

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
REGULAR SESSION  
November 23, 2020

PRESENT: Acting Chairman Ricky Herring, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Sinquefield, Commissioner Brandon Shoupe, County Engineer Barkley Kirkland, Chief Administrative Officer Peter Covert and County Attorney Pres Register.

Acting Chairman Herring welcomed everyone to the November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, Houston County Commission Meeting and called the 10:00 a.m. meeting to order. He declared a quorum as all commissioners were in attendance. He also welcomed everyone that is watching the meeting via ZOOM.

The invocation was given by Commissioner Shoupe and Commissioner Harvey led in the pledge of allegiance.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Commissioner Harvey and seconded by Commissioner Sinquefield. The motion passed unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS

Acting Chairman Herring announced that he hoped everyone has a great Thanksgiving. He also stated that the Sanitation Dept. will be running on Friday instead of Thursday due to the holiday.

Commissioner Doug Sinquefield commented that members of the Cottonwood FFA recently received the state FFA award and those winners were Kevin Dixon, Isaac Fob, Cheyenne Stoops, and Katira Williams. These students have either earned or invested \$1,000 in their supervised agricultural experience projects and they worked at least 300 hours on the projects outside the classroom. He continued by stating that the Cottonwood FFA members also celebrated that their chapter was recognized at the state level as a Superior Chapter and at the national level as a Gold Ranked Chapter through the National Chapter Award. Congratulations to Cottonwood FFA and their members.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to appoint Mayor Kimberly Trotter to the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the appointment and Commissioner Harvey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to approve contract with Ingenuity for Probate Software

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the contract with Ingenuity and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to approve Resolution and Agency Agreement for the Secretary of State to serve as the agent in the voter file maintenance process as required by Act 95-769 – Peter B. Covert, Chief Administrative Officer

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Harvey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to approve CARES Act Funding reimbursement for Dothan-Houston County EMA in the amount of \$20,000 – Chris Judah, EMA Director

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Harvey seconded.

Commissioner Shoupe commented that he had spoken to Mr. Judah and that he is excited for Houston County to get this app and that it be paid for entirely out of CARES Act funding and he appreciated Mr. Judah bringing it to the Commission's attention. Commissioner Shoupe added that he had researched this over the weekend and questioned if this is the best way to go about it. He asked if it was possible to build a more broader app that would do all the things that EMA needed but could also allow the probate judge to conduct more business through the app which would mean fewer people coming into the Administration Building and possibly more employees conducting more work through this technology. Commissioner Shoupe stated that he had spoken to Jay, who is the app developer, and he stated that they can do that and the question that Mr. Shoupe had is that if we delay this request by two weeks, would we still have enough time as it pertains to the CARES Act Funding deadline. Mr. Covert reported that he is understanding that the expenses for CARES Act money needs to be incurred by December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, in order for it to be qualified for reimbursement and he does know of some discussion in Congress about extending the date but that is not guaranteed with so much uncertainty going on in Washington that it should not be pondered. Mr. Covert continued by stating that whether commission approval is deemed incurred or whether a check needs to be cut, which qualifies to be an expense, that he cannot answer that question. However, in saying all that, Mr. Covert said that if this is something that a decision can be made in the next two to three weeks, that should give us three or so weeks to be able to consummate that transaction. Mr.

Shoupe stated that with the holidays approaching that time could be a factor with trying to get a contract with a new company. He asked Mr. Judah if he had any comments to add to the conversation that they had earlier. Mr. Judah responded that the company that he is speaking of is already incorporated with the City of Dothan and they are very familiar with Dothan and Houston County in what we do and how we do it. He added that they are a local state company, out of Opelika, AL, and they do a lot for the state of Alabama to include currently working on a state app. Mr. Judah stated that the things that Mr. Shoupe is looking for to expand, that this particular company can do those things and they can be added to the app. Mr. Shoupe commented that this is probably the best course of action to reduce the risk of losing the eligibility for the CARES Act funding. Mr. Judah stated that on a financial side, the price of most apps is very expensive and the price that this particular company gave us is cost efficient. Mr. Shoupe, while speaking with the owner of the company, did find out that the county would have to pay an ongoing maintenance cost of 15% of the upfront cost of the app, which could be at least \$3,000 each year and the commission needs to be aware of that and would need to take that into account. Mr. Judah added that usually, in the communications budget, this would be a small amount and part of it could be reimbursed from the state as well as Plant Farley and other grant money. Mr. Shoupe stated that based on his conversation this morning with the owner, his recommendation would be to go ahead and approve this with the understanding that the budget may need to be expanded to include other areas of the county on the app in which the price of the app could increase. Commissioner Harvey asked Commissioner Shoupe what his recommendation is on this item and Commissioner Shoupe stated that he recommends that the commission go ahead and approve this request with the understanding that in two weeks they may be back to approve more funding for this item.

Commissioner Sinuefield asked if this was tied into the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Mr. Judah answered that it is not and that particular app is the I Pause app which is a state mandated mass notification app and cannot be used on a local level. He added that on this particular app that the county is looking at, they can add mass notifications such as weather notifications. Commissioner Sinuefield stated that according to the funding of \$20,000 for an EMA app, to qualify it states that it is for an EMA app to be used for updates and information with EMA, County 9-1-1, road closures, weather alerts, and numerous other things. He feels that it should be kept for EMA items instead of making it broad to include other county departments. Mr. Judah commented that he is more concerned about the EMA side for the public to have alerts and public safety items and anything else added would be up to the commission.

Commissioner Shoupe stated that he is concerned that we should not have two or three apps because the public would get confused on which app they would need. He suggested that we only need one app and by moving forward with this request today it is saying that we definitely are going to implement an EMA app and could possibly come back in two weeks and expand

the scope of this project to create a "Houston County" app that has features required for EMA and for the probate judge and other departments. Mr. Judah reported that he highly suggest that this is not to get away from putting items on the website, twitter, etc., and this is an instant alert for emergency items. Mr. Covert asked if the EMA app is a push notification as opposed to the other items talked about is more features for services. Mr. Shoupe responded that just because it has push notifications it does not mean that people will agree to it. He stated that most apps have push notification features and you can opt out of that. On this particular app, push notifications could be for weather, road closures, etc., but could also be used for the other departments to notify someone that their tag renewal is due. Mr. Judah reported that the Dothan Fire Department has a great app developed by this particular company as does Montgomery and Mobile, and they are incorporated into their county commission as well. Each one has scrolling information similar to what is on the county website and that could be included as scrolling items but Mr. Judah's main concern is emergency alerts that pertain to weather, emergency situations with the Sheriff's Dept., etc., and this information could be pushed and sent to the alert app instead of receiving numerous emails from the EMA Department. Commissioner Sinquefield commented that the request needs to be approved as asked and maybe not tie up too much information on the app and use solely for emergency items.

Acting Chairman Herring stated that he thinks this is a great opportunity and he appreciates the time that Director Judah has spent on this item. After a call for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

5. Request to approve bid for Aluminized Roadway Drainage Pipe to lowest bidder meeting specs - Road & Bridge

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the bid and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

#### STAFF REPORTS:

Chief Administrative Officer – No report

County Engineer – Closed Roads: S. Park, Middleton, Gilmore, Coot Adams, Ben Ivey and Silcox. Hopefully S. Park will be reopen in January as it is a big project.

County Attorney – No report

Meeting adjourned.