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BAIL BOND BOARD HEARING

MAY 16, 2024

THOSE PRESENT: JUDGE RAQUEL WEST  
JUDGE CRAIG LIVELY  
BECKY BERTRAND  
RHONDA BRODE  
TIM FUNCHESS  
KELLIE HOLMES  
LESLIE HUGHES  
CAPTAIN MORRIS  
AL REED  
TOM ROEBUCK  
VALENCIA SIMPSON  
DUSTIN GALMOR  
INDIA LOCKE  
CHRIS ROMANO  
TAMARA RITENOUR  
DEDE ROJAS  
KIMBERLY BROUSSARD

1 JUDGE WEST: I'm going to call the meeting to  
2 order. Sorry I'm a couple of minutes late. Also, Judge Woods  
3 is going to come down as soon as he finishes something because  
4 I've got an appointment that I need to be at and I have about  
5 15 minutes hopefully. So, we'll see where we get and then he'll  
6 come step in.

7 First thing on the agenda is the minutes from the  
8 April meeting. Those were sent out to everyone.

9 MS. HOLMES: Yes.

10 JUDGE WEST: We'll need a -- those need to be  
11 approved.

12 MR. GALMOR: I make a motion to approve the  
13 minutes from the last meeting.

14 MR. FUNCHES: I'll second.

15 JUDGE WEST: Any discussion? All those in favor?

16 (AYE RESPONSES.)

17 JUDGE WEST: Any opposed?

18 All right. That passes. Report from the DA's  
19 office? Looks like everybody should have that. Any do we have  
20 a --

21 MS. BRODE: We don't have --

22 JUDGE WEST: We don't have one.

23 MS. BERTRAND: They're still working on them.

24 JUDGE WEST: Okay. We'll skip that. Any  
25 applications for renewals or --

1 MS. BERTRAND: No, ma'am.

2 JUDGE WEST: Thank you. Any complaints?

3 MS. HOLMES: No, ma'am.

4 JUDGE WEST: Report from the treasurer?

5 MR. FUNCHESS: Oh, I passed my report out.

6 JUDGE WEST: Everyone's got a copy of that.

7 Anything that we need to pay attention to?

8 MR. FUNCHESS: No, ma'am, other than I think it's  
9 Ronald Ducote that we're going after his collateral. It's not  
10 going to be a release of collateral, but it's going to be like a  
11 reattachment, some of his forfeitures, which will in essence put  
12 him out of business.

13 JUDGE WEST: That's the one we've been --

14 MS. BERTRAND: Yes. I was going to bring that up  
15 at the end but Mr. Ducote has already surrendered his license  
16 and Quentin and I --

17 JUDGE WEST: I'm in that email. Yeah.

18 MS. BERTRAND: -- are working on resolving his  
19 issues.

20 JUDGE WEST: Okay. Perfect.

21 MS. BRODE: And I already have the debtor form  
22 ready.

23 JUDGE WEST: Perfect. So, that's getting taken  
24 care of. Any other questions on that, anybody? Any release of  
25 property requests?

1 MS. BERTRAND: Yes, there is one. Eric James, I  
2 have it there for you, I finally was able to resolve the last  
3 bond he was on, which was a 200,000-dollar bond written back in  
4 2017. The DA's office had never picked the case up. So, I  
5 finally got them to resolve that issue to refuse it. So, now he  
6 is free and clear of any bond requirements; and, so, the last  
7 piece of property he has, we are now good to release it.

8 JUDGE WEST: All right. That is specifically the  
9 motion would be to release all of -- well, do we need to --  
10 here. Somebody read for the motion and that would be the easier  
11 way to do it.

12 MR. GALMOR: Wait. What do I do?

13 JUDGE WEST: Just make a motion to release that  
14 property.

15 MR. GALMOR: All right. I'll make a motion to  
16 approve this release of lien on all of North 1/3 of Lot 5  
17 Block 322, City of Port Arthur, also known as 2424 Bluebonnet  
18 Avenue property.

