

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION
OCTOBER 22, 2018

PRESENT: Chairman Mark Culver, Commissioner Doug Siquefield, Commissioner Jackie Battles, Commissioner Brandon Shoupe, County Attorney Pres Register, County Engineer Barkley Kirkland, Chief Administrative Officer William J. Dempsey.

ABSENT: Commissioner Curtis Harvey

Chairman Culver welcomed everyone to the October 22nd, 2018, Houston County Commission Meeting and called the 10:00 a.m. meeting to order. He declared a quorum.

Long time Houston County Employee Myer Holloway gave the invocation and Commissioner Brandon Shoupe led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Doug Siquefield made a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Commissioner Battles seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Culver announced that the next Commission meeting will be a little different as there will not be an Administrative Meeting and the Commission Meeting will not be held on the regular Monday meeting day. He continued by stating that state law precludes county commissions from meeting for seven (7) days after the election so the next meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, the 14th of November. This will be immediately after the swearing in which will be held at 9:30 a.m. on the 14th and everyone is invited to attend the swearing in ceremony.

Commissioner Jackie Battles asked for prayer for the Ronnie Brown family as Mr. Brown passed away last evening.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Proclamation – “Red Ribbon Week” – Susan Trawick, Executive Director – Dothan-Houston County Substance Abuse Partnership

Chairman Culver stepped down to the podium and asked for a motion to approve the “Red Ribbon Week” proclamation. Commissioner Jackie Battles made a motion to approve the proclamation and Commissioner Shoupe seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Culver asked Susan Trawick to come forward and then proceeded to read the proclamation. Upon completion, Chairman Culver thanked Mrs. Trawick for her efforts with this campaign and for all

the work she does to bring awareness to the problem with teens and drugs. He then asked Mrs. Trawick for comments. She began by stating that it had been 18 years since beginning this fight with drug abuse and numbers show that progress is being made by bringing awareness. She encouraged parents to talk to their kids as communication is a key factor. She also encouraged everyone to place a red ribbon on their mailbox, door, lapel, or wherever to show support for Red Ribbon Week. Mrs. Trawick thanked all those that are helping us to recover from the storms and thanked the Commission for all they do in support of the Substance Abuse Partnership.

2. Special presentation recognizing years of service

Chairman Culver called Myer Holloway up to the podium. He began by telling Mr. Holloway that the commission wanted to recognize and thank him for his many years of service as a county employee. Chairman Culver added that this would be Myer's last commission meeting after 24 ½ years of serving the citizens of Houston County as Assistant County Engineer. He thanked Mr. Holloway for his service and commitment to Houston County and for the way he did his job over the years. Chairman Culver asked Mr. Holloway for his comments.

Mr. Holloway began by saying that he has seen a lot over the past 24 ½ years. He continued by stating that the commission, for many decades, has worked hard for Houston County, in terms of infrastructure, to keep things up to date and to put Houston County where they are today. Mr. Holloway added that when he began working at the county there were 46 bridges that school buses could not cross and they have all since been replaced; he has seen several disasters in which the county received several million dollars to use to repair roads; the department began with two computers when he started working and now the offices are completely computerized; he has seen a lot of accomplishments and the department has won a lot of awards. He ended by saying that it has been a privilege to work for Houston County and that he has worked for three different county engineers and thirteen different commissioners and "it has been a fun ride".

Chairman Culver then announced that the next recognition is to ask the Commission to adopt a resolution. He stated that as of midnight on election night, November 6th, State Senator Harri Anne Smith will no longer be our Senator. He added that Senator Smith has served the area for twenty years and has served us well as she has always cared for the citizens of Houston and Geneva County. Chairman Culver thought it appropriate that the commission adopt a resolution of appreciation to send to Senator Smith and he asked for a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Shoupe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Chairman Culver then read the resolution and stated that he will make sure that Senator Smith gets the resolution.

Chairman Culver then stated that the last presentation he would like to make is to Commissioner Jackie Battles. He announced that today is Commissioner Battles last commission meeting and Chairman Culver wanted to recognize him publically and let him know that it has been an honor and joy to serve with him and that Commissioner Battles has served his constituents with dignity and has done an

excellent job during the last eight years from road infrastructure, maintaining a very difficult budget, working with our fire community and many others during his tenure. Chairman Culver added that Commissioner Battles should be proud of a job well done as he and the rest of the commission have worked as a team for the good of the citizens of Houston County. Chairman Culver then presented Commissioner Battles with an appreciation plaque for his eight years of service.

Commissioner Battles commented and thanked God for allowing him to be a commissioner for Houston County and he thanked the citizens of District 3 for electing him in 2010 and 2014 to serve as their county commissioner. Commissioner Battles then thanked Chairman Culver and the Commissioners for the opportunity to work with them and he ended by thanking his wife Tina Battles for being by his side and in attendance today.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to approve temporary change in Gordon polling place – Patrick Davenport, Judge of Probate

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the temporary change and Commissioner Battles seconded the motion. Chairman Culver noted that this is due to damage to the existing polling facility because of Hurricane Michael. When called for the question, the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to enter into an agreement with State Bank and Trust for the deposit of county funds during the three year period beginning 1/1/2019 – 12/31/2021 – William J. Dempsey, Chief Administrative Officer

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the agreement with State Bank and Trust and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to approve Permit Renewal Application for Houston Economic Development Association

Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the Permit Renewal Application and Commissioner Shoupe seconded the motion. When Chairman called for comments, he recognized and asked a citizen to approach the podium and state their name. He stated his name as Gary Knight and that he has some concerns about HEDA and commenced to read a statement he had written. In the statement, Mr. Knight highlighted that he has concerns on the distribution of funds that HEDA receives from the Bingo gaming. He asked the commission to table the issue of any permit to HEDA until financial disclosure and assurances of full payments of charities are satisfied. He added that secrecy and privacy are what makes people distrust government and he feels that openness would help to close that gap. Mr. Knight commented that he would appreciate consideration of forming a committee appointed by the commission to monitor this situation.

