



MINUTES OF A SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE SAN BENITO CISD BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND OF THE CITY OF SAN BENITO CITY COMMISSION

On April 30, 2025, the City of San Benito City Commission and San Benito Consolidated Independent School Board of Trustees convened for a Special Joint Meeting at the John G. Barron Administration Building, Board Room, located at 240 North Crockett Street, San Benito, Texas, 78586.

City Commission Members Present:

Ricardo Guerra, Mayor; Pedro A. Galvan, Mayor Pro Tem; Thomas W. Goodman, Commissioner, Place 1; Deborah A. Morales, Commissioner, Place 2; Joe Navarro, Commissioner, Place 4; Javier Villalobos, City Attorney and Eric Flores, Attorney.

City Administration Personnel Present: Fred R. Sandoval, City Manager; Diana Garza, Assistant City Manager, Ruth McGinnis, City Secretary, and Yolanda Galarza, Assistant City Secretary.

San Benito Board of Trustees Present:

Orlando Lopez, Board President; Dr. Ariel Cruz-Vela, Board Vice-President; Rudy Corona, Board Secretary; Frutoso M. Gomez, Jr., Board Trustee; Crystal Hernandez, Board Trustee; Israel Villarreal, III, Board Trustee; Alfredo Perez, Superintendent of Schools; Tony Torres, Board Attorney.

A quorum was confirmed by both entities.

ITEM 1. WELCOME.

[Mayor Ricardo Guerra](#) called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m., confirming a quorum.

[Orlando Lopez, SBCISD Board President](#) called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. confirming a quorum.

PUBLIC COMMENTS. (Speakers/Remarks limited to three minutes).

[Ruth McGinnis, City Secretary](#), announced that no public comment forms were received.

[Dr. Ariel Cruz-Vela, Board Vice-President](#) announced the following person that signed up for public comment:

Ms. Lupita addressed the Board with concerns regarding the agenda topics presented at the special joint meeting. She questioned whether additional questions from the City would be addressed and expressed concern that the items listed—such as city park improvements, logos, water tower updates, and retail or EDC-related projects—did not pertain to curriculum, academics, or student needs. She urged the Board to remain vigilant and prioritize matters directly impacting students and school staff. Ms. Lupita also emphasized transparency and accountability, stating that decisions involving partnerships or funding should be carefully considered in light of budget constraints and community interests.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

At this time, it was requested, that SBCISD Agenda item 3.9 / City Agenda Item 9, be moved out of sequence for discussion, before 3.1.

FOR SBCISD: Dr. Ariel Cruz-Vela, Board Vice-President, motion to move Agenda Item 3.9 before discussing Agenda Item 3.1. The motion was seconded by Israel Villarreal, III, Board Secretary, and carried unanimously.

FOR CITY: No action taken.

ITEM 9. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP WITH SAN BENITO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE, REGION ONE, AND CITY OF SAN BENITO.

Fred Sandoval, City Manager addressed the Board and City Commission, noting ongoing discussions with Region One Executive Director Dr. Daniel P. King and STC President Dr. Ricardo Solis regarding potential opportunities that would benefit the community. He highlighted the potential impacts on educational attainment and job readiness. Mr. Sandoval introduced Dr. Daniel P. King to present further details on Region One's latest initiatives.

Dr. Daniel P. King, Executive Director, Region One ESC addressed the Board and City Commission to present an overview of a long-standing educational initiative he began as superintendent of PSJA ISD in 2007. Noting his 48 years in education, Dr. King highlighted the successful development of the first adult high school in Texas for individuals aged 18-26 who had not completed their diplomas. In partnership with South Texas College, the program emphasized high school completion alongside industry certification or college credit. Over 12 years, the program graduated nearly 3,000 students and received recognition as both a state and national model.

Brief discussion ensued, Board Trustee Crystal Hernandez, enquired if the program was self-paced and if the student would earn a GED or a High School Diploma. In response to the inquiry, Dr. King emphasized that students in adult high school programs benefit most from direct instruction, especially in foundational subjects like reading and math. While supplemental computer-based tools can support learning in certain areas, direct engagement with qualified educators is essential. He noted that some students may qualify for credit recovery through assessments, particularly if they previously completed coursework but lacked credit due to attendance issues.

Commissioner Tom Goodman inquired as to what would be the steps to implement the program. In response to Commissioner Goodman's inquiry, Commissioner Goodman inquired about the next steps for implementing an adult high school program. Dr. King responded that the initiative would need to be led by the school district, with collaboration from various community partners. He noted that successful models in other districts involved support from county offices, particularly in addressing barriers such as housing or transportation. Additionally, partnerships with organizations like Workforce Solutions helped ensure services such as childcare were available to support student participation. Dr. King emphasized the importance of aligning resources to remove obstacles that may prevent students from attending and succeeding in the program.

