

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
APRIL 13, 2009

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Bobby R. Snellgrove, Commissioner Frances M. Cook, Commissioner Phillip L. Forrester, Barkley Kirkland, Acting Engineer, and Bill Dempsey, Chief Administrative Officer

ABSENT: Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Gary Sherrer, Attorney, and Mark Pool, Engineer

Chairman Mark S. Culver called the 10:00 A.M. meeting to order, declared that a quorum was present, and welcomed everyone. Rev. Aaron Dickinson, Pastor, Cloverdale Baptist Church, 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 Forrester seconded the motion; and it carried unanimously.

#### Announcements and Public Comments from Chairman and Commissioners

Chairman Culver reported since there was no Administrative meeting last week, the format would be a little more open than it normally is on the regular session's agenda. He stated there would be more discussion if necessary in advance of a motion if called for.

The chairman reported most members of the commission were in Montgomery last week for legislative days, and from the reports he had received that everything went successfully. The chairman reported the legislature passed one of the ACCA's bills and all of Houston County's legislation is in position to be passed. He pointed out there is one minor amendment that has to take place on the Sunday Sales bill. Chairman Culver stated he did not think it would be a problem as it is to clarify what bill is being amended.

Chairman Culver reported since the last meeting, there has been a lot going in the county due to the flooding. He stated he had asked Mr. Barkley Kirkland, acting Engineer, to give a flood report under his staff report. The chairman then thanked the Road and Bridge employees. He pointed out at one time, there were 29 roads closed in the county. Chairman Culver reported in the two weeks since the flood, there are 12 roads closed. He reported it said a lot for the road and bridge staff and their employees and all of their hard work to get the roads open as soon as possible.

Chairman Culver reported there will be a benefit softball game between the media and the elected officials in the city and county. He stated some of the judicial officials and some non-elected leaders may have to be brought in to get enough players. He reported the game will be May 9<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 A.M. at Westgate Park. Chairman Culver reported the entrance fee is one can of food and would benefit the Wiregrass Area Food Bank. He stated WTVY's Erica Proffer is organizing the media's squad and he is organizing the elected officials' squad. The chairman stated it would be a lot of fun and he urged everyone to put it on their calendar.

Chairman Culver reported in light of the inclement weather, they were going to move Clark Matthews' request to the front of the agenda, and he also asked him to give an update on the weather. The chairman stated this would allow him to go back to the EMA office and keep a check on the weather conditions.

Mr. Matthews reported they got started at 2:30 A.M., and since then there had been several severe thunderstorm warnings and the county was under a flood warning. He stated there had been tornado warnings and the county had just gone under another severe thunderstorm warning. Mr. Matthews reported the severe weather should be gone by 11:00 A.M. He stated there would be another round of severe weather in the evening, and it looked like another long night for EMA. Chairman Culver stated he hoped Mr. Matthews was not looking for a raise this year in the budget. Chairman Culver reported the Governor stated in a public meeting in the EMA office that Houston County had the best EMA staff in the state. The chairman reported the commission agreed with the Governor that the Houston County EMA staff is the best in the state.

7. Request from EMA to approve hiring two temporary employees.

Mr. Matthews reported they were asking the commission to approve two temporary employees with a 75/25 match. He stated they do not have the employees but they want it on the books if necessary. Chairman Culver reported the EMA office is overwhelmed with calls coming in and working up damage and reporting the damages back to FEMA and everyone else. He pointed out these are temporary employees to get the county through the flood reporting stage. Chairman Culver thanked the county employees from other departments who went down and helped answer the phones during the flood. Mr. Matthews stated they did a great job along with the volunteers. Mr. Matthews reported they were up over 500 hours for volunteer service to the EMA office. He pointed out that did not count the volunteer firefighters or auxiliary sheriff's personnel.

