

W Day

revealed a black Nissan Altima (occupied by one male) evaded law enforcement inside the city limits of Donna," the release said. The Nissan was traveling south on FM 493, as was a blue Saturn ION that was occupied by four people, including the driver. On the opposite end of the

Herald

THE FOURTH OF JULY 1892

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EVAN VUCCI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PLEASE SEE RATE, A3

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BRIANA VARGAS/THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

omore at the University of Houston, has entered immigrant in California and Texas and was rejected for DACA after a federal program was created illegally.

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PLEASE SEE DACA, A3

CEO of nonprofit shelter for migrant kids indicted

BY LAURA B. MARTINEZ
STAFF WRITER

Ruben Gallegos Jr., the CEO of International Education Services, or IES, has been indicted by a federal grand jury on embezzlement and theft charges.

Gallegos was taken into custody Thursday after a bench warrant had been issued for his arrest, federal court documents reflect. He was to be held on no bond.

Count one of the indictment charges Gallegos with conspiracy, and count two charges him with theft concerning programs receiving federal funds.

The IES contracted with the Unaccompanied Alien Children Program and provided temporary shelter care and other related services to unaccompanied alien children, according to the federal indictment. IES received almost all of its funding in the form of federal grants, and for each fiscal year from 2014 through 2018, it received millions of dollars in federal grant funds.

According to the Aug. 30, partially unsealed federal indictment, from 2014 through 2018, Gallegos did knowingly conspire with another unnamed person

PLEASE SEE CEO, A3

2/4

privacy, no right to contraception, no right to marry who you love."

"For a long time, we've reassured ourselves that American democracy is guaranteed. But it is not," Biden says. "We have to defend it. Protect it. Stand up for it. Each and every one of us."

Biden, who largely avoided even referring to "the former guy" by name during his first year in office, has grown increasingly vocal in calling out Trump personally. Now, emboldened by his party's recent legislative wins and wary of Trump's return to the headlines, Biden is sharpening his attacks.

Trump plans a rally this weekend in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Biden's birthplace.

At a Democratic fundraiser last week, Biden likened the "MAGA philosophy" to "semi-fascism."

In Philadelphia, White House officials said, Biden intended to hark back to the 2017 white supremacist protest in Charlottesville,

betrayed America's trust."

Asked about McCarthy's criticism, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said "we understand we hit a nerve" with the GOP leader, and quoted the Republican's prior statements saying Trump bore responsibility for the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Larry Diamond, an expert on democracy and senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, said calling Trump out for attacks on democracy "can be manipulated or framed as being partisan. And if you don't call it out, you are shrinking from an important challenge in the defense of democracy."

Even this week, Trump was posting on his beleaguered social media platform about overturning the 2020 election results and holding a new presidential election, which would violate the Constitution.

Timothy Naftali, a presidential historian at New

works were not expected to carry the address live.

Biden's trip to Philadelphia is just one of his three to the state within a week, a sign of Pennsylvania's importance in the midterms, with competitive Senate and governor's races. However, neither Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, the Democrats' Senate nominee, nor Attorney General Josh Shapiro, their pick for governor, was expected to attend Thursday night.

The White House intended the speech to unite familiar themes: holding out bipartisan legislative wins on guns and infrastructure as evidence that democracies "can deliver," pushing back on GOP policies on guns and abortion that Biden says are out of step with most people's views, and rejecting efforts to undermine confidence in the nation's election or diminish its standing abroad.

The challenges have only increased since the turmoil surrounding the 2020 election and the Capitol attack.

CEO

FROM PAGE A1

to commit an offense against the United States, to "embezzle, steal, obtain by fraud knowingly convert without authority, and intentionally misapply property that is valued at \$5,000 U.S. dollars or more, and is owned by, or is under the care, custody, or control of, an organization

that receives more than \$10,000 U.S. dollars in federal assistance in any one year period."

The indictment reads that from 2014 to 2017, Gallegos and another unnamed person caused IES to use federal grant funds to pay themselves salaries that were hundreds of thousands of dollars above the salary cap imposed by federal regulations.

In addition, Gallegos and others used IES federal

grant funds to lease properties from themselves and others, "at rates in excess of the limits imposed by federal regulations," officials said.

The federal government is seeking to seize multiple properties on Maverick Road that are owned by Gallegos, the federal indictment reads. Gallegos was taken to the Brownsville City Jail late Thursday morning and was to remain there overnight.

RATE

FROM PAGE A1

"We are all in the customer service business and in your particular area that could create some issues," Trevino said.

The Feb. 15, 2018, contract agreement between the county and Republic Services stated a 5% cap for any and all CPI increases would remain in place. "This will benefit the county during the budgeting process and also protect the county from large spikes in pricing from year to year. Price

would not be able to increase more than 5% in any given year," the document stated.

Under the contract, residents will pay \$36.28 per month for one cart; \$48.77 per month for two carts; \$72.48 per month for three carts; \$96.19 per month for four carts; and \$119.90 per month for five carts.

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Indictment details charges against migrant shelter CEO

BY LAURA B. MARTINEZ
STAFF WRITER

Ruben Gallegos Jr., the CEO of International Education Services, or IES, was spending the weekend and Labor Day in federal custody after U.S. Magistrate Judge Ronald G. Morgan Friday ordered he be held without bond.

A federal grand jury Aug. 30 handed down an indictment charging Gallegos on embezzlement and theft charges.

Among the charges and according to a portion of the indictment, Gallegos was paid salaries way over the \$183,000 cap limit with his 2017 salary at \$435,416.88. The indictment also states others were also paid high salaries, one at \$506,003.22 and another at \$377,060.96 - also in violation of the salary caps - but their names are redacted in the document.

Gallegos served as CEO of IES from 2014 to 2018 until the federal government decided it would not renew its funding for the IES shelter. He was taken into custody Thursday after a bench warrant had been issued by Morgan for his arrest, federal court documents reflect.

The IES contracted with the Unaccompanied Alien Children Program and provided temporary shelter care and other related services to unaccompanied alien children, according to the

ment states that Gallegos received a \$1,000 salary increase in 2015 bringing his salary to \$492,001.62. His 2017 salary was \$435,416.88, authorities said.

The United States Congress prohibited use of grant funds to pay salaries above a certain rate. In addition, federal regulations further limited spending of grant funds.

The indictment also states that Gallegos, defendants and IES did not comply with federal regulations requiring competitive bidding and did not comply with federal regulations setting rental cost limits in less-than-arms length transactions.

Gallegos, through a related entity, purchased property in San Benito at a cost of \$100,000 that was to become the site of the IES San Benito shelter, according to the indictment. In 2014, the defendants submitted a grant application to ORR (Office of Refugee Settlement) requesting funds to operate the shelter, officials said. "Defendants falsely claimed that the shelter was operational and would serve approximately 1,040 children during FY-2015. The IES San Benito Shelter was not operational during FY-2015," the indictment states.

In addition, Gallegos and others used IES federal grant funds to lease properties from them-

RIO GRANDE

Starr County \$3M for border security

BY VALERIE GONZALEZ
STAFF WRITER

Starr County law enforcement received \$3 million to continue supporting a border security federal grant program Thursday.

U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, made the announcement at the Starr County Courthouse Annex before multiple law enforcement agencies that stand to benefit from the funds dedicated to Operation Stonegarden.

"This money will be used to increase overtime pay available and pay for operating expenses and new equipment — resources that are necessary for the security of the community," Cuellar said via a statement shared on social media.

Operation Stonegarden is a grant program that allocates money for law enforcement, primarily those along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Over the last two years, there have been an increase in encounters between people crossing the border illegally and federal law enforcement. The current year is set to break a record again with over 2 million encounters, Cuellar said.

He added that while the number of migrants cross-

DPS invests

BY LAURA B. MARTINEZ
STAFF WRITER

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NOTICE TO READERS

OFFICE CLOSED

The health and well-being of our customers and our community is always a top priority. Due to the ongoing concerns of the coronavirus or COVID-19, The Brownsville Herald Business Office will be closed until further notice. Payments may be made over the telephone by calling (956) 542-4301, or by mail at 222 N. Expressway 77/83 Suite 176, Brownsville, Texas 78521. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience.

AROUND THE VALLEY

DPS pilot stops plane from smuggling 13 people

STAFF REPORT

A Texas Department of Public Safety pilot stopped a plane that was ready to smuggle more than a dozen people in Edinburg on Wednesday, but not before being struck by a fleeing suspect's vehicle. The pilot thwarted the smug-

PAGE 2

BROWNSVILLE AND THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

Judge orders CEO of migrant shelter to be held without bond

BY LAURA B. MARTINEZ
STAFF WRITER

The CEO of a South Texas migrant children's shelter who's facing embezzlement and theft charges will remain in custody until his next hearing, which is scheduled for Sept. 7, federal court documents reflect.

Ruben Gallegos Jr., the chief executive officer of International Education Services, or IES, appeared Friday morning before U.S. Magistrate Judge Ronald G. Morgan, who ordered that he be held without bond.

A federal grand jury on Aug. 30 handed down an indictment charging Gallegos on the embezzlement and theft charges.

Gallegos was taken into custody Thursday after a bench warrant had been issued for his arrest, federal court documents show. He was to be held on no bond.

Count one of the indictment charges Gallegos with conspiracy and count two charges him with theft concerning programs receiving federal funds.

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Alien Children Program and provided temporary shelter care and other related services to unaccompanied alien children, according to the federal indictment. IES received almost all of its funding in the form of federal grants, and for each fiscal year from 2014 through 2018, it received millions of dollars in federal grant funds.

As previously reported and according to the partially unsealed federal indictment, from 2014 through 2018, Gallegos conspired with another unnamed person to

"embezzle, steal, obtain by fraud knowingly convert without authority, and intentionally misapply property that is valued at \$5,000 U.S. dollars or more, and is owned by, or is under the care, custody, or control of, an organization that receives more than \$10,000 U.S. dollars in federal assistance in any one year period."

