

Candidates agree on increased impact fees

By [EMMA PEREZ-TREVINO, The Brownsville Herald](#)

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Before the Brownsville City Commission votes on raising utility rates, at least two future commissioners will vote to increase impact fees to \$3,486 per lot assessed developers to offset the cost of extending water and sewer lines to new construction.

That's what the four candidates for two seats on the City Commission in the June 9 run-off election promised at Monday's accountability session with Valley Interfaith in the backdrop.

"Investing in our families' agenda," was the theme of the session with the candidates that the religious-based grassroots organization sponsored.

At-Large B candidates Rose M. Z. Gowen and Carlos C. Ayala Jr. and District 3 candidates Melissa Zamora and incumbent Carlos A. Cisneros faced the large crowd that gathered at St. Mary's Catholic Church parish hall.

The organization required yes or no answers. Anything else was termed "wishy washy."

"This is not a campaign stop," Valley Interfaith moderators warned the candidates, their supporters, and those in attendance, telling them not to hand out election materials, applaud or heckle.

"You can let them know how you feel by going out to vote," the group was instructed.

The four candidates also promised to vote to increase starting wages for temporary and part time city employees to \$8.50 an hour and to up pay to \$9 an hour in the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

The four promised to invest in human capital by appointing people to the Greater Brownsville Incentive Corp. who support funding the Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement (VIDA) organization. VIDA educates and trains low-income and unemployed residents, helping them obtain skilled, high-paying [jobs](#). They also promised to work toward increasing the funding to VIDA.

Gowen, Ayala and Cisneros committed to opposing the proposed toll road on railroad right of way and to buying the right of way to develop green space and amenities, while Zamora said she could not make a commitment pending study of viable alternatives to traffic congestion.

"We will not forget your commitment and we will hold you accountable," moderators, including Rev. Jerry Frank, told the candidates.

Parish Rev. Ricardo Garcia summed up the purpose: to find out who is the best candidate for the "voiceless, vulnerable and poor."

"It is our responsibility to move the community forward," Garcia said.