

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION
March 25, 2019

PRESENT: Chairman Mark Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Siquefield, Commissioner Brandon Shoupe, Acting County Attorney R. Bruce Hall, County Engineer Barkley Kirkland, and Chief Administrative Officer William J. Dempsey.

Chairman Culver welcomed everyone to the March 25, 2019, Houston County Commission Meeting and called the 10:00 a.m. meeting to order. He declared a quorum as the majority of the commissioners were present.

Absent: Commissioner Ricky Herring

Pastor Chase Faulk, Ridgecrest Baptist Church, 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 Harvey seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Shoupe began by congratulating the Auburn Tigers on their recent win in the basketball playoffs and making it to the "Sweet Sixteen".

Chairman Culver reported that it has been an honor to serve with Mr. Bill Dempsey, Chief Administrative Officer, and today is Mr. Dempsey's last meeting. Chairman Culver stated that he wanted to take a minute to publically thank Bill for the work he has done for the citizens of Houston County. He added that Mr. Dempsey's last working day will be Thursday of this week after eleven and a half years of service. He continued by stating that Mr. Dempsey came to the county after working for Sony Corp. for many years and that Houston County government is a much better place since the eleven years that Bill Dempsey served. He changed the budget process which made it a lot smoother and by his various implementations, saved the county millions of dollars. Chairman Culver ended by saying that on behalf of the commission and the citizens of the county, he thanked Mr. Dempsey. This was followed by a standing ovation. Mr. Dempsey spoke and stated that it had been an honor to work for the county.

Commissioner Shoupe also thanked Mr. Dempsey on his retirement and stated that it had been a pleasure to work with him. He added that the taxpayers have no idea how much Mr. Dempsey has saved the taxpayers of Houston County and he appreciated his service and the great job he has done. Commissioner Shoupe also stated that he looks forward to working with Peter in the coming years and he wished Mr. Dempsey the best. Commissioner Siquefield commented that he has known Mr. Dempsey for many years and thinks highly of him and what he has done for the county. He continued

by stating that it had been a honor to work with Bill and that he had learned a lot from him and he looked forward to working with Peter. Commissioner Harvey congratulated Mr. Dempsey and thanked him for his service and stewardship for the Houston County Commission and the citizens.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Proclamation – “Child Abuse Prevention Month” – Terri DuBose, Executive Director, and Meagan Dorsey, Development Advocate – Southeast Alabama Child Advocacy Center

At this time, Chairman Culver stepped down to the podium and announced that the first item on the agenda is the Houston County Queens and unfortunately one of the queen’s airplane was not working properly coming back from Europe so they did not make it back and we will reschedule their appearance for a future commission meeting. He continued by stating that the other item under Awards and Presentations is a proclamation for “Child Abuse Prevention Month”. Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the proclamation and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded the motion. Chairman Culver then read the proclamation and thanked them for the work they do to bring awareness to child abuse. On behalf of the Child Advocacy Center, Ms. DuBose thanked the Houston County Commission for their ongoing support. She added that, like the proclamation read, it takes everyone working together and they could not do what they do without the support of the community, government, team members with Houston County Law Enforcement, and Houston County DHR. She ended by thanking everyone for supporting what they do.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to approve budget amendment for Road and Bridge due to auto repair expense to include off-setting insurance revenue – William J. Dempsey, Chief Administrative Officer

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the budget amendment and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to approve budget amendment for Probate due to cost and reimbursement for transporting of mental health patients – William J. Dempsey, Chief Administrative Officer

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the budget amendment. Commissioner Sinquefield seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

3. Request to approve Resolution to authorize notice of public hearing, public hearing, and meeting to address vacating portion of Faulkner Road based upon petition to vacate made by abutting land owners – Lewie Helms, Windmill Investments, LLC

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the Resolution and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. Chairman Culver mentioned that this motion is to approve the resolution setting the public hearing and

then having the public hearing during a meeting. After calling for the question, the motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to approve Tower Project Lease Agreement with the Town of Gordon – Maj. Bill Rafferty, Sheriff's Dept.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the Tower Project Lease Agreement and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Request to enter into agreement with Houston County Health Care Authority for Houston County pay expenses at agreed upon rate for inmates of the Sheriff in Houston County Jail

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the agreement with Houston County Health Care Authority and Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion. Commissioner Sinquefield stated that during the last year, the ACCA Legislative Committee was looking into a proposed cap on inmate Medicare charges. They are also looking into some sort of insurance that could be proposed, in the coming year, for inmate care. Chief Administrative Officer Bill Dempsey stated that he has not spoken with anyone with the ACCA, but that over the years there has been opportunities presented from the private sector to insure inmates. He added that at this point, they do not know what it is going to cost. Chairman Culver stated that there was also legislation that was introduced, but did not get passed, that required medical charges to be at Medicare pricing and that is what we are agreeing to in this agreement with the Health Care Authority. In saying this, he added that there are ongoing efforts to try and address this problem. Commissioner Sinquefield reported that some of the inmates from other counties are in our county jail and he then called Major Bill Rafferty to the podium to explain this issue.

