expressed relief that council members acknowledged resident concerns. She warned about the practice of NDAs between elected officials and corporations in other cities and asked the council to avoid signing any NDAs related to data centers.

Alexis Diaz, 1744 Cathage Ct., Brownsville, Texas, stated that Brownsville's growth should not come at the cost of local needs. He supported pausing data center development until benefits can be proven.

Victoria Ocegüera 175 Downs Dr., Brownsville, Texas, argued that Brownsville is already facing extreme water scarcity and that data centers would worsen conditions. She emphasized

environmental impacts, especially noise affecting native and migratory birds, and encouraged investments in wildlife focused development rather than data centers.

Diablo Velez, 1254 E. Tyler St., Brownsville, Texas, submitted a Public Comment Form but he rescinded his request to address the City Commission.

Anaid Zapata, 1233 Calle Pluton, Brownsville, Texas, from Ground Game and DSA, supported the Brownsville Workers First initiative on the agenda. She urged the city to prioritize small businesses, local hiring, worker protections, and union collaboration.

Etianne Rosas, 33 Shadowbrook Lane, Brownsville, Texas, argued that data centers present significant financial risks, citing national trends in AI related debt, rapid hardware obsolescence, and declining profitability. He encouraged investing in essential services rather than data center development.

Rosa Gonzalez, 405 Valley Oak Cr., Los Fresnos, Texas, submitted a Public Comment Form but wished to register her comments directly to the Commission expressing opposition to the Data Center.

Amelia Murillo, 41546 Schafer Rd, Brownsville, Texas, opposed data centers and warned against allowing corporations to influence decisions at the expense of local residents and resources, and she emphasized “people over profit.”

Nancy Cruz, 4820 Mckenzie Rd, Brownsville, Texas, urged careful evaluation of data center development. She cited risks to the electric grid, rising utility costs, water scarcity, and limited permanent job creation. She recommended updates to zoning codes to restrict high resource industrial uses.

Nathan Watson, 51 Alberte Rd., Brownsville, Texas, a student and local resident, opposed data centers near neighborhoods already affected by industrial development. He emphasized ongoing drought conditions and urged learning from Corpus Christi’s challenges. He supported imposing a moratorium.

Keyla Garcia, 624 Pera Ave, Brownsville, Texas, expressed concern about the data center.

Jesse Gonzalez, 1001 E. Elizabeth St., Brownsville, Texas, urged the council to institute a full moratorium and suggested a three to five year research period to properly study impacts on electricity, cost of living, and environmental restoration.

Veronique Medrano, 980 Plantation St., Brownsville, Texas, emphasized Brownsville’s past recognition for preserving natural resources. She argued the city lacks infrastructure to support large data centers and cited water use statistics from San Antonio. She advocated for a one year moratorium and stronger protections.

Rebekah Hinojosa, 3005 Old Alice Rd, Brownsville, Texas, submitted a Public Comment Form but wished to register her comments directly to the Commission expressing opposition to the Data Center.

Mary Therese Gallegos, 3160 North Buckingham Court, Brownsville, Texas, expressed concern about the data center.

Jacqueline Morales, 142 Acacia Dr., Brownsville, Texas, expressed opposition to local data centers. She highlighted quality of life impacts, environmental concerns, and rising costs seen in other communities.

Christopher Basaldu, 651 Old Port Isabel Rd, Brownsville, Texas, opposed data centers, arguing they are environmentally harmful, disproportionately targeted at communities of color, and financially unstable.

Adhlemmy Sanchez, 478 Rey Juan Carlos St., Brownsville, Texas, represented multiple community organizations and emphasized long term responsibility to protect Brownsville's environment for future generations. She supported a one year moratorium, stronger zoning setbacks, environmental studies, protections for water and noise, and careful evaluation of tax abatements.

Bebe Jowell 23405 FM 1846, Brownsville, Texas, expressed concerns regarding the Data Center.

Italia Salazar, 3812 Southmost Rd, Brownsville, Texas, emphasized concerns about water usage, affordability, and the impacts on residents with fixed or limited incomes. She stated that data centers would create financial burdens and argued they are not beneficial to the community.

Marlane Reyna, 1615 W US HWY 77 lot 209, Brownsville, Texas, submitted a Public Comment Form but wished to register her comments directly to the Commission expressing opposition to the Data Center.

Brenda Garza, 76 Alan Dale, Brownsville, Texas, argued that data centers would require water the city does not have to spare and predicted increased financial burden on residents. She summarized her message as prioritizing water and food security.

Mikaela Martinez, 1609 W Schunior St., Brownsville, Texas, submitted a Public Comment Form but wished to register her comments directly to the Commission expressing opposition to the Data Center.

Kaled Foss, 2064 E Van Buren St., Brownsville, Texas, expressed concerns about industrial development near the border and its impacts on communities across the region, including Mexico.

Angelina Cortez, 514 W. Buchanan St., Brownsville, Texas, representing UTRGV College Democrats, emphasized youth perspectives and long term consequences of industrial projects. She opposed data centers due to drought conditions, environmental concerns, and cumulative impacts of other developments.

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE(S)

1) 2026 City of Brownsville Interdepartmental Call Audit

Yolanda De La Torre, Director of the Enterprise Project Management Office, explained that approximately a year and a half earlier, an interdepartmental call audit—similar to a “secret shopper” review—was conducted after a commissioner called several departments and identified inconsistencies in how staff answered phones and responded to callers. As a result, customer service training was initiated, and six cohorts, totaling around 120 employees, completed the

training. The EPMO conducted a follow up interdepartmental call audit and identified additional issues. The purpose of the presentation was to outline those gaps and describe corrective actions underway. The collected data will be used to develop a second phase of customer service training aimed at improving consistency in telephone interactions.

