

MINUTES OF HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
MARCH 13, 2006

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Bobby R. Snellgrove, Commissioner Frances M. Cook, Gary Sherrer, Attorney, Mark Pool, Engineer, and Roy Roberts, Administrator.

ABSENT: Commissioner Phillip L. Forrester.

Chairman Mark S. Culver called the 10:00 A.M. meeting to order, established that a quorum was present, and welcomed everyone. Commissioner Curtis Harvey gave the invocation. Commissioner Snellgrove led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Commissioner Harvey seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

Announcements and Public Comment from Chairman and Commissioners.

Chairman Culver stated that at the last meeting he had reported he had received calls and complaints about some trucks being parked overnight on the property the county owns at the intersection of Redmond Road and Flynn Road. He stated that the "No Parking" and "No Trespassing" signs had been installed. The chairman reported the last he had heard there were some trucks still parking there. He stated that the next step is to ask the Dothan Police Department to start enforcing the "No Trespassing." Chairman Culver asked if anyone knew who might be parking there to let them know that the property is not zoned for a truck stop and they did not need to be parking there.

Awards and Presentations

1. Recognition of "2006 Alabama Junior Miss" – "Ms. Megan Butler – Mrs. Lauren Waid.

Chairman Culver reported it is not everyday the commission has someone who represents the county so well to attend our meetings. He then asked Ms. Megan Butler and Mr. Walter Hill, Houston County Junior Miss Program, to come forward. The chairman stated not only is she representing the county but was recently awarded and won a competition and is the "2006 Alabama Junior Miss." He pointed out Ms. Butler is also the "2006 Houston County Junior Miss". The chairman reported this is a scholarship program and the contestants are awarded on talent both artistic and scholastic. He commended her on representing Houston County and the State and wished her the best in the National Junior Miss competition which will be held in Mobile in June. Ms. Butler stated she is a senior at Houston Academy and she was lucky to be in the "Houston County Junior Miss" program this year and she won. She stated she is proud to

represent Houston County and the state. Mr. Walter Hill, Houston County Junior Miss Program Board member, stated that Mrs. Lauren Waid, Chairperson, Houston County Junior Miss Program, was unable to attend because she was under the weather. Mr. Hill reported they are excited about having Ms. Butler represent Houston County and the State of Alabama in the National Junior Miss Program in June. He pointed out she had won \$17,000-\$18,000 in cash scholarships that can go to the college of her choice. Mr. Hill reported Houston County awards more scholarships than any other county in the state.

#### Legislative Update.

Chairman Culver gave a Legislative Update on some local bills and legislation at the state level that is making its way through the process.

He stated the first local bill that was sent was a technical change to the Firefighters' Fee. The chairman pointed out it straightened out some language having to do with mobile homes. Chairman Culver reported that bill has been signed out by all of the area legislators and is ready for action. He stated it is sitting on one senator's desk that controls the process and some politics are being played with it. The chairman reported they do anticipate it breaking loose and the bill being passed.

Chairman Culver reported the county's bill calling for the referendum on allowance of draft beer should be voted on in the House on March 14<sup>th</sup>. He stated he would be in Montgomery, and if it is approved, the Legislature will meet three days this week before taking Spring Break next week. He pointed out the following week they will meet three days, and it would be in a position to be passed in the Senate the week after Spring Break. He reported the issue on the bill is if it is passed before the last day of the Legislative Session, then it should be on the June ballot. The chairman reported the Legislature has set their schedule, and they meet on April 6<sup>th</sup> and take a break and come back on April 17<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Culver reported he thought if the bill passed on April 17<sup>th</sup>, it will be too late to get on the ballot. He pointed out they are pushing to try to get it on the June ballot. The chairman reported there had been some discussion that the county and city are not on the same page on this bill and that is not the case. He stated the bill has been straightened out and it gives municipalities the authority to make their own decisions whether they want draft beer on or off premise, and authorize it in the rest of the county. He stated the key date to watch on this bill if it passes is April 6<sup>th</sup>, it will be on the June ballot.