The indictment reads that from 2014 to 2017, Gallegos and another unnamed person caused IES to use federal grant funds to pay themselves salaries that were hundreds of thousands of

dollars above the salary cap imposed by federal regulations.

In addition, Gallegos and others used IES federal grant funds to lease properties from themselves and others, "at rates in excess of the limits imposed by federal regulations," authorities said.

The federal government is seeking to seize multiple properties on Maverick Road that are owned by Gallegos, the federal indictment reads.

The government did not renew funding for IES in 2018, forcing it to close.

After the Harvest

Year's first
anthrax case

102 Bid Notices

102 Bid Notices

102 Bid Notices

102 Bid Notices

102 Bid Notices

Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District is soliciting

Competitive Sealed Proposals for "Liberty Memorial Middle School HVAC Equipment Replacement".

All proposals must be on a lump sum basis including General Contract, Electrical and Mechanical work. Digital Bid packages available at Ethos Engineering, email: dlooper@ethoseng.net; phone: (956) 230-3435. An executed bid bond form in the amount of 5% of the proposal must accompany each proposal.

The Pre-Bid Conference will be on Thursday, July 28, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. at Liberty Memorial Middle School at 31579 Farm Road 2893, San Benito, Texas.

A walkthrough will follow Pre-Bid Conference at 10:00 a.m. Bid proposals are due on Thursday, August 4, 2022, at 4:00 p.m. Proposal must be submitted in a sealed envelope to Ethos Engineering, 1126 South Commerce St., Harlingen, TX 78550 and shall be plainly marked "CSP#22-23-15 LFCISD LIBERTY MEMORIAL MS HVAC EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT".

Faxed or emailed Proposals are not acceptable. Proposals will be opened and read at 4:15 p.m. virtually via GOTOMEETING.

Login access details:

<https://meet.goto.com/991306957>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: +1 (872) 240-3311

Access Code: 991-306-957

LFCISD reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals and to waive any irregularities.

APARTMENTS FOR RENT? or LEASE?

Bid Notices

parent company, Free Speech Systems, liable by default last year without a trial, as punishment for what she called his repeated failures to turn over documents to the Sandu Hook lawyers.

Jones has complained that he was found "guilty" without trials. There is no guilt in civil trials like this

his Infowars show led to the families being threatened and harassed by deniers of the shooting. They say they've endured death threats and in-person harassment, video recording by strangers and abusive comments on social media. Some families moved out of Newtown to avoid the harassment.

stoked anger and fear on Infowars.

Watts said that by the end of 2012, around the time of the school shooting, Jones and Infowars had the infrastructure in place to have far-reaching influence. Multiple websites, a large amount of content and a "massive" Infowars audience.

vacate, all the actual evidence, was either known or knowable to cops

Beyond with

BY KEE-ANN DURBIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A top executive at plant-based food company Beyond Meat has been charged with felony battery after a fight outside a college football game which he was accused of hitting a man's nose.

Doug Ramsey was charged with making a terroristic threat after an attack Saturday in a parking garage outside the University of Arkansas football game in Fayetteville.

According to a police report, Ramsey was angered when another driver inched in front of him in a traffic lane and made contact with t

Feds: Minnesota food scheme stole \$250M; 47 people charged

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MINNEAPOLIS — Federal authorities charged 47 people in Minnesota with conspiracy and other counts in what they said Tuesday was the largest fraud scheme yet to take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic by stealing \$250 million from a federal program that provides meals to low-income children.

Prosecutors say the defendants created companies that claimed to be offering food to tens of thousands of children across Minnesota, then sought reimbursement for those meals through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food nutrition programs. Prosecutors say few meals were actually served, and the defendants used the money to buy luxury cars, property and jewelry.

"This \$250 million is the floor," Andy Luger, the U.S. attorney for Minnesota, said at a news conference. "Our investigation continues."

Many of the companies that claimed to be serving food were sponsored by a nonprofit called Feeding Our Future, which submitted the companies' claims for reimbursement. Feeding Our Future's founder and executive director, Aimee Bock, was among those indicted, and authorities say she and others in her organization submitted the fraudulent claims for reimbursement and received kickbacks.

Bock's attorney, Kenneth Udoibok, said the indictment "doesn't indicate guilt or innocence." He said he wouldn't comment further until seeing the



SHARI L. GROSS/STAR TRIBUNE VIA AP

Aimee Bock, the executive director of the nonprofit Feeding Our Future, speaks Jan. 27 in St. Anthony, Minn.

multiple sites in January, including Bock's home and offices, Bock denied stealing money and said she never saw evidence of fraud.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Justice made prosecuting pandemic-related fraud a priority. The department has already taken enforcement actions related to more than \$8 billion in suspected pandemic fraud, including bringing charges in more than 1,000 criminal cases involving losses in excess of \$1.1 billion.

Federal officials repeatedly described the alleged fraud as "brazen" and decried that it involved a program intended to feed children who needed help during the pandemic. Michael Paul, special agent in charge of the Minneapolis FBI office, called it "an astonishing display of deceit."

Luger said the government was billed for more than 125 million fake meals, with some defendants mak-

played one form for reimbursement that claimed a site served exactly 2,500 meals each day Monday through Friday — with no children ever getting sick or otherwise missing from the program.

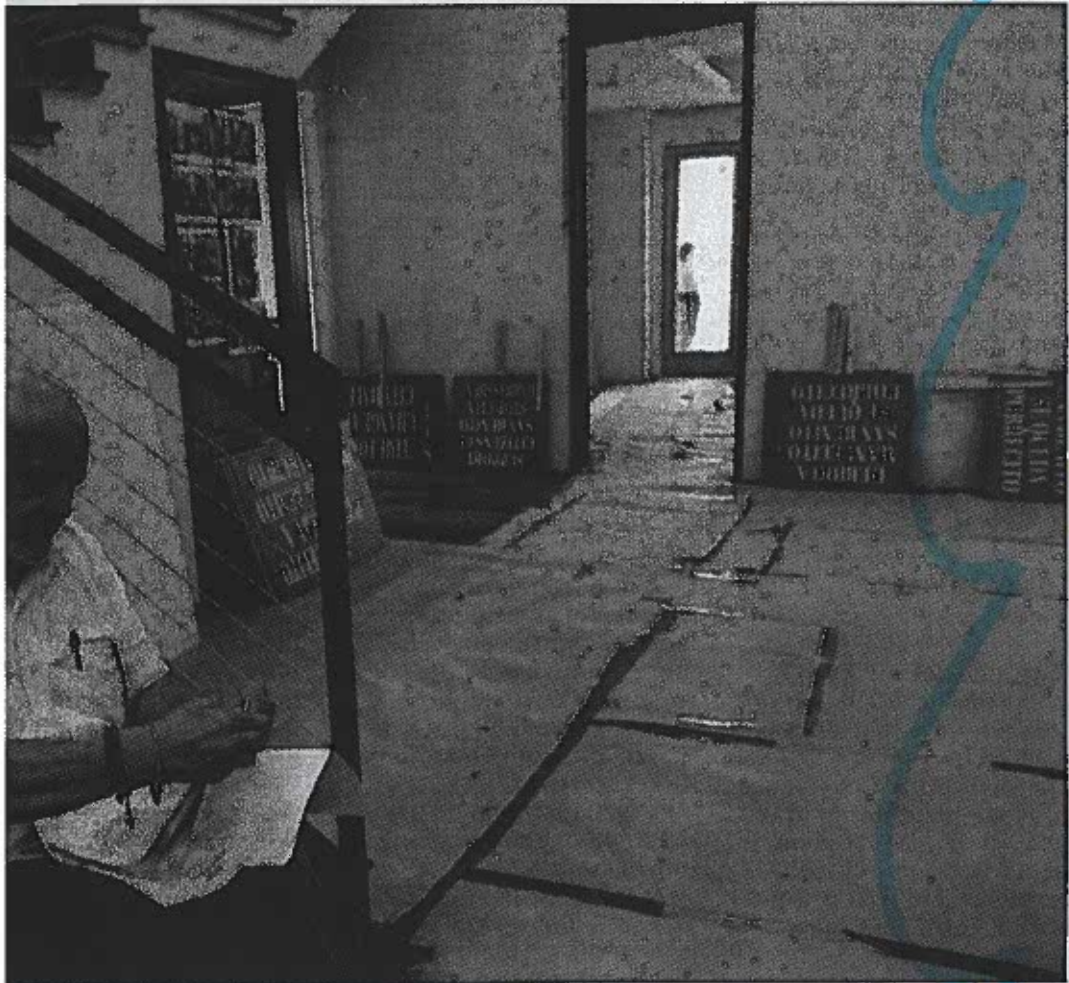
"These children were simply invented," Luger said.

He said the government has so far recovered \$50 million in money and property and expects to recover more.

The defendants in Minnesota face multiple counts, including conspiracy, wire fraud, money laundering and bribery. Luger said some of them were arrested Tuesday morning.

According to court documents, the alleged scheme targeted the USDA's federal child nutrition programs, which provide food to low-income children and adults. In Minnesota, the funds are administered by the state Department of Education, and meals have historically been provided to kids

streamline subdividing



PHOTOS BY DENISE CATHEY/THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

s calling for the removal of San Benito's City Manager Manuel De La Rosa Sept. 6 ahead of the San Benito's
rators gather in a nearby home to prepare to protest outside the Municipal Building in San Benito.

leaders atorium

fire City Manager Manuel
La Rosa, arguing he has
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nce's enactment from the
stly re-platting process.
Before Tuesday's meeting,
embers of the group waived
ns during a demonstration
front of City Hall.

See UPROAR ★ A9



Kerri Valencia and her children Alice and Tyler hold up signs along Sam Houston Boulevard Sept. 6 to protest City Manager Manuel De La Rosa ahead of the San Benito's City Commission Meeting outside the Municipal Building in San Benito.

