

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
OCTOBER 11, 2011

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Siquefield, Commissioner Jackie Battles, Gary Sherrer, County Attorney, Mark Pool, County Engineer, and William J. Dempsey, Chief Administrative Officer

ABSENT: Commissioner Phillip L. Forrester

Chairman Mark S. Culver called the 10:00 A.M. meeting to order, declared a quorum present, and welcomed everyone. Rev. Laurie Williams, Pastor, Triumphant Cross Lutheran Church, gave the invocation. Commissioner Doug Siquefield led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

#### Announcements and Public Comments from Chairman and Commissioners

Chairman Culver reported Houston County is the awarding county for the statewide county bid program. He pointed out the bids have been received and opened and are being evaluated. He stated upon completion of the evaluation, the bids will be awarded at the next meeting.

The chairman stated the commission always wants to brag on the county employees when they hear good things about them. He reported he had received a letter from Mrs. Turman thanking Mrs. Sherri Douglas, In-Home Service Director, for the outstanding job she does. He stated Mrs. Douglas does an excellent job, and he urged the commission to give her a pat on the back if they saw her.

Chairman Culver reported that the National Peanut Festival's Ribbon Cutting would be November 4<sup>th</sup>, and the Parade would be on November 12<sup>th</sup>. He stated this year the Houston County Courthouse would be the location for the VIP Coffee. The chairman pointed out the former location was not available. He stated the coffee would be held in the Jury Deliberation Room and the bleachers would be located in the parking lot.

#### Awards and Presentations

1. Proclamation – "BEST Robotics Day" – Chris Manasco, Pre-Engineering Instructor, Beverly Middle School

Due to Chris Manasco's absence, Mrs. Marsha Nowell, came forward along with her students. Commissioner Siquefield made a motion to approve the Proclamation for "Best Robotics Day." Commissioner Battles seconded the motion; and it carried unanimously. Mrs. Nowell reported BEST stood for Boosting Engineering and Science Technology. She pointed out it is a six week robotics program for middle and high school students where they have six weeks to create, build and design a robot that will perform certain tasks. Mrs. Nowell reported they have two weeks left before the competition on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. She thanked the county for acknowledging it. The chairman then read

the Proclamation and presented it to Mrs. Nowell. Chairman Culver reported for those people who have not been to one of the BEST competitions, it is like a basketball, volleyball, or football game with cheering. He stated it is amazing to see these young people being able to put into real life what they have in their minds. The chairman also commended their teachers. Alex Reynolds reported the theme for this year's competition is on genetically altered bugs that have escaped from a research laboratory. He stated they have retreated to a construction zone, and they have to design a robot that will go into the construction zone and retrieve the bugs. He pointed out they have to get food, which are tennis balls, and place the bugs, which are not real, in a containment unit. Chairman Culver stated they are certainly to be commended, and he thanked them, and urged them to keep up the good work.

2. Proclamation – “National Domestic Violence Awareness Month” – Ms. Beverly S. Youse, Director, The House of Ruth, and Ms. Pam Miles, Director, Exchange Center for Child Abuse Prevention

Chairman Culver asked Ms. Youse and Ms. Miles to come forward. Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the Proclamation for “National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.” Commissioner Sinquefield seconded; and the motion carried unanimously. The Chairman then read the Proclamation and presented it to Ms. Youse. He thanked them for attending. Chairman Culver reported he understood there was a Candle Light Vigil that evening providing the weather cooperated. He stated Commissioner Harvey would be in attendance to present the Proclamation again. Ms. Youse invited everyone to the Candle Light Vigil at 6:30 P.M. in Justice Park. She stated she hoped it would stop raining. Ms. Youse pointed out the purpose of the vigil was threefold: 1. to unite those who work against domestic violence whether it is adults or children; 2. to celebrate those victims of domestic violence who are out of those relationships, and 3. to mourn the four women who were murdered in their 8 county service due to domestic violence. Ms. Youse reported this year she and Ms. Miles wanted to tie the theme to children who witness this, even though they are not physically harmed, they are scarred by what they see. Chairman Culver thanked them.

3. Presentation – Career Technical Education Symposium – Glenn Maloy, Director, Houston County Schools Career and Technical Center

Chairman Culver asked Mr. Glen Maloy, Director, Houston County Schools Career and Technical Center, to come forward. Mr. Maloy reported earlier this year the Governor, along with some support from business and industry and the State Board of Education, decided it was time to revamp career tech education. He reported the Governor formed a commission to help with the efforts. He pointed out as a result, approximately 60-70 people from across the state were chosen to talk about things that needed doing to improve career education. Mr. Maloy reported one of the things they are working on is to make people aware of some of the changes. He stated the commission is comprised of educators, administrators, but mainly business and industry people from around the state. Mr. Maloy reported those people are coming together to talk about some things they might want to do to change career tech education. He stated he and Mr. Jack Cook are the only two from the area who serve on the commission. Mr. Maloy reported a Career Technical Education Symposium would be held on October 25th, at 6:00 P.M. He pointed out it is a joint effort between Houston County Schools and Dothan City Schools, and because of that it would be held at Troy University in Sony Hall. Mr. Maloy reported the

main purpose of the symposium is awareness and they really need the community leaders to come out and attend. He stated they are trying to make a difference for the students in the school system, and they feel career tech is a great opportunity to do that. He thanked the commission, and stated he hoped to see them at the symposium. Chairman Culver thanked Mr. Maloy for coming.