19 JUDGE WEST: Do we have --

20 MR. FUNCHES: Make a motion.

21 JUDGE WEST: We have a motion.

22 JUDGE LIVELY: I'll second that.

23 JUDGE WEST: And a second. Any discussion about  
24 that? Does it look okay?

25 MR. ROEBUCK: Yeah.

1 JUDGE WEST: All right. All those in favor?

2 (AYE RESPONSES.)

3 JUDGE WEST: Any opposed?

4 All right. I will sign off on that. We've got  
5 auditor's office report.

6 MS. BRODE: I've handed out the general ledger  
7 report. We're still working on balancing the collaterals.

8 JUDGE WEST: Any questions on that? Discussion?

9 All right. The last thing I had added to the  
10 agenda is just kind of a discussion briefly. I think we've had  
11 the discussion over the years between us and the bondsmen about  
12 defendants being sent up here to the courthouse instead of to  
13 the jail. And just kind of -- and I know sometimes it's  
14 obviously easier but because we're all in court so much, it  
15 really is difficult at times because the bailiffs are taken away  
16 from their duties. And they cannot turn them away obviously;  
17 and, so, they're getting arrested. But we just kind of wanted  
18 to put it out there that if someone has a forfeiture or whatever  
19 it is, that the best thing for us and everyone is for them to be  
20 told to go to the jail and turn themselves in. Obviously we'll  
21 arrest them if they come here, but we would appreciate maybe  
22 getting the word out that it's kind of becoming a little bit --  
23 it kind of goes through cycles where we talk about it and it  
24 kind of slows down and then we've had some issues lately with  
25 quite a few from different places. So, if y'all could kind of

1 spread that word, we'd appreciate it.

2 MR. REED: Can I speak on that, Judge?

3 JUDGE WEST: Sure.

4 MR. REED: The problem is that when we call the  
5 warrant officer, we can say, "Our client's over here at this  
6 house. He's sitting there," --

7 JUDGE WEST: They won't go get them.

8 MR. REED: -- and we can't get them out to go  
9 arrest the defendant. One of the warrant officers in Port  
10 Arthur, I don't know whether it's true or not, he said, "Well,  
11 we need three" -- "We need three officers to go out there to  
12 arrest somebody." I don't know if that's true or not. Maybe  
13 one of these people that work at the sheriff's department can  
14 enlighten us on that. We go out there, and we arrest -- we  
15 arrest the client. Here comes the warrant officer just driving  
16 by and just looky-loo, see what's going on.

17 We ask the warrant officer to transport this  
18 person to the jail. I don't -- "No, I can't do that." That's  
19 the difficulties that the bondsmen are having. We can't -- our  
20 defendant, we tell them go to the jail --

21 JUDGE WEST: They aren't going.

22 MR. REED: -- nine times to a hundred --

23 JUDGE WEST: I know.

24 MR. REED: -- they're not going to go there if  
25 they think they have a chance of getting the court reset. Then

1 they come -- that's just getting another person off the street  
2 that don't need to be on the street to commit more crimes.

3 JUDGE WEST: And I don't disagree; and, yes, the  
4 request isn't to necessarily to never do it. It's just I think  
5 being used a little more lately on things than it was. And, so,  
6 maybe just to be mindful of it. If we need to talk to  
7 warrant -- maybe we can talk to the warrant division and see if  
8 there's something, what the policy really is on that, and maybe  
9 get somebody if you don't mind.

10 CAPTAIN MORRIS: I agree. I'll get with Chief.

11 JUDGE WEST: I appreciate that.

12 MR. REED: I think maybe as a suggestion, if we  
13 had a designated person from the sheriff's department or works  
14 here at the courthouse that could assist us in arresting, then  
15 people wouldn't tie up the bailiffs' time.

16 JUDGE WEST: I don't think there's the manpower  
17 for that. That's part of the problem. That's part of why I  
18 brought it up because I think the bailiffs and the manpower here  
19 at the jail -- I mean here at the courthouse is already kind of  
20 pretty tenuous; and, so, having somebody just that that's their  
21 job is to do that is probably not going to happen.

