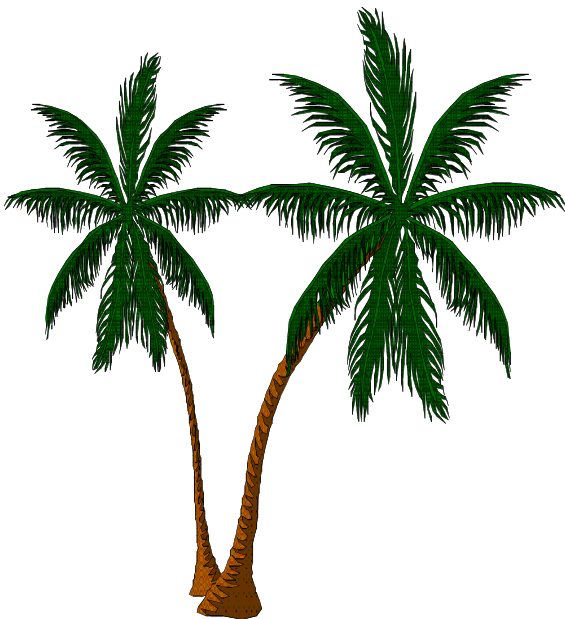


# TIMELINE 2023

## HEADLINE NEWS ARTICLES



**SPEAKERS:**

**Panel of Speakers**

E  
D

## TEA seeks candidates for La Joya ISD board

BY MATT WILSON  
STAFF WRITER

The Texas Education Agency on Wednesday posted candidate applications for a board of managers at La Joya ISD, moving the district closer to state intervention that it plans to oppose.

After years of corruption scandals, the agency recommended in May the installation of a board of managers for the district — the most severe level of intervention.

In a split vote, the district's board decided to resist intervention after a contentious meeting later that month.

"Our educators, administrators, and support staff remain steadfast in their dedication to delivering a well-rounded education, promoting student achievement, and fostering a nurturing atmosphere that encourages growth and success at the highest levels," Board President Alex Cantu wrote in a statement addressing the agency's search for candidates. "Your continued trust and understanding are vital as the Board navigates the appeal process and works tirelessly on behalf of our community.

"By standing together, we can ensure that the best interests of our students and their future remain at the forefront of all decision-making processes."

The statement pledged diligence during the process and emphasized that a board of managers is not yet a forgone conclusion.

According to the TEA, the district has the right to appeal the agency's special investigation unit's recommendation for intervention at a hearing scheduled to happen later this summer.

PLEASE SEE TEA, C3

# The



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2023

B O R N

## Partnership negotiation

### BISD to discuss health insurance Sept. 18

BY GARY LONG  
STAFF WRITER

The Brownsville Independent School District Board of Trustees has scheduled a special-called meeting Sept. 18 on health insurance, postponing action on the status of the district's insurance consultant Roger Garza after a closed session at its Sept. 5 meeting.

Trustee Carlos Elizondo had placed an item for discussion and possible action in open session on the issue, but board president Jessica G. Gonzalez had it moved to executive session.

The executive session lasted until just before midnight but also concerned other matters. The board then tabled Elizondo's item and quickly voted 7-0 to hold the Sept. 18 meeting.

Elizondo said he placed the item out of concern about the number of bidders for third-party administrator of BISD's \$54 million self-funded insurance plan and the information they were given.

"I found out the information these bidders were requesting, there was 14 of them. They were being denied this information, so they truly could not get an adequate bid to the school district to be able to say 'yeah we could save you money or we can't and we're out,' so these questions were asked. I got a copy of these questions with the answers by our hired Roger Garza," Elizondo told The Brownsville Herald.

Elizondo raised the concerns at the board's Aug. 23 insurance committee meeting.

At that meeting Garza explained that five out of 14 vendors that submitted bids to be the third-party administrator for BISD's insurance plan met the criteria to be selected finalists and were to make presentations at the meeting.

PLEASE SEE BISD, 12A

### BISD

From Page 1A

Of those, only three, current TPA Blue Cross Blue Shield, United Health Care and Aetna, were selected finalists because the other two, Assertive and Lucent Health, would only submit certain information if they were selected finalists, Garza said.

United Healthcare, Blue Cross and Aetna were to start their presentations when questions arose. The process was similar to the last time the contract was negotiated four years ago, but BISD converted to electronic submission this time, Garza said.

Garza also said there was about a 30-point spread between the top three and

bottom two vendors on the selection criteria.

Trustee Eddie Garcia, the insurance committee chairman, said he felt the committee's consensus was to look "for something better than our current plan design offers, and definitely at a savings to taxpayers. ...That's the consensus of this board, to get the best for our employees and ... to hear presentations from the top five," Garcia said during the meeting.

Reportedly, the five vendors vying for selection as third-party administrator presented at a Sept. 1 meeting of BISD's employee benefits committee. However, the meeting was not streamed on the district's YouTube channel as is normal practice.

# Former La Joya school board president sentenced in corruption scandal

BY DINA AREVALO  
STAFF WRITER

McALLEN — Former La Joya school board president Oscar “Coach” Salinas has been sentenced to one year and two months in federal prison for his role in a massive Western Hidalgo County public corruption scandal.

He was further ordered to undergo substance abuse counseling and drug testing after twice violating his bond conditions by using and testing positive for cocaine.

“Good or bad, the responsibility was to look after your community. You weren’t doing that. ... You were looking after your own welfare,” U.S. District Judge Micaela Alvarez said before sentencing Salinas Tuesday afternoon.

“People who earn that privilege ... We are entrusted to look after the wellbeing of others, so, sort of taking care of our community,” Alvarez said, adding that she becomes “troubled” when public officials violate their oaths.