Chairman Culver asked if there were any questions? Mr. Matthews reported Ms. Stephenson stated if the county uses the temporary workers, the county's cost estimate for them to work 30 days would be approximately \$1,600.00 and FEMA's cost would be around \$6,400.00. He stated these people would be used for the paperwork for FEMA, which is very detailed. Mr. Matthews stated if he did not need them he would not hire them but he wanted to have them ready to go. Chairman Culver stated he thought the county wanted to be in the position of having the workers ready to go because if there should be some reason that payments for recovery are slow coming back, the county does not want it be on their side of the ledger but due to somebody else.

Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to approve EMA's request to hire two temporary employees. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion; and it carried unanimously.

1. Request to appoint Keith Granger to serve unexpired term on the Dothan-Houston County Airport Authority.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to appoint Keith Granger to serve the unexpired term on the Dothan-Houston County Airport Authority. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion.

Chairman Culver reported this would fill the unexpired term of Dick Bell who passed away three or four months ago. He pointed out the Airport Authority had recommended Mr. Granger. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to approve funding agreement with Houston County Water Authority.

Chairman Culver reported he and Commissioner Cook had attended a meeting at the Water Authority regarding adding some lines. He stated they have to do a bond issue, and they are asking for the commission's backing. The chairman reported the commission had done this before with them with letters of guarantee, and the commission had also done this before with the Airport Authority. Chairman Culver stated they had met with them and talked with them and he and Mr. Dempsey had met with Attorney Sherrer and gone over the agreement. He pointed out if the commission does not do this the Water Authority can still do the bond issue but it will cost them possibly as much as 2% more money.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the funding agreement with the Houston County Water Authority. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion.

Commissioner Snellgrove asked the amount of the bond issue? It was reported it would cost \$2.2 million to extend the existing lines, and in order to get a better interest rate they were asking for the commission's guarantee. Chairman Culver reported the plan is for the extension to be paid for by the users, and if the users did not pay it all then the commission would step in and help. The chairman reported the maximum payment is \$130,000.00. Commissioner Snellgrove asked if the Water Authority would provide the commission with a map of the area in which the lines would be extended? Chairman Culver reported the project involves enlarging from an 8 inch line to a 16 inch line down the Highway 231 South corridor. He stated the next thing they hoped to do is to apply for an EDA grant and get a tank and new well down the corridor to serve all of the citizens. It was reported the land had already been purchased on Eddins Road for the well and tank. Chairman Culver reported the commission was waiting to see if they can get the Smithville Road project funded with stimulus money. He pointed out if it does not come through, the commission has money set aside to go ahead with that project. Chairman Culver thanked the Water Authority for working on this. He asked if the Water Authority had any significant damage from the flooding, and it was reported they had approximately \$50,000 worth of damages.

Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to enter into agreement with Waid Parrish & Associates for cost analysis of Courthouse office relocations.

Chairman Culver reported the commission has talked about moving EMA and the Communications Center out of the basement of the Courthouse, and moving Juvenile Court Services into the basement. He stated they wanted to do that in an effort to get the juveniles out of the main flow of the Courthouse. The chairman reported they had looked at the space and feel as though it would work. He stated they do not want to go down and start putting walls up and end up in a situation with ventilation problems because one area has two air conditioning vents and another space might not have a vent. The chairman reported he and Mr. Dempsey met with Charles Waid, who did the courthouse renovation, and they have agreed to do a cost analysis at no charge. Chairman Culver reported once the commission gets the cost analysis, they would know whether or not they can do it.

Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to approve the request to enter in an agreement with Waid Parrish & Associates for a cost analysis of the Courthouse office relocations. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion; and it carried unanimously.

Chairman Culver reported if the commission decides to do both of the projects, the Juvenile Court Services building would be one project, and the Courthouse basement would be another project. He stated the commission would have to get architects for both. Chairman Culver reported the matter would be brought back to the commission at some point.

4. Request for keys to exterior door at the Houston County Extension Office – Willie Durr, County Extension Coordinator.

Mr. Durr, Houston County Extension Coordinator, reported the reason for the request was for two keys to the front door and Auditorium A, the large meeting room, and it would give them access to the restrooms and the water fountain. He pointed out they have three groups that meet monthly, and two of those groups would have those keys and the Extension Office would have a key on hand instead of them having to make additional trips to the office to pick up the key and return the key. He pointed out the keys would not allow them into the work area or primary offices.

