

## MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION

### REGULAR SESSION

January 11, 2021

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

Chairman Culver welcomed everyone to the January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Houston County Commission Regular Session and called the 10:00 a.m. meeting to order. He declared a quorum as the majority of the commissioners were in attendance. He also welcomed everyone that was watching the meeting via ZOOM.

ABSENT: Commissioner Doug Sinquefield

The invocation was given by County Attorney Pres Register 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 Herring. The motion passed unanimously.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Culver began by reminding everyone that next Monday is a national, state, county, and city holiday and the county buildings will be closed for Martin Luther King Day. The sanitation department will be running that day for garbage pickup. He continued by mentioning that the commission meetings continue to operate under less than favorable conditions due to COVID restrictions and he appreciates Pres Register, Judge Davenport and all the commissioners for being willing to provide our invocation at the meetings regularly since we are not able to allow pastors to come in under our current guidelines and he appreciates everyone that is here and willing to help out. He stated that Commissioner Harvey is a pastor and he could be called on every time for the invocation, but we try to spread this privilege and Chairman Culver added that the commission is very fortunate to work with the people that they do and are very willing and able to get the meeting started in the proper manner and they do appreciate it. He continued by stating that he hopes that soon things can get back to normal operations but the COVID numbers continue to go up and it is a very serious thing. The hospitals are in a critical state and he encourages everyone to continue to wear their mask, social distance, limit the size of gatherings, sanitize and do all the things that need to be done. Chairman Culver reported that he is seeing reports of the vaccine being available by the 18<sup>th</sup> of January with segment 1B which is for first responders and people over 75. He encouraged everyone to get vaccinated and see if we can get this virus behind us and get to some sort of normal life. He added that Commissioner Sinquefield asked him to mention that he wanted to

publically thank the Ashford fire, rescue, police and Dothan Fire for their quick response on Saturday regarding the tree that fell on the gentleman in Ashford. They used Jaws of Life and airbags to remove the tree and at this time the patient is stable because of the quick action of everyone involved. Thankful to all first responders and continue to pray for that individual.

## AWARDS AND PRESENTATION

### 1. Presentation – Multi–Use Trail Study Update – Kim Meeker

Chairman Culver called Kim Meeker to the podium and thanked him for the work he is doing on this project. Mr. Meeker began by stating that there have been several steps in this feasibility study since its beginning. They are looking at running the trail from the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine to Ashford. His first step was to meet with the City of Dothan Planning Department. He added that this all came about as Commissioner Shoupe had a vision for this multi-use trail and it was to connect the hospitality and entertainment district of Dothan as well as Ashford and Cowarts. Mr. Meeker stated that the result of the City of Dothan Planning Department meeting continued with a meeting with some of the county commission and the city planning department. The outcome was that they would all work together in a planning stage to produce a comprehensive alternative transportation plan for the county and the city, jointly, and share some of the expenses. He also feels that this will open the doors for state and federal funds as well. Mr. Meeker then went on to say that he then met with some of the stakeholders of the project. He reported that he had spoken to the Town of Cowarts Mayor and the City Clerk and their meeting went really well as the Mayor was extremely excited to hear the process of the project. He also spoke with Ashford Mayor Carol Barfield and she expressed the same excitement and is in hopes that the trail could truncate somewhere around the railroad museum. Mr. Meeker added that he has spoken with bike and running clubs in the surrounding areas as well.

Mr. Meeker reported that they are currently looking at four different routes at this time. One route would be from ACOM, which he stated that they all begin at ACOM, and go towards Ashford on Cowarts Road which would turn into Jordan Avenue and on to Glen Lawrence. He commented that Jordan Ave. and Glen Lawrence each had an 80 ft. right-of-way versus the 60 ft. that many of the county roads currently have. Mr. Meeker then mentioned that he spoke with Engineer Barkley Kirkland concerning the right-of-ways with a 60 ft. clearance and he encouraged him to steer clear of that. He stated again that Cowarts Ave. and Glen Lawrence had 80 ft. and then Broadway leading straight into Ashford has some natural beauty with three lakes and scenery but the disadvantage, or the advantage, was that it is a longer trail that would be about 11 miles from ACOM to Ashford. He mentioned that another option would involve going out 84E a little further and proceed to Sanitary Dairy Road using the railroad right-of-way which is 100 ft. and then to Ashford with a 200 ft. right-of-way. Mr. Meeker shared this option with several people and it seems to be the most popular with the Glen Lawrence route

being second as this route would be about 8 miles. He ended with the last option being to stay on 84 E going to Ashford until you reach the old 84 and go straight in but is the least scenic.

