

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
SEPTEMBER 9, 2013

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Sinquefield, Commissioner Jackie Battles, Commissioner Melinda S. McClendon, Gary Sherrer, County Attorney, Barkley Kirkland, County Engineer, and William J. Dempsey, Chief Administrative Officer

ABSENT: None

Chairman Mark Culver called the 10:00 A.M. meeting to order, declared a quorum present, and welcomed everyone. Dr. Bradley Rushing, Pastor, Mt. Gilead Baptist Church, gave the invocation. Commissioner Harvey led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Announcements and Public Comments from Chairman and Commissioners

Chairman Culver announced the Dedication of the James Green Senior Center in Columbia would be held on September 17<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 P.M. – 9:00 P.M. He reported citizens who have been in the area for a while knew Mayor James Green and his contributions. The chairman encouraged anybody who might be interested to attend.

Awards and Presentations

1. Proclamation – “Childhood Cancer Awareness Month” – Jessica Brackins, Lillian Brackins, Lee and Mick Steltenpohl, Josh and Jessica Steltenpohl

Chairman Culver asked the members of the Steltenpohl family to come forward and bring anyone else who was there for the Proclamation. Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the Proclamation declaring September as “Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.” Commissioner McClendon seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously. Chairman Culver then read the Proclamation and presented it to Mrs. Jessica Steltenpohl. He thanked them for bringing it to the commission’s attention. The chairman reported they have a personal story related to childhood cancer. He reported most everyone has a personal story related to having family and friends who have been lost to cancer, and he stated he hoped to see a cure in his lifetime. Mrs. Steltenpohl thanked the commission for bringing the awareness to the community. She reported they lost their six and one half year old niece to cancer a little over two years ago to DIPD, a form of a brain tumor. Mrs. Steltenpohl stated this is a cause that is very dear to their hearts and the community is very caring and supportive of any endeavors that are created to support families who are going through this process. She thanked the commission for having them and for the recognition.

2. Proclamation – “Suicide Prevention Week” – Mrs. Rose Blakey Phillips, Wiregrass Suicide Prevention Services

Chairman Culver asked Mrs. Rose Blakely Phillips of the Wiregrass Suicide Prevention Services, and her guest to come forward. Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the Proclamation declaring September 9<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> as “Suicide Prevention Week” in Houston County. Commissioner McClendon seconded the motion; and it carried unanimously. Chairman Culver then read the Proclamation and presented it to Mrs. Phillips. He reported that Mrs. Phillips has been coming for several years and bringing this to the community’s attention, and he thanked her for all she does all year.

Mrs. Phillips introduced Ms. Melissa Cope, who she stated was helping them in so many ways and has been a tremendous support. Mrs. Phillips thanked the chairman and commission for the Proclamation. She reported when they first formed their non-profit organization she was talking to Chairman Culver and she told him what they do. Mrs. Phillips stated she asked him to please tell her how to get the word out, and he told her by doing exactly what you are doing helping to educate people. She reported she would never forget the advice Chairman Culver gave her, and she had been doing it ever since. Mrs.

Phillips reported the youngest person that she was aware of to commit suicide in our area was a 12 year old who hung herself as a result of school bullying. She stated this needs to be taken very seriously. She pointed out there have been more military lost to suicide than lost in the War in Afghanistan in recent years. Mrs. Phillips pointed out there have been 10 to 12 teens in our local area who have committed suicide, and that is too many. She reported there would be a Candlelight Service tonight at Poplar Head Park to remember loved ones who died by suicide and to honor those who struggle with that stigma and with mental illness but have survived. Mrs. Phillips reported a community wide Out of the Darkness Walk would be held on September 29th, at 2:00 P.M., at Westgate Park, to benefit the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention. She thanked the commission for allowing them to come.

