

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
MARCH 10, 2014

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Siquefield, 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 S. Culver called the 10:00 A.M. meeting to order, declared a quorum present, and welcomed everyone. Rev. Rudy Heintzelman, Executive Pastor, First United Methodist Church, gave the invocation. Commissioner Jackie Battles led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Siquefield 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 reminded everyone that the Annual Elected Officials vs. Media Softball Game will be Saturday, April 26th, at 10:30 A.M., at Colby-Bottoms Field to benefit the Wiregrass Area Food Bank. He reported that the admission is a can of food or a monetary donation to the Food Bank. Chairman Culver reported they look forward to it, and he encouraged everyone to attend.

He reported "Spirit of Service Day" and "Wiregrass Gives Day" will be on April 5th. He reported these two are combining their efforts this year. The chairman pointed out "Houston County Gives Day" is a day long event to support the non-profits in our community, and will be held at Eagle Eye Outfitters located on the corner of North Cherokee and the Ross Clark Circle. He reported there will be booths set up and people can come by and get information on the non-profits and also make contributions as they choose. Chairman Culver reported there will also be a 24 hour period allotted for people to make contributions to the non-profits.

Chairman Culver reported there are also several events planned that day for "Spirit of Service" that have already been scheduled. He stated he knew a Habitat for Humanity House would be built in Ashford as well as several Dothan City School projects going on. The chairman reported it would be a big day and he encouraged citizens to get involved in a project. He stated if someone has a project they would like to submit or has a group of people who would like to volunteer, he urged them to contact Ms. Linda Kelley, Coordinator, at the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce.

Chairman Culver reported there was a significant fire down 231 South last night. He called on Mr. Steve Carlisle, EMA Director, who briefed the commission on the fire that occurred at the New Vision Flea Market. Mr. Carlisle reported the fire began around 7:00 P.M., and the business was located about a half mile past Center Stage on 231 South. He reported when the call came in that it was fully engulfed, almost all of the departments were there when he arrived. Mr. Carlisle pointed out Ashford's 911 vehicle was used as the command center. He reported the Fire Departments from Cottonwood, Hodgesville, Madrid, Southern Junction, and Rehobeth and their rescue unit participated. He pointed

out Southern Junction and Matt Boster took command. The EMA Director reported that a mutual aid request was placed, and the Jackson County and Graceville Fire Departments came, and Campbellton brought in their tanker. Mr. Carlisle reported there was a problem at the fire scene due to no water being available. He stated a shuttle operation from Center Stage was set up and they shuttled water back and forth to the scene. Mr. Carlisle pointed out they set up a pool with the tanker and it would hold 3,000 to 4,000 gallons of water, and it only took about 30-45 seconds to empty the pool. He reported the Sheriff's Department and the State Troopers provided traffic control on Highway 231. Mr. Carlisle stated the cause of the fire was undetermined last night, and the State Fire Marshall was out there doing an investigation. He reported there was only one building left standing, and everything else was pretty much burned to the ground. Mr. Carlisle stated his office provided lighting at the scene. He pointed out most fire departments left around 11:00 P.M. Mr. Carlisle reported this was such a large firefighting operation, and he commended the volunteer firefighters for the way they worked together, showing unity and organization in trying to overcome the many obstacles they ran into, and no one was injured. Chairman Culver reported a significant number of agencies were involved and he stated that was the main reason he wanted Mr. Carlisle to report on it because it pointed out the cooperation as he stated among all of them. The chairman stated the commission hopes to grow water down that way. He thanked Mr. Carlisle for his report.

Chairman Culver reported sometimes, particularly when the commission has local legislation, they talk about the legislative process and things going on. He reported the commission depends heavily on the ACCA to look out for the best interests of counties at the legislative level in trying to pass things that benefit counties. He stated the association has done a good job in the last few years of bringing all of the County Probate Judges, Sheriffs, and commissioners together, and they have a good working relationship. He pointed out the slogan for the ACCA is "67 Counties – One Voice." The chairman reported there is a piece of legislation up Tuesday that really seems to be of concern that he wanted to publicly make everyone aware of and ask people to contact their legislators today. He pointed out it is in the House and it is HB-458. He reported the bill would change the way one specific set of properties in the State of Alabama values are assessed. The chairman stated the evaluations are done annually at the local level through the Revenue Commissioner's office based on market and other conditions. He reported the Commission believes that is where it should be because they know the values. Chairman Culver reported this bill would take more than 640 Section 42 Housing Projects in the State of Alabama and take them out from that valuation and set their value at basically what their income is. He stated they take the revenue minus their expenses and that is pretty much their value. The chairman reported that will cost significantly any entity in the State that receives property tax whether it is the state, counties, cities, and in some areas, the volunteer fire departments. He pointed out it would also affect the hospitals and schools across the state. Chairman Culver reported it is at all of these entities expense to just give this one sector of property another tax break. He pointed out these are Section 42 Housing Projects that already get federal funds, and they are estimating \$7-8 million dollars would be lost statewide from this legislation. The chairman stated as important as the money is, the state would be setting a precedent, and if one group is going to be exempt this week maybe they need to look at exempting another sector the next week, and on and on. He asked where would it stop and why would this group specifically be given a tax break? Chairman Culver reported if the state is going to do this