Chairman Culver thanked Mr. Meeker for his presentation and commented that there looks to be some alternatives to look forward to and added that the plan study with the MPO is a good opportunity to make this even larger than the original plan. He asked Mr. Meeker if he will be getting feedback from the bikers and runners clubs and Mr. Meeker responded that he has basically gotten it from the mountain biking club as they do prefer the railroad route and then the Glen Lawrence route would come in second. He added that he has put it before Joe Varner, who represents the club Dothan Area Cyclist and he has given Mr. Meeker feedback with preference to the more rural routes and he would get more opinions from the club members. Chairman Culver stated that he agrees that they need the feedback and then make a determination if the railroad is where it needs to be and then if that is not an option to move forward with the other option. Mr. Meeker reported that on a normal basis they would be having a public hearing but during COVID they are not able to. Commissioner Shoupe stated that an alternate transportation plan is not something that he has been involved with and he asked Chairman Culver if he knew how long the plan usually takes. Chairman Culver responded that nothing moves really fast with the MPO and it could be at least a year. Commissioner Shoupe thanked Mr. Meeker for his work on this project and feels that they are going in the right direction and that it will be nice once they can begin work and it will be really nice once people can start using it.

## 2. Presentation – FY-2020 Houston County Rebuild Alabama Annual Report – County Engineer Barkley Kirkland

Engineer Barkley came forward and Chairman Culver stated that this report is required by law as the Rebuild Alabama Act was formed two years ago and involved an implementation of a fuel tax and the law included accountability measures to include the Annual Report in addition to other items that the staff has to do within the year. He commented that these funds can only be used in certain way and this is the second time the report has been presented as it has to be done at the first meeting of the commission of the calendar year.

Engineer Kirkland began by stating that this is the FY-2020 Annual Report and they are required by law to give a presentation of what funds were spent the last fiscal year. He continued reporting that this plan was approved initially and all the roads that were worked on are listed in the report. To date, ten roads were improved, fourteen miles of roads were resurfaced, twenty-eight miles of shoulder work was completed and twenty-eight cross drains were replaced. The projects were listed on the report and these are attached to the original minutes (see attachment). Mr. Kirkland commented that all the money is put into asphalt and the county takes care of the rest. He added that the cost of the projects initially were \$2.3 million and when completed the total was \$1.85 million. He commented that they also partnered with NCAT in Auburn to come up with a new asphalt mix that they are trying which allowed them to

do away with some surface treatment materials and saved about \$500,000. This money can be used in the additional roads to pave. Engineer Kirkland then presented a map of all the roads which were completed for the fiscal year and also roads that have been completed since October. He added that so far in the year 2021, they have completed three roads and they have nine left to complete. The upcoming projects are Pleasant Grove, Randall Wade, Hopkins, County Road 75 N, Coot Adams Rd., County Road 8, which is a big project that consists of 14 miles, Trelawny Drive, Quail Drive and Dove Drive. Engineer Kirkland stated that they are working on roads currently and will have all completed in two years but hope to accomplish the majority this year.

Commissioner Shoupe commented that he appreciates the hard work of the Road & Bridge and for them looking into new asphalt mixes because as he was driving on Hwy. 123 he noticed that it was already cracking and it was just completed a few years ago and he is in hopes that our asphalt would hold up much better. Engineer Kirkland remarked that he hopes that it does too and that according to the test track the results show that it should. He added that all they can do is try as what they are doing is not working. Engineer Kirkland reported that also in 2020, through federal aid and state funds they were able to pave four more roads and almost twenty miles of shoulder work and an additional 23 cross drains which included S. Park, Cumbie and Willie Varnum. In addition, Hurricane Sally came and added thirty-three damaged sites on twenty-eight roads to include twenty-seven FEMA sites, six FHWA sites and they have already completed twenty-six of those sites and they are working on the last seven sites but unfortunately those are big projects and will take time to complete. Commissioner Shoupe asked about Gilmore Road and if there is an estimated time when it would be completed. Engineer Kirkland replied that it would probably be the last project as it is big and at least thirty feet deep and their hope is that it will be completed in the summer. Engineer Kirkland reported on special projects that were completed this past year and those include Cowarts Town parking lot, Landmark Park, the IGA building in Ashford and partnered with Dale County on a small project. He added that the roundabout at Taylor Rd. and S. Park Ave. was a huge project as was County Road 81 and Bazemore Mill and that is a project that has been ongoing for twenty years.