Dr. King also addressed funding, stating that school districts receive the same state funding for adult high school students as for traditional students. He added that this could positively impact a district's Average Daily Attendance (ADA), potentially increasing the percentage of state funding versus the local tax burden. He noted this model can help districts facing declining enrollment, as it recaptures students who may have otherwise left the system.

Dr. Ricardo Solis, Presbcisdsident of South Texas College, along with Carlos Margo, Dean for Advanced Training, provided a presentation highlighting the educational partnership efforts and opportunities available for the San Benito community. Dr. Solis emphasized that the college's mission is focused not only on students, but on the broader population of the region. He shared that:

- South Texas College serves over 30,000 students across six campuses and offers more than 120 programs.
- The college is prioritizing program relevancy, ensuring that offerings align with high-demand, high-paying careers.

- Discussions have already taken place with the San Benito CISD regarding collaboration and program alignment.
- Workforce development is a central focus, including apprenticeship programs that allow qualifying adult learners to receive paid training while studying.
- Dual credit programs remain a core strength, with high school students having the opportunity to earn an associate degree prior to graduation. Dr. Solis noted that in an upcoming graduation ceremony, over 5,000 students will graduate from the college—40% of whom are still in high school.
- The college expressed interest in significantly expanding these opportunities in San Benito.

Dr. Solis also noted the significance of career pathways, particularly in technical fields and healthcare-related programs, and recommended further discussions with the school district to explore specific program partnerships.

[Board Trustee Crystal Hernandez](#) inquired about fees associated with these programs for the district. Dr. Solis responded that some fees do apply, depending on the type of program and location of delivery. He acknowledged that cost considerations would be further discussed in subsequent meetings tailored to specific partnerships. Dr. Solis recommended scheduling a dedicated meeting with the school district to continue detailed discussions regarding program implementation and collaboration.

[Fred Sandoval, City Manager](#) explained that the purpose of this agenda item was to highlight the connection between education and economic development. In his role overseeing both the City and the EDC, he emphasized that attracting industries—particularly in manufacturing and industrial development—requires a skilled, certified workforce. Mr. Sandoval noted that retail alone won't drive long-term growth, and that San Benito has a unique opportunity to lead in workforce development through its partnership with South Texas College. He added that political stability and collaboration among city leadership and partners are essential for attracting investment and growth.

No action taken.

FOR SBCISD: Orlando Lopez, Board President moved that Agenda Item 3.8 be moved out of sequence for discussion.

FOR CITY: No action taken.

ITEM 8. DISCUSSION ON THE CITY OF SAN BENITO REAL TIME CRIME CENTER.

A representative from the Real Time Crime Center provided an overview of ongoing conceptual planning efforts with the City of San Benito to develop a Real Time Crime Center. The center would enable real-time coordination between city police, school police, and other agencies, improving response times and situational awareness during incidents at schools, parks, and other public areas.

Key features discussed included:

- Federated interoperability between city, county, and school systems.
- Centralized command, control, and communication.
- Technology such as access readers and camera integration to support rapid response and guided entry for first responders.
- The center remains in the workshop/concept stage and aims to unify security infrastructure citywide for more efficient emergency management.

[Fred Sandoval, City Manager](#) shared that the City is investing in public safety technology, including security cameras and license plate readers at key entry points. These tools will enhance real-time response and reduce reliance on manpower. He emphasized the value of interagency collaboration to share resources and avoid duplicating costs, noting that a formal proposal will be developed in partnership with the school district for future consideration.

[Alfredo Perez, Superintendent of Schools](#), noted that this past summer marked the first time the district and city conducted joint practice evacuations. He observed that while school police had full access to campus facilities, city officers did not highlight the need for shared access tools like lock boxes and key cards. He emphasized the importance of cross-agency communication and coordination, suggesting that improved technology and systems could significantly reduce emergency response time.

A brief discussion ensued among the City Commission and San Benito CISD Board Trustees concerning community safety.

No action taken.

ITEM 1. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON THE CITY OF SAN BENITO WATER TOWER LOGO(S) AND REHABILITATION PROJECT.

