

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 27, 2010

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Bobby R. Snellgrove, Commissioner Frances M. Cook, Commissioner Phillip L. Forrester, Pat Jones, Acting County Attorney, Mark Pool, County Engineer, and William J. Dempsey, Chief Administrative Officer

ABSENT: Gary Sherrer, County Attorney

Chairman Mark Culver called the 10:00 A.M. meeting to order, declared a quorum was present, and welcomed everyone. Rev. Matthew Johnson, Administrative Pastor, Northside Methodist Church, gave the invocation. Commissioner Phil Forrester led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion; and it carried unanimously.

Announcements and Public Comments from Chairman and Commissioners

Chairman Culver extended sympathy and condolences to the family of Chip George who passed away on September 25th. He stated anyone who knew Mr. George knew his strong commitment to Downtown Dothan. The chairman reported he was a pioneer in trying to get the revitalization of downtown. He stated it is a tragic loss and he asked everyone to keep his family in their prayers.

The chairman reported a public forum would be held at the Houston-Love Memorial Library on September 28th, at 6:00 P.M. to solicit community input on the proposed library project.

He reported a public meeting would be held that evening at 5:00 P.M. at Honeysuckle Middle School to hear the data on the performance of the Dothan City School system.

Awards and Presentations

1. Proclamation – “Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner With Your Children” - Mrs. Susan Trawick, Director, Dothan-Houston County Substance Abuse Partnership, and Mrs. Beth Ford

Chairman Culver asked Mrs. Susan Trawick and Mrs. Beth Ford to come forward. Commissioner Forrester made a motion to approve the Proclamation as prepared proclaiming September 27th as “Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner With Your Children.” Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. Chairman Culver then read the Proclamation and presented it to Mrs. Trawick. He thanked Mrs. Trawick and her staff for the continued good work they do in the community. Mrs. Trawick invited everyone to their Ribbon Cutting, September 28th, at 10:30 A.M. at their new offices located at 355 N. Oates Street, Suites 4 and 5. She reported they have opened an educational library at their new facilities for parents, teachers, students, community leaders, and anyone interested in information on any type of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs. Mrs. Trawick also reported that they have videos for check out and they are always available to come and speak to the different organizations.

Mrs. Ford thanked the Commission for the Proclamation. She stated each year on this day they try to stress the importance of families taking the time to be together and celebrate the little things. Mrs. Ford urged parents to develop a relationship with their children and encourage them to know that they can come to them and discuss things. She stated if parents do not know what to say to their children about drugs, alcohol or tobacco to come to the library and check out the information. She thanked the commission.

2. Update on Houston-Love Memorial Library – Mr. Forrest Register, Chairman, Library Steering Committee, MaryEllin Santiago, Consultant

Chairman Culver asked Mr. Forrest Register, Chairman of the Library Steering Committee, and Ms. MaryEllin Santiago, Consultant, to come forward. Mr. Register thanked the commission for allowing them to come and make the presentation. Mr. Register introduced Ms. Santiago and gave some background on what had occurred over the past year since the city and the county made a joint purchase of land around the library for future improvements. Mr. Register reported they realized that there were so many interest groups involved with the library, the city and county commissions, the Library Board, the Friends of the Library, and various civic groups and individuals with a lot of interest and all going in a lot of different directions. He stated among the discussions with the various groups it was decided the best thing to do was to develop a steering committee and put some focus on where the library needed to go as far as direction. Mr. Register reported out of that discussion, they realized there were different ideas but it did not need to be about what the committee thought, but it should be about what the community thought it should be. He stated as with any good product, it is built around the consumer, and in this case the consumers are the citizens of Dothan and Houston County. He stated they then approached the Wiregrass Foundation about funding, and they agreed, and proposals were sent out to different groups. He reported Ms. Santiago, Santiago Consultants, got the job and the community has been very fortunate in that she has come here, and there has been lot of input received. He then turned it over to Ms. Santiago.

