

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
JANUARY 26, 2015

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Siquefield, Commissioner Jackie Battles, Commissioner Brandon Shoupe, 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. Chairman Culver stated before Rev. Temples, Pastor, Westwood Presbyterian Church, gave the invocation, he would like to have a moment of silence in memory of Blake McNiel, Houston County Corrections Officer, who was killed in an auto accident last Friday. He reported the funeral is today. The chairman reported any time any Houston County employee is lost the whole Houston County family feels the loss, and he stated he wanted his family and friends to know that they are in our prayers and he just wanted to lift up Officer McNiel today. After a moment of silence, Rev. Temples gave the invocation. Commissioner Battles led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Culver asked Sheriff Valenza if he wanted to comment on the loss of Officer McNiel? Sheriff Valenza thanked the commission for taking the time to pause. Chairman Culver stated everyone is in this together as one big family, and any loss is everyone's loss.

Announcements and Comments from Chairman and Commissioners

Chairman Culver reported the community has suffered another loss, the passing of Brian Etheredge. He stated many know he was Wess Etheredge's son and Chris Etheredge, City of Dothan Fire Department's brother. The chairman pointed out he had been an inspiration to a lot of people.

The chairman reported Commissioner Doug Siquefield had been selected as one of 12 people around the state to participate in a statewide leadership initiative, a new program the Association has put forward with 15 counties represented in an 18 month program. He stated basically they will be selecting people that will become the chief leadership of the ACCA over the next 4 years. He pointed out the ACCA has the 50 hour legally mandated training that Commissioner Shoupe is currently undergoing as a new commissioner. The chairman pointed out this is above that; there is a senior training, and this initiative is above that, and will train people to become the leadership of the ACCA. He reported this is a small competitive group, and he commended Commissioner Siquefield on being selected. Chairman Culver reported this group will be traveling various places and seeing different programs not only around the state, but around the country. He stated the county feels that training is not an expense; it is an investment.

Approval of the Minutes

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

Awards and Presentations

1. Proclamation - "National Marriage Week" – Muriel Goosby, Strong Families Project Coordinator, Saliba Center for Families, and James Winfrey, III, Marriage and Relations Skills Facilitator, Saliba Center for Families

Chairman Culver asked Muriel Goosby, Strong Families Project Coordinator, and James Winfrey, III, Marriage and Relations Skill Facilitator, Saliba Center for Families, to come forward. Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the Proclamation proclaiming the week of February 7th-14th as "National Marriage Week." Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion; and it carried unanimously. The chairman then read the Proclamation and presented it to Mr. Winfrey. He thanked them for bringing it to the commission's attention, and he stated particularly in light of what is going on in our state.

Mr. Winfrey thanked Chairman Culver, and he stated the national divorce rate was 9.2% for men and 9.7% for women during 2009 – 2013. He pointed out in Houston County, 4,546 men filed for divorce and 6,821 women filed for divorce over the same five year period. Mr. Winfrey reported the impact to children can be devastating. He stated at the Saliba Center for Families they believe that divorce is the enemy. He stated their organization is joining other non-profits across the country celebrating National Marriage Week in Houston County. Mr. Winfrey reported the Saliba Center for Strong Families Department is offering community discussions and educational opportunities for the week as part of its commitment to marriage and healthy relationships skills education. He pointed out these activities are not just for married couples; everyone is welcome. Mr. Winfrey reported they believe the opportunities will equip participants with core principles they can use these skills to build and sustain healthy couple relationships. Mr. Winfrey thanked the commission on behalf of their Executive Director, Mrs. Linda O'Connell, and their Center Director, Ms. Belinda Mitchell for helping to bring attention to this week. They received a round of applause.

