

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION
August 24, 2020

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

Chairman Culver welcomed everyone to the August 24, 2020, Houston County Commission Meeting and called the 10:00 a.m. meeting to order. He declared a quorum.

The invocation was given by Commissioner Siquefield and Commissioner Shoupe led in the pledge of allegiance.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Commissioner Siquefield and seconded by Commissioner Shoupe. The motion passed unanimously.

ABSENT: Commissioner Curtis Harvey and Commissioner Ricky Herring

Chairman Culver reported that an item had been requested to be added to the agenda and this would item #10. The item is a request from Dothan Area Botanical Gardens for assistance with dirt and a few other things as in-kind services. With no objection, the item will be added as item #10.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONER

Chairman Culver announced that the next Commission Meeting will be held in three weeks due to there being five Mondays in the month of August and it is the intention of the Commission to go back to having Administrative Meetings beginning in September unless things with COVID get worse. These are held on the Thursday prior to the Monday Commission Meetings. The next meeting will be held on Monday, September 14th and Chairman Culver stated that this is the meeting that the budget is usually approved and that will be the intention for this year as well. In addition, the Administration Meeting would be held on the 10th of September. He added that there are some weather concerns in the gulf and asked everyone to continue to monitor the weather. Chairman Culver reported that the commission had their annual ACCA Meeting last week in which it was a virtual meeting due to the COVID and Commissioner Siquefield was elected to the board as the representative for the district. He added that Commissioner Shoupe currently serves on the Legislative Committee. He also reported that the State Health Department Dashboard, which reports COVID cases, was incorrect yesterday and they are working on the issue to correct it today.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Recognition – 2020 Houston County Queens

Chairman Culver began the presentation by stating that the commission has been waiting for this special day for a while but because of the COVID restrictions, the queens have not been able to attend the meeting. The commission is excited that they are present here today and he reported that the queens have been representing the county well as they have been trying to attend as many functions as possible, while following the safety guidelines. The Commission is honored to have them. Chairman Culver then had each young lady come forward and say a few words about themselves and what they enjoy about being a county queen. He also presented each one with a county pin and thanked them for what they do in representing the county in such a great way. Queens in attendance were as follows:

Future Little Miss:	Avery Hughes, Wicksburg Elem.
Little Miss:	Ellie Marie Granger, Rehobeth Elem.
Young Jr. Miss:	Libby Kate Wood, Carver Magnet
Junior Miss:	Anzley McInnis, Mixon Intermediate
Preteen Miss:	Emma Claire Hinson, Providence
Teen Miss:	Taylor Jones, Rehobeth
Miss:	Anna Grace Johnson, Wicksburg High

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request from Personnel Board to concur in the 2021 County Holiday Schedule – Sheri Garner, Personnel Director

Chairman Culver commented that the holiday schedule is in the commission package and that this year there are no oddities from the previous year and the county tries to concur with the state holiday schedule each year. Commissioner Sinuefield made a motion to approve the request and concur with the 2021 Holiday Schedule. Commissioner Shoupe seconded and the motion passed.

2. Request for In-Kind Services from the Industrial Development Board – Matt Parker, President, Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Matt Parker came forward to the podium. Chairman Culver remarked that it is always an honor to have Matt in attendance, because usually when he is here they are creating jobs. Mr. Parker began by stating that the Board is excited about a new project that is looking to purchase an existing building that is highly specialized. This is located at 208 Nypro Lane and has been a priority for their economic development since it became available. He continued by reporting that this will be a new manufacturer and they are currently completing details on the project so no other information can be released until these are finished. They are requesting some in-kind work for some light bush hogging and clean up on the three acres where this is located. Things should be finalized by mid-September. Chairman Culver commented that it is amazing that during these trying times that the economic development has continued and how the economy has continued and thrived and he appreciated the Industrial Development Board for all their hard work.