Salinas is among a score of former elected or public officials in Western Hidalgo County who have been implicated in a broad-reaching public corruption scheme involving vendor contracts, bribery, kickbacks, political retaliation and more.

Salinas originally pleaded guilty to one count of extortion in March of 2022.

The former school board president had an \$8,000 per month consulting contract with Jacinto Garza and his Mercedes-based firm L&G Consulting

and Engineering.

As the 2020 election season got underway, Salinas learned that Garza supported one of his political adversaries, Everardo “Ever” Villarreal, who was at the time running in the Democratic Primary for the Precinct 3 seat on the Hidalgo County Commissioners’ Court.

During a re-arraignment hearing last March, Salinas admitted to threatening to sever La Joya ISD’s contract with its insurance agent, Ruth Villarreal Insurance Inc., lest Garza renegotiate Salinas’ payment contract.

Ruth Villarreal, the principal of the insurance agency, is Everardo Villarreal’s wife.

“If Defendant’s contract was not renegotiated to include additional mone-

tary payments Ruth Villarreal Insurance’s contract at LJISD would be terminated,” federal prosecutors said last spring.

But Garza refused to renegotiate his payment deal with Salinas, who was running for reelection to the school board that year.

“Garza subsequently terminated the agreement with (Salinas), and (Salinas) subsequently cast an official vote as an LJISD trustee to terminate Ruth Villarreal Insurance’s contract,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Roberto “Bobby” Lopez Jr. said then.

Salinas’ threatening messages to Garza subsequently became public as part of a February 2020 lawsuit the La Joya school district filed against Ruth Villarreal insurance alleging breach of contract and fraud.

Ruth Villarreal later filed the profanity-laden text message exchange as part of a countersuit against the district in February of 2021.

She claimed the payment terms of the insurance contract were part of a settlement she and the school district had reached

after she had been awarded a \$3.35 million judgment in a separate 2013 lawsuit against the district.

The more recent countersuit further details the political retaliation Ruth Villarreal and her husband allegedly experienced at the hands of Salinas and members of his “TeamUn1ted” political slate.

“LHISD through the above listed slate of candidates continued to make threats against Villarreal and her husband. Members of that slate publicly stated that they would terminate Villarreal’s contract,” including Salinas who, “was kind enough to document his criminal conduct in writing,” Ruth Villarreal’s countersuit states, in part.

But in federal court on Tuesday, Salinas and his attorney, Christopher “Chris” Sully claimed that the insurance contract was a bad deal for the school district and its taxpayers.

“Voting against the contract was the right thing to do,” Sully said, adding that a study conducted by the school district later found the contract rate was two

to three times higher than the industry average.

“Regardless of what the propriety was of whether the contract was valid or not ... the manner in which the defendant conducted himself ... there is no excuse,” Lopez, the prosecutor, said Tuesday.

In September 2021, a state district court awarded Ruth Villarreal a \$2.7 million settlement.

Sully conceded the point.

And when given an opportunity to address the court, so, too, did Salinas, adding that his drug addiction contributed to his bad decision making.

Meanwhile, Salinas said he has made a turnaround after his bail was revoked last year.

Since then, he has started a literacy group for inmates at the East Hidalgo Detention Center in La Villa.

He has also taken part in various enrichment programs offered through the prison, pursued mental health help and has become sober, he said.

“The biggest problem in my life has been substance abuse,” Salinas said.

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS BUDGET AND PROPOSED TAX RATE

The Santa Maria ISD will hold a public meeting at 6:00 PM, August 30, 2023 in Santa Maria ISD Board Room, 11119 Military Hwy 281 Santa Maria, Texas. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the school district’s budget that will determine the tax rate that will be adopted. Public participation in the discussion is invited.

The tax rate that is ultimately adopted at this meeting or at a separate meeting at a later date may not exceed the proposed rate shown below unless the district publishes

## BISD PURCHASING

Bill Rusteberg <riskmanager@sbcglobal.net>

Thu 9/7/2023 3:50 PM

To: Adrian Garcia ISM-Rio Grande Valley <adrian@ismrgv.org>

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2023**

### **BISD TO AUDIT PURCHASING, MAINTENANCE AND FOOD AND NUTRITION**

XI.A.2. Discussion and possible action regarding purchasing department procurement review. (Board Agenda Request Denise Garza/Board Support Eddie Garcia)



Special to ***El Rrun-Rrun***

Were you an administrator or a vendor with the Brownsville Independent School District's Maintenance, Purchasing, or Food and Nutrition Service departments?

Did you sell ineffective fertilizer to the maintenance department, spoiled meat to the Food and Nutrition department, or padded the costs of your bid to get a facilities construction contract?

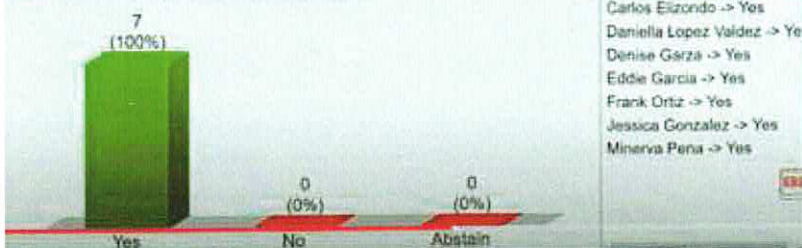
If you were involved – going back to 2017 – get ready for the Requests For Proposals (RFP) and Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) that might have been submitted and accepted or rejected to come under the BISD's internal auditors' scrutiny.

The item was placed and voted on during the BISD board's Tuesday meeting placed on the agenda by board member Denise Garza and supported by Eddie Garcia and drew a unanimous vote.

"Due to some ongoing issues that we've had with some RFQs, I'd like to motion to conduct and audit from January 2017 in reference to some RFQs and RFPs for the following departments; Maintenance, Food and Nutrition Service, and Facilities," Garza told the board. "And the reason I'm asking to go back to 2017 until now is because I know we've had a change in administration, we've had a change in directors, and superintendents, so this is my motion."