Chairman Culver asked Mr. Durr if he was talking about the door on the side toward the Farm Center where the two bathrooms are? Mr. Durr stated yes. The chairman asked if he was giving them a key to the front door in order for them to have access to the bathroom and conference room? Mr. Durr stated that was correct. He asked Mr. Durr if the doors into the offices would be locked? Mr. Durr stated yes.

Commissioner Snellgrove asked Mr. Durr if he was going to issue the keys for each event or was he going to let the group have a key. Mr. Durr stated they would sign the keys out to the individuals. He stated one group has had a relationship with the extension office for many years and they are getting elderly and it poses a problem for them to make the trips to pick up the key and return the key. He stated with the other groups it is a matter of coming into town and getting a key. Commissioner Snellgrove asked if the commission should not issue the keys to Mr. Durr

and let him assign the keys and then the commission would be looking to Mr. Durr to be responsible for the keys. He stated these groups have been meeting for the last two to three years or so.

Mr. Dempsey reported the policy for the commission is that any keys issued to exterior doors of county owned buildings has to come to the commission. Mr. Dempsey stated if he understood Mr. Durr he was going to issue the keys to the individuals. Mr. Durr stated the individuals would be granted the keys for a period of one year. He reported he would preferably have the president of the organization sign off on the key in the same manner as the agents sign off on the keys. Mr. Dempsey stated the reason he brought up the point to Mr. Snellgrove's comment if Mr. Durr issues those keys to an individual for a year then he thought it would have to come before the commission. Chairman Culver stated he thought Mr. Snellgrove's point is that the commission is issuing the keys to Mr. Durr and he would be responsible for where the keys go. Commissioner Snellgrove stated instead of Mr. Durr issuing the keys on a yearly basis, he would need to do it per event. Chairman Culver stated if he did it per event he would not need but one key. Mr. Durr stated these groups meet monthly, and the request was made by one of the individuals. Chairman Culver asked before the buildings were re-keyed if the groups had keys to the building? Mr. Durr stated one of the groups did. Chairman Culver stated the commission is voting to issue the keys to Mr. Durr and then he will issue them to an individual not a group. Mr. Durr stated that was correct. Chairman Culver stated the commission would look to Mr. Durr as the responsible party. Commissioner Snellgrove stated in the past the keys got of hand, and they are trying to keep a tight rein on them. Mr. Durr stated he felt confident in these groups.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the request for 2 keys as requested to Mr. Willie Durr, Houston County Extension Coordinator. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded the motion. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Request from Revenue Commissioner to approve budget amendment transferring funds to cover position that was budgeted for half year only.

Chairman Culver reported several positions were eliminated in the budget by attrition. He stated many of those positions have been vacated or open at this point and will remain open. Chairman Culver reported one of the positions was in the Revenue Commissioner's office and no one has left yet. He stated Mrs. Matthews' is asking for the commission to fund this for no more than a year; and the alternative would be that the commission tell her today they will be relieving one employee of their job. The chairman reported the commission's stance at this time in the difficult economy did not want to terminate anyone unless by attrition. He stated the Revenue Commissioner's request is to make the budget amendment and keep the employee for no more than a year. He stated once this position or some other position becomes vacant the Revenue Commissioner will not fill it, and the vacancy will occur; it is not ready to occur today.

Commissioner Snellgrove asked if it was any new money? Mrs. Matthews stated no. Commissioner Cook made a motion to grant the Revenue Commissioner's request for a budget amendment transferring funds to cover the position that was budgeted for a half year only. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached budget amendment in Minute Book)

6. Request to approve budget amendment for Pardons and Parole building renovations.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the budget amendment for Pardons & Parole building renovations. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion.