[Fred Sandoval, City Manager](#) provided an update on the planned rehabilitation of the City's two water towers—the hydro pillar near the expressway and the leg tank on Williams Road—both of which are in critical need of repair. Key points included:

- Engineering assessments have been completed, and a proposal with cost estimates is being prepared.
- The scope of work will include sandblasting, metal repair, internal and external coating, cathodic protection, and logo reapplication.
- The project is anticipated to begin this fall, starting with the hydro pillar.
- Equipment currently installed on the towers (e.g., antennas) will need to be removed temporarily, and coordination with relevant stakeholders, including the school district, will be necessary.
- Logo discussions are underway; the Freddy Fender design is likely to return to the expressway tower, with the Williams Road tower logo still under consideration.
- Additional artwork or custom logos may incur extra costs beyond the standard city branding.

A brief discussion ensued among the City Commission and San Benito CISD Board Trustees concerning the water tower and rehabilitation project.

[Mayor Pro Tem Pedro Galvan](#) inquired whether the City currently receives any compensation or has existing contracts or liability agreements related to the equipment installed on the water towers. In response to Mayor Pro Tem Galvan's inquiry, Mr. Sandoval, City Manager noted that, to his knowledge, the only equipment present belongs to the school district and no contract or agreements are in existence.

No action taken.

ITEM 2. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON CITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE.

[Fred Sandoval, City Manager](#) provided an update on the City's ongoing efforts to update its Comprehensive Plan, funded through a resiliency-focused grant awarded by the Texas General Land Office (GLO). He noted that the project is well underway and emphasized that it is a collaborative effort involving the City, school district, and other community stakeholders.

[Diana Garza, Assistant City Manager](#), provided an update on the comprehensive plan process, highlighting community engagement efforts including a recent public workshop. She shared draft goals from the plan, which focus on:

- Establishing a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly downtown
- Future-proofing San Benito against hazards such as flooding
- Making San Benito the most livable city in the Rio Grande Valley
- Transforming the city into a cultural destination

The plan covers key areas such as land use, housing, infrastructure, economic development, mobility, and community services. Public input, including survey responses, has informed the draft goals. Ms. Garza, Assistant City Manager emphasized collaboration with the school district, encouraging youth and

parent participation via surveys to ensure diverse community voices are reflected in the plan. Next steps include continued outreach and engagement to refine the plan.

A brief discussion ensued among the City Commission and San Benito CISD Board Trustees regarding the City of San Benito Comprehensive Plan and the ongoing collaboration to advance community goals.

No action taken.

ITEM 3. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON CITY AND SCHOOL PARKS IMPROVEMENTS TO INCLUDE STORMWATER REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITIES (SRDS), LIGHTNING, AND AMENITIES.

[Fred Sandoval, City Manager](#) highlighted ongoing discussions about improving parks and green spaces in collaboration with the school district. The City of San Benito is fortunate to have considerable green areas, and there is potential to enhance access and amenities by opening school parks for community use, including walking trails and rehabilitated sports facilities. Mr. Sandoval, City Manager emphasized the importance of regional stormwater detention facilities (SRDs) as a cost-effective solution to mitigate flooding, referencing successful models such as McAllen. These detention areas temporarily hold stormwater runoff and then slowly release it, reducing flood risks while providing usable green space for recreation when dry. The City has developed a real-time hydraulic model to identify flood-prone areas and determine optimal locations for detention facilities, possibly near schools with available green space, which would not interfere with school operations. Mr. Sandoval, City Manager noted that this initiative presents an opportunity to improve both flood control and community amenities, including lighting and other park enhancements. Mr. Sandoval, City Manager further noted that the project is in early stages, with coordination ongoing between city staff, elected officials, and school district representatives.

A brief discussion ensued among the City Commission and San Benito CISD Board Trustees regarding the city and school park improvements to include stormwater regional detention facilities, lightning, amenities, and the ongoing collaboration to advance community goals. The Board inquired if the City would contract an engineering firm to assess school properties for potential regional detention facilities. It was confirmed that the City would handle contracting and planning, while the school district would allow access to its properties. The school district would maintain the facilities during the day, with the City assisting during flood events. The system is designed to be mostly self-draining and low maintenance. The City aims to target high-flood-risk areas and engineer solutions to redirect stormwater into detention ponds, reducing flooding on roads.

No action taken.

ITEM 4. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS-CV COORDINATION.

[Diana Garza, Assistant City Manager](#) provided an update on the CDBG-CV (COVID-related) program, which offers financial assistance for water utilities, rent, and mortgage payments to eligible residents within the city limits. Assistance can cover up to three months for applicants who have experienced hardship due to COVID-19. The program targets low- to moderate-income individuals, seniors over 62, and others who meet specific qualifications. Ms. Garza emphasized outreach efforts to ensure the community is aware of the available funds and requested the school district's help in spreading the word. Applicants can receive assistance in English or Spanish by making an appointment for guidance through the application process. This is the final year to utilize these funds.