XI. A. 2. Discussion and possible action regarding purchasing department procurement review. (Board Agenda Request Denise Garza/Board Support Eddie Garcia)

garza/garcia  
conduct audit January 2017 to present in reference to RFQ's - RFP's (In-house Internal Auditor)  
Maintenance, FNS and Facilities Departments



"Is there just an amount, or just everything?," asked board member Carlos Elizondo.

"Everything having to do with RFQs and RFP0s, because one thing we have been hearing and what we have noticed is that there have been some violations out there," Garza replied. "...those are the departments that go out for big contracts."

"I'm just wondering because there's a lot of them," Elizondo replied. "Are we including all of them? Everything?"

"We have to include them since that's what the item calls for," said Superintendent Rene Gutierrez.

"I think that's good, but be very conscientious that there is a statute of limitations on a lot of this stuff," said board member Minerva Peña, "especially since 2017. But it would be good to know if something inappropriate had been done that would be excellent."

After board counsel clarified that there was no statute of limitations if it was an internal matter, he said that when it comes to vendors and it was criminal, the statutes could apply. The board then voted unanimously to approve the item.



*RiskManagers.us is a specialty company in the benefits market that, while not an insurance company, works directly with health entities, medical providers, and businesses to identify and develop cost effective benefits packages, emphasizing transparency and fairness in direct reimbursement compensation methods.*

**MEDSAVE**  
MedSave Management LLC

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### AROUND THE VALLEY

#### Man accused of lighting couple's vehicle on fire

BY VALERIE GONZALEZ  
STAFF WRITER

Two men who allegedly lit a Progresso couple's vehicle on fire suffered two fates: one was arrested on Thursday and the other was burned.

Fernando Herrera Rodriguez, 39, of Weslaco, was arrested last week and charged with arson.

In the early hours of

# PAGE 2

## BROWNSVILLE AND THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

### Public corruption case headed to trial

BY DINA AREVALO  
STAFF WRITER

A trial date has been scheduled for a man implicated in a far-reaching public corruption and fraud scheme out of western Hidalgo County.

Mariano Garcia, 49, of Mission, will tentatively head to trial on Feb. 27 on one count of federal programs theft.

The announcement came during a brief status conference Thursday in McAllen federal court.

Garcia — a civil engineer who founded M Garcia Engineering in 2007 — is allegedly one of several key players in a

massive fraud scheme that targeted numerous government entities in western Hidalgo County.

According to federal prosecutors, the conspiracy involved bribes paid to elected officials in exchange for their use and favorability in approving energy contracts with Indiana-based firm ed Performance Serps Inc., or PSI.

The conspirators allegedly targeted the Min City Council, the La Va Independent School District, the Agua Spal Utility District and others.

In Garcia's case, he is charged with participating

in a scheme to defraud Agua SUD out of millions of dollars.

Federal prosecutors allege Garcia paid nearly a quarter of a million dollars to former Peñitas chief of staff, Andres Morales.

(Garcia) gave approximately \$249,839.13 to Andres Morales, through RGV Redlight, as instructed by the Agua SUD General Manager intending to influence and reward said General Manager for his official support and recommendation for Agua SUD to award the energy savings contract to M Garcia Engineering, according to the indictment.

In March 2022, Agua SUD filed a 24-page civil lawsuit against Garcia and his company alleging he had bilked the utility district out of millions of dollars.

Garcia served as an intermediary between Agua SUD and PSI, which had approached the utility district sometime between 2016 and 2017 with an opportunity to save money by upgrading electrical and other infrastructure.

The plan involved installing LED light fixtures and solar paneling, and upgrading customers to "smart" water meters, among other things.

PSI and Garcia claimed

the upgrades would come at no cost to Agua SUD thanks to a state law that incentivizes cost-savings projects.

But instead, Agua SUD took on some \$12 million in debt on the project — paying \$11.4 million to PSI and more than \$346,000 to Garcia over the course of two years.

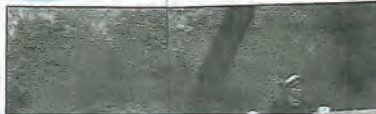
Last January, two other men connected to the conspiracy-at-large pleaded guilty to the allegations against them.

Morales, the man Garcia is accused of paying off, admitted to accepting more than \$1.1 million in kickbacks and bribes as part of the scheme.

### Valley cities launch fitness challenge

BY XAVIER ALVAREZ  
STAFF WRITER

WESLACO — It's Time for It's Time.  
That's right. A news



Program Director Sam Gervase said. "We're at just over 4,000 participants just here in the RGV. I would say, per community, (the Valley has) the strongest representation. Over the last 5 to 10

### Weslaco man sentenced in crash that killed 'best friend'



Lights form a Christmas tree Tuesday at W.H. Heavin Memorial Park.

DENISE GARCIA/THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD

### San Benito \$1.2 million project back on track

BY FERNANDO DEL VALLE  
STAFF WRITER

SAN BENITO — After more than two years of hurdles, San Benito school district officials say they are back on track with a \$1.2 million project to pave their bus barn's gravel parking lot.

After officials launched the project with a 120-day timetable in September 2021, a company losing the construction bid filed a lawsuit, requesting the court grant a restraining order that delayed work for about five months.

Meanwhile, officials negotiated the cost of the contractor's change order request after workers broke a water line, further delaying construction.

Now, officials are planning to complete the project within five to six months, board member Rody Corona stated

Wednesday.

#### LONG 'JOURNEY'

During a meeting, Superintendent Theresa Servellon presented school board members with the project's timetable showing the series of hurdles officials have faced during the construction of the Jana Kay Landrum Auxiliary Services Building's parking lot located in the San Benito Industrial Park.