Chairman Culver reported when SARCOA moved out the county had an empty building and a lease was negotiated with Pardons and Parole. He stated their space in the courthouse was freed up and will allow the county to be able to do some of the things at the courthouse that was discussed previously. The chairman pointed out also Attorney Sherrer negotiated the lease enabling the county to get \$36,000 per year for the facility. He reported there were some renovations made in order to bring the building up to speed including air conditioning, electrical upgrades, etc. He stated while there are expenses upfront, there will be \$36,000 in revenue the county has not been receiving annually. The chairman stated he felt it was a good investment.

Commissioner Snellgrove asked the length of the lease? Chairman Culver stated he was not sure whether it was three years or five years. He stated he would look it up and let him know. Chairman Culver stated Pardons & Parole seems happy in the building and he felt it was a "win win" situation for everyone. It was pointed out Mr. Marshall Smith is also located in the building. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached budget amendment in Minute Book)

8. Request to approve Rose Hill Landfill waste disposal agreement of \$12.50 per ton for a period of twelve months.

Chairman Culver reported Rose Hill Landfill is where the county takes its inert waste. He stated the county pays a much lower price than for any other. Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the Rose Hill Landfill waste disposal agreement of \$12.50 per ton for a period of twelve months. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded the motion.

Commissioner Snellgrove asked how many tons of inert waste are taken to the landfill each year? Mr. Kirkland stated he was not sure. Commissioner Snellgrove stated the county has paid the same rate for a number of years. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

9. Request to approve items to be sold on GovDeals.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the items to be sold on GovDeals. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion. Chairman Culver stated the list seemed to be all

seized vehicles. Mr. Dempsey stated the only one on the list that is on the county's books is the 1999 Chrysler LHS. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached list in Minute Book)

10. Request to award bids for crushed limestone, fiber mesh concrete, bulk cement and reflectorized thermoplastic pavement marking material.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to award bids for crushed limestone, fiber mesh concrete, bulk cement and reflectorized thermoplastic pavement marking material to the low bidders meeting specs in each category. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion.

Commissioner Snellgrove asked about the price of concrete per yard, and if the 3% local rule would apply? Chairman Culver reported the determination was made that it does not count if they have an office in Houston County. The chairman reported this issue came up on gasoline one time.

Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached bid summary sheets in Minute Book)

11. Request to approve emergency bid for flowable fill.

Mr. Kirkland reported the flowable fill is concrete that is more liquid than normal, and it can be poured in bridge ends and saves a lot of time and money. Commissioner Snellgrove asked if there was a travel charge included in the quotes? Mr. Kirkland stated no, the prices were per yard. Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to approve the emergency bid submitted by B & H, low bidder meeting specs, for flowable fill at \$75.00 per yard. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached summary sheet in Minute Book)

Staff Reports:

Chief Administrative Officer

Mr. Dempsey welcomed Mrs. Tracy Forsha to Houston County as the new Payroll Coordinator. He reported Mrs. Forsha had previously worked with Jones County, Georgia as their Payroll Coordinator and also with the City of St. Mary, Georgia. He stated Mrs. Forsha's husband is employed with Farley Nuclear Plant, and they are building a home near Rehobeth. Mr. Dempsey reported Mrs. Fosha would be reporting to Ms. Sheri Stephenson in the Personnel Department. Chairman Culver stated the commission was glad to have Mrs. Fosha on board.

Mr. Dempsey reported on September 22, 2008, when the 5% COLA was discussed the Commission had requested at the end of six months that they review the possibility of increasing the 3% to 5%.

He stated he would like to report back. He reported the following three things need to be considered:

1. He reported it is still too early to know where the county is on revenues. He stated they do not know on areas such as ad valorem tax, sales taxes, fees and commissions from Probate. Mr. Dempsey stated on at least one of those, the financial institute tax, the county went down by \$150,000 last year unexpectedly. He reported they will not know that until August. Mr. Dempsey stated they know that the Revenue Commissioner's ad valorem tax is expected to be flat. He stated the Revenue Commissioner has indicated that next year is also expected to be flat with no increase.

