In a 3-2 vote at the May 19 special meeting, the Fort Bend County Commissioners Court passed a budget for how to spend $134.3 million in federal funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act.

Precinct 1 Commissioner Vincent Morales and Precinct 3 Commissioner Andy Meyers, both Republicans, voted against the budget. Precinct 2 Commissioner Grady Prestage, Precinct 4 Commissioner Ken DeMerchant and County Judge KP George, all Democrats, voted in favor for the budget.

Several expenditure amounts and categories changed between the proposed budget revealed at the May 12 court meeting and the passed budget, which was provided to Community Impact Newspaper by the judge’s office.

For example, the small-business grant program increased from $2 million in the proposed budget to $22 million in the passed budget.

Other notable changes include the amount of funding allocated to cities within Fort Bend County. Based on a funding formula that allotted $55 per capita based on 2019 population recorded by the U.S. census, about $15.9 million will go to municipalities, according to the passed budget.

The proposed budget had previously allocated $4.8 million to this expenditure. However, there was a $10 million expenditure category for political subdivisions to submit COVID-19-related expenses that was removed from the passed budget. Here are the funding amounts for each city:

- Sugar Land: $6,523,000
- Missouri City: $3,763,760
- Rosenberg: $2,093,355
- Stafford: $990,165
- Richmond: $661,815
- Fulshear: $659,450
- Meadows Place: $253,935
- Weston Lakes: $210,100
- Needville: $169,235
- Arcola: $137,060
- Katy: $118,745
- Pleak: $88,605
- Fairchilds Village: $67,320
- Pearland: $56,155
- Simonton: $48,345
- Beasley: $36,465
- Orchard: $22,385
- Kendleton: $21,835
- Thompsons: $18,535

However, not everyone was pleased with the passed budget, for which the Commissioners Court invited more than 50 entities to participate in a committee to discuss how the funds should be distributed.

Sixteen people spoke during public comment at the May 19 meeting asking for adjustments. They asked for additional funds for residents, local businesses and schools.

In particular, faith leaders and nonprofits asked rental assistance funds increase to $25 million and utility assistance funds increase to $7 million. Sugar Land Mayor Joe Zimmerman stated outright he did not support the budget.

"That budget does not address the intent of the funding as the governor reviewed with us last week," Zimmerman said. "It doesn't address the needs of the community as we've heard here."

While Zimmerman asked the county to step back and review, Meadows Place Mayor Charles Jessup urged the court to act quickly to help his city cover costs associated with COVID-19.

Jessup along with many of the speakers recognized that the court’s decision on how to distribute the funds is a difficult one: The need is great, and the funds are limited.

"Y’all had a tough decision, and no matter what you did, you’re going to get it wrong," Jessup said. "Somebody is going to be mad at you."

Despite the many speakers, the court did not make any changes to the budget presented at the May 19 meeting. Meyers attempted to propose his own budget, but the court voted 2-3 to discuss it as an amendment, and so it failed.