Major Rafferty stated that if Houston County Sheriff's Department/Jail is housing an inmate for another county, because of overcrowding or the specific charge, any medical issues that arise for that particular inmate are charged back to that county. But if an inmate is picked up on out of state warrants and Houston County is holding them on a Fugitive From Justice warrant, the cost of any medical care is paid by Houston County and not the out of state facility.

Commissioner Shoupe commented and asked if anyone from the Medical Center was present to answer any questions. As no one was present, Commissioner Shoupe stated that he was not being critical of this deal that has been negotiated, but he had a few questions concerning how this impacts the Medical Center, as to whether the county is charged or not charged, because the impact it has on the county is detrimental to the budget. Another question he asked is that if someone goes to the Medical Center and cannot pay for their medical care that he assumes that the medical center sends their bills to a collection agency. Commissioner Shoupe questioned what happens if someone sort of figures out and starts gaining the system, just say they are on dialysis or a cancer patient, and they figure out that they can just get arrested and get free medical treatment as inmates do not have to pay back medical treatments. He stated that he has read that this has happened and what if this happened to Houston County and what is there to prevent this from happening. Commissioner Shoupe stated that there are a

few questions he has concerning a bill from one patient that was discharged in January and the bill is \$63,532.50 and he assumes that this is not the Medicare rate. He added that the patient's name is on the bill and he inquired if the county is under any HIPPA regulations that we would need to black out the patients name on these documents. Chairman Culver stated that he would think that the county would not be required to provide the name. Commissioner Shoupe ended by saying that he is going to vote for the agreement because he believes that it is in the best interest to agree to it now, but he fully intends to make sure that this comes to an end in the future.

Commissioner Sinuefield commented that if all entities could try to work together corporately to take care of the inmates and keep cost down. The state requires that we have to feed the inmates and provide medical care for them as well. He added that Southeast Health is like any other corporation in the way they have their expenses and he is sure they have to write off enormous amounts year after year. He hopes that we can find some resolve here, or through the ACCA, to help with the cost.

At this time, Chairman Culver recognized an audience member and he approached the podium. He stated his name as Jerry Charles Dillard of Taylor, Alabama. He asked if Southeast Health collects 2.5 mils from property tax from the citizens of Houston County. Chairman Culver answered that they do. Mr. Dillard stated that money could figure into the cost for the inmates. Chairman Culver responded that he needs to address that question to Southeast Health and that the county is addressed with this contract and we are legally required to cover healthcare costs. Mr. Dillard asked if it is paid to Southeast Health and Chairman Culver answered yes.

Chairman Culver called for the question and the motion passed to approve the agreement with Southeast Health.

6. Request to approve resolution to resurface Hodgesville Road from E. Saunders Road to Ross Clark Circle. Approximately 1.874 miles – Road and Bridge

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the resolution to resurface Hodgesville Road from E. Saunders Road to Ross Clark Circle. Commissioner Sinuefield seconded the motion. Audience Member, Mr. Jerry Charles Dillard, approached the podium and stated that in the past when the county resurfaces the roads, they would just take a big tiller and till up the right of way. He feels that it is totally unnecessary to use a tiller, especially in front of houses, and he would like to see that this is changed.

Chairman Culver called for the question and the motion passed unanimously.

7. Request to approve resolution to resurface S. Park Ave. from Taylor Road to Ross Clark Circle. Approximately 1.078 miles – Road and Bridge

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the resolution to resurface S. Park Ave. from Taylor Road to Ross Clark Circle. Commissioner Sinuefield seconded the motion. Chairman Culver recognized an audience member and he approached the podium and stated his name as Kenneth Mathis. Mr.

