

MINUTES OF HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
MAY 27, 2008

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Bobby R Snellgrove, Commissioner Frances M. Cook, Commissioner Phillip L. Forrester, Gary Sherrer, Attorney, Barkley Kirkland, Acting Engineer, William J. Dempsey, Chief Administrative Officer

ABSENT: Mark Pool, Engineer

Chairman Mark S. Culver called the 10:00 A.M. meeting to order, established that a quorum was present and welcomed everyone. Rev. Lyle Peluso, Pastor, Dothan Vineyard Church, gave the invocation. Commissioner Frances Cook led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Announcements and Public Comments from Chairman and Commissioners

The chairman reported the county offices were closed on Monday, May 26th in observance of Memorial Day. He reported in the past, a lot of citizens have come down to the county to conduct their business only to find the county offices closed. Chairman Culver reported Mr. Sean Curtis has gotten new signs to put out that will notify the public when the county is closed. He pointed out the county will be closed Monday, June 2nd.

Chairman Culver reported he had received a letter from the American Cancer Society commending Mickey Segó and his staff at the Farm Center for their assistance in helping with the Relay for Life event. The chairman stated they were very complimentary of the staff and that they had a great event. Chairman Culver stated the commission appreciated Mr. Segó working with them and others who have events out at the Farm Center to make sure their functions are successful.

Chairman Culver reported the Farmers Market is open on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 6:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon, and he encouraged everyone to go out and purchase home grown vegetables and produce.

Chairman Culver reported he had received a notice from the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce that the annual cost of living index had just been published. He stated that 100 is the average, and New York and Manhattan's index is 218. He pointed out Dothan and the Dothan Area's is 88.2 making it the lowest cost area in the State of Alabama and the 29th lowest in the nation. Chairman Culver reported Mr. Matt Parker can certainly use this information as

he works to bring people to our area. He thanked Mr. Parker for sending the information to the county.

Chairman Culver stated the county has challenged the city for the last two years to collect money for the Salvation Army Kettle at Christmas by ringing the bell. He pointed out the city commission has 7, and the county only has 5 on their commission. He stated the county felt it was not fair and they recruited the Revenue Commissioner and Probate Judge to make it even. Chairman Culver reported when they got out to Walmart to ring the bell, the City of Dothan had several of their department heads there to help them also. The chairman stated thanks to the hard work of only the elected county officials, they were presented the award for winning the Red Kettle Campaign for 2007. He thanked the Salvation Army for recognizing them and stated they were going to work hard to keep the plaque at the county. The chairman reported the Salvation Army had a very successful year in raising money with the Kettle Campaign, and he thanked the city for working with the county on this project.

Chairman Culver reported on Monday, June 2nd, at 6:00 A.M., the bridge on Brannon Stand Road at Highland Elementary will be closed. He stated it will be closed completely for a half hour to an hour, and at that point, the detour will be opened and will remain in place for approximately 4 months while they replace the bridge. Mr. Culver reported they hoped many of the cars that travel that road will find alternative routes. He stated the Dothan Police Department and Sheriff's Department will be helping with law enforcement, and it will be posted for no trucks.

Commissioner Forrester stated the temporary bridge and the permanent bridge will be closed for up to an hour on June 2nd at 6:00 A.M. He pointed out the detour will be open by 7:00 A.M. at the latest. Commissioner Forrester complimented the Road and Bridge Department on the work they had done so far to get the temporary bridge ready.

Chairman Culver stated the last report he had received from Commander Reed on May 21st, there were 481 inmates in the jail. He stated the problem is that the Sheriff's activity goes up in the summer and the judicial activity goes down. Chairman Culver begged the judicial system to have a special session or something to help get some of the people out of the jail for the summer. He stated it is an issue and they will continue to manage it as best they can. Chairman Culver reported the long range plan calls for the commission to look into a long term solution. He pointed out right now he is not going to ask the sheriff not to arrest anyone, but the county needs to get them in and out as quickly possible. He asked for the judges to be reasonable on bonds, and if they can figure out a way to have court or get them on other programs like community corrections if at all possible. Chairman Culver requested that the state ready inmates be sent to Montgomery as soon as possible. Sheriff Hughes stated the number is down to 466 inmates.