Ms. De La Torre provided background on the effort, noting that an initial audit in early 2024 was performed informally by Commissioner Villarreal revealed areas needing improvement. That audit led to the development of customer service training for the Parks Department, and subsequently a citywide audit in fall 2024. Between January 2025 and June 2026, twelve training courses were delivered across four cohorts, reaching 223 staff members. She summarized the findings of the 2026 audit, which involved 68 calls made to departments listed in the City's online directory between June 1 and June 4. Calls were evaluated based on compliance with the employee handbook, telephone etiquette standards, customer service expectations, and professional communication practices, using the same criteria as the 2024 audit for consistency. Key results included:

- Departmental responsiveness increased from 64% answered calls in 2024 to 72% in 2026.
- 17% of calls in 2026 were not answered, with additional calls marked "not applicable" due to disconnected numbers.
- Professionalism ratings improved from 52% meeting expectations in 2024 to 68% in 2026.
- Helpfulness increased from 55% to 65% meeting expectations.
- Overall communication showed the most significant improvement, rising from 46% meeting expectations in 2024 to 67% in 2026.

Recommendations were provided to department directors and city leadership, including continued use of online customer service training, developing standardized phone greetings, and ensuring staff are trained on internal call routing protocols to reduce caller frustration. Additional recommendations included alphabetizing directory listings, regularly reviewing publicly posted phone numbers, updating interactive voice response systems, and evaluating the need to publish individual staff numbers.

The Enterprise Project Management Office will conduct ongoing follow ups to ensure accuracy of publicly listed contact information.

In response to commissioner questions, she confirmed that calls were limited to regular business hours and acknowledged concerns regarding weekend accessibility. She referenced available alternatives such as email, the service portal app, and emergency and non emergency numbers. She noted that IT is working on automated tools, including AI supported call routing and the ServiceNow chatbot, to improve after hours triage.

City Commissioners expressed appreciation for the work and suggested exploring incentives through HR, incorporating customer service expectations into onboarding, and continuing annual audits for ongoing improvement.

2) Second Budget Worksession with City Commission for FY 2027. (Financial Services Department)

Stephe Muse, Financial Services Director, presented the City of Brownsville's second Fiscal Year 2027 budget workshop, beginning with a recap of the prior session. He reviewed the city's strategic planning efforts, findings from the citizen satisfaction survey, and recent legislative

impacts. Mr. Muse also revisited departmental requests and end-of-year projections to give context for the upcoming fiscal year.

He highlighted key elements of the proposed FY 2027 budget, including the second phase of the compensation plan, continued adjustments to align salaries with market rates, and a proposed minimum wage increase to \$15 per hour. Mr. Muse also discussed considerations for an additional employee holiday, noting strong staff preference for a flexible personal day. These items, he explained, were incorporated to support employee retention and organizational competitiveness.

Mr. Muse provided a detailed overview of the city's revenue outlook and tax rate options. While maintaining the current tax rate would leave an unfunded operational gap of approximately \$1 million, the voter approval tax rate would generate additional revenue to cover critical needs. He emphasized that even with the higher rate, not all departmental requests could be met, reflecting the ongoing challenge of balancing limited resources with growing demands.

The presentation outlined both funded and unfunded operational requests across departments. Funded items included enhancements in public safety, emergency management, IT security, street maintenance, and staffing expansions in key service areas. Unfunded needs included airport maintenance, additional code enforcement positions, planning support, and several facility improvements. Mr. Muse explained that prioritization was guided by strategic goals and citizen feedback, particularly in areas such as roads, public safety, parks, and cultural events.

Mr. Muse concluded by summarizing expenditures, internal service fund adjustments, special revenue allocations, and enterprise fund performance. He noted that the budget maintains stable proportional spending across major categories while supporting ongoing improvements through the capital improvement plan. He then invited commissioners to ask questions and provide directions as the budget process continues.

Commissioner Pedro Cardenas requested clarification on budget items related to board meeting transparency, specifically the lack of live streaming for certain boards. Staff explained that while meetings for the Board of Adjustment, Historic Preservation Commission, and Building Standards Commission are recorded through platforms like Teams or Webex, they are not streamed live on YouTube due to unfunded costs to expand the city's formal streaming system. Commissioner Cardenas also raised concerns about the quality of streaming for other Board and inquired about licensing costs for Accela software.

Staff confirmed that essential system functions remain supported under existing licenses, and the requested funds were only for optional feature enhancements.

Mayor John Cowen Jr. addressed broader budget policy considerations, observing that the city's conservative sales tax budgeting approach may delay funding for essential projects.

Alan Guard, City Manager, noted that while this policy protects the city during economic fluctuations, midyear amendments often fill gaps once revenues exceed conservative estimates. Mr. Guard emphasized the city's strong financial health, ongoing revenue generating initiatives—including methane gas sales and dark fiber leasing—and the commission's continued commitment to transparency, competitive employee compensation, and strategic investment in community priorities.