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the request for in-kind services and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Request to approve Resolution for an Economic Development Administration (EDA) CARES Act Funding Application to construct a PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) Warehouse Facility – Emily Van Scyoc, Community & Economic Development Director

Chairman Culver reminded everyone that at the last meeting an engineering firm was approved so things could move quickly on this application process and that today this is to approve the application only. Mrs. Emily VanScyoc came forward and stated that this is money that has been made available through the Economic Development Administration CARES Act and it is competitive. The County is looking to use this for a PPE warehouse/storage facility that would be heated and cooled to store PPE supplies and equipment. She commented that at this time the commission would be passing a resolution to commit to the match with it being an 80% grant and a 20% match. Mrs. VanScyoc reported that the total estimate cost of the project is \$2,870,000.00 with the county commission portion being \$574,000.00. She reiterated that this is just an application stage and if the application is approved, this would be the estimated dollar amounts they would be looking at. Chairman Culver asked if the \$574,000.00 would be cash and/or in-kind services and Mrs. VanScyoc commented yes as there will be some in-kind work to be done. Chairman Culver thanked Mrs. VanScyoc for her work on this project. He stated that they have a lot of buy-in from the local hospitals, Farley Nuclear, and the Health Department for this facility and it will also serve the Sheriff's Department and EMA. Commissioner Shoupe asked when they would be expecting an answer on this and Mrs. VanScyoc stated that they are not sure but that all applications have to be submitted by the end of the year. They are hoping that maybe within thirty to sixty days they may hear something. Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the resolution for the EDA CARES Act Funding Application and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Request to approve Distribution Agreement of EMS Funds from the \$5 tag fee for EMS Services, if approved

Chairman Culver reminded everyone that legislation was previously approved that went to the Alabama Legislature, and was passed, calling on a \$5 fee for tags issued in Houston County and proceeds from that fee would go to the EMS providers in the county. This \$5 fee is subject to a vote of the citizens during the November election. The Commission voted to approve a distribution agreement and that is what is in front of the commission today. (The distribution percentage amounts attached to original minutes.) Commissioner Sinquefield began by stating that the EMS has been working on this for several months to get the percentages for the distribution and he thanked all of those that serve on the EMS Board and their hard work put into this. Commissioner Sinquefield recognized Ms. Heather Thomas from the Rehobeth EMS and asked her to come forward. He added that it took a while to try to come up with the percentages but it was determined by the number of calls each entity receives and that this is going to be a benefit for the citizens of Houston County that utilize county emergency services. Ms.

Thomas began by thanking the commission and stated that it would be extremely beneficial for the rescue squads of Houston County in the aspect of allowing them to have personnel, better equipment for the citizens, and to further train their services for the community. Chairman Culver asked about the percentages being based on the call volume and if this would be reviewed as call volumes change and Ms. Thomas answered that it had not been discussed at this point but is a very good question and she would take this back to the board for discussion. Chairman Culver commented that with the growth of each community that five years from now the call volume may change and he recommended that this would be good to put in the agreement that every five years the percentages would be reviewed and not left up to the discretion of the board. He added that another concern was the pay out and that it states the administrator would pay these and the Commission would like to make the payments to the association instead of each organization and then in turn the association could distribute the funds. Chairman Culver stated that this was a gray matter in the documents and it would need to be cleared up before finalizing. Commissioner Shoupe asked if there had been any discussions on how to inform the public of this voting option coming up in November. Ms. Thomas responded that it was discussed and a PAC Committee has been formed and they will be responsible for advertising, etc, and getting the information to the citizens. Commissioner Sinquefield presented a flyer that has been created and would be distributed in the coming weeks. He added that the rescue squads require a lot of money for their materials and training as a new ambulance can be as much as \$250,000, a stretcher can be as much as \$50,000 and training is ongoing to keep accreditations up-to-date. Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the distribution agreement and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Request to authorize Chairman to negotiate and enter into a renewal lease agreement with Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission

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

6. Request to remove from the table and request to enter into an agreement with Home Oil Company to allow landscaping and maintenance on county right-of-way