San Benito releases forensic audit

Report reviews 6 'areas of concern'

By FERNANDO DEL VALLE
Staff Writer

SAN BENITO — San Benito school district officials are addressing an auditing firm's recommendations based on its 10-month, \$220,000 forensic audit focusing on district operations during a five-year period.

Earlier this week, the Fort Worth-based firm of Weaver and Tidwell presented its report to school board members before they publicly released its findings.

"Trustees will work collaboratively with district administrators to ensure that steps are taken to promptly and efficiently remediate the areas of concern," board President Ramiro Moreno stated.

On Wednesday, board member Orlando Lopez said the auditors, who found no unlawful practices, presented recommendations.

Addressing concerns

"Under the current administration, the district has implemented multiple measures to ensure all acquisitions of goods and services are obtained in accordance with board policy and Texas law," Superintendent Theresa Servellon stated.

"Commencing the 2022-2023 school year, teachers and instructional assistants

melessly violated' UN Charter in Ukraine

AUDIT

FROM A1

The realignment of these funding sources has proven to be advantageous in meeting our school district's goals. I look forward to working with the school board and district administrators to examine each of the forensic audit's recommendations and will implement appropriate change for the betterment of San Benito CISD."

Audit's scope

As part of the audit covering the period from Sept. 1, 2016 to Aug. 31, 2021, the auditors focused on six "highest areas of concern" out of the board's requested 13 "potential areas of review," the 120-page report states.

The areas included credit card expenditures, purchasing and procurement practices, federal funds and grants, payments to vendors and contractors for construction projects and facilities along with payments to consultants and professional services firms, the report states.

The audit included reviews of budgets from 2017 to 2021, reviews of 200,000 emails along with reviews of the district's ledger and check register, from which auditors selected a "sample of transactions for further review," it states.

The review included vendor solicitation, evaluation of proposals, quotes and bids as well as the district's competitive bidding practices along with district and board purchasing, travel and credit card expenditures, it states.

\$40 million bond

states.

As part of a 2019 contract, the district paid the Brighton Group \$1.25 million based on estimated \$30 million construction costs, it states.

"Based upon other reviews of other project management contracts at other school districts, fees are generally paid based on either project completion percentages each month, the completion of pre-determined milestones or based on hourly rates and time on the project," the report states.

ABC Group

The audit also included a review of the district's 2018 \$180,000 contract with the ABC Group, which produced a quarterly district newsletter suspended in October 2020 as a result of COVID-19 pandemic, the report states, adding the contract automatically extended for two years in 2021.

"We did not identify evidence of the board discussing the renewal," the report states.

By the time the contract expires in April 2023, the district is expected to spend a total of \$540,000 for public relations services from April 2018 to April 2023, it states.

Maintenance and Operation

The audit also included a review of a \$2.1 million Parsons Commercial Roofing project "procured through a purchasing cooperative," the report states.

In their review, the auditors found "it did not appear that other bids or quotes were obtained."

as defined under the Texas Government Code," it states.

From 2018 to 2019, the district paid vendor Dezvia LLC \$78,000 to remodel the central office as part of a project for which the auditors wrote, "it did not appear that other quotes were obtained," the report states.

The audit included a review of the board's 2020 appointment of Jeff Everitt & Associates, selected to serve as the district's insurance agent, it states.

"The insurance agent of record services was not procured through an RFQ process ... a possible violation of Texas Education Code Section 44.031," the auditors wrote.

Credit card expenditures

The audit also included a review of 3,700 credit card transactions from 2017 to 2021, the report states.

During their review, the auditors found the district earned American Express "additional rebates" from 2017 to 2018, it states.

The audit shows the district redeemed American Express rewards points through cash gifts to the district office totalling \$9,325, which was used for a Thanksgiving luncheon, the report states, adding rebates totalled \$150,000.

As part of their review, the auditors found three transactions without purchase orders, three without supporting documentation and seven whose documentation was destroyed pursuant to a record retention policy, it states.

During the review

Handwritten mark: A circled "2" with a checkmark.

TH

> A2 | THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD | THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2022

Donna ISD sued over Wi-Fi tower project

BY MATT WILSON
STAFF WRITER

The company responsible for building and installing Donna ISD's \$3.7 million Wi-Fi tower project sued the district in April for breach of contract, alleging it has yet to be paid over a million dollars related to the project.

The district launched the tower project in August 2020 as a remedy to a significant portion of its students lacking internet connectivity needed for online learning, contracting with Alton-based company WIFIRUS LLC to design and build 12 Wi-Fi communication towers.

The district's administration billed the towers as a permanent solution to its students' Wi-Fi woes, and the project received national attention.

Construction delays, however, dogged the project virtually from the outset, delays the district and WIFIRUS attributed to pandemic-related supply shortages and foundation headaches.

Those delays prompted pointed criticism from trustees on the district's board by the end of that year. In February 2021, trustees even floated the idea of legal action if delays persisted. Then-WIFIRUS owner Gilberto De Los Santos defended the company's performance and its competence during those often tense meetings. The company's suit again defended its performance, saying delays were simply out of its control and the district should have accommodated them.

"Throughout the Project, Plaintiff encountered numerous unforeseeable delays beyond its control, including events related to the pandemic, the arctic freeze with attendant loss of power and several District errors and/or failures to comply with the Agreement," it reads. "Despite being requested to do so, the District has unreasonably failed to extend the contract time, in violation of the Agreement."

WIFIRUS is suing the district for over \$1 million, including damages, court costs and attorney's fees. "Plaintiff did in fact perform and provide substantial additional products and services as directed by the District, at significant out-of-pocket expense," the suit reads.

Senior professional counselor at the STHS behavioral hospital, is one of those individuals who offered a hand, and on Thursday, April 28, led an STHS presentation for the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office about stress management.

essential for authorities to identify their personal affinity for law enforcement and community.

"I think that it is really important for people to look introspectively to figure out what their meaning and their purpose is, which is to help others," she said.

Like Balleza-Ruiz, sheriff's Captain David Friedlein believes that taking care of one's mental health plays a vital role on how officers are able to interact within the community.

According to Friedlein, the stresses of law enforcement are not necessarily seen often but very much existent.

"Mental health has always been a very taboo subject for law enforcement, but we like everyone

BIRD FEED



DENIS

Birds bring food back to their young hidden in a birdhouse Wednesday at Le Moyne Gardens' Bu

State rests in Weslaco man's murder

BY MARK REAGAN
STAFF WRITER

EDINBURG — The fate of a 31-year-old Weslaco man will soon be in the hands of jurors.

Prosecutors rested Wednesday afternoon on

ex-lover, Nancy Arlene Lopez, 32, prior to the shooting for a lack of evidence.

During three days of testimony this week, jurors saw 181 exhibits offered by prosecutors and heard testimony from 15 witnesses, including Lopez.

a trace amount of gunshot residue on Alfaro's hands, though he did determine gunshot residue existed on Alfaro's clothes.

Prosecutors have alleged Alfaro wore winter weather gloves while han-



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NOTICE TO ALL BIDDERS/CONTRACTORS:

The Brownsville Affordable Homeownership Corporation (BAHC) is accepting sealed bids for the proposed construction of single-family homes. Model Home numbers are: #1077, #1464(A)(B)(C), #1700(A)(B), #1850 and #2000.

Bid Packets may be obtained at the BAHC offices located at 3401 Old Hwy 77, Suite "B", Brownsville, Texas 78520 during regular business hours.

Bidders are encouraged to attend the pre-bid conference to be held on May 24, 2022 at 10:00a.m and 2:00p.m. located at the BAHC offices. Registration is required for attendance. Attendance is not required to bid.

Bids will be received and accepted until Monday, May 30, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. at the office of BAHC, located at 3401 Old Hwy 77, Suite "B" Brownsville, Texas 78520. Bids must be submitted in a Sealed Envelope and properly marked: "BAHC Sealed Bids". **No faxed, mailed or late bids will be accepted.**

No bid may be changed after the bid date, although any bid may be withdrawn and resubmitted before that date. Any bids received after the bid date and time specified, in the bid packet will be returned unopened.

All bids submitted having met the above mentioned requirements will then be collected, opened and read publicly at the office of the Brownsville Affordable Homeownership Corporation. BAHC reserves the right to reject any and all bids, to waive irregularities or informalities in any and all bids and to accept any bid which is deemed to be in the best interest of the Brownsville Affordable Homeownership Corporation.

All first time Bidders/Contractors must be approved prior to the award of a Bid. The Contractor Application must be completed by all Bidders and all references will be checked prior to award.

ALL BIDDERS MUST SUBMIT THE BID FORM ALONG WITH THEIR BIDS.

Small and minority firms are encouraged to submit bids for this project. Attention is called to the fact that not less than the federally determined prevailing (Davis-Bacon) wage rates, as issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, as set forth in the Contract Documents must be paid on this project and the Contractor must insure that all employees and applicants are not discriminated against based on age, sex, disability, race, color or national origin in its operational programs, activities or employment as required by Title IX, Section 504 and Title VI.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to call (956) 621-2813.

Steven D. Solis,
Executive Director

Independent Distributors

CALL TODAY 556-430-8270

El Extra The Herald

222.N. Expressway 83 St



Digital and Print Outs

We're looking for a highly motivated, performer who is accustomed to producing results in a fast-paced environment to grow our Digital and Print business in Cameron County proper.

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Then we want to talk

Experience in selling digital and/or print advertising is preferred but will consider candidates with no experience selling intangible, customized solutions

Other qualifications:

- A track record of consistently meeting or exceeding production fast paced environment
- Strong organizational and people skills and ability to manage a team
- A proven ability to be adaptable, including the ability to learn quickly.

If this sounds like the right mix of characteristics and you meet the minimum qualifications, please call or email to hear from you!