2. Award – Department of Veterans Affairs – Law Enforcement – Deputy of the Year – Joshua Spooner – John Seay, DAV Commander District Post 7, Ed Pritchard, Past Commander

Chairman Culver reported it is always his honor and privilege to bring Ed Pritchard, Past Commander, of the DAV, to the podium. He stated Mr. Pritchard has done many things for the community, and along with him is Mr. John Seay, DAV Commander of District Post 7. The chairman reported they come annually and do a great service for the community in recognizing law enforcement personnel. The podium was then turned over to Mr. Pritchard, and he introduced Mr. Seay, who stated he was glad to be a part of the presentation. He stated they do a lot at the VFW and he invited everyone to come and see them.

Mr. Pritchard reported this is a nationwide program of the Veterans of Foreign Wars to honor law enforcement officers. He asked Sgt. Pippin and Trooper Lee Phillips to come forward. Mr. Pritchard welcomed Trooper Phillips back home from his service in Afghanistan. He stated he is not only protecting our nation, but he is also protecting the citizens of our community. Commander Seay then

presented the award to Trooper Lee Phillips, Sr. Trooper Phillips thanked the VFW for selecting him for the award, and he will continue to do his best to uphold it. He received a round of applause.

Mr. Pritchard asked Deputy Joshua Spooner and Sheriff Valenza to come forward. He reported Spooner was selected as Deputy of the Year from the local post, and he then presented the award. Sheriff Valenza reported that they were honored that the VFW thinks enough of law enforcement to give this annual award. He reported Deputy Spooner started in 2011, and in 2014, he transferred to the Criminal Investigations Unit. The Sheriff reported since then, he has done an outstanding job, and has demonstrated on several occasions his ability, his dedication, and his loyalty to the department and to the citizens. He pointed out Deputy Spooner had 38 felony arrests in 2014 which is a very good statistic. Sheriff Valenza stated he is an active member of their Special Response Team, and very well respected in the law enforcement community. The sheriff stated he was honored to have him, and he thanked them for the award. Deputy Spooner thanked his family, the Sheriff's Department, the VFW, and Sheriff Valenza. He received a round of applause.

Mr. Pritchard asked everyone to please keep the first responders in their prayers. He reported the last few years, law enforcement officers and first responders have been targeted to be killed. He stated recently, two were lost sitting in their cars in New York City. He stated another way they lose their lives is when they have stopped vehicles and are on the side of the road. Mr. Pritchard asked the traveling public to move over in to the other lane when they are driving down a four lane, and if on a two lane road, to slow down and if it is clear go around. He stated they are out protecting the citizens every day. He thanked Chairman Culver for his attendance over the years at their Veterans Day and Memorial Day ceremonies. Mr. Pritchard reported Houston County has always supported their programs, and he thanked the commissioners for their time and effort. Chairman Culver thanked them and he stated it is always a pleasure to have the law enforcement recognized.

3. Presentation – Economic Development – Matt Parker, President, Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce

Chairman Culver asked Matt Parker, President, Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce and Mark Saliba, Grow Dothan, to come forward. Mr. Saliba thanked the Chairman and commissioners for allowing them to come and talk. He recognized Mrs. Hope Johnson, Chairman of the Chamber Board, and Dean Mitchell, who works in Economic Development and External Marketing at the Chamber. Mr. Saliba reported Grow Dothan came about some 20 years ago, when city and county leaders and chamber leaders started out with Dothan by Design. He stated it has been their economic public/private partnership for economic development for our communities. Mr. Saliba reported over the years, they have worked under that name, and after going through the tough economic recession in 2007-08, they decided they would restart the program and revitalize it and re-package it, and rename it Grow Dothan. He stated he wanted to thank the chairman and commission for their contribution and investment in the Grow Dothan campaign through the years and especially this year as well. Mr. Saliba reported their stewardship and accountability toward those funds are very important to the entire Grow Dothan team. He covered the way Grow Dothan dollars are being spent. He stated in order to have a top notch economic development team that is working 24/7 every day, it takes money, and part of the funds go

