

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
REGULAR SESSION  
March 9, 2020

PRESENT: Chairman Mark Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Sinuefield, Commissioner Ricky Herring, Commissioner Brandon Shoupe, County Attorney Pres Register, County Engineer Barkley Kirkland, and Chief Administrative Officer Peter Covert.

Chairman Culver welcomed everyone to the March 9, 2020, Houston County Commission Meeting and called the 10:00 a.m. meeting to order. He declared a quorum as all commissioners were in attendance.

Brother Allen Singley, Youth Pastor at Grandview Baptist Church, gave the invocation and Commissioner Curtis Harvey led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Commissioner Sinuefield and seconded by Commissioner Harvey. The motion carried unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONER

Chairman Culver announced that there will not be an administrative meeting on March 19<sup>th</sup> as the majority of the commissioners will be out of town. The regular session will be held on Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. He also reminded everyone that the Azalea Dogwood Trail will be held this Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, at either 2:30 p.m. or 3:00 p.m. Chairman Culver commended everyone involved with the first Foster Fest last Friday night and with Jon Jam on Saturday as both events were a great success.

Commissioner Sinuefield announced that Ashford DRA has a Spring Fling scheduled for this Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00 p.m. in downtown Ashford with entertainment, live music, food vendors and family fun. He invited everyone to attend.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Proclamation – “National Kidney Month” – Lisa Baity, Wiregrass Director – Alabama Kidney Foundation

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the proclamation and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Culver asked Commissioner Harvey to

present the proclamation. Commissioner Harvey stepped down to the podium and asked Ms. Baity to come forward. After reading of the proclamation, Commissioner Harvey presented it to Ms. Baity and asked her for comments. Ms. Baity thanked the Commission and commented that they work very hard for all the local patients that are on dialysis and which are under served or under privileged. The foundation allows them to help with daily living needs such as transportation, food, and paying their bills. Services rendered in 2019 were over \$50,000 and that was from money that was raised in Houston County and it stays in Houston County. She thanked the community for all their help.

## REGULAR AGENDA

### 1. Request to approve appropriation for the Alabama State Games in the amount of \$15,000

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the request for the appropriation and Commissioner Herring seconded. Chairman Culver noted that as discussed during Thursday's meeting, we are fortunate enough to be contacted and able to put together a coalition with Wiregrass communities to bring the games back to our area. He added that Houston County, Dothan, Ozark, Dale County, Coffee County and Enterprise are all participating in this endeavor and when the games were in our area several years ago, that it had the largest single impact of any event held in our community. After a call for the question and vote, the motion carried unanimously.

### 2. Request to approve emergency expenditure from the Capital Replacement Fund for HVAC Air Handler 16 at the Health Department – Sean Curtis, Building Maintenance Manager

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the emergency expenditure from the Capital Replacement Fund. Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

### 3. Request to approve emergency expenditure from the Capital Replacement Fund for HVAC Rheem R410A Heat Pump Package Unit for W. Main Storage – Sean Curtis, Building Maintenance Manager

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the emergency expenditure from the Capital Replacement Fund. Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

4. Request to consider passage and authorize advertising of local legislation establishing \$5.00 tag fee for EMS Services to be approved by referendum in November pending establishment of distribution agreement

Commissioner Sinuefield made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. Chairman Culver asked for a motion to amend the first page at line 20, after the word "tag" a comma should be inserted and insert word "except utility trailers," He stated that after research, utility trailers were exempted. Commissioner Sinuefield made a motion to amend the bill as stated and Commissioner Herring seconded. After a call for the question, the motion to amend passed unanimously. Commissioner Shoupe asked for a motion to amend the motion that the distribution agreement must be approved by the county commission. Chairman Culver clarified that the motion by Commissioner Shoupe is to amend the motion to read "Request to consider passage and authorize advertising of local legislation establishing \$5.00 tag fee for EMS Services to be approved by referendum in November pending establishment of distribution agreement and approval of distribution agreement by county commission." Commissioner Sinuefield seconded the motion. Chairman Culver asked for discussion or comments and Mr. George Trotter, county resident, approached the podium and stated that he is concerned about the amendment and the motion. Chairman Culver stated that they are discussing this particular amendment. When called for the vote, the amendment to the motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Culver then stated that now discussion is up to the original motion (as amended) of "Request to consider passage and authorize advertising of local legislation establishing \$5.00 tag fee for EMS Services to be approve by referendum in November pending establishment of distribution agreement and approval of distribution agreement by county commission." Mr. George Trotter approached the podium and stated that he lived at 4218 County Road 203, Dothan, AL. He stated that he is not interested in another \$5 tax, but is interested in the money that should be in the budget if the county would stop funding the city of Dothan with roundabouts, private businesses, and do logical things with county money other than buying a two million dollar building. He added that his point is to look at the budget and do things more logical.