Maribel Guerrero, Director of Engineering and Public Works, provided an extensive update on major street reconstruction projects currently underway or in development. She reported steady progress on Coffee Road Phase I, Jeanette Road, Old Highway 77, and Wild Rose Lane, noting that each project includes complete roadway reconstruction, upgraded drainage, utility improvements, curbs, gutters, and multi-use sidewalks. Ms. Guerrero also highlighted upcoming

work for Coffee Road Phase II and Old Alice Road, both in the design and bidding phases, and emphasized continued coordination on intelligent transportation system upgrades, including modernization of traffic signals, real time monitoring equipment, and expanded fiber connectivity.

Joel Garcia, Director of Multimodal Transportation, gave an overview of several trail projects, including Monteo Trail Park, West Road Trail to the Sports Park, Southmost Nature Trail Phase V, and additional phases of the citywide trail network. He outlined current design timelines, bid evaluations, and construction progress, noting that these projects aim to improve pedestrian mobility and strengthen connections to parks and neighborhoods.

Diego Gomez, Capital Projects Financial Manager, then presented the five-year CIP, totaling \$158 million, with balanced funding between CO debt and grants. He detailed allocations for FY 2027 across departments—including landfill, engineering, parks, multimodal transportation, fire and EMS, airport, IT, and planning—while highlighting major upcoming facility upgrades, equipment replacements, historic preservation initiatives, and multiyear infrastructure investments.

Gilberto Salinas, President & CEO of the Greater Brownsville Economic Development Corporation (GBDC), presented an overview of the organization's recruitment strategy. He outlined recent lead generation efforts, prospect visits, and project conversions. Over the past year, the GBDC generated more than one thousand new jobs and facilitated approximately one hundred ninety-one million dollars in capital investment, with additional large scale projects currently under negotiation. The projected economic impact of both announced and pending projects is expected to reach several billion dollars over the next decade, significantly expanding the city's tax base and PUB's power load revenue.

Salvador Villalando, CPA and Director of Budget and Investments for the Greater Brownsville Economic Development Corporation (GBDC) also presented its proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget, which includes twenty-two million dollars in planned revenues, seventeen million dollars in expenditures, and a projected fund balance of sixteen million dollars. A portion of the revenue comes from one-time industrial land sales, specifically designated for development of the next phase of the Brownsville Tech District. Staff emphasized that these onetime revenues would not be used to fund ongoing operations.

Finally, Cori Peña, President and CEO of the Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation (BCIC), presented the Fiscal Year 2027 budget to the Mayor, City Commissioners, and city staff, expressing gratitude for their continued support and partnership. She emphasized BCIC's commitment to responsible stewardship and strategic investments that advance entrepreneurship, support small businesses, enhance community development, and improve quality of life.

Victoria Padron, Chief Operating Officer and Finance Program Director, outlined the balanced \$10.1 million budget, funded primarily by sales tax and supplemented by interest income, GBEDC partnerships, federal EDA funds, and carry forward dollars from FY 2026. She highlighted key allocations across operations, city quality of life projects, community development programs, entrepreneurship and innovation initiatives, strategic investments, city service contracts, and the Ebridge revolving loan fund. The budget, approved by the Board on July 27, is scheduled for first and second readings at upcoming commission meetings, with implementation expected to begin on October 1.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEM(S)

- 1) Consideration and **ACTION** to authorize the City Manager to execute a budgeted Group Critical Illness Interlocal Agreement with the Texas Municipal League Intergovernmental Risk Pool (TMLIRP), enabling eligible Pool members to obtain Group Critical Illness Coverage in accordance with House Bill 4144 of the 89th Texas Legislature. (Organizational Development & Human Resources)
- 2) Consideration and **ACTION** to authorize the City Manager, or designee, to negotiate and execute a professional services agreement with The Harbeck Company, Inc., in an amount not to exceed \$100,000, for training services, hiring assessments for various departments, including the Fire and Police Departments, leadership development, coaching, and related travel expenses. (Organizational Development & Human Resources)
- 3) Consideration and **ACTION** to approve the first one-year renewal of the Professional Service Agreement for Air Service Development Consulting Services (RFP ASC-89-0623) with Crawford, Murphy and Tilly, Inc for the Brownsville South Padre Island International Airport in the amount of \$104,187, as budgeted. (Airport Department).
- 4) Consideration and **ACTION** to authorize a professional services contract with Parkhill, Smith & Cooper, Inc. dba Parkhill on a Task Order basis for Contract No.153-26-AIR-RFQ, for a term of up to five years, for landside architectural, engineering, and construction management services to support the Airport's capital development program. (Airport Department)
- 5) Consideration and **ACTION** to approve a Task Order No.19 for Civil Engineering and Related Services for the reconstruction of Tradition Circle and Achievement Drive, to Ambiotec Civil Engineering Group, Inc., in the amount not to exceed \$108,758, as budgeted. (Engineering and Public Works Department)
- 6) Consideration and **ACTION** on **Resolution Number 2026-113** authorizing the execution of an agreement between the City of Brownsville and the Texas Department of Transportation for the Installation and Reimbursement for the Operation and Maintenance of Traffic Signals within a Municipality. (Engineering and Public Works Department).
- 7) Consideration and **APPROVAL** on **SECOND** and **FINAL READING** of **Ordinance Number 2026-1811** accepting and approving an update to the Paseo De La Resaca Lighting and Landscaping Maintenance Public Improvement District (PID) Operations and Maintenance Service and Assessment Plan; accepting and approving the updated assessment roll for the PID; making a finding of special benefit to property within the PID; levying special assessments against such property and establishing a lien on such property; providing for the method of assessment and the payment of the assessments levied against the PID assessed property; providing penalties and interest on delinquent Assessments; in accordance with Chapter 372 of the Texas Local Government Code, as amended. (Paseo PID Board)
- 8) Consideration and **APPROVAL** on **SECOND** and **FINAL READING** of **Ordinance Number 235-2026-014-S**, to request a Specific Use Permit (SUP) in a Downtown Edge (DE) zoning district to allow an event center for Lots 13 & 14, Block 120, Brownsville Original Townsite, Cameron County, Texas, located at 1247 East Madison Street, Brownsville, Texas 78520, as shown in Exhibit "A". (District 4) (Planning & Redevelopment Department)
- 9) Consideration and **APPROVAL** on **SECOND** and **FINAL READING** of **Ordinance Number 235-2026-015**, to rezone from Agriculture (AG) to Residential Single-Family (R-1) for an