#### 4. Presentation – 2010-2011 Road and Bridge Projects – Mark Pool, County Engineer

Mr. Pool reported they have projects they do during the year and he stated one of their biggest projects was finished in 2009. He then made a presentation on the following special projects his department has completed:

Ardilla Intersection – joint project between Houston County, the City of Dothan and the Alabama Highway Department - the cost of materials was split

Ashford Industrial Project - \$540,000 grant from the state that helped them out with their industrial property

County Road #81 - \$912,000 project with 80% federal funds and 20% county funds - the county did engineering and inspection and received \$23,000 back from inspecting the project

Fortner Street – project done with MPO money, stimulus money, county match money for a total of \$534,000 and received some engineering and inspection money back in the amount of \$26,000

Guy Branch Road – Dirt road paving project with all county funds in the amount of \$83,000

Miller Street – Dirt road paving project with all county funds in the amount of \$14,000

Cherry Rock Road – located in the City of Dothan and part of a road swap with the city – all county funds in the amount of \$16,000

Woodham Road – county resurfaced the road in the amount of \$176,000 and the city took over the maintenance of the road – also part of a road swap project

Mr. Pool reported he thought it was pretty good with his department being down 27 people. He pointed out they used to have 117 workers and now they are down to 90 at Road & Bridge Department.

Chairman Culver commended Mr. Pool and his staff for the amount of work they completed. Mr. Pool pointed out those were just the special projects and they still maintain all of the roads, repair potholes, cut grass, etc. The chairman reported the good thing about those projects is that a lot of them had side benefits such as the project on Woodham Road where the city will take over the maintenance and the county will not have to worry about it again.

#### Regular Agenda

1. Appointment and Re-appointment to SE Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission – Lori Wilcoxon, and Matt Parker

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to appoint Mrs. Lori Wilcoxon and to re-appoint Mr. Matt Parker to the SE Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. Commissioner Battles seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to adopt Resolution regarding GASB 54.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to adopt the Resolution regarding GASB 54. Commissioner Battles seconded. Chairman Culver reported this was discussed on Thursday. He called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see in Resolution Book)

3. Request to approve and advertise legislation to repeal Act #2007-253 regarding Probate Fees.

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to grant the request to approve and advertise legislation to repeal Act #2007-253 regarding Probate Fees. Commissioner Battles seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported this is a piece of legislation that was originally passed in 1997 that established a probate fee that goes to the Probate Judge. He stated in 2007, the commission at that time took that fee off. The chairman reported because of various things; primarily the significant issues with the long tag lines, that fee will go to help address that need. He reported this is basically repealing the act that was passed in 2007 that took off a portion of the probate fee that was already in place. He stated it is going back to the original law as opposed to what they did in 2007.

Commissioner Harvey asked the chairman to explain why they took it off in 2007? Chairman Culver reported if you look back at the county's financials in 2006-07 and 2007-08, they were the peak of the revenues and finances. He stated at that point, they were trying to do some things to help people and took it off to lower the cost. The chairman reported the county is certainly not in that position now, and because of the budgetary cuts and personnel cuts particularly in the tag line, where the fee will be assessed, there is a real problem. He stated he felt it was incumbent on the commission to try to address the tag line issue in cooperation with the Probate Judge. The chairman reported it was taken off because at that time the commission felt comfortable taking it off to give some relief. He pointed out that at this time they are not comfortable with it. The chairman reported they would ask the legislature to move forward. He stated they will use it to move some funds around to allow the Probate Judge to absorb some things that are in her budget where the county can possibly put two part-time people to work to help in the tag line. The chairman encouraged everyone to either mail their tag in or go online and do it on the computer or come about 7:10 A.M. He pointed out that is one of the reasons the county is open at 7:00 A.M. in order to allow people to come before work and take care of their business. He reported this legislation will have to go to the Legislature and be approved and then it will go from there. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached in Minute Book)

4. Request from the Personnel Board to set 2012 Holiday Schedule.

Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the request from the Personnel Board to set the 2010 Holiday Schedule. Commissioner Sinquefield seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported they try to mimic the state holidays because the county is so tied to the state. He reported when the state is off

it is hard for the county to do the necessary things it has to do. He pointed out it has become a little bit more complicated because not only are there 10 hour employees in the Admin Building and Road and Bridge, there are 8 hour employees at the Sheriff's Department and other places, and 12 hour employees who work at the Jail. He stated they cannot give everyone 10 days of holidays because 10 days of 12 hours is much different than 10 days of 8 hours. The chairman reported it is based on hours and the Personnel Board looked at several different alternatives before they made this recommendation to the county. Chairman Culver reported it would be posted on the website. He called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached in Minute Book)

5. Request from the Personnel Board to change the anniversary dates of eligible employees, and approve the appropriate budget amendment.