Compensation & Benefits

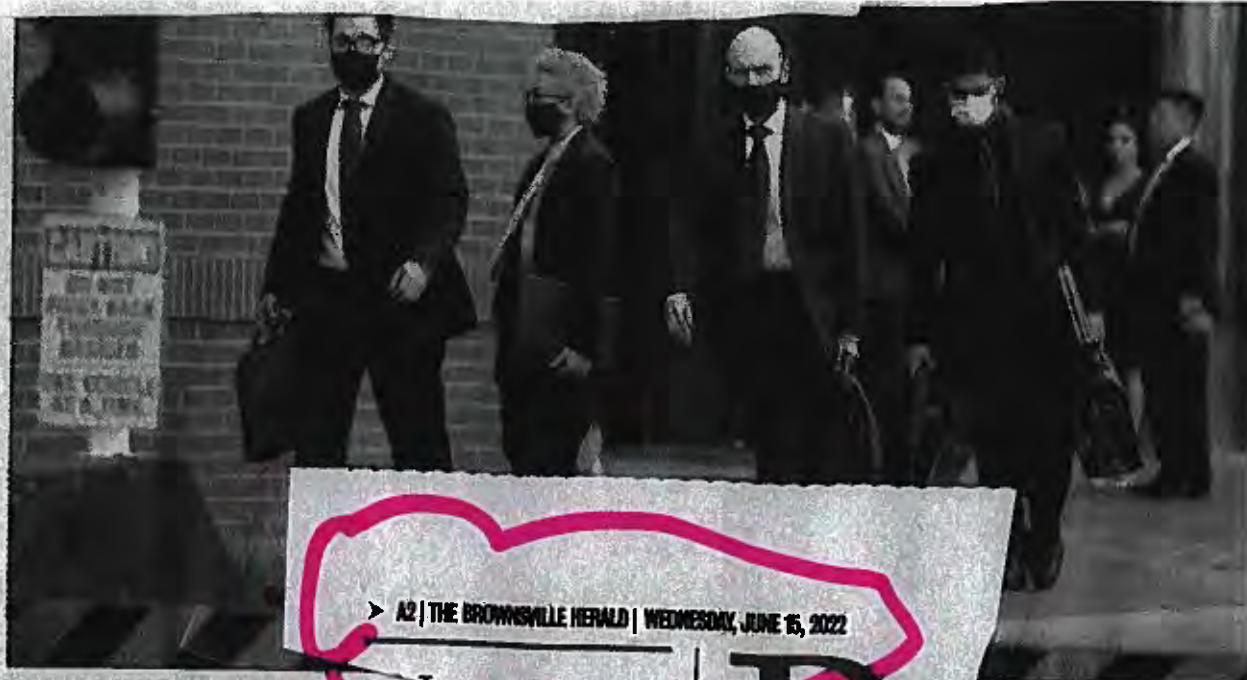
Team members are paid base salary plus commission potential and the opportunity to work in a fast-paced environment. We provide a full benefit package including health insurance, paid vacation, and 401(k).

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DINA AREVALO/THE MONITOR

In this 2021 photo, defense attorney Jaime Peña, third from left, leaves the McAllen federal courthouse.

No More Delays

Weslaco bribery trial gets October trial date

BY DINA AREVALO
STAFF WRITER

McALLEN — U.S. District Judge Micaela Alvarez has run out of patience for further delays to the Weslaco water plant bribery trial, which has been on her docket since April 2019.

To that end, the federal judge was terse and quite to the point during a status conference held in her courtroom Monday morning on what should have been the day a jury was empaneled and opening statements were made.

"Why can't we seem to get this case tried?" Alvarez asked prosecutors and defense attorneys at the top of the hearing.

"I am very frustrated," she said.

The latest delay in trying the case came after one of the two defendants remaining in the case recently suffered a medical issue that has his doctors concerned about him enduring a stressful situa-

tion so soon into his recovery.

Ricardo "Rick" Quintanilla, a Weslaco businessman, underwent open heart surgery earlier this spring. When prosecutors became aware of his health condition, they communicated to the court their expectation that Quintanilla's defense team would request a temporary delay to the start of the trial.

But that didn't happen. Instead, Alvarez called a status conference on May 24 in response to the government's motion — a hearing during which she expressed her displeasure with the 11th hour delays and the lack of supporting documentation from Quintanilla's attorneys.

"I do not like these last minute issues coming up," Alvarez said then, before launching into a series of questions directed at Jaime Peña, one of two attorneys representing the recuperating Quintanilla.

Peña said he had been awaiting statements from

Quintanilla's doctors regarding his condition, but Alvarez admonished the attorney for failing to file a motion at all, even one stating that supporting documentation would be forthcoming.

The judge also said she would be disinclined to accept any late motions, but that didn't stop Peña from filing one anyway — after the motion deadline had lapsed.

This one, at last, detailed Quintanilla's medical condition, according to discussions held in open court.

But a portion of the document, which was filed with the court electronically, was corrupt, meaning Alvarez could not access it.

The judge made note of the technical error in an order begrudgingly handed down on June 2. And it was a fact she keyed in on during the discussion Monday, when Peña said he had been unaware of the upload error.

"We're a small town, Mr. Peña," Alvarez said, adding

that he could have "sent someone over with a hard copy" of the doctors' note.

"I don't want apologies," she added when Peña attempted to apologize for the oversight.

Already, the trial — which Alvarez in May 2019 declared "complex" — order to stretch the latitudes allowed under the Speedy Trial Act of 1974 — has seen numerous delays far beyond what that designation would imply.

Some of the delays were due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At least one was due to the death of a key witness. But on Monday, Alvarez was visibly frustrated with the idea of allowing things to stand further.

So much so that she not only refused to entertain further delays from the defendants, but she also refused to allow much latitude to prosecutors, including a trial attorney from the Justice Department's Public Integrity Division out of Washington, D.C.

He was carrying a replica handgun with a large blade that folded out of it similar to a pocket knife, according to a photo released by police.

"After reviewing the evidence, prosecutors determined that while criminal conduct occurred, the evidence as presented did not consti-

epic and record-breaking and he refuses to allow last night's incident to overshadow the magic of this historic moment," Chappelle's publicist Carla Sims said in a statement.

Chappelle was attacked as he was wrapping up a routine in which he talked about how comedians have to worry more about

2013. This time, the virus has been detected in birds in 34 states, indicating it is far more widespread than seven years ago.

The U.S. Geological Survey's National Wildlife Health Center also collects data from wildlife officials on suspected and confirmed bird flu deaths. It lists 8,536 recent wild bird

avian influenza. "It's definitely an event," said

Rebecca has been in influenza at the

University of Georgia's Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study. "The number of birds and species and states already in which it has been detected is pretty alarming."

Water fowl including ducks and geese, which typically carry the virus, and the raptors and scavengers that feed on them are the most commonly sickened birds, but cases have been confirmed in more than three dozen species. Ducks and geese are usually able to live with the virus without getting sick, but latest variant is proving more contagious and more deadly.

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office, which prosecutes misdemeanors within the city. An email seeking comment from the office was not immediately returned.

COLLATERAL

Rock was also in the wings of Chappelle's show. He grabbed the mic and jokingly asked, "Was that Will Smith?"

Former tribal leader convicted in casino bribery case

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOSTON — A former leader of a Massachusetts Native American tribe was convicted Thursday of bribery and extortion charges related to the tribe's long-planned casino project, federal prose-

cutors said.

But Cedric Cromwell, former leader of the Mashpee Wampanoag, was cleared by the federal jury in Boston of some charges, including one count of extortion and a count of bribery conspiracy, prosecutors said.



Are you at risk?

"I men virus Rapt Minn 1,000 sear ferin ever. No birds cente Marc and died. had t work tive injur influ them into infec No cases recor eagle USD, said recov givin wild fight US respo about ing th tation Se study years of w Amer nearly as h encro But i what will h tions is ong been

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comments as provided by the agenda and as permitted by the presiding officer during

THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD | SUNDAY, MAY 15, 2022 | PAGE D5

101 Legal / Bid Notices

101 Legal / Bid Notices

101 Legal / Bid Notices

101 Legal / Bid Notices

220 Commercial & Industrial

102 Bid Notices

102 Bid Notices

102 Bid Notices

102 Bid Notices

102 Bid Notices

6/22 AB
1/22 ARFP

6/21/22 ARFP

6/23/22 ARFQ 1

6/23/22 ARFQ 1

6/30/22 AB 14

A = Annual Q = Quarter

Detailed specifications of the County Purchasing
<https://www.cameroncountypurchasing.com>

Your sealed submission to the COMMISSIONERS CO-QUALIFICATIONS ON- and addressed and submitted to Cameron County Courthouse, 3rd Floor, Room 303, referenced and returned to Cameron County Courthouse, 3rd Floor, Room 303, Texas in the Purchasing Office. (as per Purchasing Office) are invited to attend. Opportunity Employer and reject any and all submissions.

Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District is soliciting Competitive Sealed Proposals for "Rancho Verde Elementary School HVAC Upgrades".

All proposals must be on a lump sum basis including General Contract, Electrical and Mechanical work. Digital Bid packages available at Ethos Engineering, email: dlooper@ethoseng.net; phone: (956) 230-3435. An executed bid bond form in the amount of 5% of the proposal must accompany each proposal.

The Pre-Bid Conference will be on Thursday, May 12, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. at Rancho Verde Elementary School at 101 Rancho Alegre Dr., Brownsville, Texas.

A walkthrough will follow Pre-Bid Conference at 10:00 a.m. Bid proposals are due on Thursday, May 26, 2022, at 4:00 p.m. Proposal must be submitted in a sealed envelope to Ethos Engineering, 1126 South Commerce St., Harlingen, TX 78550 and shall be plainly marked "CSP#21-22-38 LFCISD RANCHO VERDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HVAC UPGRADES".

Faxed or emailed Proposals are not acceptable. Proposals will be opened and read at 4:15 p.m. virtually via GOTOMEETING. Login access details: <https://meet.goto.com/750114109>. You can also dial in using your phone. United States: +1 (872) 240-3412 Access Code: 750-114-109.