toward that. Mr. Saliba reported they are targeting Governor Bentley's campaign, Accelerate Alabama, in which he identifies certain industrial sectors in the state. He reported they are helping to develop new sites like the Mega Site, which was recently announced on the Alabama –Florida line as well as existing sites that are in the Wiregrass area. He stated they provide economic data and graphics to interested developers and prospective businesses that come into the area, and introducing Dothan and marketing Dothan and the wiregrass to international investors as well as protecting and expanding our infrastructure strength such as the Dothan Regional Airport and all of the sites. He reported they are working with all of the wiregrass communities in order to support regionalism, which is very important to Chairman Culver and Mayor Mike Schmitz and Matt Parker, who have led that charge for quite some time. Mr. Saliba reported they are providing resources for the special economic and workforce development needs as well. He updated everyone on the status of the capital campaign. He reported they had set a goal of \$2,000,000 to raise over a 3 year period. He stated at the present time, they have raised approximately \$730,000. Mr. Saliba reported they felt good about the capital campaign. He stated those who have given in the past, have stepped up their pledges this year, and they are making a concerted effort to reach out to all of the members whether it is someone has given in the past and trying to emphasize that it is about involvement by everyone. At that time, Mr. Saliba turned the meeting over to Mr. Parker.

Mr. Parker presented a power point showing where they have come from. He stated there is no doubt there have been some challenging economic times over the last couple of years with the economy. He reported he thought everyone would be pleased that they are heading in the right way. Mr. Parker thanked the county and the whole team for the great support they provide for economic development. He stated everyone works well together to make things happen and that is so important when trying to attract business. Mr. Parker thanked Mr. Saliba for all of his work on the Grow Dothan Initiative. He pointed out Mr. Saliba has put in many volunteer hours on the project. Mr. Parker also thanked Mrs. Johnson for the great job she does for the chamber.

Mr. Parker showed the projections on the population for Houston County in 2013. He pointed out the current population is 105,000, and the county is exceeding the state and national growth projections. Mr. Parker reported Houston County is growing faster than Alabama and the nation with the growth rate from a population standpoint. He stated that is a positive trend that will continue. Mr. Parker reported Dothan's population exceeds 70,000, and that is also a positive trend. He stated the market is recognized as one of the top five growing areas in the state with the Center for Business and Economic Research projections. Mr. Parker reported it has been very interesting to them and Dr. Steve Turkoski along with Troy's Center for Business Economic Research, that the daily inflow of traffic coming into the metropolitan market has shown a tremendous uptick in the numbers in the last 4 years. He stated it has accelerated in the last few years and in all of the 12 metropolitan areas of the state, including Dothan, where at one point about 75% of the gross domestic products of the state were being created and now it is closer to 80%. He stated the trend line is very important to watch. Mr. Parker reported another positive indicator is the people who are coming into the Dothan market and the people who are leaving. He showed the regional market from Geneva, Henry, Covington, Coffee, Barbour, Dale, Pike and Houston Counties and he stated they are seeing a continued net increase on in-flow traffic. He reported

it certainly drives business and commercial development and it has been an interesting trend because 10 years ago, the in-flow modeling would have been border line on being a negative; actually being an out flow. He stated he felt it is the trend for the metropolitan markets that are driving the state's economy. He reported the infrastructure, the growth and development, and the investment that the county and city is putting in the market is helping them grow and maintain business and development from that standpoint. Mr. Parker reported when they are marketing their economic development efforts and talking about how big the market is, they always say Dothan's population is 70,000, and they say it is double in size during the day. He pointed out the daily estimated population is approximately 164,000, almost two and one half times the number. He stated these are pretty good indicators to help with the business decision and location for coming into our market. Mr. Parker reported per capita income sales are positive data for our area. He pointed out it has continued to go on an upward trend with the per capita sales tax dollars that are available in the Dothan market. He reported Jacksonville State does a study about every other 3 years for their out shopping patterns. Mr. Parker reported we have been the number one market in all those studies and a lot of it is contributed to the per capita retail sales number. He stated they like for people to come here and spend their money. He reported the state average is around \$11,000, and he stated it is due to the medical community and the diversity of the economy as well. Mr. Parker reported in 2008, the county had around a 4.8% unemployment rate, and then the bottom fell out of the market. He stated in 2009, the county was as high as 9.2%, and bottomed out in January 2010 with the actual number. He pointed out they have worked to do whatever to create economic opportunities in the market and today the unemployment rate is 5.4%. He stated they have brought it down from 9.2% to 5.4%. He stated the percentage is great and Alabama is moving in the right direction that way as well. Mr. Parker reported the challenge out there is getting those numbers up, getting more people in the labor force, and continuing to create more jobs from that standpoint. He stated there has been a lot of work, a lot of challenges and a lot of opportunities where they have tried to make things happen. He stated he feels good about the future.