Mr. Dempsey reported sales taxes are about \$400,000 down. He stated they had projected a slight increase this year. Mr. Dempsey reported revenues for Work Release are not keeping pace with expenses due to difficulty in finding jobs for individuals in their program.

2. Mr. Dempsey reported there are concerns about any additional expenses the county may incur due to the recent flooding. He reported they felt some grant money might be available but they are not certain. He stated some additional costs may be incurred at Road and Bridge.

3. Mr. Dempsey reported a wage study is currently being conducted through Ms. Sheri Stephenson, Personnel Director, for all positions in the county; classified and unclassified. He stated they hope to have the study within the next 60 days or so, and it will tell whether a COLA would need to be in effect or not because they would come back to the commission on a position- by- position basis.

Mr. Dempsey reported based on the three circumstances he recommended that the commission not increase the COLA at this point. He stated he felt the commission should stay with the 3% that was originally budgeted in September.

Commissioner Snellgrove stated Mr. Dempsey had mentioned some additional costs at Road and Bridge. He asked about matching funds for the recent flood. Mr. Dempsey stated not knowing yet what may or may not happen the county would always plan for the worst and hope for the best. He reported the commission was projecting to have a \$4 million ending balance this year.

Commissioner Snellgrove asked about a rough estimate on the damages and the help the county will receive from FEMA? Mr. Kirkland stated they ran some rough estimates last week while FEMA was here and just depending on how they pay for the dirt road repairs, cleaning out ditches, etc. it will probably be between \$5 and \$15 million.

Chairman Culver stated that is one of the reasons the county has the reserve. He stated the roads have to be fixed now and in the past, it has been a year or longer before the county has gotten FEMA money. He stated the county cannot spend money it does not have. The chairman stated

the timing is the concern because it may be 2010 before they get all of the money but they have to spend it now to repair the roads. Commissioner Snellgrove asked Mr. Kirkland if he was saying the upfront costs were approximately \$10 million to get the roads back to their condition before the flooding. Mr. Kirkland stated costs includes manpower, materials, everything. He stated \$10 million is the average of the cost he had stated. Commissioner Snellgrove asked if there is a window? Mr. Kirkland stated if Houston County gets declared, FEMA will have a kickoff meeting and then there is a sixty day period from that meeting to declare all of the damages. He reported once they start coming and doing DSR's then they will assign projects to each site and work will begin. Mr. Kirkland pointed out if they are under a certain amount, money will be received immediately. He reported if they are over a certain amount, then it is worked on like a project in that the county will receive money every so often. Commissioner Snellgrove asked if there was a window in which to complete the work? Mr. Kirkland stated they had not been told, but he felt as though there is about nine months worth of work.

#### County Engineer

Mr. Kirkland, acting Engineer, stated the Road & Bridge Department started at some point with 29 roads closed. He reported the chairman had stated there were 12 roads closed at the present time. Mr. Kirkland reported these roads will require pipes to be ordered and laid. He stated they are still finding some areas with bridge ends and places that are going to have to be repaired. Mr. Kirkland reported on Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, there were 150 sites with damage and it has grown from there. He pointed out it does not include damages to the dirt roads. Mr. Kirkland reported there is a lot of damage in Houston County.

Chairman Culver reported in the last two weeks, while roads have been closed they have tried to get information to the media on a daily basis, and he thanked the media for the great job they have done informing the public.

Mr. Kirkland then showed some slides of a few of the damaged roads in the county.

Chairman Culver stated he thought after seeing the pictures people could see why it is so important to not drive around barricades. Chairman Culver stated the flooding could have been a lot worse but Houston County has been very blessed over the years to have the roads in good shape.

Attorney's Report – There was none.

Commissioner Snellgrove reported the county was very fortunate not to have any fatalities directly related to the flooding.

He asked the citizens in the county to be patient because they have to take care of the roads first. Chairman Culver reminded everyone patience is the key word.

Commissioner Cook stated she had several people to let her know how much they appreciate what the county is doing to get the roads open as fast as they can. She stated they understand that the county will get to their driveways or other small problems as soon as possible.

Adjourn.

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