The chairman reported at the State level, one particular bill that has been of interest to the commission is the publication of the voter list. He pointed out that counties across the state are required by state law to publish the voter list every election cycle. Chairman Culver reported some of them feel it would be well served and save a lot of tax money if the voter list was published on the internet, and have it available in hard copy for inspection. He stated in the past,

newspapers have charged counties the regular legal rate to publish the document. Chairman Culver reported the last one cost the county around \$30,000. He stated that the counties feel they should be able to have the document printed and pay an insert rate, which is significantly less. The chairman reported for a while he felt the press association resisted that and as part of their compromise and deliberations on the Open Meetings Law they agreed to let that happen. He stated that Representative Carothers has been the sponsor of the bill and one of the Senators in one of the committees put a halt to it for several weeks. The chairman reported Representative Carothers was very strong and adamant to get the bill out, and due to his persistence, the bill has gotten out and is now in a position to be passed in the Senate. The chairman reported the bill should pass and it will save Houston County around \$20,000. He reported this is significant when you think about the tax dollars across the state that will be saved.

The chairman reported Representative Locy Baker has a bill that deals with juvenile incarceration costs that they are hoping will pass. He pointed out the commission has been meeting about juvenile costs and their concern. He reported this bill could help with that to some degree by allowing some of the municipalities to help cover the costs of incarcerating juveniles that violate municipal offenses.

He stated there is another bill involving annexation notification that requires cities and towns when they annex property to notify the state and the county in a timely manner so that they will know what roads that municipality has taken over.

Chairman Culver reported the ability for counties to purchase from NACO's purchase list is in a position to pass. He stated the national association like the state association has a purchasing bid that has a lot of items on it that counties can buy at a lower cost.

#### Consent Agenda

1. Request to award bids on oil and grease.
2. Request to award bid on vehicles for Sheriff's Department.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda awarding bids on oil and grease to the low bidder meeting specs, Southeastern Oil Company, for a one time buy six months supply for a total of \$11,776.70, and to award the bid for vehicles for the Sheriff's Department to the low bidder meeting specs, Medford Lincoln Mercury, \$18,658.93 for white and \$18,658.93 for black. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached bid summary sheets IN Minute Book)

#### Regular Agenda

1. Request to approve the Interlocal Agreement between the City of Dothan and Houston County for the 2006 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program Award.

Chairman Culver reported this program will assist the Sheriff's Department and the City of Dothan Police Department. He stated this is a grant they have worked with them on in the past. Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to grant the request to approve the Interlocal Agreement between the City of Dothan and Houston County for the 2006 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program Award. Commissioner Harvey seconded; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached in Minute Book)

2. Request to address Rabies Control Program.

Chairman Culver reported Mrs. Peggy Blakeney, Director, Houston County Health Department, is present. He stated for years, the health department has graciously and in a very efficient manner taken care of the county's rabies control program. The chairman reported they pick up dogs and other animals that are possible rabies candidates as well as strays they receive calls on. He reported the program started several years ago when the Sheriff at that time felt he did not need animal control under his department. The chairman pointed out they have worked on things over the years, and made adjustments on the fees the county has been paying. The chairman pointed out there have been a couple of meetings with the health department and the bottom line is the current amount of money that the county can verify that is designated for the animal control program does not cover the cost. Chairman Culver reported the health department is asking that the county at least cover the cost of the program. He stated the county has provided a couple of vehicles, and there are two employees. Chairman Culver reported in looking back, that the county has put in between \$40,000 and \$50,000. He stated they have discussed other alternatives to the health department doing it. The chairman reported their suggestion is for the county to either pay them to cover the cost or the county take the program in house. He reported a couple of other alternatives have come up and there have been some discussions with some other municipalities in the county about their interest in taking the program over and the county funding them. Chairman Culver stated he did not think the commission had all the details at this point and he stated he would like to see the commission fund the health department for an additional 90 days if the health department would agree. He stated this would give them fees to cover their cost and give the commission time to gather facts and figures. The chairman reported the time would be April through June.