Chairman Culver asked for any other comments and another citizen approached the podium. He stated his name as George Trotter from the Rehobeth community. He commended each commissioner for

their public service that they give the citizens of Houston County. He began by quoting the preamble of the Constitution of the United States of America and stated that he believes that a lot of problems with our country today is that cities have allowed our constitution to get out of hand and teaching patriotism in our schools. He continued by pointing out Mr. Gary Knight's comments concerning HEDA and transparency and he felt that HEDA should report, as in their guidelines, periodically of what their status is and where the money is going. He thanked the commission for the opportunity to address the commission.

Commissioner Shoupe asked the representative from HEDA to come forward for comments. The representative approached the podium and stated his name as Frank Wendt from the Houston Economic Development Association. Commissioner Shoupe stated that he had personally been researching all weekend and the biggest question that he has is the \$1.6 million dollars that was given to the Wiregrass Houston County Foundation, which was a foundation that was set up by HEDA. He asked Mr. Wendt to elaborate on that donation. Mr. Wendt pointed out that the Houston County Foundation dissolved some time ago after country crossings began so HEDA thought it would be best to form a new 501(c)(3) charity for the majority of the money to go into to be distributed so that HEDA would not be the one making all the decisions on what is spent here in Houston County and the Wiregrass area. He stated that Mr. Durden is one of the members on that foundation and that he would be happy to answer any questions concerning that foundation.

Commissioner Shoupe pointed out that one thing he did like about the new permit, if issued, is that it requires reporting every year of the amount of money that is given out.

Chairman Culver then called for the vote and with (2) YEAS: Commissioner Shoupe and Commission Battles and (1) NAY: Commissioner Sinquefield. The motion passed.

4. Request to enter into a lease agreement with City of Taylor for use of water tower for radio equipment – Maj. Bill Rafferty, Sheriff's Dept.

Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the lease agreement and Commissioner Shoupe seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Request Commission to declare an emergency and bypass normal bid requirements for equipment purchase – Road and Bridge

Commissioner Shoupe made the motion to approve the request to declare an emergency and bypass normal bid requirements. Commissioner Sinquefield seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

6. Request to approve purchase of two multi-purpose grapples – Road and Bridge

Commissioner Battles made a motion to approve the request to purchase the grapples and Commissioner Shoupe seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Culver then asked EMA Director Chris Judah to come forward and introduce his guest that is in attendance today. Mr. Judah introduced him as Brian Hastings, Director of Alabama Emergency Management Agency. Mr. Judah commented that the assessment teams are still out doing their survey and hope to get an update soon. Chairman Culver thanked Mr. Hastings for coming but wish it was under different circumstances. Mr. Hastings thanked the commission for their time and stated that it is always nice to build relationships with the counties on the front side so that in case of emergency situations, such as we have now, they can partner with FEMA and everyone can connect and work together. Chairman Culver thanked him and his staff for all they have done during this crisis.

STAFF REPORTS:

Chief Administrative Officer – No Report

County Engineer –Mr. Kirkland stated that there are seven closed roads at this time: State Line, Zachary, Junction, North County Rd. 81, Harvey Hicks, Billy Cherry and Olan Jones. Tomorrow Hwy. 95, just north of the Nuclear Plant, will be closed for about two weeks and a detour will be in place. This is to replace cross drains. He then presented maps of the Houston County Roads that were blocked immediately after Hurricane Michael due to fallen trees and debris. The majority of the roads in the county were highlighted on the maps. They are now down to a minimal amount of closed roads due to the staff working hard and working long hours to clear the roads. The Road and Bridge Department will now be working diligently to remove the debris off the sides of the roads as they will have a six month window to do this if a disaster is declared.

Chairman Culver made note that there have been some instances of land owners that have equipment and were clearing their entire property and bringing the debris to the roadside. This type of debris should be burned and not brought to the right of way. He added that on Hwy. 95, the county is working with Plant Farley to make sure they know of the lack of access that they will have on that road during closure. He also pointed out that work still continues at Brannon Stand and Fortner and lanes are closed everyday and people should take precautions in that area.

Commissioner Battles asked that when putting debris on the right of way, to make sure there are not limbs, etc. hanging over into the roads as this makes it dangerous for drivers that may not see the debris in time to avoid it. Commissioner Shoupe asked County Engineer Kirkland if all cross drains had been checked and Mr. Kirkland replied that they are out now completing that task. Commissioner Sinquefield thanked Mr. Kirkland and all the Road and Bridge employees for expediting the clearing of the roads as the employees also had their own damage to tend to but were willing to get started in helping the citizens in Houston County and they are very much appreciated. Commissioner Sinquefield asked Mr. Kirkland if work orders were on hold at this point and Mr. Kirkland commented that if it is a safety issue, that it would be attended to quickly.

County Attorney – No Report

Commissioner Battles made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.