approximate 105.29 acres and Commercial Corridor (CC) for an approximate 14.67 acres to allow a single-family residential development and commercial development on a tract containing 119.96 acres of land out of a 239.92 acre tract (called the West 239.48 acres), out of Tract 40, Paredes Partition Tract, Subdivision "E", in Share 19 of the Espiritu Santo Grant, Cameron County, Texas, located at 1 West Paredes Line Road , Brownsville, Texas 78566, as shown in Exhibit "A". (District 3) (Planning & Redevelopment Department)

- 10) Consideration and **APPROVAL** on **SECOND** and **FINAL READING of Ordinance Number 235-2026-016**, to rezone from Residential Single-Family (R-1) and Traditional Neighborhood Corridor (TNC) to Traditional Neighborhood Corridor (TNC) to allow a multifamily development for 2.00 acres of land, more or less, comprised of Tract 1, being 0.37 acres of land; and Tract 2, being 1.63 acres of land, both Tracts out of Block 4, El Jardin Subdivision, Share 27 of the Espiritu Santo Grant, Cameron County, Texas, located at 970 South Central Avenue, Brownsville, Texas 78521, as shown in Exhibit "A". (District 1) (Planning & Redevelopment Department)
- 11) Consideration and **APPROVAL** on **SECOND** and **FINAL READING on Ordinance Number 2026-1812**, ordering and calling a Charter Election on proposed amendments, during the General Election on November 3, 2026, on the following amendments (Charter Review Committee/ Office of the City Secretary/ Office of the City Attorney):
 - a) Amending Charter Art. V., Administrative Provisions, Section 3. - Vacancies (Adding automatic triggers for forfeiting office)
 - b) Amending Charter Art. V., Administrative Provisions, Section 3. - Vacancies (Adding discretionary triggers for forfeiting office)
 - c) Amending Charter Art. V., Administrative Provisions, to modify Section 4. - Qualifications. (Adding tax delinquency or other liability due to City as a bar to holding office)
 - d) Amending Charter Art. V., Administrative Provisions, Section 13 – Compensation (Address Mayor and City Commissioner's compensation)
 - e) Amending Charter Art. V., Administrative Provisions, to add 21-B. - Office of the City Secretary (Creating the Office of the City Secretary)
 - f) Amending Charter Art. V., Administrative Provisions, to add 21-C. - Office of the City Auditor (Creating the Office of the City Auditor)
 - g) Amending the Charter Art. V., Administrative Provisions, to add Section 22-B, Merit Hiring (Adding Merit principle hiring to City Charter)
 - h) Amending Charter Art. V., Administrative Provisions, Section 28A. Audit and oversight committee (Increasing the membership on the committee)
 - i) Amending Charter Art. V., Administrative Provisions, Section 28A. Audit and oversight committee (general clean-up)
 - j) Amending Charter Art. V., Administrative Provisions, to add Section 35, Municipal Campaign Finance (Requiring Commission to set campaign finance regulations by ordinance)
 - k) Amending Charter Art. V., Administrative Provisions, to add Section 35, Code of Ethics; Ethics Advisory Commission (Requiring Commission to create an Ethics Board and adopt rules for ethics by ordinance)
 - l) Amending Charter Art. VII., General Provisions, to add Section 3-A, - The Initiative (Adding initiative petition procedures for citizens)

- m) Amending Charter Art. VII., General Provisions, to add Section 3-B, - Referendum (Adding referendum procedures for citizens)
- n) Amending the Charter Art. I through VII, except Art. VI, Utilities Board, to revise or eliminate provisions that have been superseded by state law and to update or eliminate archaic language.

Consideración y **APROBACIÓN** en **SEGUNDA y ÚLTIMA LECTURA** de la **Ordenanza número 2026-1812**, que ordena y convoca una elección sobre la Carta Constitutiva para someter a votación las enmiendas propuestas durante las Elecciones Generales del 3 de noviembre de 2026, respecto a las siguientes enmiendas (Comité de Revisión de la Carta Constitutiva / Oficina del Secretario Municipal / Oficina del Abogado Municipal):