Mr. Parker then gave an update on a couple of projects they are working on. He reported they are working on 2 International projects – one in Korea and one in China. He thanked Chairman Culver for his work and effort to go and visit with the client in Korea. He pointed out it has kept our area in the game as well as some other assets. Mr. Parker reported it is a pretty significant project, and they are diligently working it. He stated they are continuing to work the Chinese investment very hard and doing the due diligence on it. Mr. Parker reported he feels really good about those two projects. He pointed out one project is a lot farther ahead than the other. He reported on the domestic front, they are working on a project at the airport with the state. He reported because of some of the strategic air infrastructure, the 8,000 foot runway has put the area in the game with a project out there. Mr. Parker reported that the project would take a long time, but he felt good from the airport infrastructure. He stated they are working two exciting projects that are potential expansions for the market that represent close to a \$100,000,000 investment and several hundred jobs, and he stated they are diligently working them and waiting for some final approvals to move forward. Mr. Parker reported one other project is a retention effort to keep a plant here and more information would be forthcoming. He pointed out this past year they had 78 ribbon cuttings and groundbreaking for businesses into the market, and he stated they felt good about the activity and prosperity taking place in the area. Mr.

Parker reported everyone likes to get the big business and expansions, but so many times the small businesses are over looked. He stated each month and as needed the chamber works closely with the Small Business Development Center at Troy to help with small business planning and developing. He pointed out they meet at the chamber and at the Dothan Mixon Business Center, but if a person's schedule is such they will meet at Troy, or at the chamber. He stated collaboratively with the Regional Planning Commission, the chamber and Troy's Small Business Development Center they have put together a small business tool kit to help entrepreneurs to find the resources out there to answer the questions on what they have to do to get into business, and they have done seminars with the city as well. He pointed out they have done 9 projects the past year with the Dothan-Houston County Microloan Program, the Revolving Loan Program, and the Alabama Municipal Electric Authority Program to help those 9 businesses to grow and expand resulting in a total of 359 jobs with some of the financing packaging. Mr. Parker reported it is very important to realize the value of small business. He commended the commission on the creation of the Houston County Industrial Development Authority. He pointed out they created the mechanism for them to help a lot of the projects in the county to facilitate business. He reported Glass Stream is one of those projects that the Authority has helped . Mr. Parker stated they are excited about the Commercial Jet Academy. He reported the first class that was set up with the state to meet the short term training need for structural sheet metal workers started in October and they graduated December 19th. Mr. Parker reported those 25 that graduated started work on January 12th. He reported the next class will start as well. Mr. Parker stated the first phase of training for Glass Stream is completed, and they are up and manufacturing boats and getting ready for their second wave of hiring through Alabama Industrial Development Training, and it will create some more opportunities out there. Mr. Parker reported on the Commercial Jet Project they have finished all the financing that they needed to put together to do a \$2 million ramp improvement that there were no FAA dollars to help them out with. He thanked the SE Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, Economic Development Administration, the Aeronautics Department of the Department of Transportation, and the Wiregrass Foundation for helping them to put it together. Mr. Parker reported that will fulfill their last item on their project agreement with Commercial Jet to complete that project and the obligations to make it happen. He stated he was really proud where they are and where the airport is on that project and the good activity going on from that standpoint. Mr. Parker reported they are seeing a lot of activity on the 84 West Corridor, the 84 East Corridor is picking up, and Ag Spray is building a 20,000 square foot facility out there. He reported there is a lot of commercial interest at this time for that area. Mr. Parker stated the 231 North Corridor is still hot, and the 231 South Corridor is being looked at. He reported the county and city commissions have helped them out doing a lot of redevelopment projects. Mr. Parker stated the Eagle Eye's redevelopment project at the former cinema location to help enhance and stabilize that location was a big plus. He stated revitalizing Atlantic and SE Equipment on Kinsey Road has been a plus also. Mr. Parker reported they are excited about the next four years and where they are going. He stated they are revamping and tweaking the state marketing plan a little bit. He pointed out Governor Bentley is doing that and he is really pushing hard. He stated if there was one thing that could be changed in the economic development efforts it would be restructuring the incentive package that we can offer potential business. He pointed out they need a little help there, and he stated he is optimistic with Governor Bentley's package that they are going to get some of that help to get them more in line with some of the