"It has been a journey to insure that we get this project to where it needs to be," she told board members during a building committee meeting Tuesday.

#### CONSTRUCTION COMPANY FILES LAWSUIT

In September 2021, officials launched the project after the school board voted 4-3 to award the construction bid to

Brownsville-based G&T Paving, which presented a bid of \$1.2 million, with a 120-day timetable.

Meanwhile, the board's three-member minority noted Rio Hondo-based Rhyner Construction Services was proposing a \$594,980 bid with a 60-day timetable.

On Sept. 26, 2021, the company filed a lawsuit, requesting a judge grant a temporary restraining order, Robert L. Guerra Jr., a Brownsville attorney representing the company, said Wednesday.

"Rhyner Construction offered the lowest price and the quickest time of completion," he said during an interview. "Based on the bidding criteria, we felt it was in the best interest of the school district to select our bid. We had issues regarding the way the bids were graded."

Guerra said the case has been settled.

#### SERVELLON: DISTRICT FOLLOWED STATE LAW

During Tuesday's meeting, Servellon told board members officials followed state laws during the process in which an administrative committee evaluated the district's five proposals leading it to recommend G&T Paving for the job.

"G&T had the highest score," she said. "The reason behind the score for it to be ranked No. 1 was that it did have experience with projects of this magnitude. It had a very strong financial structure. This company has been in business for decades."

On Jan. 26, 2022, the court dismissed the lawsuit, she said, adding Rhyner had until Feb. 26 to appeal.

"So for that entire time, work was halted," she said.

BY VALERIE GONZALEZ

The high court issued opinion on Wednesday affirming Gustavo Tjerina Sandoval's capital murder conviction.

In May 2018, Cameron County found him guilty of shooting and killing off-duty Border Patrol agent Javier Vega Jr., Kingsville, and of shooting and injuring the mother, Javier Vega Sr., La Feria, on Aug. 3, 2011.

Three generations Vegas were enjoying 1 day at their favorite fishing spot, but that outfit turned dark and dead when Tjerina-Sandoval and Ismael Hernandez-Vallejo, 49, ambushed them near Santa Monica.

Tjerina-Sandoval a Hernandez-Vallejo opened fire on the man during an attempt to steal his vehicle.

Trial testimony reveal that Tjerina-Sandoval owed \$3,500 to someone in Most because he lost a vehicle. That person v threatening Tjerina Sandoval, so he decided to steal a vehicle.

Tjerina-Sandoval trial included 44 witnesses ranging from eyewitnesses at the crime scene to corroborating witnesses. Prosecutors also presented the jury with 3 pieces of evidence including scientific evidence the DNA and fingerprints found in Vega vehicle, gun residue taken from Tjerina-Sandoval hands, bullet casings in crime scene reconstruction.

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The Brownsville Herald  
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### DON PEDRO SAYS

"The Pearl Harbor event remind us that we can never let our guard down," Don Pedro emailed the newsroom.

"Attacks can come at any time, from any place," the city editor keyed back.

"Even from within our shores," the don wrote.

And out went his reminder.

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### AROUND THE VALLEY

#### Fatal two-vehicle crash leaves 1 dead

BY XAVIER ALVAREZ  
STAFF WRITER

The Texas Department of Public Safety is currently investigating a fatal two-vehicle crash that occurred Thursday morning in Santa Maria.

According to a news release, the crash occurred at about 6:25 a.m. on 281 Military Road and 12

# PAGE 2

## BROWNSVILLE AND THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

### Weslaco updates lawsuit against water plant contractors

BY DINA AREVALO  
STAFF WRITER

Just two months after Arturo "A.C." Cuellar and Ricardo "Rick" Quintanilla were sentenced to lengthy prison terms for their roles in the Weslaco water plant bribery scheme, the city has amended its lawsuit against the project's contractors to include facts from the criminal case.

On March 23, Weslaco filed a fifth amended petition in its attempt to recoup the millions it says it lost as a result of one of the largest public corruption scandals to rock Hidalgo County.

The lawsuit — which names a host of defendants, including Cuellar and

Quintanilla — primarily focuses on Massachusetts-based CDM Smith, the firm that oversaw the rehabilitation and construction of new water and wastewater treatment plants between 2008 and 2017.

The amended complaint makes new allegations bolstered by facts that were revealed during the October 2022 criminal trial against the two men, whom a jury convicted of a combined 70 counts of bribery, money laundering and wire fraud.

The 24-page petition also provides more clarity on the roles of two additional participants, former Weslaco Place 4 City Commissioner Gerardo "Jerry" Tafolla, and one-



DINA AREVALO | THE MONITOR

Weslaco businessman Ricardo "Rick" Quintanilla, second from left, walks out of the McAllen federal courthouse after being convicted on all counts in the Weslaco water plant bribery trial on Thursday.

time Starr County power broker Leonel J. Lopez Jr. Tafolla, however, is not listed as a defendant.

Weslaco originally filed a four-page suit against CDM Smith alone in January 2019 over a dispute

regarding some \$2.5 million. CDM Smith claimed Weslaco owed it that sum as payment above the \$38.5 million guaranteed maximum price the city had agreed to pay.

CDM Smith said the extra cost was as a result of 239 days' worth of construction delays due to rain over the course of 2014 and 2015.

Weslaco, in turn, argued that weather delays only entitled the company to more time — not more money — to complete the project. Weslaco is further asking the judge to declare all the contracts related to the water plant projects as void due to fraud.

# Fieldy's farewell

Edinburg family says goodbye former military dog

### Weslaco board to talk to lone finalist

BY MATT WILSON

police found a vial of alleged methamphetamine.