- a) Enmienda del artículo V de los Estatutos, apartado 3, «Disposiciones administrativas». - Ofertas de empleo (Incorporación de causas automáticas de pérdida del cargo))
- b) Enmienda del artículo V de los Estatutos, «Disposiciones administrativas», apartado 3. — Vacantes (Incorporación de supuestos discrecionales para la pérdida del cargo)
- c) Enmienda del artículo V de los Estatutos, «Disposiciones administrativas», para modificar la sección 4. — Requisitos. (Se añade la morosidad fiscal u otras obligaciones pendientes con el Ayuntamiento como impedimento para el ejercicio de un cargo público)
- d) Enmienda del artículo V de los Estatutos, Disposiciones administrativas, apartado 13: Remuneración (relativo a la compensación del alcalde y de los comisionados)
- e) Enmienda del artículo V de los Estatutos, «Disposiciones administrativas», para añadir el apartado 21-B. — Oficina del Secretario Municipal (Creación de la Oficina del Secretario Municipal)
- f) Enmienda del artículo V de los Estatutos, «Disposiciones administrativas», para añadir el apartado 21-C. — Oficina del Auditor Municipal (Creación de la Oficina del Auditor Municipal)
- g) Enmienda del artículo V de los Estatutos, «Disposiciones administrativas», para añadir la sección 22-B, «Contratación por méritos» (Incorporación del principio de contratación por méritos a los Estatutos de la ciudad)
- h) Enmienda del artículo V de los Estatutos, Disposiciones administrativas, apartado 28A. Comité de auditoría y supervisión (Ampliación del número de miembros del comité)
- i) Enmienda del artículo V de los Estatutos, Disposiciones administrativas, apartado 28A. Comité de auditoría y supervisión (revisión general)
- j) Enmienda del artículo V de los Estatutos, «Disposiciones administrativas», para añadir el artículo 35, «Financiación de las campañas municipales» (por el que se exige a la Comisión que establezca normas sobre la financiación de las campañas mediante ordenanza municipal)
- k) Enmienda del artículo V de los Estatutos, «Disposiciones administrativas», para añadir el artículo 35, «Código deontológico»; Comisión Asesora de Ética (que exige a la Comisión crear un Consejo de Ética y aprobar normas deontológicas mediante ordenanza)
- l) Enmienda del artículo VII de los Estatutos, «Disposiciones generales», para añadir la sección 3-A: «La iniciativa» (Incorporación de los procedimientos de petición de iniciativa ciudadana)
- m) Enmienda del artículo VII de los Estatutos, «Disposiciones generales», para añadir la sección 3-B: «Referéndum» (Incorporación de procedimientos de referéndum para los ciudadanos)

- n) Enmienda de los artículos I a VII de los Estatutos, excepto el artículo VI (Junta de Servicios Públicos), con el fin de revisar o eliminar las disposiciones que hayan quedado derogadas por la legislación estatal y de actualizar o eliminar la redacción arcaica.

Motion: Motion was made by City Commissioner Bryan Martinez, seconded by City Commissioner Pedro Cardenas, to approve consent agenda items 1 through 11. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING(S)

- 1) Public Hearing and ACTION on FIRST READING on Ordinance Number 2026-1818, making findings related to the Madeira Espiritu Santo Public Improvement District Number One, including: advisability of the special supplemental services, the estimated operation and maintenance costs, boundaries of the district, method of assessment, and apportionment of costs between the City of Brownsville and the District; updating the Service and Assessment Plan (SAP) that established the Madeira Espiritu Santo PID Number One; levying the assessments; and, also providing official notice of the PID's updated SAP to the Cameron County Clerk as required by Chapter 372, Texas Local Government Code. (Planning & Redevelopment Department/Office of the City Attorney/City Manager's Office)**

Will Treviño City Attorney explained that the developer of the district requested an increase in the Public Improvement District (PID) assessment due to higher maintenance expenses, particularly the cost of purchasing additional water during drought conditions to preserve landscaping. The proposed increase would raise the annual assessment from approximately \$1,078 to \$1,398 per lot, a change communicated to property owners as required by law.

Mayor John Cowen Jr. opened the public hearing.

Michelle Garza stated she owns a lot in the development and objected to the proposed 30% increase in the PID assessment. She explained that there has been little visible improvement in the area to justify the increase, noting dead trees, dying grass, and lack of irrigation. She said she pays taxes, HOA fees, and PID fees, and asked the commission to reconsider lowering the assessment.

Santiago Vero also owns a lot in the development and expressed concern about the unexpected PID increase. He asked how the assessment would be affected as future phases are built—specifically whether it would go up, down, or be divided among more lots. He emphasized that the increase was not communicated upfront and residents were surprised by the notice.

Jessi Ruiz also noted that was not aware of this increases and he would like to have more information.

Staff clarified that unsold lots remain the developer's responsibility, that the PID board has not yet convened, and that assessments fund public improvements—such as streets, utilities, trails, and landscaping—within the district.

Commissioners expressed appreciation for the residents' concerns and emphasized the need for clearer information, including participation from the developer and PID administrator. They discussed how PID boards are typically formed and noted that assessments, unlike tax rates, are not controlled by the commission. Given the unanswered questions, the commission opted to keep the public hearing open and table the item until the August 18 meeting so residents could receive complete explanations and the commission could evaluate the proposed increase more thoroughly.

Motion: Motion was made by City Commissioner Bryan Martinez, seconded by City Commissioner Pedro Cardenas, to table Public Hearing Number 1 for the next city commission meeting August 18, 2026. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

2) Public Hearing and ACTION on SECOND and FINAL READING on Ordinance Number 2026-1813, amending Chapter 54, Health and Sanitation, Article VI, Smoking in Public Places, to modify regulations related to smoking in public places to include e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery system devices, such as vapes, regulations related to smoking in outside patios; and regulations for Cigar/Hookah Bars/Lounges. (Office of the City Attorney)

Will Trevino, City Attorney, addressed the mayor and city commission regarding the second reading of the proposed smoking ordinance. He noted that additional recommendations from the Health Department had been incorporated into the updated draft distributed to the commission. Mr. Trevino explained that, consistent with prior discussions, the ordinance would allow cigar bars and hookah lounges to serve alcohol. The revised draft increased the required percentage of gross annual sales from cigar or tobacco products from 40% to 50%. It also introduced a requirement that cigar bars maintain a walk in humidor for cigar product resale, ensuring that traditional bars could not claim cigar sales merely to permit indoor smoking.