22 MR. REED: Not just that's their job, but you're  
23 talking about manpower. It takes these warrant officers to get  
24 the information to track those people down, to go out there and  
25 look for them when they're gone, now that's manpower.

1 JUDGE WEST: Sure. Maybe that --

2 MR. REED: That's a lot of manpower.

3 JUDGE WEST: We'll put it on for more discussion  
4 and kind of let the sheriffs look into what the options are on  
5 trying to make that go a little more smoothly and maybe we'll  
6 talk about it again next time. All right? Good deal. Thank  
7 you.

8 MR. REED: Can I say one more thing?

9 JUDGE WEST: Sure.

10 MR. REED: You know, the bonding people are the  
11 only entity, I believe, here that saves the County money; and it  
12 seems like everybody always wants to pick on the bondsmen.

13 JUDGE WEST: Nobody's picking.

14 MR. REED: Well, look. We've got -- we have  
15 people -- not you, you've been very supportive of the  
16 bondsmen -- but we have people here that's very adamant to get  
17 every dollar that they can squeeze out of the bonding company.  
18 We're the only entity that saves the County millions of dollars.  
19 From what I -- from what I understand, the jail tells me it  
20 takes \$200 a day to house a person. That's \$6,000 a month. And  
21 Tamara says we get three or four -- three or 400 people out a  
22 month. That's over 2 million dollars that we're saving the  
23 County. And there's other ways that we could save the County  
24 2 to 3 million dollars a year in addition to that if they're  
25 willing to listen to us. Keep that in mind.



1 JUDGE WEST: I appreciate that. And we'll get --  
2 again, we'll get the sheriff's office captain taking care of  
3 looking into what their options are on, on maybe having somebody  
4 here would be beneficial financially, you know, to help that.

5 MS. HOLMES: Maybe a certain day or time.

6 MR. ROMANO: Can I say something, too, on top of  
7 what Al's saying? So, and part of what he's saying, trying to  
8 get every penny out of us, Becky announced months ago in the  
9 meeting that our court costs went up to \$350 per case from 125,  
10 140 on misdemeanors, to something on felonies. So, yeah, I know  
11 my office does it. We try to call the court before we do it,  
12 the day of, if they have court and they didn't make it there.  
13 Our job's to get them to court. Now, if I can get them to court  
14 and they arrest them, they arrest them; but it's also the  
15 judges' discretion to see them. And we're trying to save  
16 ourself. I mean, at 350 a pop per case, per case is -- it's  
17 adding up quickly on all of us.

18 JUDGE WEST: I don't disagree. I understand why  
19 they get sent here, but if it's not a court -- if it's not their  
20 court date, if it's just -- I mean, if it's we're in trial and  
21 it's just a -- it's just an issue that I think --

22 MR. ROMANO: Okay. So, you're not talking about  
23 like a few hours after they miss the court date?

24 JUDGE WEST: No, no.

25 MR. ROMANO: Just randomly send them, I

1 understand that.

2 JUDGE WEST: For me -- and I think for most of  
3 us -- if it's their court date and they're getting here right  
4 before lunch or right after lunch, y'all get in touch with them,  
5 typically we are recalling the bond forfeiture and resetting  
6 them till the next week. That's what I do every single time.  
7 I'm talking about the one that maybe missed a court date a month  
8 ago and you finally figure out where they are and, "Hey, if you  
9 go to the courthouse, maybe the Judge will see you and fix  
10 this," and that is being told to some people. So, I'm not  
11 talking about the same day. I'm talking about the ones that --

12 MR. ROMANO: I understand.

13 JUDGE WEST: -- you might have a chance if you go  
14 to the courthouse and then it's using those resources on a  
15 different day. That's the only thing that I wanted to bring up.

16 MR. ROMANO: I understand. Yes, ma'am.

17 JUDGE WEST: Definitely not the other.

18 All right. That's it that I have on the agenda.  
19 Is there a motion to adjourn?

20 MR. FUNCHES: I move to adjourn.

21 JUDGE LIVELY: Second.

22 (CONCLUSION OF HEARING.)  
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