Chairman Culver commented that he knows that it is an inconvenience to the public as cross drains are being replaced and having to close roads, but the more that can be done by our own the more resurfacing can be done. With this, things are getting better as it is progress being made while the public is inconvenienced. He continued that some people may think that the roads are not being worked on as they may not see anyone working but sometimes materials have to be ordered and then wait for it to come in. He ended by thanking Engineer Kirkland and his department for all their hard work. Engineer Kirkland stated that there was a misconception that the Road & Bridge Dept. has been closed and not working and he is not sure where that came from and that is not the case. Chairman Culver stated that the county has not been closed for any extended period of time but certainly COVID has created issues for everyone and it may have caused some slow time but unfortunately that could not be helped as

COVID has caused a lot of things for a lot of people and he is going to make sure that his employees and the public are safe through the COVID crisis, first and foremost, and all the work will get done.

## REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to approve in-kind work for Alabama Youth Centers Dothan – Izell Reese, President & GM

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the in-kind work and Commissioner Harvey seconded. Chairman Culver reported that there was a presentation on this item at Thursday's meeting and it is an exciting project. It stated that it is not a hard project but does involve moving a lot of dirt around but it will be great for the community and the region. He continued that Mr. Reese, President of Alabama Youth Centers, is an impressive young man and he appreciates him bringing this project back to his hometown of Dothan. After a call for questions, the motion passed unanimously.

2. Request to approve budget amendment for EMA pass through grant 20FIL – Peter Covert, CAO

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the budget amendment and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to approve budget amendment for Poly, Inc., change order for solid waste disposal project at Industrial Park – Peter Covert, CAO

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the budget amendment and Commissioner Herring seconded. Chairman Culver commented that this budget amendment and the prior budget amendment were both approved items, but budget amendments for the items were not included. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to eliminate three positions in dispatch – Major Bill Rafferty, Sheriff's Dept.

Commissioner Shoupe made the motion to approve the request to eliminate three positions in dispatch. Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

5. Request to remove from the table and approve Agreement for Housing Municipal Inmates in the Houston County Jail – Major Bill Rafferty, Sheriff's Dept.

Chairman Culver stated that first a motion to remove the agreement from the table is needed. Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to remove from the table the consideration of the agreement. Commissioner Harvey and the motion carried unanimously. The item is now up for

consideration and Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the agreement and Commissioner Herring seconded. Chairman Culver added that this agreement has to do with housing of municipal inmates but does not include Dothan. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Request to remove from the table the policy regarding audio and video recording within county-owned property and table until future meeting

Commissioner Herring made a motion to remove from the table the policy regarding audio and video recording within county-owned property. Commissioner Shoupe seconded and the motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Shoupe then made a motion to table the policy indefinitely. Commissioner Herring seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

7. Request to sell the following on GovDeals; assorted office items from Probate; assorted shop items from Road and Bridge; 2005 Fore Explorer and 2007 Chevy Impala from EMA

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to sell the items on GovDeals and Commissioner Harvey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

#### STAFF REPORTS

Chief Administrative Officer – No report

County Engineer – 7 closed roads include Silcox, S. Park, Middleton, Glen Lawrence, Cecil Varnum, Coot Adams and Gilmore and they are currently working on four of them.

County Attorney – No Report

Chairman Culver asked Engineer Kirkland when will work begin on the roundabout at Campbellton Road and Engineer Kirkland stated that they are currently finishing the parking lot in Rehobeth and have a few other items to complete and they hope to begin in March.

Commissioner Shoupe commented to Engineer Kirkland to keep the closed roads at the top of the priority list before starting work on other projects. Engineer Kirkland stated that the closed roads are FEMA sites and they only have a select amount of time to finish those for federal reimbursement and they are on top of the list.

Adjourn