Mathis stated that he had met with the commission a little over a month ago concerning the round-about that was going to be built at Taylor Rd and Campbellton Hwy. He continued by stating that it was passed to do that work and a deal that another one would be built at Taylor Rd. and S. Park Ave. Mr. Mathis stated that he is here today to speak and ask to table this resolution to resurface S. Park and he has several reasons for that. He reported that the commission is aware that Moore Rd. is closed and he understands that since the construction is going to take place of a round-about at Taylor and Park that Moore Rd. may have to be reopened to revert traffic due to the construction at Taylor and Park. He asked the commission to table this so he can get with the engineer and the engineer from the City of Dothan and solve the problem at the intersection of Honeysuckle, Park, Hatton, and what is still left of Moore Road. Mr. Mathis continued by stating that the engineer, whom has gone on to a higher position with the City of Dothan, is convinced that it is the most dangerous intersection in the City of Dothan. Mr. Mathis said he begs to differ with him and he has argued with that because there have been several people killed at the intersection of Hodgesville Rd. and the Ross Clark Circle and it is a very dangerous intersection. He feels that there is a common sense solution to the problem at the intersection in front of Selma Baptist Church and it did not have to start with the closing of Moore Rd. He feels that there is no justification and he has been given every reason for it. Mr. Mathis reported that there is already a right-a-way and already pavement down to solve the problem at the intersection and number one would be to cut in a turn lane, maybe two turn lanes, for traffic off of Park Ave. turning onto Honeysuckle and Hatton Rd. He suggested taking down the yield signs and putting up stop signs to stop everybody and then allow them to turn right or left. Mr. Mathis also commented that something else that needs to be addressed, and he is confused about, is how the city and county does their road resurfacing and bringing in the Metropolitan Planning deal. He read the article in the paper and he feels that there are some common sense solutions to a lot of these problems and there are simple to do if the Commission would just listen to the tax payers and concerned citizens and open up a suggestion box. Mr. Mathis states that he is aware that the Dothan Eagle newspaper has a question "answer man" and that he has answered two questions wrong concerning the US Postal Service and he mentioned that he worked for the Postal Service, so he knows that the "Answer Man" was wrong. He continued by stating again that there are common sense solutions and suggestions that the average people, that have not been to Auburn or Alabama, that they just have common God giving sense that could give a solution to the problem. He stated that he knows that the Commission tabled supporting Dale County and the veteran's home but at the meeting on that Monday, he walked in and the Mayor of Ozark was standing in the Commission Chambers but before the meeting started, he left and Mr. Mathis states that the Mayor of Ozark was told what he already knew before he came to the meeting. Mr. Mathis reported that he had come from a meeting with Mayor of City of Dothan. Chairman Culver informed Mr. Mathis that his time was about up and to wrap up and Mr. Mathis responded to put a timer up like they have for the football players on the big screen TV and stated that he had the rules of the meeting. Chairman Culver stated to Mr. Mathis that his time was up and asked him to sit down. Mr. Mathis continued and Major Bill Rafferty asked Mr. Mathis to sit down or he would have to leave the meeting.

Chairman Culver commented that the meeting is open for anyone to talk, but there are rules and regulations and everyone is going to abide by them.

Chairman Culver called for the question and the motion to approve the resolution to resurface S. Park Ave. from Taylor Rd. to Ross Clark Cr. was approved.

8. Request to approve resolution to resurface N. Broad Street and Omussee Road from US Hwy. 84 to Alabama Hwy. 52. Approximately 3.316 miles – Road and Bridge

Commissioner Sinquefield made the motion to approve the resolution to resurface N. Broad Street and Omussee Road from US Hwy. 84 to Alabama Hwy. 52. Commissioner Shoupe seconded the motion. An audience member approached the podium and stated they he would encourage the Commission to have their planners review the specs on the roads that are paved. For example, Fortner St. from Honeysuckle to Brannon Stand deteriorated eight to five years ago and it was his recommendation to really look closely at the specs and everyone follow through with the contractors. He stated his name as Greg Cox.

The chairman called for the question and the motion passed unanimously.

9. Request to approve resolution to resurface 1st Ave. in Ashford from US Hwy. 84 to old Hwy. 84. Approximately 0.446 miles – Road and Bridge

Commissioner Sinquefield made the motion to approve the resolution to resurface 1st Ave. in Ashford from US Hwy. 84 to old Hwy 84. Commissioner Shoupe seconded the motion. Commissioner Sinquefield asked the County Engineer if part of this was completed when a cross drain was put in and Mr. Kirkland responded that it was just a very small section. The motion passed unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS

Chief Administrative Officer – No Report

County Engineer – Closed roads: State Line, Nobles, Waddell, Billy Cherry, Indigo Pond, McDaniel, and Lanier. Nobles will possibly be opening today.

County Attorney – No Report

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