### 3. Proclamation – “Hunger Action Month” – Mr. David Hanks, Wiregrass United Way Food Bank

Chairman Culver asked Mr. David Hanks of the Wiregrass United Way Food Bank, and Ms. Julie Gonzalez to come forward. Commissioner Siquefield made a motion to approve the Proclamation declaring September as “Hunger Action Month.” Commissioner McClendon seconded the motion; and the motion carried unanimously. Chairman Culver then read the Proclamation, and presented to Mr. Hanks, and he stated the commission appreciates everything he and his staff do for the community. Chairman Culver reported the commission has a special relationship with the food bank by helping financially and through working hand in hand with EMA in times of natural disaster. The chairman also reported over the last 5 years, there has been an event held in May to help raise food and donations through a softball game between the elected officials and the media. Chairman Culver thanked Mr. Hanks and his staff on behalf of the community for the tremendous job they do.

Mr. Hanks thanked the commission for their continued support, and he stated they realize they cannot do this by themselves. He pointed out the numbers have not really changed that much, and there are approximately 38,000-39,000 people who could go to bed hungry every night in the wiregrass area. Mr. Hanks reported they are proud to be able to announce the Backpack Program that will be getting off the ground in about two weeks. He stated this program is for kids who go home on the weekends that are at risk. Mr. Hanks reported they have been able to obtain a grant with the help of WalMart where food will be sent home with the kids every weekend. He stated this is very similar to the Brown Bag Program, but it is only for children. He pointed out it is something in their continued quest to fight hunger. He thanked them for the Proclamation, and stated they look forward to the softball game as long as they do not pull any muscles.

Ms. Gonzales thanked everyone who has supported the food bank, and she stated they appreciated their continued support. She reported they have a lot of new things coming up this year and she urged everyone to be looking for them.

### 4. Presentation – PorktoberQue – Mrs. Kerry Farrell, The Main Event

The Chairman asked Mrs. Kerry Farrell to come forward. Chairman Culver reported Mrs. Farrell is working with Mickey Segó and the staff at the Farm Center putting together a great event to be held at the Farm Center, and he asked Mrs. Farrell to please tell everyone about the event. Mrs. Farrell reported they were going to put on an OctoberFest and Bar-B-Que Festival out at the Houston County Farm Center and to combine the two they came up with the term, PorktoberQue. She stated it is scheduled for September 27<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 P.M until 9:00 P.M. and September 28<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 A.M. until 9:00 P.M. Mrs. Farrell reported it is not just OctoberFest but there are traditional aspects such as the Beer Garden and Polka Bands, but it is also a family event with tons of free activities for families to do including inflatables for the kids, and a huge car show on Saturday. She stated all weekend there will be car, rv, and tractor shows going on, a free reptile discovery program, and free putt putt. Mrs. Farrell reported that the Beer Garden will be inside in the air conditioning, there will be many vendors and a lot of great food. The Kansas City Bar-B-Que Society Sanctioned Bar-B-Que competition will be held with teams for all over the south competing for \$5,000 in prize money, and there will be a chance for spectators to sample the bar-b-que at the People’s Choice Tent located outside of the Man Cave. Mrs. Farrell reported they know football is important in the south and Dish Network is coming in and running five tv’s showing all of the favorite games on Saturday. She invited everyone to come out and support the PorktoberQue at the Farm Center. Chairman Culver thanked Mrs. Farrell, and he encouraged

everyone to attend. The chairman reported the county has 2 associates who are really into dancing and he stated he would like to challenge Bill Dempsey and Gary Sherrer to do the polka.

#### Regular Agenda

1. Re-appointments to the Houston County Port Authority – Hugh Wheelless and James Etheredge

Commissioner Battles made a motion to re-appoint Mr. Hugh Wheelless and Mr. James Etheredge to the Houston County Port Authority. Commissioner McClendon seconded the motion. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Re-appointment to the Houston County Department of Human Resources Board – John Craig

Commissioner Siquefield made a motion to re-appoint Mr. John Craig to the Houston County Department of Human Resources Board. Commissioner Battles seconded the motion. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to approve 2013-14 Budget.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the 2013-14 Budget. Commissioner Battles seconded the motion. Mr. Dempsey then gave an overview of the Budget. He covered the following major highlights:

