

MINUTES OF HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
AUGUST 14, 2006

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

ABSENT: None

Chairman Mark S. Culver called the 10:00 A.M. meeting to order. Rev. Cliff Morrison, Associate Pastor, Bay Springs Baptist Church, gave the invocation. Commissioner Forrester 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 Comments from Chairman and Commissioners

Chairman Culver congratulated Rev. Curtis Harvey on his installation August 13th as the new Pastor of Center Missionary Baptist Church in Newville. The chairman reported there was a tremendous crowd and this is Rev. Harvey's first church. He stated that the commission stands behind him and knows he will do an excellent job for the church. He then extended best wishes to him. The chairman reported he and Commissioner Forrester represented the commission, and enjoyed it.

Chairman Culver reported the parking lot has been opened since last week, and he stated everything he had heard so far had been positive. He commended the Road and Bridge Department and the Maintenance Department for doing an excellent job. Chairman Culver stated there is a spot for employees to have a picnic area and an outside break area and he hoped this would be approved in the budget. He pointed out that the employees who take breaks outside the building on the front will no longer be doing that. The chairman reported the idea for the parking lot came as a response from a citizen in the county who called in when he was doing the radio program on WWNT. He stated he then thought about the idea and he did not know why that had not been done. Chairman Culver reported he talked with Mr. Pool and he found out the project was doable. He stated he brought it to the commission and they felt it was the thing to do, and we now have the parking lot. The chairman reported the commission tries to be responsible to its citizens. He reported he did not know who it was but the commission would like to let them know they appreciate the idea and they acted on it and as a result we now have a very nice parking lot.

Awards and Presentations

1. Employee of the Month – Road and Bridge Department.

Mr. Pool asked Mr. Jerome Pierce to come forward and presented him with the “Employee of the Month” Certificate. Mr. Pool reported Mr. Pierce started with the County in 1997 as a laborer and currently is an Equipment Operator II. He reported he has had perfect attendance for the last 3 years and is doing a good job. Mr. Pierce received a round of applause.

#### Regular Agenda

1. Request from Board of Registrars to approve budget amendment for printers.

Chairman Culver stated he thought there was a change in this request. Mr. Roberts stated unless Judge Cooley can clear this up the request was for a budget amendment to buy 3 micro line printers and a laser printer. He stated apparently the request did not go through the Information Systems Department. Mr. Roberts pointed out Mr. Clark has 2 micro line printers. Mr. Roberts reported there is a question as to why they need a laser printer and they have not been able to get an answer. Mr. Roberts asked that the request be tabled until the commission gets a chance to see if the county does not have some printers they could fill? He stated unless there is an immediate need for it they should wait until it can be cleared up. Chairman Culver stated there are two printers the county can give them if they need them. Mr. Clark reported they had a problem with their forms and he has gotten them lined up. He pointed out they have to have some programming changes and Syscon will take care of that. He stated he did not know what they planned to use a laser printer for. Chairman Culver asked Judge Cooley if there was a problem with tabling the request? Judge Cooley stated she thought it could be tabled but she had promised them they would have something to print on before the election. She reported they have money in their budget rather than waiting for the new budget. Commissioner Harvey made a motion to table the request. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to approve life insurance changes at a reduced rate.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to table the request. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded the motion. Chairman Culver called on Mr. Roberts who stated he did not know why it was being tabled. The chairman asked any of the commissioners if they knew why it was being tabled? Commissioner Harvey reported he had some concerns expressed to him on the way the bid was handled on some different things and he would like some clarification. Chairman Culver reported budget hearings were scheduled later in the week and this was a concern. He asked Mr. Roberts if there was a time issue? Mr. Roberts reported there was a cost issue. He stated if this is not approved prior to the first of next month then the county will be another month later with higher rates. He pointed

out it is not a big cost but it is a cost. Chairman Culver then asked Commissioner Harvey if his motion was to table the request until the next meeting?

Commissioner Harvey stated yes. The chairman stated he thought the proper motion would be to postpone the request. Commissioner Snellgrove stated questions were raised as to why the county did not send out the bids? Mr. Roberts stated they did take proposals but insurance is one of those things that cannot be put out for bid like other pieces of equipment because you get independent agents that go to everybody and the companies will not bid if they have multiple requests. He reported you have to get a good sampling but you cannot open it up to everybody. Mr. Roberts reported if an insurance company gets a request from six different accounts then the company is going to ask who to give the bid to. He reported they did get seven or eight different companies and he felt it was a fair sample. Commissioner Snellgrove stated he thought the other commissioners had received a phone call from one of the companies and they asked why it was not put out for bids? He reported the commissioners were told the company gave a quote and the county shopped their quote.