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to remove the request from the table and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. Motion passed. Chairman Culver stated that this is the agreement for the "island" at the roundabout at S. Park and Taylor Road. Both parties met and are in agreement on this item. Commissioner Shoupe asked if the current property owner sells what would happen if things are broken or damaged and Engineer Barkley Kirkland stated that his suggestion would be to concrete the entire area. Attorney Pres Register stated that the agreement itself does not transfer over if the property owner sells. Chairman Culver added that this would enhance the area. He also stated that the county and the city have done a great job and he has had several positive comments on the round-about project. Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the agreement with Home Oil Company. Commissioner Shoupe seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

7. Request to cancel all events at the Houston County Farm Center for September and October, 2020

Chairman Culver reported that as of preponderance of caution and not having to deal with situations like a prior event, they feel that it is in the best interest of the citizens, safety, and abide by all recommendations to cancel all events at the Farm Center during September and October, 2020. Commissioner Sinquefield asked if the event holders have been contacted about the cancellation and Chairman Culver stated that after the action is taken by the Commission, they would be contacted today. Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the cancellation of the events and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Request to approve Resolution to repeal and replace Resolution 2020-22 and authorize notice of public hearing, public hearing, and meeting to address vacating a portion of Barton Road

Chairman Culver reminded everyone that at the last meeting this was approved but there was an error in the description of the property and this will correct that description and proceed with the proper process. Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Request to approve Rebuild Alabama FY 2021 County Transportation Plan – Road and Bridge

County Engineer Barkley Kirkland reported that this is basically the same plan that was approved initially but there was neither an asphalt bid in place nor the new asphalt in place. The numbers have been updated and several roads have been done and costs are coming in cheaper than originally planned. Three roads have been added as well and all is going really good. This is a formality required by law and in January a report will be given on the roads that are completed and the cost associated and perform the modifications to the plan as needed. Engineer Kirkland is in hopes that if the costs remain the same they would be able to add a few more roads to the original plan.

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the Rebuild Alabama FY 2021 County Transportation Plan and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

10. Request from the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens for assistance with several small projects at the gardens – William Holman, Executive Director, Dothan Area Botanical Gardens

Mr. Holman came forward and thanked the commission for adding this request to the agenda He reported that there are several projects at the Gardens and they are asking for some in-kind services from the county Road and Bridge Department. Currently, they are planning on building a 30x40 metal building for storage and will need some fill dirt for that foundation and he stated that this project will not begin until December. Mr. Holman continued by stating that there are several other drainage issues that need to be addressed with one being the rainwater in the parking lot drains out to Headland Avenue and does not seem to make it to the roadside ditches. He has meet with R & B and they seem that a “swell” can be made and that will direct the water to the roadside ditches. Another area of the

Gardens that needs attention is an old retention pond that needs some work so the water will flow into it instead of going past it and there are also some pine trees that they need help removing from the parking area and some pecans trees along Headland Avenue that are sick and dying that need removing. Chairman Culver began by stating that these are things that we can get to as time permits and concerning the water issue running into the road, this is a safety issue and needs to be looked at. He reminded the Commission that the Botanical Gardens are not inside the city limits of Dothan so they tend to have to lean on the County for help more so than others. Chairman Culver asked Engineer Kirkland is there was any reason why the work could not be done and he stated no there was not and they would be able to do it as time permits. He also reported that this is about \$38,000 worth of work with labor and equipment. Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the request for in-kind services for the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Holman added that the Gardens began charging admissions last July and what this enabled them to do is to collect data from the visitors. Due to COVID-19, the offices closed in March and they could not collect admissions but during the months that they did collect the money and collected data, that had visitors from 41 states and 14 different countries just in the nine month time frame. Chairman Culver added that sales tax for the county was up 16% from this time last year even during these COVID-19 times.

STAFF REPORTS:

Chief Administrative Officer – No report

County Engineer – County Road 33 for cross drain replacement #6 out of 11.

County Attorney – No report

Meeting adjourned