Awards and Presentations

1. Recognition of Sheriff's Deputy for exemplary service.

Chairman Culver asked Sheriff Hughes to come forward and to bring his special guest that he and the commission wanted to recognize for a job well done.

Sheriff Hughes thanked the commission for recognizing Deputy Donovan Kilpatrick. He stated Deputy Kilpatrick had been recognized a couple of other times. The sheriff reported Deputy Kilpatrick was on patrol around midnight one evening and he was riding by a convenience store and saw a police officer running out of the store with his gun drawn and immediately knew that there was something wrong. Sheriff Hughes stated it turned out there was a robbery in progress and both officers had been shot and Deputy Kilpatrick turned into the parking lot and rendered aid to the officers, got them to safety, and made sure they had the assistance they needed to identify the perpetrator. He reported Deputy Kilpatrick found out the perpetrator was still inside the store and he got a couple of civilians to safety until other assistance could arrive. Sheriff Hughes commended Deputy Kilpatrick for the job he always does and he commended other deputies who always do an exemplary job. He reported when he has a deputy that does something above and beyond their daily duty they like to recognize them. He thanked the commission for the recognition also. Chairman Culver stated on behalf of the commission, they appreciate him doing the job he does everyday and particularly in this case. Deputy Kilpatrick received a standing ovation.

Consent Agenda

1. Request to re-appoint Commissioner Frances Cook to the Wiregrass Area United Way Food Bank.
2. Request to approve Public Works project to repair fuel tank monitoring system.
3. Request to continue current contract for asphalt placement for six months with Lewis Incorporated at the same price.

Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to approve the consent agenda to include re-appointing Commissioner Frances Cook to the Wiregrass Area United Way Food Bank, approve the public works project for Turner's Pump Shop to repair the fuel tank monitoring system in the amount of \$16,515.79, and to continue the current contract for asphalt placement for six months with Lewis Incorporated at the same price. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion; and it carried unanimously. (Please see attached in Minute Book)

Regular Agenda

1. Request to adopt Resolution cooperating with Focus 2000 on a public/private partnership for the development of a public thoroughfare through Houston County and the adjoining counties.

Chairman Culver stated he thought this item was quite exciting for our area and he pointed out the contract was discussed at the meeting on Thursday. He then gave a brief history. The chairman stated the citizens of the wiregrass have been working on some limited access highway for at least 20 years if not longer. He reported it has been a long slow effort and they have not made a lot of progress due to there not being any funds at the public level to create such a project. Chairman Culver stated thanks to some people who were present, the opportunity for private involvement has come up and there have been a lot of meetings ongoing over the last year and a half on this project to determine if it would work. He stated the determination is that they believe it will in fact work, can work, and hope it will work. The chairman reported there are ongoing efforts to work with various groups. He stated the unique thing about this, from what they can tell, is that this is the first time counties across state lines have actually been the impetus for this type of a project without direct involvement from the state. He pointed out they have the states support on both sides of the line. Chairman Culver reported these are counties coming together to initiate an interstate quality road project outside of their jurisdiction. He stated assuming all this works out, they will be doing this properly in Geneva County this afternoon and in Dale County this evening for all of the counties to be adopting a resolution.

Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to adopt the Resolution cooperating with Focus 2000 on a public/private partnership for the development of a public thoroughfare through Houston County and the adjoining counties. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion.

The chairman called on Mr. Luther Strange, Focus 2000, to come and make comments. Mr. Strange stated this is a unique opportunity and a great project for this region of the state. He reported they have all known about the need for this project for many years but because of recent economic development and creative thinking they have come up with the idea of having the counties work together in a public/private partnership in a unique way to construct a limited access road that will start in Midland City and go through Dale, Houston and Geneva Counties connecting up with I-10 through Jackson County and other counties in Florida. He stated it may go south and north from there. Mr. Strange pointed out their first priority is to create the I-10 connector. He reported it has been a fantastic collaboration of governmental officials and the private sector in the community. He thanked Mr. Matt Parker and the civic leadership in Houston County and the commissioners for their interest and

involvement which has been critical to making this project happen. Mr. Strange reported the governor has been extremely supportive of the project as well as the State Highway Department.