According to Salinas, the campus principal began looking for Blixt after the discovery of the purse, but he had left and gone home.

"So our police went to her house and arrested her," Salinas said.

A spokesperson for the district said no students were harmed in relation to the incident.

Salinas said Blixt had been with the district for eight years. According to ECISD's website, she taught seventh grade social studies at Harwell.

"The safety of our students is our top priority. We want our parents and community to know that no students were injured, and with the aid of security cameras we were able to pinpoint who the teacher was within an hour of the incident," Salinas said in a statement.

### 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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bipartisan bill seeking to guarantee continued access to healthcare resources at lower costs.

The bill would expand access for Medicare, Tricare and Medicaid beneficiaries such as permanent care at a freestanding

pandemic.

Due to many hospitals reaching capacity during the pandemic, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service issued a waiver that allowed fully licensed emergency departments, or FECs, to function as

rooms.

The release also pointed to a study that indicates that FECs saved Medicare programs 21.8% in payments. Those payments were for lower emergency care.

"A person's access to

beneficiaries may access the high-quality medical treatment provided by free standing emergency centers — expanding access and lowering cost for South Texans and patients across the country."

HB 4422 calls for state officials to conduct a study "public safety, border security, and (the) modernization of transportation infrastructure from the Texas-Mexico border crossing onto the state highway system," according to the bill text.

The study would be conducted by the Texas Department of Public Safety in conjunction with local law enforcement academic researchers and transportation industry stakeholders.

HB 3805 would go toward creating a new funding category in the state's transportation code.

The new funding would be allocated for highway infrastructure projects located along the border that would "provide greater security in the movement of goods... onto the state highway system," or mitigate congestion in other modes of transportation, such as airports and railroad crossings.

The Rio Grande Valley is the only border region in the state whose international ports of entry are not connected to an interstate highway system.

Plans to expand Interstate 69 to the region's land ports have stalled for years, leaving local leaders trying to plan projects themselves.

## County hires firm to determine how bad leaks are at new courthouse

BY DINA AREVALO  
STAFF WRITER

EDINBURG — Move-in day for the Hidalgo County Courthouse has hit yet another setback after officials discovered leaks in the roof at the newly constructed building.

However, the leaky roof isn't the only issue plaguing the seven-story building, whose opening was pushed back multiple times last year.

There are also problems with air leaking in through the building's exterior shell, leading to humidity issues inside the courthouse.

The problems loom so large that, on Tuesday, the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court hired a firm to conduct a comprehensive inspection of the entire facility.

The county hired Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates Inc., or WJE, of Houston, to determine the extent of the damage.

WJE's inspection will make use of aerial drones, fog machines, moisture probes, infrared imaging and other techniques both inside and out of the courthouse to examine the roof, the exterior shell, windows and more.

According to documents the county provided to WJE ahead of its inspection proposal, both water and air have been infiltrating the building due, in part, to defective construction.

"There is also reported non-conforming work installed by the Construction Manager and their subcontractors throughout the building," WJE stated in a March 2 proposal to provide

consulting services.

Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez confirmed WJE's assertions.

"I think we have some issues with the roof. I think we have some issues with some of the windows and some issues with pressure, negative pressure, in the courthouse that we're trying to correct," Cortez said via phone Wednesday.

But the judge was less forthcoming when asked what the inspection's price tag will be, as well as fixing the issues that the company uncovers.

"We're trying to identify responsibility and solutions to the problems. And we're right in the middle of those things, so I'd rather not discuss those things at this time," Cortez said.

The judge further asked

for the public's trust that he and other county leaders are doing their best to resolve the construction issues without further burdening taxpayers.

"At this point in time, the public is better served if you allow us to do our jobs and we will do our jobs," Cortez said.

In 2017, the county hired San Antonio-based firm, JacobsProjectManagement Co., to serve as the overall project manager for the build.

Jacobs, in turn, has been overseeing the work of other contractors associated with the project, including architects HDR Architecture Inc. and ERO Architects, and construction manager, Morganti Texas Inc., which has offices in both Houston and San Antonio.



**NOTIFICATION TO BID**

23-001

1 Park Mountain Lake Trails

102 Bid Notices

102 Bid Notices

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102 Bid Notices





**Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District is Soliciting Competitive Sealed Proposals for**

**CSP# 22-23-19 Laureles Elementary HVAC System Upgrades and CSP# 22-23-20 Laureles/Liberty Central Plant Chiller Upgrades.** All proposals must be on a lump sum basis including General Contract, Electrical and Mechanical work and must be submitted as separate bid packages. Digital Bid packages available at Ethos Engineering, email: [dlooper@ethoseng.net](mailto:dlooper@ethoseng.net); phone: (956) 230-3435. An executed bid bond form in the amount of 5% for each proposal must accompany each proposal.

**CSP# 22-23-19 Laureles Elementary HVAC System Upgrades bid proposal due December 1, 2022 at 2:00 pm and read virtual (Go-to-Meeting) at 2:15 pm.** Login access details: <https://meet.goto.com/443008709>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (312) 757-3121 Access Code: 443-008-709.

**Virtual Go-to-Meeting Pre-Bid Conference will be on November 17, 2022, at 8:30 am**  
Login access details: <https://meet.goto.com/983133341>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (646) 749-3122 Access Code: 983-133-341.

**CSP# 22-23-20 Laureles/Liberty Central Plant Upgrades bid proposal due December 1, 2022 at 2:00 pm and read virtual (Go-to-Meeting) at 2:45 pm.** Login access details: <https://meet.goto.com/541772173>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (408) 650-3123 Access Code: 541-772-173.

**Virtual Go-to-Meeting Pre-Bid Conference will be on November 17, 2022, at 9:00 am**  
Login access details: <https://meet.goto.com/758243693>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (671) 317-3122 Access Code: 758-243-693.