southeastern states that have positioned their incentive structure a little bit differently. He stated it is going to be important this Session to get some progress there. Mr. Parker stated he wanted the commission to know how much they appreciate the support and the partnership the county provides them. He also recognized Barkley Kirkland, Engineer, and thanked him for all he does.

Commissioner Sinquefield stated he appreciated Mr. Parker and Mr. Saliba coming and bringing positive news. He asked about the status of the Mega Site? Mr. Parker stated the biggest thing was trying to find the piece of property that contained good infrastructure and pulling a team together. He stated the kickoff was launched in October and at the present time, they are promoting the site with Enterprise Florida and the Florida partners and trying to get information into the hands of people to get some looks. Mr. Parker reported if one big mother ship located there then a lot smaller ships will also come based on some of the modeling on some of the projects, and it will be a significant for southeast Alabama. He stated they continue to work it hard, and Neal Wade has been a great partner. Mr. Parker reported he was with the Bay County Economic Development Association in Panama City and was co-chair with him. He stated Mr. Wade is currently at the University of Alabama, and he is still pushing it. Mr. Parker pointed out it is one of a handful in the southeast that is available. Chairman Culver reported he appreciated Mr. Parker and the team coming and giving the update. He stated we have a great team. He reported Mr. Parker mentioned the regionalism and it has come a long way, and he stated it is something that gives out area a great advantage. Chairman Culver stated David Money from Henry County has been a great partner with them, the Mayor, the city and the chamber. He stated he hoped that would continue and it gives them an advantage over a lot of parts of the state. He thanked Mr. Saliba, Mrs. Johnson, and Mr. Mitchell for all of their efforts.

4. Presentation – Dothan Area Library System – Charlotte Mitchell, Manager, Downtown Library

Chairman Culver asked Ms. Charlotte Mitchell, Manager, Downtown Library, to come forward. Ms. Mitchell gave an update on the Library System. She stated Ms. Bettye Forbus is the Director of the Library System. She reported February 3rd is their 1st Anniversary and they would be doing a celebration all month long. Ms. Mitchell stated as part of the anniversary, they want to get feedback from the public. She stated they launched a survey back in 2010 before construction began on the building, and they want to launch another survey on February 1st. Ms. Mitchell reported the survey will be a lengthy version online, or a short version on a form that people can come in and fill out if they do not have access to the internet. She stated included in the survey will contain information to help them with their 5 year strategic planning. Ms. Mitchell reported this information will guide them in the direction they need to go. She stated several different activities will be held during the month of February to include an Anniversary party on the 6th in their Community Room. Ms. Mitchell reported along with the month of February one of the marriage workshops will be held in the downtown library. She encouraged everyone to go online on February 1st, and fill out the survey in an effort to help with their programs and services. Ms. Mitchell reported this information will also be used to improve their current services and programs. She expressed appreciation to the commission for everything they have done for the library. Ms. Mitchell reported included in the survey is information regarding whether a person lives in the city or county, and that information will help with the scheduling of the bookmobile and help determine the timing of the programs. She thanked the commission for allowing her to come

