

RECEIVED MAR 23 2009

COUNTY OF ARANSAS

Office of the County Judge
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C. H. "Burt" Mills, Jr.
County Judge

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March 17, 2009

The Honorable Jim Dunnam
State Representative, District 57
Room 4S.2, Capitol Building
Austin, TX 78701

RE: President Obama Stimulus Package 2009

Dear Representative Dunnam:

Aransas County would like to submit a request for funding from President Obama's stimulus package. Aransas County has experienced the negative impact of the down-turned economy. There are much needed repairs, maintenance and infrastructure in Aransas County with limited funding available. The citizens of Aransas County are experiencing the tough economy, and to further burden those with the repairs, maintenance and infrastructure needed would cause further undo hardship on our wonderful citizens.

The following is a list of items to enhance the needs of Aransas County:

- **\$25 million—New County Courthouse.** Aransas County's current courthouse is over 50 years old with asbestos and mold still in the building. It has become extremely costly to maintain the ailing courthouse. Also, Aransas County has grown exponentially over the years, and we have outgrown our present courthouse. Our new county courthouse will be "green". Aransas County will take the initiative to be as environmentally friendly as possible by using solar panels for lighting and a geo-thermal heating/cooling system. Construction will take approximately two (2) years with 300+ jobs during that time.
- **25 million—Stormwater Management.** Aransas County severely needs improvements to our Tule Watershed, Little Bay circulation, shoreline stabilization and several wetlands and other drainage improvements. Heavy rains severely flood many low lying areas in the County. Many areas are impassible for several days until the runoff can catch up or evaporate. This strands many of our citizens for several days. Reports come from many living in the more unimproved areas of the County that during heavy rains, those citizens have to park their cars out a few miles from their homes on higher, dryer ground and walk in as deep as waist-high to get to/from their homes. Little Bay has problems with salinity due to rain run-off or the other extreme of lack of rain and the salinity being too high. This area is excellent for fishing, which brings many out-of-town patrons to stay in our hotels, and if the Little Bay situation is not corrected will have a negative impact on our future.

- **\$7 million—County Roads.** Aransas County has many unpaved rural roads within the County. Funding is not available to either pave or maintain many of these roads. Aransas County is home to about 24,000 residents, many of whom live in the County because they are low income and have been able to acquire inexpensive property. The property was inexpensive because of its inadequate means of access. These lots were platted back in the late 1800's before modern subdivision regulations that would have required adequate roads to be built by the developer. We call these roads "paper streets" because they only show up on the paper copy of the plat. Residents that have purchased these lots have blazed a trail through the dense vegetation for access. Once they are there, they have posed a problem for emergency response services because many of the roads are only accessible by four-wheel drive. Even though the County would like to do something for these people, we are restricted by our tax base and limited funds that must be utilized to maintain the existing roads that we have. If adequate funding was available, these roads could quickly be constructed because of the straight-forward standard design and the fact that no additional right-of-way would be required for construction. The roughly fifty miles of roadway could be built with county and contract forces within a one-year period and would employ about 40 individuals with various skill levels.

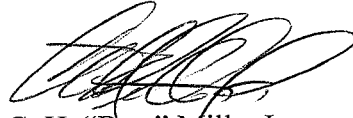
- **\$5 million—Acquisition of 310 acres for economic development.** Aransas County lost one of its top ten (2nd) taxpayers due to the ailing economy, and Aransas County would like to invest in the property to ensure the right business is attracted to our County to continue the ability to take care and assist our citizens in the manner which is mandated.

- **\$5 million—Rural Fire Departments and Emergency Medical Services (EMS).** Aransas County's rural fire departments rely on funding from Aransas County, the City of Rockport, the Town of Fulton, and the citizens of our County. The County's north side is separated by a long bridge which stretches over Copano Bay. The north end of Aransas County is a rural area with a large population. Emergency services including police, fire and EMS are present only by the calls received for assistance with considerable travel time to respond. A much needed annex to house our fire department, police sub-station and EMS sub-station is essential for this area of the county. One building that will accommodate all emergency services with the addition of a heli-pad for the most critical is a priority. The Fulton Fire Department is currently in an ailing building too small to accommodate all fire equipment and vehicles. The Fulton Fire Department has been given land with which to build a new building; however, funding of \$2 million is currently not available to build the building. Other items needed are three (3) brush trucks for the three separate fire departments @\$150,000 each, air packs, updated fire protection suits and other equipment for which funds are not available to purchase. EMS was able to build a new, state-of-the-art building in 2008; however, they have over \$200,000 in debit. If this debt were to be paid in full, EMS would be able to hire additional staff and purchase an additional ambulance. The closest hospital is at least 15 miles away; however, critically ill patients are transported to Corpus Christi which is the closest large city to Rockport.

- **\$3 million—County Airport.** Aransas County has an airport utilized by several residents of the County. Our Airport has continued to slowly improve over the years. Our United States Navy uses our airfield to conduct training. In the past, Aransas County has had to secure Certificates of Obligation to make much needed runway repairs to the Airport to maintain a safe level for aircraft to land. This is an added burden to Aransas County taxpayers and, because of the troubled economy, is causing a hardship on our residents to make these much-needed repairs and maintenance of our Airport. New hangars are needed as the structures currently on site are rusting, and maintenance costs are outweighing the costs to build new buildings. Infield drainage on a 67 year-old failing system is greatly needed. The fueling trucks are over 20 years old and need to be replaced for safety reasons.

In conclusion, Aransas County has some severe issues which need to be addressed, and currently our only method of completing these tasks is to ask for additional funding from the taxpayers and citizens of our County. With the poor economy, Aransas County is having difficulty keeping up with the growing needs of our citizens and have very limited resources in which to comply with those needs. With the \$70 million in requested funding from President Obama's stimulus package, Aransas County will be able to fulfill the needs of our citizens and further ensure no added financial burden to which our citizens are already feeling the effects from the troubled economy. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my office.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. H. Mills, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

C. H. "Burt" Mills, Jr.
Aransas County Judge