Commissioner Snellgrove stated he thought the concern is if it is fair regardless of what it is. Mr. Snellgrove stated he knew the county does not shop prices on equipment and other items. Mr. Roberts reported it could not possibly have been done if Mr. Snellgrove was talking about the company represented at the meeting because their bid was the last one received. Mr. Roberts pointed out another item is that their quote that was presented was at least 40% higher for the employee portion on life insurance. He reported anywhere from 40% on the younger ones and then the rates changed on the older employees. Mr. Roberts reported the majority of the county employees would have had a 30%-40% increase on their voluntary life. He stated he would be glad to discuss it.

Commissioner Snellgrove asked Mr. Roberts if it is possible to write a set of specs for insurance? He asked if he could submit a set of specs to the insurance companies and let them bid on it? Mr. Roberts reported insurance companies are not going to create a policy they do not have. He stated if a company tries to write specs for a life insurance policy plan, and if the insurance company cannot meet those specs because the part they cannot meet might be insignificant, then they will not make a proposal. Mr. Roberts stated he thought the process is that the county presented what they currently had and asked for people to quote on that. He stated if the commission wanted to make enhancements to it that was fine but he is going to make sure that the county has at least the same coverage or better. Mr. Roberts stated beyond that he did not know what the county could do. Mr. Harvey asked Mr. Roberts if he stated there was a 30-40% increase?

Mr. Roberts stated yes. Chairman Culver stated that he was sure that Mr. Roberts and his staff have not put all the things under a microscope but they are looking at the bottom line. He reported the county is not required to bid this but the commission wants to be fair to everyone. The chairman reported Mr. Roberts is in his office everyday and when issues like this arise, he would appreciate the commissioners contacting Mr. Roberts in advance. The chairman stated there was a motion to table. He asked if there was any more discussion?

Mr. Ashley Avery, representative of Synovus Insurance Agency, stated the commission can build the specs they want and it can be put out for bids. He reported those that can match the specs can come back and give the correct policy and pricing and the commission can make a decision based on that. Mr. Avery stated the issue he had with it is that he and his group initiated this process for the county to take a look at this because he knew the county was not getting a good deal with the current carrier. He stated after that he found it was being sent around to other groups in town. Mr. Avery stated he should have contacted Mr. Roberts and requested the county make a list of everything this will include if everybody is going to be contacted. He pointed out when the bids came back, they needed to make sure everyone was on the same ground. Mr. Avery stated Mr. Roberts was correct in that his rates were higher but he included extra benefits in that area. He reported the cost would not be to the county but to the employees, and it could be explained. Mr. Avery requested that the specs be written and sent out so everyone can get a fair shake.

Chairman Culver asked Mr. Roberts if he could have all of this prepared for the next meeting and still meet the budget time constraints? Mr. Roberts stated yes. He also stated he did not know what to prepare because he had done everything that he would normally do. Mr. Roberts reported as far as putting it out to a lot of other people, all they did was to allow the existing provider to have a chance to quote on coverage he was proposing. Chairman Culver stated the notice needed to be made that the commission is postponing this item until the next meeting. He stated over the next two weeks, anyone with any concerns needs to contact Mr. Roberts and then he will have a recommendation for the commission on August 28<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Culver reported there was a motion and second on the floor to postpone the request until the next meeting and he called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

### 3. Request to adopt Resolution to participate in Retirees Act #2006-510.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the request to adopt the Resolution to participate in Retirees Act #2006-510. Commissioner Harvey seconded; and the motion carried unanimously. Chairman Culver reported adopting this resolution will bring the commission in compliance with the act that was passed giving state employees a 7% raise and it will follow that same increase for county retirees effective in the new budget year. Commissioner Snellgrove asked about the cost? Mr. Roberts stated he did not remember the exact amount but he thought it was a little over \$100,000. Commissioner Snellgrove reported there were 133 retired county employees on this program. Commissioner Cook stated that it was brought up that the retirees do not get a raise every year. She stated they did receive one last year but it had been several years prior to that since they had received one. Mr. Roberts reported historically the retiree raises have occurred about every three years. Commissioner Cook stated she would like to see them give the retirees a small raise every year so that the county would not be hit with such a large amount.