LFCISD reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals and to waive any irregularities.

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"INVITATION TO BID"

The Los Fresnos CISD is requesting sealed competitive bids/proposals on the following:

Method	Category	Number	Time Due	Due Date
CSP	Athletic, PE Supplies & Small Equipment	22-23-01	8:30 AM	4/25/2022
CSP	Student Uniforms & Clothing (Athletics/PE, extra-curricular, clubs)	22-23-02	9:30 AM	4/26/2022
CSP	Employee Uniforms (Police & Security, maintenance, & general)	22-23-03	10:30 AM	4/25/2022
CSP	General Merchandise & School Related Products	22-23-04	11:30 AM	4/25/2022
CSP	Groceries & Misc. Products	22-23-05	1:30 PM	4/25/2022
CSP	Music Supplies, Instruments, or Repair Services	22-23-06	2:30 PM	4/25/2022
CSP	Speech Therapy Services	22-23-07	3:30 PM	4/26/2022
CSP	Police & Security Supplies/Parts, Small Equipment, Repair, Installation, & Services	22-23-08	4:30 PM	4/25/2022
CSP	Awards, Trophies, Incentives, Spirit Attire, Promotional & Advertising Items	22-23-09	8:30 AM	4/26/2022
CSP	Printing Services	22-23-10	9:30 AM	4/26/2022
CSP	District Vehicle Parts, Repairs, Sales, Supplies or Services	22-23-11	10:30 AM	4/26/2022
CSP	Custodial Supplies & Small Equipment	22-23-12	11:30 AM	4/26/2022
CSP	Maintenance Facilities & Grounds Supplies, Equipment, or Services	22-23-13	1:30 PM	4/26/2022

RFP/CSP is due at the specified time and date above, on the below mentioned website. We reserve the right to accept or reject any or all proposals.

Specifications may be obtained by visiting Los Fresnos CISD purchasing web-site <https://lfcisd.bonfirehub.com/portal/?tab=openOpportunities>. Any questions to register and/or to access the proposal packets please contact Albento Anguiano, Purchasing, Director, at aanguiano15456@lfcisd.net or at the District Purchasing Office at 32703 State Highway 100, Los Fresnos, Texas or by calling (956) 254-5115.

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The Herald has ope
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CALL TODAY

El Extra

28

102

203 Air Conditioning

217

General Services

230 Remodeling

723

Asphalt

ices

102

Bid Notices



BROWNSVILLE
PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD

INVITATION TO BID/PROPOSE

NO.	PRE-BID/PROPOSAL CONFERENCE VIA CONFERENCE CALL	SUBMISSION	OPENING	NAME
P 039-22	N/A	05/18/22 5:00 PM	05/19/22 10:00 AM	Supplemental Power Supply and Generation
B 040-22	N/A	05/04/22 5:00 PM	05/05/22 2:00 PM	Supply of Electrical Inventory Material
P 041-22	N/A	05/11/22 5:00 PM	05/12/22 10:30 AM	Classification and Compensation Review Services

*B/P/Q (BID/PROPOSAL/QUALIFICATIONS)

Sealed bids/proposals/qualifications will be received by the Brownsville Public Utilities Board, at the office of **DIANE SOLITAIRE, PURCHASING, 1155 FM 511, OLMITO, TEXAS 78575, (956) 983-6364**. The bids/proposals/qualifications will be received until the date specified above. **INTERESTED BIDDERS/PROPOSERS MAY OBTAIN SPECIFICATIONS AND/OR INFORMATION AT THE BPUB PURCHASING DEPARTMENT.** Bidders/Proposers are invited to attend the bid/proposal/qualification opening at the Office of the Purchasing Department on the dates specified. Presence at the bid opening is not mandatory. Specifications may also be obtained at https://www.brownsville-pub.com/rfp_status/open/

04/24/22



City of Brownsville Purchasing & Contract Services Department

INVITATION

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT *of* TEXAS

U.S. Attorneys » Southern District of Texas » News

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, April 7, 2022

More charges filed in HISD corruption probe

HOUSTON – The former chief operating officer of the Houston Independent School District (HISD) is facing new tax charges in relation to a bribery scheme, announced U.S. Attorney Jennifer B. Lowery.

A federal grand jury returned the 33-count superseding indictment against Brian Busby, 43, and HISD contract vendor Anthony Hutchison, 61, this morning. They are expected to make their appearances before a U.S. magistrate judge in the near future.

Both were originally charged Dec. 14, 2021, alleging they conspired to engage in a bribery scheme. Busby allegedly helped award HISD construction and grounds maintenance contracts to Hutchison in return for cash bribes and hundreds of thousands of dollars in home remodeling. The new charges allege they filed false tax returns that underreported their income – income related to the scheme. Hutchison also overstated cost of goods sold on his returns.

Specifically, Hutchison obtained cash he used to pay bribes to HISD officials by writing company checks to vendors, who cashed the checks and provided the cash to Hutchison. Hutchison falsely stated on the memo line of the checks that they were in payment for work that had been performed on HISD properties. He then caused the checks to be improperly deducted on corporate tax returns as business expenses.

Hutchison also caused his gambling losses to be improperly deducted on corporate tax returns as alleged business expenses his companies incurred on HISD construction or landscaping projects.

Busby concealed his involvement in the bribery scheme by making cash deposits of bribe proceeds into multiple bank accounts and by filing false tax returns that failed to declare the cash bribes and other benefits as income.

To date, five others have pleaded guilty in relation to the scheme - Rhonda Skillern-Jones (former HISD Board of Education president), 39, Houston; Derrick Sanders (officer of construction services), 50, Alfred Hoskins, (general manager of facilities, maintenance and operations), 58, Gerron Hall (area manager for maintenance - south), 48, all of Missouri City; and Luis Tovar (area manager for maintenance - north), 39, Huffman.

NOTICE TO READERS

OFFICE CLOSED

The health and well-being of our customers and our community is always a top priority. Due to the ongoing concerns of the coronavirus or COVID-19, The Maggie Ozuna, Robert Camacho Jr., and Christian Alonzo Juarez.

There are 18 early voting locations in Cameron County, and they are open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Early voting runs through Friday. Election Day is Tuesday.

GETTING IT RIGHT

► CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

It is the policy of The Brownsville Herald to correct errors in a timely manner. Corrections and clarifications will be published in this space. To inquire about corrections, readers may call an editor.

982-6628 | 982-6617

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or e-mail us at
corrections@brownsvilleherald.com

PAGE 2

BROWNSVILLE AND THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

Judge scales back restitution for La Joya's ex-mayor

BY DINA AREVALO
STAFF WRITER

Two weeks after sentencing former La Joya mayor Jose "Fito" Salinas to nearly three years in federal prison and ordering that he pay more than \$320,000 in restitution to the city he defrauded, a federal judge has reconsidered that sentence and significantly lowered the amount the former mayor must repay.

U.S. District Judge Randy Crane on Monday granted a motion by Salinas' attorney, Michael McCrum, of San Antonio, to reconsider the restitution amount Salinas must repay for his role in four schemes he and his daughter, Frances Salinas De Leon, participated in.

McCrum, whom Salinas retained after his sentencing on April 28, argued that though prosecutors had tied Salinas' involvement to all four schemes — and though he admitted such — the former mayor had only pleaded guilty to one of the five charges laid out in the indictment against him, and could therefore only be ordered to pay restitution on that one count.

"The Fifth Circuit has held that a trial court's order of restitution must be limited by the offense of conviction," McCrum argued in a May 11 motion for correction of sentence. The judge agreed and

lowered the amount of restitution Salinas owes to just \$22,000 — a figure related to a public relations contract Salinas had awarded to one of his daughter's associates.

THE CHARGES

Federal prosecutors had initially implicated Salinas in three of the five counts laid out in the indictment against him, his daughter and two other co-conspirators.

The five counts detailed the four separate schemes prosecutors say either the former mayor or his daughter had contrived.

The first two counts revolved around a public relations contract for the

La Joya Housing Authority.

In that scheme, prosecutors said a woman named Sylvia Garces Valdez had paid Frances Salinas — at France Salinas' suggestion — \$10,000 to "influence and reward" her father to award the contract to Garces Valdez.

In the second scheme — outlined by count three of the indictment — Salinas sold his personal property at an inflated price to the city, which was looking to expand its cemetery.

The third scheme — detailed in count four of the indictment — also involved the La Joya Housing Authority. Only Frances Salinas was charged in that count.

ensure that our exceptional coastal beaches and natural resources remain preserved," said County Judge Eddie Treviño Jr.

"Last year, we re-nourished approximately 2,200 linear shoreline at Isla Blanca Park, and through our great partnership with state agencies, we are pleased to announce this additional coastal preservation effort," he added.

Driving on the dunes can subject a motorist both civil and criminal penalties. Under state law, it is a Class C misdemeanor, with a maximum \$500 fine.

In addition, under the Texas Natural Resources Code, a fine of between \$50 and \$2,000 can be levied for each offense. Additional fines may be incurred via the Texas Administrative Code.

The Herald

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3 MONTH	\$46.80	\$42.90	\$37.71
6 MONTH	\$93.60	\$85.80	\$75.42
1 YEAR	\$187.20	\$171.60	\$150.84

DON PEDRO SAYS

"Congress is taking a new look at UFOs," Don Pedro emailed the newsroom.

THE VALLEY

Federal charges dropped in ex-housing official case

BY BERENICE GARCIA
STAFF WRITER

The federal government has dropped their case against Sylvia Garces Valdez, the former vice chair of the La Joya Housing Authority who was accused of participating in a bribery scheme, after she pleaded guilty to improper influence in state court.

U.S. District Judge Randy Crane signed the order to dismiss the charges against Garces Valdez after attorneys for the federal government filed a motion requesting to dismiss the case on Thursday.

The motion came after Garces Valdez, 40, pleaded guilty to improper influence, a Class A misdemeanor, in state court.

