

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
REGULAR SESSION  
July 27, 2020

PRESENT: Chairman Mark Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Sinquefield, 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 July 27, 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.

The invocation was led by Commissioner Sinquefield and Commissioner Herring led in the pledge of allegiance.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONER

Chairman Culver began by stating that, unfortunately, there is not a lot going on in the community due to COVID-19 restrictions but that school should be starting back soon and he encouraged everyone to monitor their school districts for information. Commissioner Harvey asked if the governor will be assessing the current order on Friday and Chairman Culver commented that she would have to do something by the end of the month due to the current order expiring on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Chairman Culver reported that the ABC Board called an emergency meeting this morning and is coming out with an order for establishments that sell alcohol could see having to stop selling alcohol at 11:00 p.m. He assured everyone that this virus is real and he encourages everyone to wear their masks, wash their hands, and stay home. Commissioner Sinquefield commented on the Census 2020 and the struggles that are occurring due to the COVID and low community outreach. Chairman Culver added that after the first of August there will be several events and public awareness activities for the Census 2020. He stated that it has been very difficult due to all the COVID restrictions and this is a state wide problem and he encourages everyone to participate in the census.

Chairman Culver stated that Emergency Management Director Chris Judah asked that an item be added to the agenda. This item would be a request to approve a Supplemental

Proclamation of Local Emergency Declaration. This has to do with the COVID situation and will be a joint proclamation with the City of Dothan. With no objections, the item will be added to the agenda.

## REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to approve the 2019 insolvents, errors and taxes in litigation and uncollected insolvents and litigations for previous years for final settlement with the State of Alabama – Starla Moss, Revenue Commissioner

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Herring seconded. Chairman Culver commented that this is an annual item and is required by the state. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to approve resolution for the relocation of the Town of Cowarts polling place from the Cowarts Town Hall to the Cowarts Baptist Church Family Life Center – Patrick Davenport, Judge of Probate

Judge Patrick Davenport came forward and stated that this is a request that is needed due to the growing area of Cowarts. He added that the elections office was approached by the Town of Cowarts and they had already performed some of the leg work to get this change going. Judge Davenport reported that the Cowarts Baptist Church has a family life center that is separate from the sanctuary of the church and it is only a few hundred yards from the town hall. This facility is larger and will accommodate the citizens and also provide the social distancing space that is needed during the COVID-19 restrictions. The family life center has handicap access and is in every way a great move for the community. Judge Davenport added that the public will be notified by media communication, signage, and the Cowarts Town Hall will be relating this to their citizens. There will not be a card mailed out this time due costs.

Commissioner Siquefield made a motion to approve the resolution for the relocation of the Town of Cowarts polling place and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. Commissioner Harvey asked how the process of voting will take place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Judge Davenport responded that in the primary run-off it worked really well as they educated the public through various media outlets, CARES ACT funds were used for masks, individual stylist, pens, hand sanitizer, and six feet markings in the lines at the precincts. He added that he has some concerns for the November elections with the number of people that will turn out for this. Judge Davenport stated that they are facing some real challenges and his election staff is working hard to address all of the concerns with safety due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With no further questions or comments, the motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to approve lease of county voting equipment to municipalities within Houston County – Peter Covert, Chief Administrative Officer

Chief Administrative Officer Peter Covert began by stating that the Probate Judge pointed out recently that due to an ethics committee ruling, the process of getting the county owned voting equipment out to the municipalities had changed. In working with the County Attorney, a formal arrangement has been developed between the municipalities and the county to enter into an agreement for the use of the equipment. He added that this does not change a lot of the procedures but it more formalizes the relationship and the responsibility. Chairman Culver reminded everyone that the equipment is leased and in the care of the county and rather than the individual municipalities duplicate all this that they use our equipment for their elections and this will make the arrangement more standardized agreement and with accord of the ethics law.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the leasing of the county voting equipment and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to adopt resolution selecting Poly, Inc. as the architect/engineer for EDA warehouse project

Emily VanScyoc, Community & Economic Development Director for SEARPDC, approached the podium. She began by stating that this is a project in the very early stages and that the Economic Development Administration has CARES ACT funding and typically projects are fifty percent grant and fifty percent match. As of today with the CARES ACT funding, they are looking at eighty percent grant and twenty percent match. In recent talks with the county and working with Matt Parker and Chris Judah, SEARPCD are in the very early stages of looking into a proposed PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) warehouse. This warehouse would benefit hospitals, Farley Nuclear, and our local EMA, just to name a few. Mrs. VanScyoc stated that this would be a heated and cooled warehouse and they are currently looking at the Sam Houston Industrial Park for the location of the building. The first stage is to secure an engineer architect firm and proposals were received from five engineering firms. She reported that Mr. Peter Covert, Matt Parker, and Chris Judah all rated the proposals and based on their scores, Poly Inc. scored the highest. Mrs. VanScyoc ended by stating that she is here today to ask that the commission formally select Poly, Inc. to move forward with the development of the project.