Commissioner Herring then read the following statement:

"Mr. Chairman and fellow commission members:

I supported a one-percent sales tax. Each year the money would be spread out to improve roads and bridges, fire protection, emergency medical services and law enforcement. Today, I still feel the same. As we sit here today, we are in a tough spot when it comes to revenues. Mainly due to the actions of previous administrations not facing the issue head-on and doing

what's right in hopes to continue to get re-elected. I'm not here to sugar-coat things and I'm not worried about getting re-elected. I'm here to do what's right and what's best for this county and right now, we have a revenue problem. We are growing in the county and we are putting more strain on our infrastructure than ever before. In the last 4 years, we've had a neighborhood in my district build 86 homes with another 96 scheduled to begin in the next three months. Our schools are busting at the seams, our roads are being traveled more now than ever before, our deputies are answering more calls than ever before, all while doing more with less because we don't have the adequate resources to meet the demands. We can only dip into our reserves so much before we are really in a tough spot. I've been told by our Montgomery delegation if this \$5 tag fee is put on the ballot in November, we are done for a few years asking for revenue increases in Houston County. But, I would hope that we, as a commission, request that they do it. For the record; I fully support this referendum and our EMS agencies need the money. They need a lot more for what they do to help keep our citizens safe and to respond in a timely fashion with quality equipment. They need every resource at their disposal, because it's about saving lives. But our volunteer fire departments need money, they aren't getting new money. Our road and bridge department needs additional staffing and they aren't getting new money to help that. Same with the Sheriff's Dept; same with probate; same with every other department in Houston County. Again, I fully support this. It's needed and I'm glad that all of the citizens of Houston County are the ones who get to make the decision. I know that this is something that will make you all uncomfortable and not happy with a campaign season coming up, but that's not why I'm here. I'm here to do what's right and best for the county not for a re-election campaign. Regardless if I'm re-elected or not, or anyone up here for that matter, the next commission, just like this one, will face a revenue problem! And I hope, moving forward, we do what's right and have the county's best interest in mind. Gentlemen, Albert Einstein once said, "We cannot fix our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." The pressure is on us.

Chairman Culver then called for the vote on the motion as amended, twice. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Request to approve memorandum of understanding and accompanying financing related to real property purchase and authorize Chairman to take action necessary and appropriate related to purchase

Commissioner Sinuefield made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Harvey seconded. Chairman Culver reported that this, as discussed on Thursday, is considered to be an exciting move forward for downtown, the Sheriff's Dept., for the future of county offices and services. He stated that the building was built along with the Administrative Building and now

the commission has the opportunity to use it as a joint facility and to enhance the northern end of downtown Dothan and an opportunity to get this building at an excellent value. Chairman Culver added that this is a long term process to get the building ready for occupancy and he wanted to commend Five Star Credit Union as they have been very patient during this endeavor and they are committed to staying in the downtown area in the future. Commissioner Shoupe stated they he is really excited about this and he feels that the taxpayers of Houston County are getting an outstanding deal versus the cost of building a new building, even if built on property that the county already owns. He hopes, that once ready, the citizens are able to tour the building and they will be very proud. Chairman Culver added that hopefully an open house could be held in the future. At this time, Chairman Culver asked for comments from the public and Mr. George Trotter then approached the podium. Mr. Trotter asked if the commission recalled that not once, not twice, but three times in the last six months, that he “We the People” asked the commission to consider where the people would like the Sheriff’s Department to be located. He stated that the twenty-three plus acres at the Farm Center, which already has paved parking and it accessible to the public, would be beneficial and asked if the newly purchased building would be 100% for the Sheriff’s Dept. and Chairman Culver answered that it would be. Mr. Trotter stated that people across the county are not happy about how tax dollars are being spent. He wanted to know what logic was being used in purchasing a building where parking will still be a problem.

Chairman Culver added that the purchase of the building will come with about an acre of parking space. When called for the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

#### 6. Request to approve resolution to transfer certain real property to the DDRA

Commissioner Siquefield made a motion to approve the resolution to transfer certain real property to the DDRA. Commissioner Shoupe seconded the motion. Chairman Culver commented that everything that the Commission does requires partnership and this is no exception to that rule. He recognized the Executive Director of the DDRA that is in attendance today and thanked her and her organization for helping with this project and ongoing projects. He stated that the Commission is in conjunction with them transferring this property so that we can work together with Five Star to locate a branch to continue their presence downtown. He stated that the metal building that is on the proposed property will be gone and with Five Star building a branch there, it will definitely enhance that area. Chairman Culver asked for comments and Commissioner Siquefield commented on behalf of the area farmers. He stated that this would be an excellent advantage to them to expand from the civic center to have more space to set up and sell their produce and goods. Chairman Culver clarified that the farmer’s market, that will hopefully be located behind the property in this transaction, will

actually use some of this property and it supports each other. Chairman Culver then asked for other comments and Mr. George Trotter approached the podium. He asked the Chairman if, in the future, could we use words instead of abbreviations on the agenda items and keep things simple as he was not sure what the DDRA stood for.

Chairman Culver called for the vote and the motion carried unanimously.

7. Request to award bid for in-place asphalt and in-place surface treatment to lowest bidder meeting specs – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Sinuefield made a motion to approve the request to award the bid and Commissioner Herring seconded. Chairman Culver reported that this is asphalt that will be used on the Rebuild Alabama roads. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Request to partner with the Town of Rehobeth and Houston County Schools for pipe installation at Rehobeth Elementary and Rehobeth Middle School – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. Chairman Culver stated that this is another example of partnering to get things done and how it benefits the citizens of Houston County. He added that at Thursday's meeting there was a question about some dirt being moved or removed and asked Commissioner Herring to look into that. The motion passed unanimously.

#### STAFF REPORTS:

Chief Administrative Officer – Mr. Covert reported that as part of this year's budget, the dump truck leases will be paid off to receive clear titles so they can be used as part of the transfer to purchase new dump trucks, as budgeted.

County Engineer – 3 Closed Roads; Johnny Murphy, Fuller, and Otis Buie, which are all cross drain replacements

County Attorney – No Report

Commissioner Shoupe asked Engineer Kirkland if roads have been prioritized yet for re-pavement. Engineer Kirkland stated that there are currently six roads they are working on and pipes have been completed on several roads.

Adjourned