Hidalgo County Court-at-law Judge Jaime Palacios sentenced Garces Valdez to two years of community supervision. He also ordered her to pay a \$4,000 fee and \$22,000 in restitution.

The now-dismissed federal charges against Garces Valdez stemmed from allegations that she bribed former La Joya Mayor Jose "Fito" Salinas in exchange for a public relations contract with the city.

Prosecutors alleged that she agreed to pay Salinas' daughter, Frances A. Salinas, to help her obtain the contract.

Frances A. Salinas then allegedly convinced her father, Jose "Fito" Salinas, to approve the contract.

The former mayor pleaded guilty to wire fraud in relation to the alleged bribery scheme just as he was about to go to trial in July.

Frances A. Salinas and Ramiro Alaniz, another co-defendant in the federal case, also pleaded guilty.

Frances was the former interim executive director of the La Joya Housing authority and Alaniz was the former maintenance director for the housing authority.

Both pleaded guilty to a wire fraud charge related to a kickback scheme that was tied to the construction of a daycare. The construction was a project of the housing authority.

GETTING

sincere gratitude, yet a heavy heart that I have decided that I will not seek

January 2007.

In his release, Lucio stated, "It has been an

grateful for office where make our s

Bringing awareness to do

BY LAURA B. MARTINEZ
STAFF WRITER

No one knows what

► A2 | THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD | SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2021

NOTICE TO

Domestic violence with their spouse to stop assaulting them.

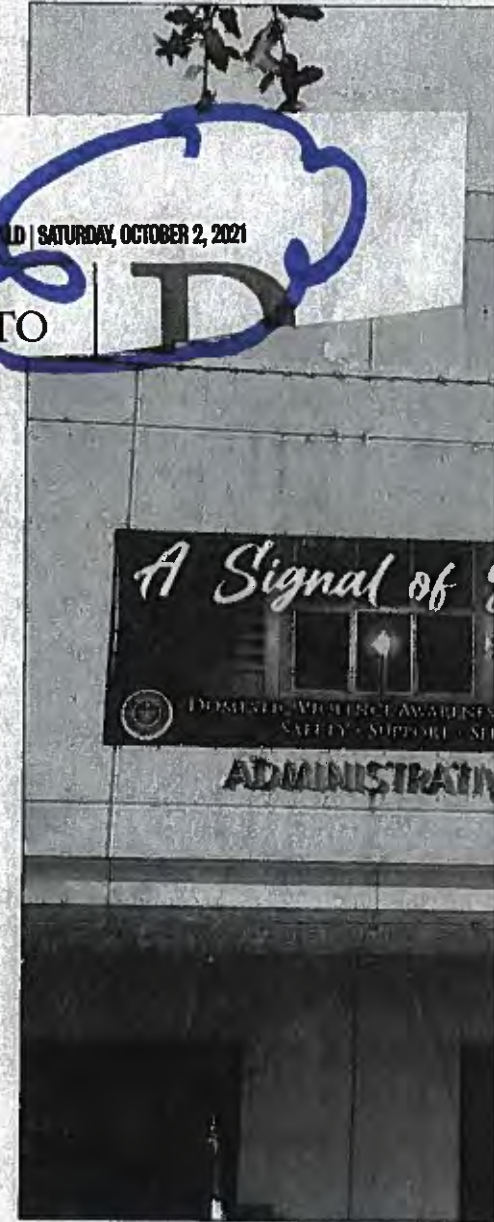
October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and the Cameron County District Attorney's Office held a press conference on Friday to remind the public that domestic violence is occurring in the community and there is help for those women and men being abused.

This year's theme is A Signal of Hope. The signal is lit candles left in a window at a home letting a victim of domestic violence know that it is a safe place he or she can go to for help.

"We are asking members of the community to put a candle in the front window of your homes because every single one of us has a family member or a friend or neighbor who is a victim of domestic violence. They just haven't told us yet," said Art Villarreal, lead prosecutor in the Domestic Violence Unit at the DA's office.

"Hopefully by putting these candles in the front windows of our homes we are sending a signal to these victims that this home is a safe place you can come and talk about the domestic violence situation you are suffering through."

He added the light also signals that those committing the violence can come and seek assistance too.



A sign outside the Cameron County Administrative County District Attorney's Office held a press Awareness Month.

The most common thread that we see in domestic violence cases is anxiety by the victims, fear by the victims that no one will believe them that no one will support them and what I am going to do if he is put away. And the more frightening question, what am I going to do if they let him out."

District Attorney V. Saenz laid out in which gets assault spouse or boy residence and The officers notice every home is dish after the case investigated will make an

VALLEY/NATION

TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2022 | THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD | A3

Three of Lina Hidalgo's aides indicted in Harris County

BY ZACH DESPARD
THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Three employees of Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo have been indicted by a grand jury on charges related to how they helped award a contract for COVID-19 vaccine outreach last year.

The Harris County district clerk lists two felony counts each for chief of staff Alex Triantaphyllis, policy director Wallis Nader and policy aide Aaron Dunn. The charges are

misuse of official information and tampering with a government record.

The charges add weight to a scandal Hidalgo has attempted to dismiss as politically motivated, and they threaten to tarnish her image as an ethically minded public servant as she seeks reelection this year. Hidalgo is widely seen as a rising star in the Texas Democratic Party and a future statewide candidate.

PLEASE SEE COUNTY, A3

draw selfie-taking visitors

months."

COUNTY

FROM PAGE A1

The three employees were part of a selection committee to choose a vendor for a COVID-19 vaccine outreach campaign Hidalgo wanted. The committee, which also included members of the county health department, unanimously awarded an \$11 million contract to Elevate Strategies, a small political consulting firm owned by Felicity Pereyra, who has previously worked on Democratic campaigns.

Republicans have seized on this as evidence of corruption, alleging without evidence that Hidalgo was funneling money to help the

Democratic Party, build relationships with voters. Hidalgo accused Republican county commissioners of spreading conspiracy theories, though she agreed to cancel the contract in September because she said it had become too politicized.

Court records filed by the Texas Rangers, who are assisting prosecutors, suggest the inquiry focuses on whether Hidalgo's office inappropriately involved Pereyra in designing the bid proposal she would later win.

Hidalgo did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg's office said it could only confirm charges after delivering arrest warrants to defendants.

NOTICE TO READERS

OFFICE CLOSED

The health and well-being of our customers and our community is always a top priority. Due to the ongoing concerns of the coronavirus or COVID-19, The Brownsville Herald Business Office will be closed until further notice. Payments may be made over the telephone by calling (956) 542-4301, or by mail at 222 N. Expressway 77/83 Suite 176, Brownsville, Texas 78521. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience.

AROUND THE VALLEY

Ground broken on Edinburg 'starter home community'

STAFF REPORT

Ground was broken March 4 on what's being called a "starter home community" in Edinburg that is expected to contribute as much as \$50 million in tax

PAGE 2

BROWNSVILLE AND THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

Man convicted in \$1.2M fajita theft eligible for parole in 2023

BY LAURA B. MARTINEZ
STAFF WRITER

A former Cameron County employee sentenced to 50 years for stealing \$1.2 million worth of fajitas over a period of nine years will be eligible for parole next year.

State records indicate Gilberto Escamilla, 57, is eligible for parole May 24, 2023. He remains incarcerated at Alfred Hughes Unit in Gatesville, Texas.

According to court doc-

uments, the thefts occurred between 2008 and 2017 while Escamilla served as the food administrator for the Darrell B. Hester Juvenile Justice Center in San Benito. An audit revealed that Escamilla purchased \$1,252,578.72 worth of fajitas for the juvenile center using Cameron County funds. Instead of serving the fajitas at the juvenile center, Escamilla sold the meat to individuals and restaurants keeping the

proceeds for himself.

Escamilla was arrested in 2017 after a driver from Labatt Food Service in Harlingen called the detention center's kitchen to let them know their 800-pound delivery of fajitas arrived. An employee who answered the phone said he was in charge of that kitchen, and fajitas are not on the menu at the center.

On April 20, 2018 Escamilla waived his right to a jury trial and pleaded

guilty to one count of theft by a public servant. Visiting State District Judge J. Manuel Bafiales sentenced him to 50 years in state prison. He was also ordered to pay restitution of the \$1,251,578.72 to Cameron County plus court cost.

In June 2018, Escamilla filed a motion for a new sentencing hearing stating he had ineffective counsel and an illegal basis for sentencing. His request was denied.

Escamilla later sought to have his conviction overturned by the 13th Court of Appeals citing he had ineffective counsel and that an associate judge did not have authority to accept his written waiver of his right to a jury trial, however the higher court affirmed the 50 year sentence.

Escamilla's projected release date from prison is May 24, 2038.

lmartinez@brownsvilleherald.com

TRAIL RIDERS

Man indicted in deadly

NOTICE TO READERS

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health and well-being of our
issued for Valley

BY LAURA B. MARTINEZ

degrees) across most of Deep South Texas late tonight (Friday) into early Saturday morning."

Dangerously large waves are anticipated in the surf zone with a high risk of strong rip currents.

The low temperatures tonight will be in the 30s with the highs on Saturday in the upper 50s and lower 60s.

lmartinez@brownsvilleherald.com

GETTING IT RIGHT

➤ CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

It is the policy of The Brownsville Herald to correct errors in a timely manner. Corrections and clarifications will be published in this space. To inquire about corrections, readers may call an editor.

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PAGE 2

BROWNSVILLE AND THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

Ousted TSC president awarded over \$1M

BY LAURA B. MARTINEZ
STAFF WRITER

Texas Southmost College is appealing a recent ruling by a higher court ordering the college pay ousted President Lily Tercero nearly \$1 million for breach of contract and attorney fees.

In a final judgment issued by U.S. District Judge Fernando Rodriguez Jr. he ordered that Tercero recover \$674,878.66 on her cause of action for breach of contract, \$235,290.26 in attorney fees and \$24,579.41 in conditional attorney fees.