A brief discussion ensued among the City Commission and San Benito CISD Board Trustees regarding the Community Development Block Grants-CV Program. It was clarified that September is the deadline for spending down the available CDBG-CV funds. The program was acknowledged as a valuable opportunity for the community, and appreciation was expressed for the update.

No action taken.

ITEM 5. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON THE MASTER PARK PLAN COMMUNITY MEETING SCHEDULE.

Diana Garza, Assistant City Manager provided an update stating that the City is currently updating the Master Park Plan. A key part of this process is engaging with the school district to gather input on what students, parents, and the community want to see in future parks—such as recreation, sports facilities, and green spaces. A survey has been distributed, and the City encourages participation from parents and students. There are plans to possibly host a workshop or meeting to further involve the community before the plan’s deadline. Ms. Garza, Assistant City Manager emphasized the importance of City-School parks, noting their benefits not only for students but also for the broader community. Access to parks after school hours provides safe, free spaces for children to socialize and families to exercise and gather, which is especially important in this low- to moderate-income community for fostering a healthy and prosperous environment.

A brief discussion ensued among the City Commission and San Benito CISD Board Trustees regarding the Master Park Plan. It was clarified that this approach applies to both existing parks located on school campuses and potential new parks. Existing school parks could be utilized for city-school recreational leagues, such as soccer or baseball, with city staff providing oversight after school hours to ensure safe use during practices and community activities. Additionally, there is potential for collaboration in enhancing park amenities at school sites, contingent upon community access after school hours. This partnership aims to increase recreational opportunities for students and residents while ensuring proper supervision.

No action taken.

ITEM 6. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON SUMMER RECREATION PROGRAMS AND SUMMER GYM OPENINGS, MEALS, AND ACTIVITIES.

Diana Garza, Assistant City Manager provided an update on potential collaboration opportunities between the City and the School District for summer programs. A recent survey at the City’s baseball park indicated community interest in expanding youth activities such as basketball camps, volleyball camps, soccer, football, tennis, track, chess, and even fishing camps. The discussion included the possibility of offering open gyms to the public and providing free breakfast and lunch to encourage greater youth participation. The goal of this collaboration is to engage as many children as possible in productive and supervised activities during the summer months, enhancing community wellness and safety.

A brief discussion ensued among the City Commission and San Benito CISD Board Trustees regarding collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club to align summer programs and maximize youth engagement. Questions were raised about the possibility of building a new swimming pool in San Benito, a topic included in the Master Park Plan. Diana Garza, Assistant City Manager confirmed that feasibility studies concerning location and funding are currently underway, emphasizing the importance of swimming as a vital life skill for children.

There was interest from the school district in a potential joint-use swimming facility, acknowledging community demand due to capacity limitations at existing pools. Alternatives such as splash pads were also discussed as viable options. The conversation included expanding youth sports tourism as a means to attract visitors and support community growth.

No action taken.

ITEM 7. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON THE SCHOOL BUS ROUTES AND CITY TRAFFIC PLAN.

Diana Garza, Assistant City Manager provided an update on the City’s recent award of a Safe Streets for All grant focused on the planning phase for improved traffic safety around school bus routes and stops. The grant consists of two phases: planning and implementation, with the current focus on developing safety measures to reduce traffic violations and accidents near school bus stops. Ms. Garza, Assistant City Manager highlighted the availability of a reporting tool on the City’s website for residents to report

traffic violations, such as drivers running stop signs at bus stops. The Police Department is committed to increased patrols in these areas to enhance safety.

Additionally, there is consideration of hosting a workshop to engage the community in discussions about crosswalk safety and related pedestrian traffic issues as part of the grant's planning efforts.

It was noted that coordination with City staff is essential to address infrastructure issues, such as speed humps, during non-disruptive times to avoid impacting school hours. The Board plans to gather input through surveys distributed to principals and will share findings to aid City efforts.

A brief discussion ensued among the City Commission and San Benito CISD Board Trustees regarding concerns that were raised regarding past issues with the construction of public sidewalks without proper coordination between the City and School District.

No action taken.

ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business to come before the Commission and San Benito CISD Board Trustees, upon duly made motion by [Mayor Ricardo Guerra](#) announced ADJOURNMENT AT 7:57 P.M.

CITY OF SAN BENITO

**HONORABLE RICARDO GUERRA
MAYOR**

ATTEST:

**RUTH MCGINNIS
CITY SECRETARY**