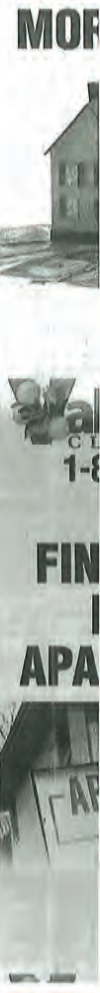
A walkthrough will be on November 21, 2022, at 9:00 am at Laureles Elementary School, 31393 FM 2693, San Benito, Texas. Each Bid Proposal must be submitted in a sealed envelope to Ethos Engineering, 1126 South Commerce St., Harlingen, TX 78550 and shall be plainly marked "CSP# 22-23-19 Laureles Elementary HVAC System Upgrades" and "CSP# 22-23-20 Laureles/Liberty Central Plant Upgrades".

Faxed or emailed Proposals are not acceptable. LFCISD reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals and to waive any irregularities.



**PURCHASING DEPARTMENT INVITATION**  
 BID/CSP/RFO (Bid/Competitive Sealed Proposal/Request for Qualification)

Description	Number	Submission/Opening
Achievement Awards & Incentive District-Wide <b>Senior Buyer: Sandy Hernandez</b>	BID 24-003	06/08/2023 Submission 9:00 am Opening 9:15 am
Training Room Supplies & Equipment District-Wide <b>Senior Buyer: Sandy Hernandez</b>	BID 24-005	06/08/2023 Submission 9:00 am Opening 9:30 am
Graduation & Honor Awards District-Wide <b>Senior Buyer: Sandy Hernandez</b>	BID 24-010	06/08/2023 Submission 9:00 am Opening 9:45 am
Contracted/Presentation Services & Training District-Wide <b>Senior Buyer: Sandy Hernandez</b>	BID 24-025	06/08/2023 Submission 9:00 am Opening 10:30 am
Resaca Tech Center Parking Improvements <b>Senior Buyer: Connie Alvear, CTSBS</b>	CSP 23-175	06/20/2023 Submission 3:00 pm Opening 3:15 pm
BISD Transportation New Fuel Station <b>Senior Buyer: Connie Alvear, CTSBS</b>	CSP 23-170	05/25/2023 Submission 3:30 pm Opening 3:45 pm
ESSER Faulk MS HVAC Upgrades, Group II <b>Senior Buyer: Connie Alvear, CTSBS</b>	CSP 23-173	05/25/2023 Submission 4:00 pm Opening 4:15 pm
Hanna ECHS - New Parking Lot Expansion <b>Senior Buyer: Connie Alvear, CTSBS</b>	CSP 23-174	06/26/2023 Submission 4:00 pm Opening 4:30 pm
Motor Oil and Automotive Fluids District-Wide <b>Senior Buyer: Connie Alvear, CTSBS</b>	BID 24-082	06/08/2023 Submission 9:00 am Opening 9:15 am
Electrical Supplies and Materials District-Wide <b>Senior Buyer: Connie Alvear, CTSBS</b>	BID 24-070	06/08/2023 Submission 9:00 am Opening 9:30 am
Electrical Contractors Services District-Wide <b>Senior Buyer: Connie Alvear, CTSBS</b>	BID 24-071	06/08/2023 Submission 9:00 am Opening 9:45 am
General Merchandise Supplies, Services & Groceries District-Wide <b>Senior Buyer: Maricela Ayala, CTSBS</b>	RFP 24-001	06/08/2023 Submission 9:00 am Opening 9:15 am
High School Marching Band Show Writing Services & Supplies District-Wide <b>Senior Buyer: Maricela Ayala, CTSBS</b>	RFP 24-024	06/08/2023 Submission 9:00 am Opening 9:30 am
Special Education Services District-Wide	RFP 24-027	06/08/2023 Submission





**"INVITATION TO BID"**

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	23-24-01	8:30 AM	5/30/2023
CSP	Student Uniforms & Clothing (Athletic/PE, extra-curricular, clubs)	23-24-02	9:30 AM	5/30/2023
CSP	Employee Uniforms (Police & Security, maintenance, & general)	23-24-03	10:30 AM	5/30/2023
CSP	General Merchandise & School Related Products	23-24-04	11:30 AM	5/30/2023
CSP	Groceries, Catering or Misc. Food Products	23-24-05	1:30 PM	5/30/2023
CSP	Music Supplies, Instruments, or Repair Services	23-24-06	2:30 PM	5/30/2023
CSP	Police & Security Supplies/Parts, Small Equipment, Repair, Installation, & Services	23-24-08	4:30 PM	5/30/2023
CSP	Awards, Trophies, Incentives, Spirit Affire, Promotional & Advertising Items	23-24-09	8:30 AM	5/31/2023
CSP	Printing Services	23-24-10	9:30 AM	5/31/2023
CSP	District Vehicle Parts, Repairs, Sales, Supplies or Services	23-24-11	10:30 AM	5/31/2023
CSP	Custodial Supplies & Small Equipment	23-24-12	11:30 AM	5/31/2023
CSP	Maintenance Facilities & Grounds Supplies, Equipment, or Services	23-24-13	1:30 PM	5/31/2023

**Bid Includes Items Listed Below:**

- Carpentry Supplies, Small Equipment, or Services
- Concrete, Paving, Asphalt Materials or Services
- Electrical Supplies, Small Equipment, or Services
- Fencing Materials, Supplies, or Services
- Flooring Installation, Maintenance Repairs or Services
- Glass/Glazing Materials or Installation Services
- Grounds/Landscaping Supplies, Equipment, Rentals or Services
- HVAC Supplies, Small Equipment, or Services
- Masonry Supplies or Services
- Painting Supplies, Small Equipment, or Services
- Plumbing Supplies, Small Equipment, or Services
- Roofing Supplies, Equipment, and Services
- Signage Supplies, Equipment, and Services
- Swimming Pool Supplies, Small Equipment, or Services
- Water Softener Supplies, Equipment, or Services
- Welding Supplies, Small Equipment, or Services