3% Step increase for eligible employees and a 1% COLA for all full time employees

One part time position in Community Corrections

5% increase in medical and dental cost, 11% increase in county-share retirement cost, decreased unemployment insurance cost

Change from self-insured dental health coverage to dental coverage with the State Employees Insurance Board

Includes 8 additional dump trucks, two pick up trucks and a Cat Loader for Road and Bridge

Includes the purchase of \$33K in garbage cans and one pickup truck for Sanitation

Includes the repair of the Chattahoochee Park residence and pavilion roof

Replacement of Jail Oven

Four new vehicles for the Sheriff's Department including cameras

Probate video conferencing equipment

Reappraisal Plotter

Estimated \$7.1 million long term debt commitment for ATRIP and ESCO project

Includes \$25K for labor wage study

Total decrease in workers compensation and liability insurance premium \$300K since 2011/2012

Includes \$75K allocation for relocation related to ESCO project

Includes \$200K for capital replacement of other heating/cooling units

Mr. Dempsey reported they will begin this year with approximately \$7.4 million, and end next year with a fund balance of approximately \$6.5 million. He stated revenue is expected to be down from last year and the county's expenditures will exceed the revenue. Mr. Dempsey pointed out there will be a gap of between \$500,000 and \$1 million. Mr. Dempsey reported \$3.1 million was allocated for agencies. He commended department heads on the outstanding job they have done cutting expenses, and staying within their budgets. Mr. Dempsey reported there are 410 approved employee slots in this budget. He stated if approved, the total budget is \$39 million.

Chairman Culver reported the commission is not happy with any increase in medical costs, but they are glad it is 5% instead of 8%. He pointed out some of the reason the dental was changed was created by the Affordable HealthCare Act. The chairman reported between the county's contribution to retirement and the employee's increase for insurance it came to around \$400,000, a significant issue that had to be addressed. Chairman Culver reported the agencies will receive \$3.1 million, and it includes tobacco tax which is collected and legally mandated to be disbursed to the volunteer fire departments and to senior citizens. He stated he wanted the citizens to know that the \$3.1 million includes a significant amount

that there is revenue to offset. He pointed out the county supports a lot of organizations through contracts, and is glad to be able to do it. Chairman Culver reported the ESCO and ATRIP projects absolutely have a significant impact on the budget. He pointed out the county is looking at a \$7 - \$7.5 million bond issue, and of that a little over \$5 million is part of the ESCO project, which is funded through energy savings. The chairman reported that is part of the arrangement that the energy savings and savings in future maintenance costs that are the result of the expenditure will pay the debt service so there is no net direct cost to the county. He stated it creates a long term more efficient, energy efficient county which is the commission's goal. The chairman stated he thought the constituents would think this was a positive move in that the county is spending the money to correct issues in the county but that expense is being covered by the savings created by that project. He reported anytime someone will give the county eighty cents out of a dollar to pave a road they will take it. The chairman stated he appreciated everyone's work on ATRIP. Chairman Culver reported there are certainly things in this budget that are unusual, but if you had the budgeted fund balance for this year it was significantly less than the ending fund balance. He stated expenses were down and the county is ending this year higher than what they budgeted. Chairman Culver reported the commission could cut \$2 million out of the budget and be level funded, and have \$8.5 million in the bank but he believed that the citizens of the county send tax dollars up here to receive services for good roads, deputies on the roads, and they want to be able to enjoy the enhancements that the Probate Office has put in the tag line. He stated \$6.5 million is over two months of operating expenses which is a good number. The chairman reminded everyone that about 4 or 5 years ago, the \$6.5 million number was around \$3.5 million, which was dangerously low, but because of the economy, that was where it had to be. He reported because the department heads and the commission have done a good job to build this back up, the \$6.5 million is a good, healthy amount even though the commission is spending more than they are bringing in. Chairman Culver reported he felt overall, the budget is good. He stated next year's budget will be interesting once ESCO and ATRIP are completed, the commission will have to continue to save funds so that the ending fund balance will hopefully come back in over \$6.5 million. The chairman thanked Mr. Dempsey, his staff, the department heads and everyone for what they have done on this budget. He reported it is not an easy process, but he felt since it was changed to allow the department heads to decide how they want to spend the amount that the commission allocates to them, it is much smoother. Mr. Dempsey reported 5 years ago when he came the chairman and Mr. Harvey were on the commission when he presented his first budget, and he told them they did not have enough money to operate. He stated no one believed him. He stated through attrition, the county lost 10% of its workforce, and some benefits, and no other employees have lost their jobs. Chairman Culver reported the commission was proud that the county has been able to cut labor costs without resorting to layoffs. He stated there are department that need some staff added, and at some point, the commission hopes to be able to address that need, but at this time it is the best they can do. The chairman reported with the labor study coming next year the county wants to be in a position of making sure that the current employees are taken care of. He stated if there is any variation then they will be placed in the salary bracket where they need to be. The chairman pointed out the Personnel Department will do a great job with that. He reported once that is done then the commission can look into trying to do what they need to do to get the issues addressed.

