

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION
January 14, 2019

PRESENT: Chairman Mark Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Sinuefield, Commissioner Ricky Herring, County Attorney Pres Register, County Engineer Barkley Kirkland, and Chief Administrative Officer William J. Dempsey.

Chairman Culver welcomed everyone to the January 14, 2019, Houston County Commission Meeting and called the 10:00 a.m. meeting to order. He declared a quorum as a majority of the commissioners were in attendance.

Absent: Commissioner Brandon Shoupe

Pastor Stacy Stafford, Southside Baptist Church, gave the invocation and Commissioner Curtis Harvey led in the pledge of the allegiance.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Culver began by reminding everyone that all county and state offices will be closed on Monday, January 21st, for the Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday.

Chairman Culver continued by stating that the county is very focused on the safety of the employees and our citizens. He then called Safety Director, Kelly Crowell, to the podium. Mrs. Crowell began by recognizing the fact that for the first time, in recorded history, the Houston County employees have begun the first quarter of the fiscal year with no recorded injuries. This includes over one hundred and seven days of work which included the massive clean-up of Hurricane Michael. These work days included law enforcement employees, whom were in full force since the beginning of the storm, road and bridge crews clearing hundreds of miles of roads, the sanitation department, which picked up debris and limbs from the storm as well as their normal trash pick-up, and the county maintenance department that were tending to the buildings and structures with damage. Mrs. Crowell thanked all the employees and recognized them for going three months without a medical case considering the amount of hours that have been worked and the types of hazards they encountered.

Chairman Culver added that this milestone is really a testimony to the attitude of the department heads and employees that has changed over the years. Their efforts to work safely are shown in our numbers and our workers compensation claims. He thanked all the employees for their diligence to work safely.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Presentation of the 2017-2018 Annual Financial & Operating Report – William J. Dempsey, Chief Administrative Officer

Mr. Dempsey began his presentation by reporting that the county's one cent sales tax for 2017-2018 increased from \$18,889,000 to \$19,457,000, which is an increase of three percent from the prior year and this year is doing good as well. Highlights for the 2017-2018 year included a contract which was approved for aerial photography of the county, renovation of the basement of the county courthouse to consolidate juvenile services and juvenile court, completed and implemented a wage study for all county classified employees, introduced electronic poll books, entered into an agreement with Legacy Inmate Communications to provide jail phone services, purchased new security cameras for the courthouse, and sold the former juvenile services building, located at 179 N. Foster St., to the Downtown Dothan Redevelopment Authority. He continued by stating that the Sanitation Department recorded one thousand plus accident-free days and the commission adopted uniform guidelines in regards to receiving of federal funds. In the Road and Bridge area, there was a total of 4.8 miles of resurfacing on two county roads, 9.6 miles of shoulder work, completed 72 cross drains and 1,202 work orders, 116 driveway installations, 1561 miles of herbicide spraying, 784 miles of dirt road grating, ditch clearing totaling 34,405 feet, 95 utility permits were issued, 954 signs made and placed, 66 building permits issued and work was completed at Cowarts Senior Center. Other areas of completion included some demolition in Cottonwood which included tearing down of a house, parking lot resurfaced in Cottonwood, Atkinson Road drainage project was worked on, reclaimed 5 dirt roads, a retaining wall at the court house was completed, fuel tank removed, and bridge repairs and bearing pad replacement was completed on County Road 22 and North Bay Springs Road.

Mr. Dempsey reported that the total fund balance at the end of the year was \$8,757,000, coming out very favorable in several areas to include Road and Bridge, sales tax and property tax, capital replacement fund, and juvenile services. He continued by stating that about half of the money spent by the county is on labor, 48% on operations, and 3% capital. The spending breakdown consists of 28.5% going to the sheriff's department and the jail, Road and Bridge is 22%, Bond Debt is 8.2%, agencies 7.1%, maintenance is at 6.5%, and sanitation 5.8%. Mr. Dempsey then pointed out the leading agencies in which the county allocated funds to last year are the Health Department at \$568,000, Houston County Board of Education \$458,000, and the Library at \$300,000. The total allocations were roughly three million dollars.

Mr. Dempsey asked that close attention be paid to one chart in particular and that being the long term debt of the county. In 2018-2019, the bond payment is \$2,881,000 and in the fiscal year 2019-2020 that payment will drop to \$1,753,000, and in 2020-2021 it will decrease to \$1,046,000. He commented that this is a substantial difference since the year 2017-2018 in which it was \$3.4 million in bond payments and that there are currently three outstanding bonds with one scheduled to be paid out in 2020, one in 2033-2034, and one 2027-2028. He reported that the commission has guaranteed the debt of the Water Authority and in 2018-2019 the payments grew from \$200,000 to \$290,000 and there will also be

an increase in 2022-2023 to \$400,000 and it will remain steady from there on. The City of Dothan shares in the guarantee of debt of the Airport Authority and this debt will be paid off at the end of 2020-2021.

Mr. Dempsey reported that fixed assets are \$88.7 million at this time. He noted that medical claims are at a record low which will aid in decreasing the worker's compensation premiums in the future.

After completion of Mr. Dempsey's report, Commissioner Doug Siquefield commented on the savings of worker's compensation premiums due to working safe, implementing safety programs, and continuing safety education for the employees.