CSP Charter Bus & Transportation Services 23-24-15 2:30 PM 5/31/23

**BFP/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 Alberto Angulano, Purchasing Director, at [aangulano18456@lfcisd.net](mailto:aangulano18456@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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3/31/20

04/02/2023



**INVITATION TO BID/PROPOSE**

NO.	PRE-BID/PROPOSAL CONFERENCE VIA CONFERENCE CALL	SUBMISSION	OPENING	NAME
B 030-23	N/A	04/12/23 5:00 PM	04/13/23 10:00 AM	Annual Supply of General Stock
B 031-23	N/A	04/19/23 5:00 PM	04/20/23 2:30 PM	Supply of 3-Phase Padmount Transformers
P 032-23	N/A	04/19/23 5:00 PM	04/20/23 10:00 AM	Employee Assistance Program Services
B 036-23	N/A	05/03/23 5:00 PM	05/04/23 10:00 AM	Annual Supply of Water and Wastewater Inventory Material

**\*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/](https://www.brownsville-pub.com/rfp_status/open/)

04/02/2023

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Port of Brownsville Purchasing & Contract Services

**INVITATION**

\* B/P/\*Q (Bid/Proposal/Qualifications)

Description	NUMBER	Pre-Bid/Proposal Meeting	Bid Opening
Port Insurance Coverages	*P PIC-020523	NA	5/9/2023 @ 2:00 P.M. CT Microsoft Teams meeting

Interested Bidders/Proposer are invited to attend the Bid/Proposal opening via Videoconference on the dates specified. Presence is not mandatory. Specifications may also be viewed and downloaded at: <https://www.portofbrownsville.com> (956) 831-4592 office, e-mail: [purchasing@portofbrownsville.com](mailto:purchasing@portofbrownsville.com)

4/02/2023



**PURCHASING DEPARTMENT**

**INVITATION**

BID/CSP/RFQ (Bid/Competitive Sealed Proposal/Request for Qualification)

Description	Number	Submission/Opening
Purchase of New Service Vehicles District-Wide	RFP 23-172	04/20/2023 Submission 9:00am Opening 9:15am

Senior Buyer: Connie Alvear, CTSBS

Respondents must submit bids/proposals electronically using the BISD eBid System by the established deadline (\*Not applicable), or sealed bids/proposals/qualifications may be received at the office of Mrs. Rosario Peña, RTSBA Purchasing Administrator, 1900 E. Price Rd, 1st Floor, RM 107, Brownsville, TX 78521-2417, (956) 548-8361. If you have any questions please contact the assigned Senior Buyer, as listed above. The BISD eBid System's website is <https://blsdpurchasing.ionwave.net>.

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A University of Virginia student shot and killed three members of the school's football team as they returned to campus from a field trip, setting off panic and a 12-hour lockdown at the school until the suspect was captured Monday.

> PAGE A3

**WORLD**



**LIBERATED CITY**

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy triumphantly walked the streets of the newly liberated city of Kierson on Monday, hailing Russia's withdrawal as the "beginning of the end of the war."

> PAGE A7

**POPULAR ON THE WEB**

**HONORS EARNED**

White birds soared in a graceful formation above the rows of headstones creating an almost peaceful dance; beneath them are the heroes laid to rest here at the Rio Grande Valley State Veterans Cemetery in Mission.

[BrownsvilleHerald.com](http://BrownsvilleHerald.com)

AIM Vol. 131 | No. 135

Good Morning!  
Thank you for reading today's edition of The Brownsville Herald



38153 00001 3

Mario Flores and his wife Cynthia Hernandez embrace one another as they stand in the charred remains of their backyard patio at their home in Brownsville on Monday, after their home was incinerated late last week.

The holidays are even more meaningful for the family of Mario Flores and his wife, Cynthia. They're alive to celebrate.

The Flores family was devastated on Thursday when a fast-moving fire destroyed their home at 834 W. Valle Verde Drive, taking all their possessions and the lives of their two dogs.

"My three daughters are safe and sound," Mario Flores said. "My wife is all good. We are just sentimental about the loss. Me, myself, I'm perfectly fine. I'm in good health, we all are."

That nearly wasn't the case when the morning of the fire Mario Flores raced to his home and tried to save the dogs, a Shih Tzu-Chihuahua mix and a Labrador retriever named Marley.

"The Labrador was my wife's. She wasn't a certified service dog but she was her service dog," Mario said. "Marley helped my wife Cynthia overcome a miscarriage from 2017." "Ma She when w did m Marley of her would i with u with us

**Corrupt DEA agent tells all: Parties, sex, 'unwinnable war'**

BY JIM MUSTIAN AND JOSHUA GOODMAN THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — José Irizarry accepts that he's known as the most corrupt agent in U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration history, admitting he "became another man" in conspiring with Colombian cartels to build a lavish lifestyle of expensive sports cars, Tiffany jewels and paramours around the world.



CARLOS GIBARTI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jose Irizarry, a once-standout DEA agent sentenced to more than 12 years in federal prison for conspiring to launder money with a Colombian cartel, speaks during an interview the night before going to a federal detention center, in San Juan, Puerto Rico on Jan. 5, 2022.

PLEASE SEE CORRUPT, A8

Abby..... B4	Comics..... B5	Obituaries..... A4
Amusements..... B4	Editorial..... A6	Sports..... B1
Classified..... B6	Horoscope..... B4	TV Guide..... A9

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# Trial for three accused of embezzling money from immigrant shelter pushed to January

BY LAURA B. MARTINEZ  
STAFF WRITER

A federal judge has signed an order agreeing the embezzlement case against the president, CEO and finance director for International Educational Services or IES is "complex" and has pushed back their trial date to January.