Mr. Dempsey reported this past year, the county's bond rating was rated in the top rating by Moody's and Standard and Poor's, and is a factor of stability. He stated he went through those processes with both groups and they both had a very good feeling that Houston County had a plan and knew where they are going. Mr. Dempsey pointed out while other governments were being downgraded Houston County was being upgraded.

Commissioner Sinquefield thanked Mr. Dempsey for the great job he has done and all the department heads for their efforts to stay within their budgets and keeping everything on track.

Chairman Culver then called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to approve items to be sold on GovDeals.

Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the items to be sold on GovDeals. Commissioner Sinuefield seconded the motion. Chairman Culver called for the question; and it carried unanimously. (Please see attached sheet in Minute Book)

5. Request to award joint gasoline/diesel fuel bid.

Commissioner Battles made a motion to award the joint gasoline/diesel fuel bid to low bidder meeting specs, Davis Oil Company, for all items except B20 Biodiesel Fuel, and to award the B20 Biodiesel Fuel bid to Total Petroleum, low bidder meeting specs in the amount of \$.0643. Commissioner Sinuefield seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported this was mentioned on Thursday that several months ago the county entered into an agreement with the city to take a pretty extensive look into the things the city and county purchase and that they could possibly go together and buy jointly in an effort to save money. The chairman reported Mr. Dempsey and the staff at the city have been doing that. He pointed out this is the first item that will be awarded as a result of the joint endeavor. Chairman Culver reported the city and county believe there will be other things that will be bid on in the future. He stated the county will save \$6,500 on this bid and the city will save around \$40,000 because they use a quite a bit more fuel than the county. Chairman Culver reported this is a significant step that has been taken in city and county relations because not only does it save both taxpayers money, but more importantly the county's working relationship with them has improved through this discussion in meetings. He stated the county appreciates the city and they will vote on this at their next meeting on September 17<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Culver thanked everyone involved and particularly the administration for making this conscious effort to work closely with the county on many things. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached Bid Sheet Summary in Minute Book)

Staff Reports:

Chief Administrative Officer – there was no report

County Engineer

Mr. Kirkland reported the paving on Judge Logue Road would begin at the end of the week, and it would probably take a month to complete the project. He stated some of the cross drains were installed on County Road 22 last week, and they would be moving to two additional sites this week and the road will be closed for another 2 weeks. He pointed out detours would be in place.

County Attorney – there was no report

Chairman Culver reported Mrs. Brittany Clayton, Assistant Engineer, has done a really good job of keeping the commissioners and the media notified of road closings. He stated they needed to continue with that with all of the ATRIP projects. The chairman reported it is extremely important that the public be notified when the roads are closing and opening. He stated there is a process through EMA to let the agencies know when these occur. Chairman Culver reported he appreciated Mrs. Clayton's effort and the press releases that the media receives, and he asked Mr. Kirkland to please convey this to her.

Adjourn

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