Dr. Arturo Rodriguez, Director of Health Department, clarified terms such as "humidor" and "walk in humidor." Cigar bars and cigar lounges would also be required to post notices indicating that entry is limited to individuals aged 21 and older and that entering the premises may expose patrons to secondhand tobacco smoke.

Mr. Trevino stated that the ordinance now required a designated hookah preparation station or counter and an inventory standard of one functional commercial hookah water pipe per every three seats of maximum occupancy. This ratio is used by other municipalities to prevent bars from converting into smoking facilities without meeting hookah lounge standards. Hookah lounges must also post signage regarding age restrictions and secondhand smoke exposure.

Mr. Trevino noted that the ordinance continued to prohibit electronic cigarettes and vaping inside buildings. However, individuals would still be allowed to smoke outdoors at restaurants, bars, and private clubs if certain conditions were met. Outdoor smoking areas must be at least 20 feet away from operable windows, ventilation systems, or entrances, and must include an air barrier or purification system. Smoking lounges must meet additional requirements, including full enclosure, independent ventilation systems, walk in humidors functioning as part of air quality systems, direct outdoor exhaust, and minimum fresh air supply rates based on occupancy. Commissioners expressed concerns regarding the 20 foot buffer requirement for outdoor smoking, particularly in densely built areas such as downtown where some establishments lack

sufficient space. They questioned whether the ordinance amendments addressed this issue and also raised concerns about patios that serve food and beverages, noting that entire outdoor patios could be considered serving areas under the existing wording, effectively prohibiting smoking throughout those spaces. Commissioners emphasized the importance of providing clear guidance to restaurant and bar owners regarding the designation and regulation of permitted outdoor smoking areas.

Mr. Trevino explained that although the 20 foot buffer remained, the ordinance allows the Health Director to assess unique cases individually during plan review. He also clarified that outdoor seating areas may be designated for smoking by the owner, provided the area meets distance and ventilation requirements, resolving concerns about patios being entirely off limits.

Finally, Trevino noted the inclusion of a new subsection reiterating that nothing in the ordinance prohibits alcohol sales. The previous draft had contained language suggesting alcohol restrictions, which was corrected in the updated version.

Mayor Pro Tem Bryan L. Martinez opened the public hearing.

There were no speakers.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Linda C. Macias, seconded by City Commissioner Tino Villarreal, to close the public hearing. The vote was cast 4 for, 0 against [Mayor Cowen, Galonsky and De Leon Absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Tino Villarreal, seconded by Commissioner Linda C. Macias, to approved first reading on Ordinance 2026-1813. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon Absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

3) Public Hearing and ACTION on FIRST READING on Ordinance Number 2026-1814, amending Chapter 2, Administration, Article II, City Commission, Section 2-26, Meetings and agendas, in order to adopt rules and procedures for executive session, including preserving confidentiality of topics discussed in executive session. (Office of the City Attorney/ City Manager's Office)

Will Trevino, City Attorney, explained that the proposed provision essentially reiterates requirements already established under the Texas Open Meetings Act. He stated that the city secretary will continue to announce the beginning of an executive session and the legal basis for entering it. A certified agenda must be maintained, and all sound or image recording devices are prohibited in executive sessions.

Mr. Trevino noted that the Texas Open Meetings Act prohibits voting or taking action during executive sessions. He added that only appropriate city staff may attend, limited to the posted agenda items, and all votes must occur in open session.

He also emphasized that remote participants must ensure secure audio and video connections so unauthorized individuals cannot listen in. Any required disclosures to the public must comply with the Open Meetings Act and the Public Information Act. Confidential legal advice and other protected deliberations must remain confidential. Trevino further explained that Chapter 38 of the ethics code already includes a provision stating that improper access or disclosure of confidential information is a violation, specifically in section 38 34. The commission's

procedures will reference this, clarifying that disclosing confidential information outside the requirements of the Open Meetings Act or Public Information Act would constitute an ethics violation.

Commissioner Pedro Cardenas asked two questions: first, to clarify that a computer used for presentations is permitted in executive session; and second, to ensure a phone is available in the room for emergencies, noting that some commissioners have children who are out of town.

Trevino responded that staff is working with IT to ensure the presentation computer remains secure with required login credentials, and a landline will be installed for emergency needs.

Mayor John Cowen Jr. opened the public hearing.

There were no speakers.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Pedro Cardenas, seconded by City Commissioner Bryan L. Martinez, to close the public hearing. The vote was cast 4 for, 0 against [Villarreal, Galonsky and De Leon Absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Pedro Cardenas, seconded by Commissioner Linda C. Macias, to approved first reading on Ordinance 2026-1814. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon Absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

- 4) **Public Hearing and ACTION to acknowledge the City Secretary's Certificate of Sufficiency for the Charter Amendment Petition, proposing the Brownsville First Jobs & Contracts Policy, establishing provisions relating to local hiring, City-funded contracts, small business participation, workforce development, transparency, and safe working conditions; and ACTION on FIRST READING of Ordinance Number 2026-1819 ordering a Charter Amendment Election to be held on Tuesday, November 3, 2026; providing for the publication and posting of notice; providing for early voting dates, times, and locations; and dealing with related matters. (Office of the City Secretary/Office of the City Attorney)**