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the request from the Personnel Board to change the anniversary dates of eligible employees, and approve the appropriate budget amendment.

Commissioner Battles seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported this came about because they have not been able as they should have to give step increases the last two years. He reported since they did that it has put everyone's anniversary date out of step. The chairman reported the action they took in this year's budget to provide a step increase along with the retirement system action was going to create some people that did not really get their pay adjusted until July, August or September of this year, and they would end up with some pay decrease during that time. He reported this will straighten this all out and sets everyone's anniversary date that is after January 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>, but before September 30<sup>th</sup> back to January 3<sup>rd</sup>. He stated everyone will receive their step increase on the first payroll in January. Chairman Culver reported the cost to do this will be covered by vacancies that the county has and will keep vacant until after January so that there will not be any additional monies into this year's budget.

Sheriff Hughes reported he had some employees who had questions about the anniversary dates. He stated the anniversary dates have been changed several times over the years. The chairman reported they usually get changed when a salary study is done. The sheriff asked if the anniversary dates were going to stay the same or if when step raises are given will the dates change again to say your actual employment date will be your anniversary date now so that the rates will not go into effect the first of January.? Chairman Culver reported he thought the Personnel Board and the commission's position would be as long as they can give step raises annually, which is their intent to do, then the anniversary dates would stay the same. Chairman Culver reported it is time to do the pay study again. He reported it is in next year's budget and if the commission can, then they will probably fund the salary study again. He stated historically, anyone who changes, have been moved to October. Chairman Culver reported the commission does not intend to change the anniversary dates but to say it will not ever change will not be a factual statement. He reported he was concerned about the employees and it seems when the anniversary dates are changed, it benefits the county and not the employees at times because if it was going to be a deduction, it would go into effect October 1<sup>st</sup> for everyone. The chairman stated it was being done to benefit the employees. The sheriff stated he understood it would benefit some of the employees but he thought there were 72 employees it would not benefit. The sheriff reported he was worried about the long term dedicated employees who have been here 5 – 15 years and planned to

retire here. He stated the county needed to make sure they are treating them right not going around back and forth changing anniversary dates when it benefits the county. Chairman Culver reported this was a result of some concerns expressed by those with anniversary dates in July. He stated those with anniversary dates in October or November were going to get theirs anyway, and it really was not a long way to January. He stated this does not benefit the county, if it was to benefit the county they would have left it where it was. Chairman Culver reported this request came from the Personnel Board, and the commission collaborated with them to try to help, and this was the solution they came up with. The chairman stated it was not the commission's intention to change the anniversary dates. Chairman Culver reported he felt it would be the commission's intent to do step raises again, the down side would be that the commission may not be able to do step raises for as many employees as they currently have unless something changes. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

6. Request to approve site work for the Town of Rehobeth requesting assistance in the building of a new Town Hall, Community Center, and Voting Precinct.

Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the request for site work for the Town of Rehobeth requesting assistance in the building of a new Town Hall, Community Center, and Voting Precinct. Commissioner Sinquefield seconded the motion. Chairman Culver then read the new list of what the negotiations between the county engineer and the engineer from Northstar Engineering came up with as the work to actually be done to include: installing erosion control, clearing and grubbing, topsoil removal, install storm drainage piping, construct sloped paved head walls, prepare sub-grade, provide, place and compact 6" sand clay base, and construction building pad to within 6" of finished grade. The chairman reported the county would start the project as quickly as possible.

7. Request to approve agreement with Alabama Department of Transportation and Houston County for the installation of guardrails and end anchors on Nuclear Plan Road at Meadows Creek and on S. County Road #33 at unnamed tributary of Mill Creek.

Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the agreement with the Alabama Department of Transportation and Houston County for the installation of guardrails and end anchors on Nuclear Plant Road at Meadows Creek and on S. County Road #33 at unnamed tributary of Mill Creek. Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion. Mr. Pool reported they had applied for 9 different sites and the money is based on safety. He pointed out it was getting more and more difficult to find locations where someone had wrecked and died. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see in Resolution Book)

8. Request to approve final plat for the Legends Subdivision.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the final plat for the Legends Subdivision. Commissioner Sinquefield seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

9. Request to approve pre-disaster engineering and debris monitoring services.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve pre-disaster engineering and debris monitoring services. Commissioner Sinquefield seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported this is just in case the county ever has a disaster, they would have this in place in order to contact whoever the low bidder is to start work as opposed to the county being overwhelmed by its staff. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

Staff Reports:

Chief Administrative Officer – there was no report

County Engineer –

Mr. Pool reported they were continuing to work under bridges where there is no water due to the dry conditions. He stated they plan to start cutting grass next week.

County Attorney – there was no report

Adjourn

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