Mrs. Blakeney reported it would be adequate for the commission to fund another 90 days. She reminded the commission that they have two merit employees who are currently in the program and it looks as if the commission is considering some other options. Mrs. Blakeney reported when the two employees are aware

of the other options they may not have the program because the two employees may decide to look for positions elsewhere. Mrs. Blakeney requested another work session with the commission to work out some of the details with the transition at the appropriate time. She reported the first quarter cost for the program is \$32,441.00, which covers October 2005 through December 2005. Mrs. Blakeney reported it is running about what they expected \$129,000 a year. She reported the commission funds the health department for a total of \$42,000 per year, and they still have a balance of roughly \$9,000. She stated if the commission would fund them the next quarter, then she would like to have a work session for the transition. Chairman Culver stated he had not thought about the two employees. He asked if they could be absorbed into other positions if the program is done away with? Mrs. Blakeney stated the two classifications are unique for the rabies control program because they are environmental health specialists, and once the positions are vacated, they will not be able to replace any in those positions. She reported since they are not environmentalists per se they cannot absorb them into the health department's budget nor do they have a position for them. Commissioner Harvey asked if they will lose their jobs? Mrs. Blakeney stated yes. She reported both employees are vested in the state merit system, and that is why they gave the county two options so these employees would hopefully retain their position. Commissioner Snellgrove asked Mrs. Blakeney if the county appropriated the health department \$25,000 plus the current balance of \$9,000 if that would carry the program through June? She stated yes barring no unforeseen expenses. Commissioner Harvey asked what it would take to retain the employees? Mrs. Blakeney reported the 2006 budget for the rabies control program is estimated at \$129,718.00, and \$42,000 of that is funded by the county, and the difference would be the balance between the two of around \$87,000. Chairman Culver stated in the letter the request was for \$70,000. Mrs. Blakeney reported that was for 2005, and she stated that was the difference it actually cost them in 2005. She pointed out their cost in 2005 was \$112,067.00 but because of their cost of living raise and merit increase as well as additional cost for fuel the estimated cost for 2006 is \$129,718.00. Chairman Culver asked Mrs. Blakeney if the commission approves the 90 day funding and looks at all other alternatives, if she believed the employees would stay through the 90 days? Mrs. Blakeney stated she could not say. She reported they would encourage them to stay, but if another option came along, then she felt they would consider it seriously. Chairman Culver stated he hated for the employees to decide they would leave and he wondered how you would hire someone for 60 days. Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to fund the health department \$25,000 for the next 90 days. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion. Chairman Culver stated the commission has to do what they feel is in the best interest of the county but he did have some concern for the employees. He asked Mrs. Blakeney to let the employees know the commission has not made a determination that they are not going to just continue with what they have been doing. Chairman Culver stated maybe the commission needed to commit to a longer period of time and try to make the determination shorter so if they decide to close the program those employees can have some time to find an additional

job. He reported if there is a decision made in 60 days, it would only leave the employees 30 days to do something. Commissioner Cook asked if the employees might be eligible to transfer to another county or health department? Mrs. Blakeney stated most of the other counties do not have a rabies control program, and are not as fortunate as the residents of Houston County. She reported the classifications are unique and there are no other positions in any of the surrounding counties. Chairman Culver reported most of the other rabies control programs are under the Sheriff's Department in other counties. Commissioner Harvey asked how viable these two employees are to the rabies control program? Mrs. Blakeney reported last year there were 19 cases in Houston County, and it is a program that has to be monitored because of the large number of rabies incidents in our area. Commissioner Harvey asked how Mrs. Blakeney felt it would affect the county by not having the program on what level? She said right now Houston County experiences the program's benefits. Mrs. Blakeney reported by having the rabies control program last year 1100 stray animals were picked up, and of the 19 cases of rabies 142 animals were actually processed. She reported the employees help with the processing of the animals as well. Chairman Culver asked if the commission would want to consider funding the program through the rest of the fiscal year rather than for 90 days? He stated the determination would be made within the 90 days but the employees would know their jobs would run through the end of the fiscal year. He pointed out it would not cost the county any more money because they would have to pay what other entity they contract with anyway. He stated if a decision is made within 60 days the employees would know they have four months to either know they will still be there or know they have four months to look for another job. Commissioner Cook stated she thought that would be good and maybe this would give them enough time to make a decision and hopefully the county would not lose the coverage. Mrs. Cook stated she was concerned about the number of rabies cases. Chairman Culver stated the county could not do without the program. Mrs. Blakeney stated the health department does not mind doing the program but there is a funding difference. Chairman Culver stated the health department had done a great job. Commissioner Harvey stated he was concerned about the rabies and also concerned about the two employees and their families. Commissioner Snellgrove asked if there is any assurance if the employees would stay with us? Mrs. Blakeney stated she could not answer that question. Commissioner Snellgrove withdrew his motion and amended the motion to fund the health department \$50,000 plus or minus the operation fee which would be for six months or until the end of the fiscal year. Commissioner Cook seconded; and the motion carried unanimously. Chairman Culver asked that the commission get together as soon as possible and work out the details in order to make a determination to continue the program as is or move in another direction.