Chairman Culver thanked Mr. Dempsey for his report and commented on the increase of the sales tax. He reiterated that the county only receives 30% of all sales tax collected and 70% goes to the school system. Chairman Culver also pointed out that the \$88 million dollars in assets, particularly in the buildings and roads, is a struggle to maintain and that needs to be addressed. He added that each budget year the maintenance of the buildings is looked at very closely as are road projects but it is a constant struggle due to funding.

2. Request to appoint Zachary Smith to fill vacancy on SEACAP Board

Commissioner Siquefield made a motion to approve the request to appoint Zachary Smith and Commissioner Herring seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Request to make appointment to the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens Board

Chairman Culver commented that Commissioner Herring is the recommendation to this board. Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to appoint Larry Williams, Jim Smith, Chris Judah, and Sean Gibson to the Southeast Alabama EMS Board

Commissioner Siquefield made a motion to table the request at this time. Commissioner Herring seconded the motion and it carried unanimously

5. Request to make appointment to the Metropolitan Planning Organization

Chairman Culver commented that the recommendation for this board is Commissioner Siquefield. Commissioner Harvey made a motion to appoint Commissioner Siquefield for the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Commissioner Siquefield seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Request to assist with paving and striping around Ashford Historic Depot in partnership with City of Ashford, Ashford DRA, and Ashford Chamber of Commerce

Commissioner Siquefield made a motion to approve the request pending approval of an agreement with the county and the town of Ashford. Commissioner Herring seconded the motion.

Chairman Culver announced that Mr. Brad Kimbro was present to represent Ashford DRA along with Mayor Barfield and other Ashford representatives. Chairman Culver thanked them for coming and making the commission aware of this need for Ashford. He added that the motion is to approve the request pending approval of an agreement between the county and the town of Ashford concerning maintaining a piece of property that is located in the Ashford area. Mr. Kimbro approached the podium to make his presentation on behalf of the town of Ashford. His slide show consisted of various pictures of Ashford and how it has grown over the last several years and the great job the Ashford DRA is doing to help with the progress of growing the area. He stated that Ashford has acquired several large and small businesses, restaurants, and retail stores that have contributed to the growth of Ashford and they are grateful for them. Mr. Kimbro continued by thanking the commission and Mr. Matt Parker, for their continued support in the way of economic development with their community and for always being supportive of their many projects and development. He pointed out that the depot is used for many activities in Ashford and most importantly that voting takes place there and parking is a very confusing and dangerous during that time. The Ashford DRA and the citizens of the Ashford community feel the need for the resurfacing and striping of the parking lot and are asking with assistance with this project. The depot is the main focus of the town, being there is not a town square, and this is important to the town to get this project completed.

Upon completion of the presentation, Chairman Culver thanked Mr. Kimbro for his presentation and commented that the county has an existing policy with all communities with requested projects, that there is a cost share policy in place. He added that it does not go unnoticed that this is a very busy place and is a voting facility for the county and the parking lot is not conducive for residents going to vote. He continued by saying that the commission has worked hard over the last several years to increase regional focus and that everyone is working together to make progress in the communities.

Commissioner Siquefield commented by thanking Mr. Kimbro for his presentation and also thanked the Ashford Chamber of Commerce, the Mayor, and the DRA for all their work they continue to do for Ashford by growing the community and the east side of Houston County.

At this time, Carol Barfield, Ashford Mayor, approached the podium and thanked the commission for all they do for Ashford. She described Ashford as the town of "potential" as it continues to grow and expand. Mayor Barfield added that as the downtown area has now included sidewalks there is much need for parking and the work at the depot is needed now more than ever.

Chairman Culver called for the vote on the motion and it passed unanimously. He added that debris pick up is a priority at this time but it will be sometime soon that they can get to this project.

7. Request to assist Wiregrass Area United Way Food Bank with removal of dirt in parking lot – David Hanks, Executive Director

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the request from the Wiregrass Area United Way Food Bank and Commissioner Herring seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

8. Request to approve bids to the lowest bidder meeting specs for the following: Hot Plant Mix Asphalt, Herbicide, Sign Faces, Signs, Sign Making Materials – Road and Bridge

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the bids. Commissioner Herring seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

9. Request to sell 2 vehicles from the Sheriff's Dept. on GovDeals – Road and Bridge

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the request to sell the vehicles on GovDeals. Commissioner Herring seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS:

Chief Administrative Officer –No Report

County Attorney – No Report

County Engineer – Barkley Kirkland commented that there are ten closed roads at this time to include State Line, Olin Jones, Billy Cherry, Zachary, Nobles, Enterprise Church, McDaniel, Indigo Pond, and County Road 55. Since the hurricane, eight roads have reopened. Mr. Kirkland then had a presentation which showed debris cleanup updates. It showed that over 400 miles of county roads and all Houston county towns have been cleaned up of debris. Over 180,000 cubic yards of trees have been picked up, which is equivalent to 8,500 dump truck loads. Mr. Kirkland continued by stating that his staff has worked 26,281 man hours and are still working six days a week.

Chairman Culver added that in spite of the federal government shutdown, the FEMA representatives continue to work with the county on the hurricane cleanup and they are appreciated.

Commissioner Sinquefield thanked Mr. Kirkland for the great job they are doing and asked about the closed roads if they are FEMA roads and do they continue to stay closed until they can be assessed. Mr. Kirkland stated that they are FEMA roads.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. The motion passed unanimously.