"The Court finds that prejudgment interest is to accrue as simple interest on \$674,878. 66, the damage that the jury awarded Tercero against the District

(November 3, 2016) and ending on the day preceding the date judgment was rendered on her claims (December 3, 2021), at the prime rate of \$5,000. The pre-judgment interest totals \$171,494.75," Rodriguez wrote. His order was signed Feb. 1, 2022.

TSC amended its notice of appeal on Feb. 7, 2022.

The Brownsville Herald reached out to attorney's representing TSC and had not received comment as of late Friday afternoon.

A federal jury in November 2018 awarded Tercero more than \$13 million in damages for being fired during what Tercero argued was a sham termination hearing.

However, the trial

contract claims and reduced the damages award for her procedural due-process claim to \$1. Tercero appealed the decision with the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals which reversed her breach of contract claim.

Tercero sued the college after it fired her in September 2016 for deliberately and recklessly failing to obtain windstorm insurance with board approval in compliance with state law; for allowing TSC checks to be stamped with signatures of people who were no longer trustees; for failing to timely search and fill the position of vice president for finance and administration; for failing to inform the board of the sitting

board member's request that he personally sign and review checks in the amount of \$10,000 or more and for not complying with a request for information sought by another member.

Tercero accused the school of pre-determining the outcome of her termination hearing, arguing she never had a fair shot during the public meeting.

The jury ruled that trustees did not have good cause to fire Tercero, that TSC breached her contract and that the trustees had already made up their minds to terminate the former president.

TSC's attorney, Eduardo G. Garza, argued that the trust-

**istrict Superintendents
Alicia Noyola hailed the
new initiative.**

"I think that the thing that is so impressed with in the Rio Grande Valley native is just the opportunities that now exist for all of our students," Noyola said. "They can go on to raise the opportunities for our students in the Rio Grande Valley but across the state."

The Promise Plus
of the largest, if not the
est, endowment of its
in the country,
Harlingen School F
President Gerry Fle
understood that si
cance very well.

"I think it's one of the most profoundly important programs that's ever been offered," she said. "I'm thrilled that the University of Texas System has decided to make this investment."

Harlingen College seniors also appreciate new opportunities available by the endowment.

"It's really exciting," Joshua Garza, 18, who plans to study marketing at UTRGV.

OR OF STINCE

> A2 | THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD | FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2022

NOTICE TO

sday along Highway 48.

DENISE CATHEY/THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

charged in murder facing new charge

of committing a "intentionally or ngly threaten or ... "in fear of immidily injury or death, defendant did then re use or exhibit a weapon, to-wit: a

at a month earlier, 15, 2021, Martinez indicted on the charge.

inez has entered a lty plea in both

rding to the mur-ctment, Martinez n and there inten-

or knowingly e death of an indi-namely,

her Perales, by Christopher

Perales with a firearm."

The indictment states Martinez also shot and wounded Richard David Perales, Christopher's brother, Martinez, "did then and there intentionally knowingly, or recklessly cause bodily injury to Richard David Perales by shooting Richard David Perales with a firearm and the defendant did then and there exhibit a deadly weapon, to-wit: a firearm, during the commission of said assault," according to the record.

The shooting happened on Oct. 6, 2021 at the Sunshine Apartments, located at the 1600 block of Sam Houston Boulevard in Harlingen. Three others

were also injured.

Perales was a member of the basketball team, an auto collision student and a leader in his church.

Harlingen police investigators had said they also linked 18-year-old Danni Ruiz to the case. She was arrested and charged with tampering with evidence, authorities said. Ruiz was indicted on the charge on Dec. 15, 2021. She was arraigned and entered a not guilty plea.

According to Cameron County court records, Ruiz's trial is scheduled for March 7 while Martinez's is scheduled for March 21.

Martinez remains jailed at a Cameron County facility. Ruiz is out on bond.

PSJA to spend nearly half-a-million dollars on door access technology

BY MATT WILSON
STAFF WRITER

Trustees for the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo school district gave its blessing to spend just under half-a-million dollars of grant money on access control technology for its high school and middle school campuses.

Assistant Superintendent for Technology Latoro Devalos told the board the district received \$528,000 in federal funds distributed through a TEA grant meant to increase the safety and security on campuses.

The door access controls equipment PSJA ISD is buying for \$482,410.55, and will allow school personnel to decide who can open certain doors and keep a log of who's using entrances.

"So what will happen is we will be able to know who is accessing our schools during school hours, after hours," he said. "We can grant access to individuals — who should be going in, who shouldn't be going in. So we'll be able to see every time an ID is used to open that door. It'll create a log, so that will increase the security of our campus."

PSJA ISD Police Chief Rolando Garcia said spending that grant money has been a long running project for his relatively young department.

"We had been working on this one since the creation of our police department," he said. "This was the original school and safety grant that was awarded in 2019, and one of the main pri-

farmers swing into action in Mercedes

STC OKs \$676K purifier purchase

STAFF REPORT

McALLEN — South Texas College is purchasing 400 portable air purifiers for a grand total of \$676,800, planning to use the units as a COVID-19 mitigation tool.

Funds for the purchase were earmarked in the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund grant budget.

The purchase, which the board approved Jan. 25, will complement 125 purifiers the college ordered last fall.

Air purifiers have been a frequent big ticket purchase for local educational entities as the COVID-19 pandemic trudges on, although those purchases have led to occasional acrimony.

Those buys are often backed by federal dollars.

STC's board didn't approve the purchase unanimously; Trustee Vice Chair Alejo Salinas Jr. voted against the measure, and there was some discussion about the way the new purifiers were being purchased.

Half of the purifiers are being bought from Esparza Pest Control & Eco-Logic Systems Inc. of Edinburg for \$297,000, while the other 200 are being purchased from Aberration Inc. doing business as South Texas Solar Systems of McAllen for \$379,800.

Out of a dozen bidders, Esparza and Aberration ranked first and second, respectively.

Trustees asked about the discrepancy in cost, about why two vendors were tapped instead of just one and whether splitting the order between two vendors was allowed.

Solis said each vendor was providing purifiers that implement different technology. Although he noted both were "very good units," he said a committee from the college had found the technology used in one of those types of units isn't appropriate for laboratory settings.

"So that's why we recommend to break them down into 200 and 200," he said.

Esparza is providing the district with CIMR 2000 purifiers, according to materials presented to the board, while Aberration is supplying Ade Air Purifiers.

GETTING IT RIGHT



Above: Cash Martinez of the San Isidro FFA leads his steer into Livestock Show at the Sonny Brazil Agricultural Science Complex judging for the Showmanship category Saturday at the Sonny Brazil

AG CHAMP

Kids show livestock

BY TRAVIS M. WHITEHEAD
STAFF WRITER

SAN BENITO — Luke Garza struggled with his medium wool lamb in the arena as the judges looked over the animals.

It wasn't easy. The stiff cold Saturday at Sonny Brazil Agricultural Science Complex had lit a fuse in many of the lambs, cattle, goats and hogs at show, making them difficult to manage.

"He's kind of not in the best mood," said Luke, a fifth grader at Elma E. Barrera Elementary School in Santa Rosa.

But Luke, 10, put everything he had into his presentation, and he got something back — first place in his division at the Sonny Brazil Classic Livestock Show.

"I just try to do my best and get what I can get from



ly agreeable to the cold air, said David Munoz, a 4-H advisor.

"Pigs don't have sweat

EDITORIAL

Misspent

Billions in COVID-19 funds ended up in wrong pockets ✓

Corruption is “a cancer that eats away at a citizen’s faith in democracy,” a certain vice president said back in 2014. Now commander in chief, Joe Biden must confront a corruption problem unfolding on his watch: the spiraling costs of misspent COVID-19 funds.

In recent court filings, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has described a “massive fraud scheme” in which nonprofit organizations in Minnesota illegally diverted aid money intended to feed needy kids and used the proceeds “to purchase real estate, cars and other items.” All told, the groups received some \$65 million from federal food programs during the pandemic.

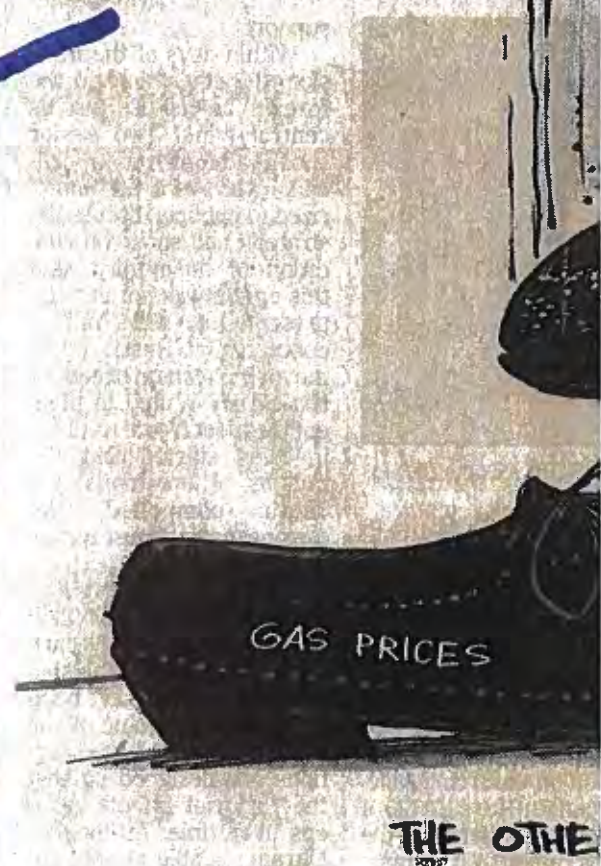
While shocking, the incident is by no means anomalous. As Congress has doled out almost \$6 trillion in relief funds, crooks and con men have lined up to get their share. They’ve created fake companies, stolen identities, invented employees, misstated their earnings, and otherwise conspired to siphon off taxpayer money. The Secret Service, which has opened more than 900 COVID-related criminal cases, estimates that \$100 billion may have been misappropriated.