3. Request to consider parking lot at Administrative building.

Chairman Culver reported this was discussed in depth on Thursday and one question was the possibility of rerouting the traffic. The chairman stated that he went over and met with personnel at Scenic Productions and they think this is a great idea. He stated they would like to see the county do this before the traffic is diverted and see the impact. He stated the discussion today would be on the plan Mr. Pool has given everyone. Mr. Culver stated 19 parking spaces would be created on the Oates Street side of the building and the Newton Street side would be for the exit only. He reported good signage would need to be installed. Commissioner Snellgrove asked Mr. Pool if they had thought about putting parking spaces where the big island is on the drawing? Mr. Pool stated they would take a look at it. Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the plan for 19 parking spaces as submitted. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

#### 4. Request to address Dispatcher pay.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the request from the Sheriff as per the letter dated March 13, 2006 regarding dispatcher pay. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported in discussion toward the end of the meeting they talked about the possibility of having a different rate for a dispatcher trainee. Ms. Pam Lowe, dispatcher, stated she was representing the Sheriff, who could not attend. Ms. Lowe reported the Sheriff had written a letter requesting the dispatchers who are the new hires be classified as the Dispatcher Trainees and stay at a Grade 16 until they complete one year of training. She stated at that time, the dispatcher has to go through several classes and upon the completion of the classes the trainee would be moved up to a Dispatcher at a Grade 18. She stated she felt it would give these employees some incentive to complete the training. Mr. Roberts asked the amount of time it would take to complete the training for the new hires? Ms. Lowe stated it normally takes from 8 to 12 months. Commissioner Cook reported the letter states at the end of 12 months, the trainees who do not receive certification will be dismissed. It was reported that the Sheriff had also requested that he and Mr. Roberts be authorized to adjust the pay for present certified E-911 dispatchers. The chairman called for the question on the motion and it carried unanimously.

#### 5. Request to authorize Wiregrass Rehab Center to purchase gas for vehicles.

Chairman Culver reported the commission agreed to a two year funding for the Adult Care Program. He stated rather than giving them cash the commission agreed to give them \$10,000 per year in gas and they have used that. He reported they are requesting that they continue to get gas and the county bill them for the gas. Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the request to authorize the Wiregrass Rehab Center to purchase gas for vehicles. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded the motion. Mr. Pool stated he had some concerns about the legality of the request. The chairman asked Mr. Sherrer and

he stated he did not know he would need to do check on that. Chairman Culver asked if the motion could be amended to include pending the attorney's approval? Commissioner Harvey then amended his motion to approve the request to authorize the Wiregrass Rehab Center to purchase gas for vehicles pending the attorney's approval. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

6. Request from Revenue Commissioner concerning aerial photography.

Chairman Culver stated at the beginning of the meeting he should have asked for a motion that this item be placed on the agenda because it was not discussed on Thursday. Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to add Item #6 to the agenda. Commissioner Harvey seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Culver reported the reason this item was not discussed Thursday was because there was a meeting regarding aerial photography occurring at the same time as the administrative meeting. He stated that this is something the county does every so many years and the plans were to do it next year. The chairman pointed out because of an opportunity that the AL Department of Transportation is planning to fly a portion of the county this weekend it will save all of the entities a significant amount of money to fly the entire county while they are flying. He reported this has not been approved in the budget and any okay done today would be tentative and pending the commission approving the funding in the budget down the road. Chairman Culver reported this would be a tremendous advantage to the citizens and to those that use the programs to have this information. He reported the state, ALDOT, the City of Dothan, and the county are participating in the project, and each entity will pay part of the \$630,000. The chairman reported the request is for the county to go ahead and let them know it is the commission's intent to do this without giving them any money at this time and to go ahead and fly the county. Mrs. Starla Matthews, Revenue Commissioner, reported they will fly the entire county but they will sit on the information until the county goes into budget. She stated that it would save a tremendous amount of money for them to be able to fly the entire county at the same time. Mrs. Matthews reported if they try to take the part that ALDOT will be flying now and fly next year it is an expensive project that they do not need to try to piece meal. Commissioner Cook asked if next year is when it is due for the county to make the aerial photographs. Mrs. Matthews stated they are trying to move it up because the county is growing so fast that it has been being done every 10 years but the state is recommending that it be done more often and they are trying to do it every seven years. She reported the maps they have now are pretty outdated. Commissioner Snellgrove asked if there would be a reduction in cost? Mrs. Matthews reported she had talked to someone earlier and requested the amount it would actually save the county if the state flew the portion they plan to fly this year and then fly the rest of the county next year, and she was told it would be a savings of approximately \$28,000 to let them do the whole project. She said that flying the county again would cost additional flying