Mr. Strange reported this will not affect the finances of the county. He stated it will be done by a public/private partnership, and the private entity will issue the funding, bonds for the road, and it will be paid for by tolls, will be bandaged and owned and operated until it is paid for at which time it will come back to the county. Mr. Strange reported at that time, the county will make the decision to accept it or to turn it over to the state. He stated this project is creative, and will be an economic development corridor that will create a tremendous amount of opportunity for development. Mr. Strange reported this is a Red Letter Day and the start of a process. He pointed out there is no guarantee that the road will be constructed but this is the first step.

The chairman asked if anyone had any questions or comments?

Commissioner Cook thanked Mr. Steve Shaw, Mr. Ron Meers, Mr. Strange, and all of the group for coming up with something that will benefit not only Houston County but the whole area. The chairman then called for the question on the motion; and it carried unanimously. (Please see in Resolution Book)

2. Request to adopt Resolution to approve tax abatement for Brownfield site.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to adopt the Resolution to approve tax abatement for Brownfield site. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion. The chairman asked for any questions or comments? There being none, he called for the question on the motion; and it carried unanimously. (Please see in Resolution Book)

3. Request from Kinsey Volunteer Fire Department for in-kind services for site grading, leveling, preparation of pad and building of parking lot and access for new fire station per policy.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the request from Kinsey Volunteer Fire Department for in-kind services for site grading, leveling, preparation of pad and building of parking lot and access for new fire station per policy. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded the motion. The chairman asked for any questions or comments? There being none, he called for the question on the motion; and it carried unanimously.

4. Request to approve budget amendments for Jail and Road and Bridge.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve budget amendments for Jail and Road and Bridge. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion. Commissioner Snellgrove asked if the \$3,100 was new money? Mr. Dempsey stated yes; that it was in last year's budget but was not spent, and the request

would be to increase this year's budget by \$3,100. Chairman Culver stated the other budget amendment for the jail involved moving money, and the budget amendment for Road and Bridge also involve moving money. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached budget amendment in Minute Book)

5. Request from Houston County Community Corrections for contract employee and the budget amendment.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the request from Houston County Community Corrections for a contract employee and the appropriate budget amendment. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded the motion. Chairman Culver asked for any questions or comments? There being none, he called for the question on the motion; and it carried unanimously. (Please see attached budget amendment in Minute Book)

6. Request to order one garbage truck for next year's budget.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the request to order one garbage truck for next year's budget. Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported the issue with the year that was discussed the other day with the special session would not change this request. Commissioner Snellgrove reported in the work session, Mr. Pool stated that he might hold up on this truck, but it has changed since the work session. Mr. Dempsey stated Mr. Pool needs the truck, and the issue was the timing, but it does not impact the need for the truck.

Chairman Culver reported the commission is evaluating a presentation that was brought to the commission for them to potentially look at sanitation payments being collected along with property taxes. He reported Lee County has done that and it is a significant change but one which long term would be financially prudent for the county to do. Chairman Culver pointed out, in essence, all of the county's customers would receive a free year of garbage pick-up because property taxes are collected in arrears. He reported this would create a little over \$1 million hole in the budget for one year. Chairman Culver reported the reason for the discussion on the truck was to be sure this truck is not in that fiscal year. He stated the determination would be that legislation would have to be done and they talked about getting it done in the special session, but that was before the commission knew it would begin today. Chairman Culver reported this will be done in next spring's session. Commissioner Snellgrove stated the reason for ordering the truck now is due to the time delay of 10-12 months to get it in. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

Reports from Staff:

- a. Chief Administrative Officer – there was none.

- b. County Engineer – there was none.
- c. County Attorney – there as none.

Adjourn.

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