Ms. Santiago reported she had only been in town about two weeks but she was starting to see familiar faces everywhere. She thanked the commission for allowing the update. Ms. Santiago reported they are building a library master plan. She stated she thought it was the key component when someone asks questions. Ms. Santiago pointed out they were focusing on what the community would like to see at the public library. She reported there were national standards out there and they wanted to let the people of this community build an awareness of what kinds of services are available in public libraries. Ms. Santiago reported before they get to the building phase they wanted to find out from everyone what they think a library should be. She stated they have compiled a short online survey available at www.houstonlovelibrary.org, the library's website. Ms. Santiago then passed out brochures. She reported the Dothan Eagle had posted a story about the survey last Sunday and on Sunday night before she arrived, there were over 1,200-1,300 people who had already posted their feelings on the online survey. She reported on September 26th, they had about 1,765 people who had taken the survey. Ms. Santiago reported if they received 2% return on the survey they would consider having done an excellent job. She reported the survey runs through October 19th, and they feel certain they will surpass the 2%. Ms. Santiago reported public libraries are drivers in the community, they create a

sense of pride, invite an opportunity for small businesses as well as large businesses to promote and attract employees coming into town, and create a place for families. She stated Dothan-Houston County is attracting a lot of people to the community, and those people who are re-locating to the area have a pre-conceived notion of what a public library can do. She reported it has been reported some of the newcomers are disappointed in the library because some of the resources are not available. Ms. Santiago reported the group wants to make sure this county will be proud of everything they are doing. She stated there are wonderful services in the community but they feel the public library deserves a little more attention and they want to hear from the community as they move forward. Ms. Santiago pointed out the survey is also in paper form, and they have been distributed by the service groups across the county. She reported there would be a community in-put session at the library on September 28th, at 6:00 P.M., and she invited everyone to attend. Ms. Santiago stated at that meeting they would share more of the visioning of what public libraries look like, and the kind of service opportunities people will have when they come to the library. She reported they have received positive, unbelievable response from everyone. She pointed out they do not have to wait until the first shovel of dirt is turned, and they started making changes at the library and they will continue to make changes this week and they will continue to do that as best they can given the facilities and the funding. Ms. Santiago thanked the commission for their support and she stated Ms. Forbus and her staff appreciate it. She applauded Mr. Register for heading the steering committee because the leadership in the community should be something everyone should be extremely proud of. Ms. Santiago reported she works with a lot of communities and she has never seen the engagement as she has in Houston County by business leaders as well as political and civic leaders. She stated it if is any sign of what is going to happen down the road she is very excited on where they have been in the first two weeks. Chairman Culver reported he was glad Ms. Santiago was in the community for the next several months and the commission wanted to support her efforts. He stated he felt the commission would be excited to know that they are looking at a master plan—not to build the biggest and best , but to build what is needed, and include the library locations that are located in Ashford and Columbia along with the main branch. He thanked Mr. Register and Ms. Forbus for bringing Ms .Santiago. Ms. Santiago reported the master plan would be available for publication no later than December 15th. She stated she hoped they would have an opportunity to come back and share the ultimate plan with the commission. Chairman Culver reported that would be great and he stated they would like for her to create that opportunity.

Regular Agenda

1. Request to implement new rates to include the required lodging tax effective 10/1/10 at the Farm Center, Chattahoochee Park, and Omussee Park.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the request to implement the new rates to include the required lodging tax effective 10/1/10 at the Farm Center, Chattahoochee Park, and Omussee Park. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported as was explained on Thursday, for years the county has been charging a flat rate at the Farm Center, Chattahoochee Park and Omussee, and it was recently brought to their attention they should have been collecting the lodging tax inside the City of Dothan and outside in the county. He stated they had not been doing that because they thought the county was tax exempt. The chairman reported they realized once they looked into it, the tax is not

on the county but on the person coming from outside the county who rents the place. He reported according to the auditors, the county is required to do this. Chairman Culver reported they are adjusting the rate. He stated they know they will be charged the tax on the amount, and they will pay the tax out of the new amount. The chairman pointed out there would not be any loss. He reported over the weekend, someone had suggested that the county pay it out of the current fee but he did not feel the citizens of Houston County should be subsidizing the rent for those people coming from outside the county. He stated the increases range from \$1.00 for primitive camping to \$2.00 daily RV camping to \$28.00. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached rates in Minute Book)

Staff Reports:

Chief Administrative Officer – there was none

County Engineer – there was none

County Attorney – there was none

Adjourn.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Cook seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.