time. Commissioner Snellgrove asked if the total was \$636,096.00, and if allowed to fly it would be \$28,000 less? Mrs. Matthews stated that it would actually cost that much more if it is not done now. Chairman Culver reported in the meeting they discussed a total cost of around \$680,000, and the \$630,000 figure as opposed to the \$680,000. Mr. Isaac Mitchell reported there are actually two projects—an aerial photography project and a contour project. He pointed out the contour project is the one they want to fly now. Mr. Mitchell reported ALDOT has a contract with them at a cheaper rate than what we can get if for next year, and their contract is running out and it needs to be executed now. He pointed out if the county goes along with them they will expand their project to include about one-third of the county which will be about an \$80,000 savings. Mr. Mitchell stated if the county waits until next year, we will have to re-fly theirs over again because they are going to cut their project back to just along the I-10 bypass. He reported that is all they need right now. Chairman Culver reported they are flying the potential I-10 corridor to move along with that project. Mr. Pool asked if the state was going to actually give the county \$80,000? Mr. Mitchell stated that they currently have a contract with the company they want to use and it is not through the county. Mr. Pool asked who is paying who to do the contours? Chairman Culver reported the state is paying the company now to do the portion they are doing. Mr. Pool stated if the county does not do it now they will not pay the county \$80,000 plus the \$28,000, and he asked if the county will actually be saving over \$100,000 to go ahead and do the project now? Mr. Mitchell stated that was correct. Mrs. Matthews stated the county will only be saving \$80,000. She stated if the two are combined it would cost that much more to get them to come back down and do the project. Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the Revenue Commissioner's request to approve flying the county for the LiDar data to create the contours with no payment being made until after the October 1<sup>st</sup> budget. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded the motion. Mr. Pool asked if they had concerns about flying this time of the year because of the trees already budding out. Mr. Mitchell stated they were not going to fly photographs until around February. He reported they can fly any time of the year to capture information for contours. Mr. Mitchell stated the rush is that the state's contract is about to expire and they want to execute their contract now and they can expand their project area, and it would mean an approximate savings for the county. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. Chairman Culver thanked Mrs. Matthews and Mr. Mitchell and stated there would be a lot more discussion on it. (Please see attached in Minute Book)

#### Reports from Staff:

County Administrator – There was no report.

County Engineer -

Mr. Pool asked Mr. Justin Barfield, EIT, to come forward and introduce his mentor. Mr. Barfield introduced Mr. Daniel Lewis, a senior at Houston Academy. He stated he is thinking about going into engineering and would be spending four days with him and others at the Road and Bridge Department. Chairman Culver stated he was glad Mr. Lewis was able to attend the meeting.

Mr. Pool reported they anticipated the bridge on Prevatt Road would be open to traffic by April 1<sup>st</sup>. He stated the bridge would be completed March 13<sup>th</sup> and the approach work would have to be done and the contractor will have to put up the guardrail.

County Attorney – There was no report.

Chairman Culver reported there had been some significant weather in the Midwest and he asked Mr. Shelby Womack, EMA Director, if he thought the bad weather might be headed in our direction? Mr. Womack stated he thought it was going north of us. The chairman asked that those people in the Midwest be kept in our thoughts and prayers.

Commissioner Snellgrove asked Mr. Pool about Third Avenue. Mr. Pool stated it is still closed and should be open next week. Mr. Snellgrove asked what area was closed? Mr. Myer Holloway stated it was closed between E. Saunders Road and Beuganvillea Circle.

Adjourn.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.