Consideración y ACCIÓN para dar constancia del Certificado de Suficiencia de la Secretaria Municipal para la Petición de Enmienda a la Carta Municipal que propone la adopción de la Política Brownsville First Jobs & Contracts, estableciendo disposiciones relacionadas con la contratación local, los contratos financiados por la Ciudad, la participación de pequeñas empresas, el desarrollo de la fuerza laboral, la transparencia y condiciones laborales seguras; y ACCIÓN en PRIMERA LECTURA de la Ordenanza Número 2026-1819 ordenando una elección de enmienda a la Carta Municipal para llevarse a cabo el martes, 3 de noviembre de 2026; disponiendo la publicación y fijación de avisos; estableciendo las fechas, horarios y lugares de la votación anticipada; y tratando asuntos relacionados. (Oficina de la Secretaria Municipal/Oficina del Abogado Municipal)

Mayra A. Rios, City Secretary reported that her office received a charter amendment petition on June 24, 2026, seeking adoption of the “Brownsville’s First Jobs and Contract Policy.” The petition included 8,195 signatures, exceeding the required 5,339 valid signatures verified through a statistical sampling method authorized by state law. An independent analysis confirmed the petition met legal requirements, and Ms. Rios certified its sufficiency on July 28,

2026. She clarified that the commission's action is limited to conducting the public hearing, acknowledging the Certificate of Sufficiency, and approving the ordinance to order the charter amendment election for November 3, 2026, with the second reading scheduled for August 18, 2026.

Mayor John Cowen Jr. opened the public hearing.

Anaid Zapata and Victoria Ocegüera, lead organizers for Ground Game Texas, urged the commission to acknowledge the Brownsville First petition, emphasizing that it would greatly benefit the community by ensuring local workers are prioritized for jobs amid growing development in the city. They stated that the initiative encourages businesses and city contractors to hire from Brownsville, Cameron County, and nearby counties before seeking workers from outside the area, helping keep tax dollars local and supporting the local workforce. They also highlighted the importance of worker safety, noting that OSHA 10 training requirements included in the policy would help ensure safe working conditions. They concluded by expressing strong community support for the initiative and enthusiasm for voting on it in November.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Bryan L. Martinez, seconded by City Commissioner Linda C. Macias, to close the public hearing. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon Absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Tino Villarreal, seconded by Commissioner Linda C. Macias, to acknowledge receipt of the City Secretary's Certificated of sufficiency for the charter amendment petition and approved the First Reading of Ordinance 2026-1819 Ordering a charter amendment election, authorizing all necessary actions. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon Absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS FOR INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATION(S)

1) Consideration and ACTION to acknowledge the Cameron Appraisal District Chief Appraiser's Certification of the City of Brownsville's 2026 tax roll. (Financial Services Department)

Stephe Muse, Financial Services Director introduced the first item for individual consideration, requesting that the commission acknowledge the Cameron Appraisal District Chief Appraiser's certification of the City of Brownsville's 2026 tax roll. He reported that the county tax assessor's appraisal roll shows a market value of just under \$17 billion, a net taxable value of \$13 billion, and \$57 million in market value still under review. Muse asked the commission to formally acknowledge the report, after which a motion and second were made. With no further discussion, the commission voted in favor and the motion carried.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Bryan L. Martinez, seconded by Commissioner Tino Villarreal, to acknowledge the Cameron Appraisal District Chief Appraiser's certification of the City of Brownsville's 2026 tax roll. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon Absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

2) Consideration and ACTION to acknowledge the Cameron County Tax Assessor-Collector's certification of the estimated ad valorem tax debt collection rate for tax year 2026, and the excess debt tax collections for tax year 2025. (Financial Services Department)

Stephen Muse, Financial Services Director, explained that the state requires any taxing entity that levies a debt tax rate to estimate anticipated collections, noting that the city used a 96.1 percent collection rate for the calculation. He reported that last year the city collected \$3 million in excess debt taxes, which will help reduce debt service requirements for the upcoming fiscal year.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Bryan L. Martinez, seconded by Commissioner Pedro Cardenas, to acknowledge the Cameron County Tax Assessor-Collector's Report. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon Absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

3) Consideration and ACTION to acknowledge the Finance Director's calculation of the City's No-New-Revenue and Voter-Approval tax rates for tax year 2026/fiscal year 2027. (Financial Services Department)

Stephen Muse Financial Services Director explained that the city's tax rates were calculated in accordance with state tax code requirements and the mandated tax forms. He reported that the no new revenue rate is .563407, showing the breakdown between the maintenance and operations (M&O) portion and the debt service portion in comparison to the current rate. Mr. Muse also presented the voter approval tax rate, limited by the 3.5 percent increase cap, which is .6134440; under this rate, the M&O component increases slightly to .363517.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Bryan L. Martinez, seconded by Commissioner Tino Villarreal, to acknowledge the City's No-New-Revenue and Voter-Approval tax rates for tax year 2026/fiscal year 2027. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

4) Consideration and ACTION to discuss a possible ad valorem tax rate increase and to authorize a public hearing on August 18, 2026, to discuss the proposed ad valorem tax rate that will exceed the No-New-Revenue tax rate. (Financial Services Department)

Stephen Muse Financial Services Director explained that state law requires the proposed tax rate to be discussed at a public hearing. He requested that the commission authorize this hearing for the next meeting, noting that it must occur within the taxing unit's boundaries, on a weekday, with a quorum present, and must provide taxpayers an opportunity to express their views.