She reiterated that this does not commit to applying for anything as of this stage, but that time is of the essence because money will run out quick.

Chairman Culver began by stressing that the sooner the better as the money will run out as this is a competitive grant so there is no guarantee and the county would be fortunate to receive this funding. He stated that this would be a huge win for the community as everyone knows that there have been several issues with PPE storage. Mrs. VanScyoc stated that both hospitals and Farley Nuclear Plant are on board with the proposed project. Chairman Culver added that this is an EDA Grant and is a business focused grant so their participation is very important to this process. This will also potentially be used by the county for EMA items and Sheriff related emergency items as well. Chairman Culver reported that the county will be responsible for the 20% funding as the grant will take care of the 80% and it will be money well spent if the county is fortunate enough to receive the grant.

Commissioner Shoupe asked who was the deciding authority and Mrs. VanScyoc responded that the Economic Development Administration is the deciding authority and their regional office is based in Atlanta. They have received a lot of grant money but it is going very fast due to the fact that it the Atlanta base covers about seven states. Chris Judah approached the podium and stated that this is a fantastic project as EMA is in need of storage space due to the state shifting some equipment to his facility in the near future. He added that this would give their agency and the hospitals a better opportunity to receive the items when needed and not as space allows.

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the adoption of the resolution selecting Poly, Inc., as the architect/engineer for the EDA warehouse project. Commissioner Siquefield seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

5. Request to approve emergency expenditures from the Capital Replacement Fund for (2) HVAC systems – Sean Curtis, Maintenance Manager

Chairman Culver recognized Sean Curtis and asked if anyone had any questions concerning these emergency expenditures. Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the emergency expenditures and Commissioner Herring seconded. Chairman Culver stated that these HVACs are at the Crawford Street Building and Road and Bridge Sanitation Dept. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Request to select Brandon Shoupe as the representative for the 2020-2021 ACCA Legislative Committee

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to select Brandon Shoupe as the representative and Commissioner Herring seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Request to approve Interlocal Agreement between the City of Dothan and Houston County for the 2020 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program – Sheriff's Dept.

Major Rafferty approached the podium and reported that this is a yearly grant that is shared with the City of Dothan. These funds are used to purchase in-car cameras and this is an annual grant.

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

8. Request to approve budget amendments for Wicksburg Road project and Rebuild Alabama project – Road and Bridge

Engineer Barkley Kirkland approached the podium and announced that these are additional pay items that were left out of the original budget due to confusion between the county and the state. He stated that this does increase the cost but also increases the revenue.

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the budget amendments and Commissioner Harvey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Request to place assorted mobile phones, metal filing cabinets, office chairs and a plotter on GovDeals – Road and Bridge

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the request to place the items on GovDeals. Commissioner Herring seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

10. Request to approve Supplemental Proclamation of Local Emergency Declaration – Chris Judah, EMA Director

Chris Judah came forward and announced that they are requesting the approval of a supplemental proclamation of a local state of emergency. He reported that they are in the process of working on establishing some alternate care sites as the hospitals are currently running out of space due to COVID-19 patients. The hospitals are currently full and this includes the emergency room as well. They currently have existing beds but staff is running low

also. Director Judah stated that the task force is in the process of developing plans for an alternate care site for the overflow of patients. In order to expedite the process, the Supplemental Proclamation will help with some of the red tape involved. Commissioner Herring made the motion to approve the proclamation and Commissioner Siquefield seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

#### STAFF REPORTS:

Chief Administrative Officer – No report

County Engineer – County Road 33 between Fowler and Gene Terry closed for cross drain replacement. Shoulder work on Johnny Murphy and next will be Fuller and Littlefield.

County Attorney – No report

Chairman Culver asked if there were any questions for the staff and Major Rafferty came forward. He stated that he was following up on a law enforcement grant for \$58,000 which was received and he inquired if that would be used for COVID charges. Chairman Culver responded that he would need to ask County Administrator Peter Covert at the conclusion of the meeting. Major Rafferty also asked about a CARES ACT grant that he believed was received in the amount of \$2,000,000 and what that would be used for and Chairman Culver answered that this is not a grant but are reimbursements for any expenditure regarding COVID activities or supplies. Major Rafferty added that they (Sheriff's Dept) were under the impression that there was a Hazardous Pay included with that and Chairman Culver directed him to get with Peter Covert on that question as well.

Meeting adjourned