and update on them the library. Commissioner Shoupe asked Ms. Mitchell about the libraries in Ashford and Columbia where they may change the hours? Ms. Mitchell stated there is no change with Ashford; they agreed to give the library the funding needed. She stated there is another meeting in Columbia and she could not give him any information. Ms. Mitchell stated it is leaning toward them helping with the funding so that they can keep the current hours the way they are.

Regular Agenda

1. Request from EMA to approve Homeland Security Sustainment Grant for Regional Community Vehicle R-2 in the amount of \$6,000.00.

Commissioner Siquefield made a motion to approve the request from EMA to approve a Homeland Security Sustainment Grant for the Regional Community Vehicle R-2 in the amount of \$6,000.00. Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported this is an annual appropriation. He called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request for a 050 Retail Beer License (Off Premises Only) DOLGENCORP, LLC d/b/a Dollar General Store 15542 – 670 Gene Terry Road – Dothan, AL 36301.

Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the request for a 050 Retail Beer License (Off Premises Only) for DOLGENCORP, LLC d/b/a Dollar General Store 15542 – 670 Gene Terry Road – Dothan, AL 36301. Commissioner Siquefield seconded the motion. Chairman Culver asked if anyone present was in opposition to the request? There being no one, he called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Request for a 070 Retail Table Wine License (Off Premises Only) – DOLGENCORP, LLC d/b/a Dollar General Store 15542 – 670 Gene Terry Road – Dothan, AL 36301

Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the request for a 070 Retail Beer License (Off Premises Only) for DOLGENCORP, LLC d/b/a Dollar General Store 15542 – 670 Gene Terry Road – Dothan, AL 36301. Commissioner Shoupe seconded the motion. Chairman Culver asked if anyone present was in opposition to the request? There being no one, he called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to approve Agreement and adopt Resolution for the resurfacing of Trawick Road with Federal funds. (MPO Project)

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the Agreement and adopt the Resolution for the resurfacing of Trawick Road with Federal funds. (MPO Project) Commissioner Siquefield seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported this is from Highway 52 to the county line. Chairman Culver reported these are federal funds. He called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see in Resolution Book)

5. Request to approve Agreement and adopt Resolution for the resurfacing of Memphis Church Road with Federal funds. (MPO Project)

Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the Agreement and adopt the Resolution for the resurfacing of Memphis Church Road with Federal Funds. (MPO Project) Commissioner Shoupe seconded the motion. Chairman Culver called for the question; and it carried unanimously. (Please see in Resolution Book)

Staff Reports:

Chief Administrative Officer – there was no report

County Engineer

Mr. Kirkland reported Cedar Springs Road between Ebenezer and King Street and Jester Street at the railroad crossing at 84 East and Miller Street are closed for cross drain replacements.

County Attorney – there was no report

Chairman Culver reported that the state has agreed to at least install a traffic light at the intersection of Fortner and Brannon Stand. He stated it is a small victory if not the winning of the battle. The chairman pointed out that intersection has been problematic. He stated Brannon Stand is the issue and it will help move traffic on Brannon Stand. Chairman Culver reported ultimately they will get the turn lanes and extended right of way put in there and it will be like it should be. He stated he appreciated ALDOT working with us and finally recognizing the 11,000 cars that go through there each day and agreeing to signalize the intersection. He said he had been told it would be happen by May 1st. The chairman thanked the city, State Representatives Paul Lee, and Donnie Chesteen , and Senator Harri Ann Smith for their help on this project.

Adjourn

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