Commissioner Tino Villarreal emphasized the importance of clarity and transparency, explaining that the commission's action simply allows the public to speak on the proposed tax rate at the upcoming meeting, rather than approving any tax increase. He stressed that the commission is providing the same opportunity for public input as it has on other issues, reinforcing that democracy depends on allowing residents to voice their opinions. He clarified that the property tax rate has not been raised and will remain flat for the third consecutive year. Alan Guard, City Manager, explained that the state's complex tax rate terminology can make it appear as though an increase is being adopted, even when the rate stays the same. They described

how valuation changes, new property, and multiple taxing entities affect overall tax bills and noted that despite decreasing tax rates, revenues have risen as needed to maintain city services. Mr. Guard highlighted that Brownsville has kept property taxes low compared to other cities through diversified revenue sources. He encouraged residents to participate in the upcoming hearing to share whether they feel they are receiving the services they expect, and confirmed that the item simply authorizes placing the hearing on the next agenda, with notices to be published and posted.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Bryan L. Martinez, seconded by Commissioner Linda C. Macias, to authorize a public hearing on August 18, 2026, to discuss the proposed ad valorem tax rate that will exceed the No-New-Revenue tax rate. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon Absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

5) Consideration and ACTION on Resolution Number 2026-112 to approve the 2026-2030 Regional Consolidated Plan & Allocation of the City of Brownsville's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), subject to appropriation by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the 2026-2027 One Year Action Plan. (Grants & Community Development)

Ruth Cuellar from the Grants and Community Development Department introduced Jennifer Alpha of TDA Consulting, who presented the City of Brownsville's consolidated plan, annual action plan, and analysis of impediments to fair housing.

Jannifer Alpha explained that TDA, a national consulting firm, assisted the city in developing these federally required planning documents, which guide the use of HUD funds over a five year period. She outlined the city's allocations for 2026, including over \$2.5 million in Community Development Block Grant funds, nearly \$900,000 in HOME funds, and \$225,000 in Emergency Solutions Grant funds, each with specific eligible uses focused on benefiting low to moderate income residents, expanding affordable housing, and addressing homelessness. Ms. Alpha described an extensive community outreach process involving public meetings, regional collaboration, stakeholder interviews, surveys with more than 300 responses, and focus groups. Using this input and supporting data, the city identified a wide range of priorities that were organized into four HUD required goals: increasing affordable housing, improving public infrastructure and facilities, enhancing services for low to moderate income populations, and addressing homelessness. She detailed planned 2026 funding allocations for capital improvements, public services, housing construction, homebuyer assistance, and homelessness programs. Ms. Alpha concluded by noting that the plan has already undergone public comment and must be submitted to HUD by August 16, after which HUD will review and provide final approval by October.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Tino Villarreal, seconded by Commissioner Bryan L. Martinez, to approve Resolution Number 2026-2030. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon Absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

6) Consideration and ACTION on Resolution Number 2026-115 to approve a one-time waiver of the maintenance bond required for the construction of improvements serving the Greater Brownsville Tech Park. (City Manager's Office/ GBEDC)

Alan Guard, City Manager informed the commission that the GBEDC, a quasi city agency, requested a waiver of the city's required two year maintenance bond for infrastructure improvements at the industrial park, a bond estimated to cost around \$70,000.

Doro Garcia, Deputy City Manager, explained that the maintenance bond is normally mandated under the Unified Development Code to ensure developers address any issues for two years after project completion, but because GBEDC is associated with the city, it would still be responsible for any problems that arise. Mr. Garcia noted that this would be the first instance of granting such a waiver and emphasized that the resolution clearly states it will not set a precedent for other developers, as the request pertains exclusively to a city initiated project.

Motion: Motion made by City Commissioner Pedro Cardenas, seconded by Commissioner Tino Villarreal, to approve Resolution Number 2026-115. The vote was cast 5 for, 0 against [Galonsky and De Leon Absent]. The motion carried unanimously.

POSSIBLE ACTION ON ANY ITEM(S) AS DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no action.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, upon duly made motion the meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Approved 1st day of September, 2026.

John Cowen Jr.

John Cowen, Jr.

Mayor

ATTEST:

Mayra A. Rios

**Mayra A. Rios,
City Secretary**



Respectfully submitted by: Blanca E. Gonzalez, Administrative Assistant, MPA, TRMC

CERTIFICATE *of* SIGNATURE

REF. NUMBER
UVQVZ-ZSAGG-R4CYH-DGNLF

DOCUMENT COMPLETED BY ALL PARTIES ON
04 SEP 2026 18:16:11
UTC

SIGNER

TIMESTAMP

SIGNATURE

JOHN COWEN JR.

EMAIL
JOHN.COWEN@BROWNSVILLETX.GOV

SHARED VIA
LINK

SENT
02 SEP 2026 12:57:18

VIEWED
03 SEP 2026 21:23:48

SIGNED
03 SEP 2026 22:00:09

John Cowen Jr.

IP ADDRESS
216.194.176.172

LOCATION
BROWNSVILLE, UNITED STATES

MAYRA RIOS

EMAIL
MAYRA.RIOS@BROWNSVILLETX.GOV

SHARED VIA
LINK

SENT
02 SEP 2026 12:57:18

VIEWED
04 SEP 2026 18:11:14

SIGNED
04 SEP 2026 18:16:11

Mayra A. Rios

IP ADDRESS
184.93.87.181

LOCATION
BROWNSVILLE, UNITED STATES