U.S. District Judge Fernando Rodriguez Jr. signed the order Thursday, which amends the hearing schedule in the case against Ruben Gallegos Sr., Ruben Gallegos Jr., and Juan Jose Gonzalez.

The trio face theft and embezzlement charges that they are accused of committing during the time they worked and operated the International Educational Services, or IES for migrant children.

According to the amended scheduling order, all motions in the case must be filed by Dec. 8 and responses by Dec. 15. A motion hearing before Rodriguez is scheduled for Dec. 20, with final pretrial conference set for Jan. 10.

Jury selection is scheduled to begin Jan. 17. The order also states the parties must "engage in timely plea negotiations" and that the final pretrial conference date "is not a date to secure a plea agreement and review it with the defendant-client."

Their earlier scheduling order had their trial scheduled to begin Nov. 7. Gallegos Sr., Gallegos Jr., and Gonzalez were indicted on the charges in August. Count one of the indictment charges them with conspiracy. Count two charges them with

theft concerning programs receiving federal funds.

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 Gallegos Sr. was paid \$506,032.22 and Gonzalez \$377,060.96 — also in violation of the salary caps — but their names are redacted in the document.

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.

Gallegos Jr. served as CEO of IES from 2014 to 2018, Gallegos Sr. as president, and Gonzalez as finance director until the federal government decided it would not renew its funding for the IES shelter.

In another ordered signed Wednesday, the government is to provide attorneys for the men, the list of witnesses, the identity and home address of informers or cooperating individuals "whose information law enforcement officers relied upon in connection with bringing charges against" the defendants.

In addition, the government should "make available the full and complete criminal record of each

witness the United States is likely to call in its case in chief at trial."

The government must also disclose and "make available for inspection, copying, or photographing any agreement between the United States and a witness the United States is likely to call at trial" to the attorneys representing the men, the order states.

The government states the case against Gallegos Sr., Gallegos Jr. and Gonzalez is one that is quite "complex" and involves fraud losses that will exceed \$9.5 million.

The government has obtained thousands of documents during the investigation, and during discovery, it will have to review bank records, property records, grant proposals, grant awards, budgets, audit reports, tax records, employment records, leases, e-mails, and written correspondence.

The government estimates the trial will take about two weeks and anticipates calling about 30 witnesses from various agencies. Some of these witnesses may live out of the area.

All three have pleaded not guilty to the charges and are out on bond. If found guilty on count one of the indictment, each man faces five years in federal prison, and/or a \$250,000 fine and three years supervised release. If found guilty on count two of the indictment, they face up to 10 years in federal prison, and/or a \$250,000 fine plus three years supervised release.

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RICK KELLEY/VALLEY MORNING STAR

These problem alligators were captured and brought to the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center and Alligator Sanctuary.

## Expert: Resist urge to feed Valley alligators

BY RICK KELLEY  
STAFF WRITER

**SOUTH PADRE ISLAND** — One of the surest ways to kill an alligator, eventually, is to start feeding it.

Herpetologist Jake Reinbolt made a passionate case against the practice last week at the 26th annual Winter Outdoor Wildlife Expo at the Hilton Garden Inn.

Reinbolt transferred last September from Gator County Louisiana in Natchitoches to the island to supervise alligators and other reptiles at the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center and Alligator Sanctuary.

"Once an alligator is fed by a person just one time, they do not forget," he said. "Alligators are like husbands, cats and kids — you give them lunch, and they ain't going away."

There are about 7 million American alligators today, a remarkable conservation success story seeing they

were almost hunted to extinction in the 1950s and 1960s.

Of those, an estimated 1 million are in Texas, with about 20,000 to 25,000 in the Rio Grande Valley, their numbers here limited by the availability of fresh water.

"Alligators, wild alligators, want absolutely nothing to do with people. They do not see us as prey; they do not see us as a source of food," he said. "Wild alligators, we almost hunted them to extinction in the 20th century, and they see us as predators, not prey."

### FINES, FATALITIES

Texas Game Wardens warn that feeding an alligator is a Class C misdemeanor, or in Texas, with fines ranging up to \$500.

"If you're out there fishing or swimming, doing whatever you're doing, and you come across a wild alligator, it's going to do one of three things," Reinbolt said. "Option one, it's going to sit

as still as it possibly can and pray to God you don't see it. Option two, it's going to get under the water and take off as fast as possible. Option three, some of the more confident animals, or the ones that feel cornered, especially, actually puff their backs out of the water."

He said the only time this behavior changes is when a mother alligator is protecting her nest and young — or when an alligator is fed and associates humans with food.

"There's one point I try to drive home to every person I give these talks to," Reinbolt said. "I don't care how cool you think you look doing it, I don't care who you're trying to impress, do not feed wild alligators. And if you care about your family and friends, do not let them do it, either. It's not worth it for you or anyone else involved, including the alligators."

The consequences can be deadly.

"You remember what happened in Disney a cou-

ple of years ago involving an alligator?" he said. "In case you're not familiar, there were two parents and 2-year-old boy, walking by the water in Disney, supposedly the happiest place on earth. A seven-foot alligator came out of water, grabbed that kid, pulled him in, and drowned him."

"My boss sits on the board, and whenever there's an alligator attack they do a little work with the gators," he added. "In the case of the Disney incident... what do you think we found? Two employees of Disney going out every single day on their lunch breaks and feeding that alligator. It's rarely the person feeding the alligator who gets hit."

### PROBLEM GATORS

All of the 50 or so alligators at the SPI Birding and Nature Center are problem gators, which have become habituated to humans, many of them because they were being fed.

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