Even that may be understating the problem. As little as 23% of the \$800 billion doled out by the Paycheck Protection Program actually found its way into workers’ pockets. A Department of Labor study estimated that more than \$87 billion in emergency unemployment benefits were improperly paid. The Small Business Administration has (among other blunders) disbursed more than \$6.2 billion to loan applicants it now suspects of identity theft. Somehow, the Internal Revenue Service managed to issue 2.2 million stimulus checks — worth about \$3.5 billion — to dead people.

Only in government could such calamitous



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Vote suppression

If you say — or write — that it’s harder to vote in Texas today than it was a year ago, or four years ago, someone will tell you how easy it is, and how full of beans you are.

**ROSS
RAMSEY**



But what are we supposed to make of the thousands of rejected mail-in ballots during the Republican and Democratic primaries this month? The Texas Tribune’s Alexa Ibra

popular Der is not a Rep turnout stat Texas) turn won all of the held or impl the congress Texas Legis But when losers are no Texas or any former pres about his los lieutenant g legislators c with reform

[Skip to main content](#)**Next Up:** Will Smith slaps Chris Rock over joke referencing wife

- 1.** Will Smith slaps Chris Rock over joke referencing wife
- 2.** Ted Cruz's daughters attend Houston school that is 'anti-racist'
- 3.** Alert: Will Smith confronts Chris Rock on Oscars stage after
- 4.** 6 ice rest visit

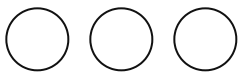
POLITICS

Harris County staffers allegedly gave vendor advantage in vaccine outreach contract, search warrant shows

County Judge Lina Hidalgo's attorney called the investigation an "act of political theater."

Ariana Garcia

Updated: March 22, 2022 11:24 a.m.





Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo speaks during a press conference on Jan. 5, 2021.

Yi-Chin Lee, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer

New details from a [March 11 search warrant](#) targeting the office of Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo shows senior county employees were in contact with the eventual winner of a large county contract prior to opening up contractual bids to the public.

The [three county employees](#) — a policy director, senior advisor, and chief of staff — under investigation formed part of an evaluation committee for a county-funded vaccination push. In June 2021, Harris County awarded a \$10.9 million contract to Houston-based marketing firm Elevate Strategies for the creation of a COVID-19 vaccine outreach campaign. Newly surfaced details from the search warrant show committee members were in contact with Elevate Strategy leaders months before open bidding on the contract began.

Four other companies also applied for the contract, including the UT Health Service Center, which offered a lower bid and rated higher on evaluations, Tina

Macias of KHOU 11 reported. However, texts and emails included in the search

warrant show county employees were already communicating with Elevate Strategies CEO Felicity Pereyra about the campaign as early as January 2021.

In an email to Pereyra in January 2021, one employee wrote "Let us know your thoughts and proposed budget after you've had a chance to review... I would be happy to discuss further by phone if that would be helpful."



In an April text message, one employee wrote to another "This vaccine outreach thing is getting ridiculous. We need to slam the door shut on UT [Health Service Center] and move on." The following month, one employee asked another "if he could make the outreach RFP meeting that's happening now?" The employee replied "No. Take it away. And don't let UT get it."

Elevate's contract was eventually terminated in September after the company came under scrutiny, according to KHOU 11. Hidalgo's attorney Ashlee McFarlane called the information in the release "misleading" and an "act of political theater from a politically motivated investigation."

MOST POPULAR

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"Ultimately, this was about dedicated public servants trying to get the best team to fight COVID-19 in Harris County," McFarlane wrote. "Since she came into office, Judge Hidalgo has held herself and her staff to the highest ethical standards and is

the only official to refuse donations from all County vendors."

No charges have been filed. However, employees could potentially face charges of tampering with a government document and misuse of official information, according to the search warrant.

More Politics

- [Ted Cruz caught checking Twitter mentions after yelling at SCOTUS hearing](#)
- [Lina Hidalgo says staffers targeted in search warrant over vaccine campaign won't get fired](#)
- [Former U.S. Senate candidate Amanda Edwards announces run for Houston mayor](#)
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Written By
Ariana Garcia

Reach Ariana on

Ariana Garcia joined Chron in 2021. Previously, she was a community news and breaking news reporter for the Austin American-Statesman. She enjoys binge-watching anime and films makeup tutorials in her spare time.

NEWS

San Angelo city council members testify in ex-police chief bribery trial in Lubbock court

Gabriel Monte Lubbock Avalanche-Journal

Published 9:27 p.m. CT March 22, 2022

A San Antonio-based radio systems provider likely would not have been awarded a \$6 million contract with the city of San Angelo six years ago had members of the city council known the city's police chief was being paid thousands of dollars by the provider.

Four former city council members and one current councilwoman testified Tuesday that they were unaware that former police chief Tim Vasquez had a cover band hired by Dailey-Wells Communications when he was endorsing the company for a contract to update the city's radio communication system used by multiple offices including the police and fire departments.

Charlotte Farmer, Lucy Gonzales, John Silvas, Rodney Flemming and Elizabeth Grindstaff were among the witnesses who testified on the second day of Vasquez's trial in a Lubbock federal court where he is charged with a count of receipt of a bribe by an agent of an organization receiving federal funds and three counts of honest services mail fraud.

Funky Munky

The council voted 6-1 to approve the contract during a June 2, 2015 meeting to award Dailey-Wells a \$5.7 million contract to upgrade the radio communication system that the company initially installed in 2007.

Evidence presented to jurors showed Dailey-Wells began hiring Vasquez's band Funky Munky for corporate parties in San Antonio starting in 2007, shortly after being awarded the initial contract.

By 2015, before the city council approved the contract, the company had paid Vasquez about \$84,000 - about \$8,000 to \$10,000 a show. That price, prosecutors said, was at least triple

what the band made in their other performances.

Case agent Jeffrey Andresen, who analyzed Vasquez's financial records, told jurors it appeared Dailey-Wells was Vasquez's band's biggest customer.

The council members said they relied on Vasquez's opinion on the radio system the company provided and said they believed the radio system update was a public safety issue.

However, none of them said they were compelled by Vasquez to vote for the contract. Instead they said they relied on his opinion as the police chief.

Vasquez also wasn't the only person who provided city council members with information about the system. Excerpts from the recorded city council meetings shown to jurors on Monday showed IT Director Bucky Hasty and fire chief Brian Dunn, who retired in February, also recommended the system. No evidence showed either received any compensation from the company.

Dwaine Morrison, the former mayor of San Angelo, told jurors he'd known Vasquez for years, saying he went to high school with Vasquez's father. Morrison said his son had a brief stint as a keyboardist in Vasquez's band.

He said he didn't know about Vasquez's relationship with Dailey-Wells when he voted to approve the contract. However, he said he wouldn't change his vote because the company had a good history with the city.

A question of influence

Lucy Gonzalez, who was newly elected when she voted for the contract in 2015, told jurors she would have voted against the contract had she known about Vasquez's business relationship.

She said since San Angelo's police chiefs are elected, the position carries more weight.

"I believe (Vasquez) had quite a bit of influence when he would bring items before us to vote on," she said.

She said she learned about the charges against Vasquez after seeing news reports of his arrest.

"I was surprised and disappointed that he had put his reputation on the line - and his legacy," she said.

Flemming, who voted for the contract, said he knew about Vasquez's band. Flemming said he was involved in local groups that hired Funky Munky to play at their events. He recalled one function where the band was paid about \$2,500 to play.

However, he said he was unaware that Vasquez's band regularly played for Dailey-Wells and said Vasquez should have disclosed the relationship.

"It's a conflict of interest," he said.

He said he was upset when he learned about the charges against Vasquez.

"I felt that it just puts a mark on the city," he said. "Everybody always says everybody's getting a kickback and here you go."

"I would have gone with them because it was the best decision," he said.

Silvas, who at the June 2, 2015 meeting moved to vote on the contract, said Dailey-Wells was the only company the city considered because it was included in a list of approved vendors of a purchasing cooperative.

Silvas said would also not have voted for to approve the contract had he known about the company's financial relationship with Vasquez.

"A company willing to do that is doing an unethical thing," he said.

He said he learned about the investigation into Vasquez when Nicholas Hanna, the Texas Ranger investigating the case against Vasquez, met with him.

"I was blown away," he said. "I could not believe that."

However, he said he would have voted to award Dailey-Wells the contract had Vasquez not been a part of the discussion.

Hanna, who is now the Tom Green County Sheriff, told jurors he initially investigated Vasquez after it was reported to him that proceeds from a May 2015 golf tournament for a Texas Police Chief's Association fundraiser may have been mishandled.

His investigation, which included reviewing Vasquez's financial records, showed that checks for the association totaling about \$3,800 were made to Vasquez, who deposited them into his personal bank account. However, Vasquez didn't pay the association until September of that year. In the intervening months, Vasquez's bank account fell to about \$69.

Records showed Vasquez paid the association \$4,000 in September a day after obtaining a \$3,000 bank loan that he paid off less than a month later.

A text message Vasquez sent to Hanna asking about his investigation was shown to jurors. Hanna responded to Vasquez telling him he was still investigating and would talk to him after he gets all the information.

Shortly after the message, prosecutors showed records that Vasquez's band was put on a retainer by Dailey-Wells for \$50,000, which was paid to Vasquez.

No representatives from Dailey-Wells Communications were called to testify before prosecutors rested their case on Tuesday.

Defense attorney's first witness was Vasquez's accountant who went through about 14 years of tax returns, which included income from his band, which appeared to show more losses than profits.

However, Vasquez's bank records showed he was underreporting the money the band was paid.

The trial continues today with at least two more defense witnesses after which jurors are expected to hear closing arguments before deliberating.

If convicted on all charges, Vasquez faces up to 70 years in prison.