then everybody needs to get one in the state, and then see where the revenue would come from. He encouraged everyone if they felt led to do so, to please contact their legislative delegation and let them know this is not a good policy, and ask that it not be passed. He reported the state is so short on money he could not believe that it has even come up. He stated the county and the other entities are very protective of the revenues they get and they all need these funds. He stated the bill is in the House, and he asked that people not contact their senators yet.

Regular Agenda

1. Re-appointment/Appointments to the SARCOA Board

Chairman Culver reported there are 4 re-appointments and one appointment to the Southern Alabama Regional Council on Aging Board as follows: Joe Carothers, Chairman Mark Culver, Mayor Ken Hamilton, Dr. Myland Brown, and Mayor Mike Schmitz. He pointed out the appointment is Dr. Myland Brown. Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the re-appointments and appointment to the Southern Alabama Regional Council on Aging as reported. Commissioner McClendon seconded the motion. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to adopt Resolution Establishing Responsibility of Feeding prisoners in Houston County.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to adopt the Resolution establishing responsibility of feeding prisoners in Houston County. Commissioner Battles seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported that a request was received from the Alabama Department of Finance about two weeks ago wanting a copy of the 2008 Resolution that the commission adopted stating that they were responsible for paying the bill for feeding the prisoners. He stated after going back and looking, there is no record of the county ever adopting the Resolution. Chairman Culver reported he was told there were several counties in the state that had not adopted this. He pointed out they asked that this item be moved forward and placed on the next meeting's agenda. The chairman reported the Resolution basically states that the county commission is responsible for the expense and not the Sheriff. He reported this came about when there were some issues with Sheriffs handling the funding of feeding the prisoners and some of the money ended up in some places it did not need to. Chairman Culver stated most of the counties that have taken the responsibility have had it for a long time as Houston County has. He reported he has been on the commission since 1986, and it has been done this way as long as he has been on board. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see in Resolution Book)

Staff Reports:

Chief Administrative Officer – there was no report

County Engineer –

Mr. Kirkland reported that Eugene West Road is closed for cross drain replacement and Saunders Road between Highway #53 and Third Avenue is also closed. He stated on Saunders Road there will be 3 more pipes that have to be replaced. Mr. Kirkland reported this is an ATRIP project and over the next

couple of months sections of Saunders Road will be closed to replace the pipes. The Engineer stated they would send out notifications updating everyone.

County Attorney – there was no report

Chairman Culver asked if anyone had any questions for the staff?

Commissioner Battles asked for an update on the trial run on the new garbage cans down at Madrid? Mr. Kirkland reported they initially put out around 270 cans in the middle of January, and they have not received any complaints. He stated it was going good and people are putting them out as they should. He pointed out they picked up 12 additional customers that they were picking up anyway, but they were not being billed. Mr. Kirkland reported it is cleaner than in other areas of the county where trash is blowing all over the place. He stated they feel like it has been a tremendous success and would like to move forward with it. Commissioner Battles reported the calls he has gotten have all been positive also. He pointed out he had received 3 or 4 phone calls from people recommending it and thought it was a good idea. Mr. Kirkland reported that Mayor Elaine Williams has been fantastic to work with. He stated she grabbed it by the horns and took control. He reported they hope the other mayors will do the same thing if the program is implemented across the county. Chairman Culver asked about the plan for moving forward? Mr. Kirkland reported this needed to be placed on the next agenda to vote to move forward because the deadline for the trucks is April 10th, or they go up by 3%. He stated the commission needs to go ahead and move forward with it at the next meeting. Chairman Culver stated if any of the commissioners have any questions they need to talk with Mr. Kirkland, Mr. Dempsey, or Mrs. Knight, Sanitation Supervisor, between now and the next meeting. Chairman Culver reported he felt it has worked not only for the county, but everywhere you look this is the trend. He asked if the commission votes at the next meeting to approve it, when will the cans actually be put in service? Mr. Kirkland reported hopefully they would be put out in October or early November because there is a 6 or 7 month lead time for the trucks. He stated their goal is to be fully automated by Thanksgiving or shortly thereafter. Chairman Culver reported that item would be placed on the next meeting's agenda.

Adjourn

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