The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.  
Please see in Resolution Book)

4. Request to enter into lease agreement with Regions Bank for two garbage trucks and an excavator, and authorize the Chairman and Administrator to execute the necessary paperwork.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the request to enter into a lease agreement with Regions Bank for two garbage trucks and an excavator, and authorize the Chairman and Administrator to execute the necessary paperwork. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion. Commissioner Snellgrove asked if it is cheaper to lease than to purchase and how it works out at the end? Mr. Roberts stated, in his opinion, it is never cheaper to lease than to buy because when you lease you pay interest, and when you buy you do not. He stated the question is whether or not you can earn more interest on your money than you pay in their case. Mr. Roberts reported the county is probably in that position but it is pretty much a wash. He stated the interest rate that is quoted on this is 4.18% and the county is probably making 4 1/2% on its investments through the banks. He stated the money can be spread over a period of time and not cost any more money. Chairman Culver reported in the current scenario, leasing is cheaper and the other question is that from a budget standpoint, the county would never be able to keep the equipment up to the standards it does if it had to be purchased every time. Mr. Roberts reported the county does try to hold the lease periods short so that the debt is not pushed out. Mr. Roberts stated this was in budget and that is why it is being done on a lease. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Request to cancel Administrative Meeting on August 24<sup>th</sup> due to ACCA Annual Convention.

Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to approve the request to cancel the Administrative Meeting on August 24<sup>th</sup> due to the ACCA Annual Convention. Commissioner Harvey seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

6. Request from Town of Webb for assistance in repaving the Town Hall's parking lot.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the request from the Town of Webb for assistance in repaving the Town Hall's parking lot. Mr. Roberts stated he needed to know what the costs would be on the project, and do a budget amendment to cover the cost. He asked Mr. Pool if it would be a general fund project? Mr. Pool stated yes. Commissioner Harvey amended his motion to approve the request from the Town of Webb for assistance in repaving the Town Hall's parking lot with the appropriate budget amendment. Commissioner Cook seconded the amended motion. Chairman Culver stated Mr. Pool had reported the cost would be \$13,000-\$14,000 for the asphalt. The chairman asked Mr.

Pool to get the total figure to Mr. Roberts. Chairman Culver stated this item was discussed two weeks ago, and with Judge Cooley's help it was determined this was a voting place and was needed to help the voting place. He pointed out this project will be at the county's expense. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached Budget Amendment in Minute Book)

7. Request from EMA to approve budget amendment in the amount of \$19,459.34.

Chairman Culver reported this request was to cover a toxic cleanup. Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the request to approve a budget amendment in the amount of \$19,459.34 for a toxic cleanup. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported the county hopes to be reimbursed by ADEM for this spill. He stated they had to get a local company to get this cleaned up and they did a great job. The chairman reported that Mr. Womack and his staff are involved in the FERMAC Exercise and that is why they are not in attendance. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached in Minute Book)

8. Request to leave Chattahoochee Park open during physically disabled hunting days.

Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to approve the request to leave Chattahoochee Park open during physically disabled hunting days. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion. Mr. Pool stated that he thought Mr. Bill Gray did a great job at the meeting on Thursday explaining how they operate at the other parks they have. He reported Mr. Gray has always been quick to respond anytime he has had any questions down there. Mr. Pool stated that he thought this would be good for the park, and he recommended that the commission approve it. Chairman Culver stated the commission appreciates Mr. Gray's help regarding the park over the whole year. He pointed out it was Mr. Gray's recommendation to leave the park open during physically disabled hunting days. Chairman Culver stated there was one minor issue with some of the walking trails that will be closed during that time that conceivably get close.

Chairman Culver asked Commissioner Snellgrove to relay a fish story he had relating to the park. Commissioner Snellgrove stated over the weekend he had gotten a phone call about a man who had witnessed someone catching a blue gill bream that weighed 2 ½ pounds. The commissioner stated he did not see the fish and did not talk with the man who caught it, but he had verified it at Southern Outdoor Sports and was told the fish would not fit in the ice cooler. Chairman Culver stated he understood the fish was put in the freezer until a picture could be taken. Mr. Snellgrove stated he thought the State of Alabama record was less

than 2 pounds, and it might be a new record for the park. Commissioner Snellgrove reported there was good fishing down at the park.

Chairman Culver asked Mr. Pool how they were doing on the weed war? Mr. Pool stated he thought they had won the weed war, and now there was something else in there. He stated he had several experts looking at it, and he is waiting for them to tell him what needs to be done. The chairman stated the algae on top of the surface is much better. He encouraged everyone to go to the park and enjoy the fine fishing down there.

The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. Chairman Culver reported by the next meeting he hoped to have a picture and some news about the park.

9. Request to approve the sale of a single axle 1995 garbage truck to the Town of Gordon for \$7,500.00.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the sale of a single axle 1995 garbage truck to the Town of Gordon for \$7,500.00. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded the motion; and it carried unanimously.

10. Request to approve employee's refund for premiums paid.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the employee's refund for premiums paid. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded the motion. Chairman Culver reported this was discussed at the Administrative Meeting and is basically for an over payment for services not received. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

Reports from Staff:

- a. County Administrator

Mr. Roberts reported the budget process is coming to a close for the first pass, and the budget hearings will be August 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>.

- b. County Engineer

Mr. Pool reported resurfacing on Hodgesville Road is supposed to begin on August 21<sup>st</sup>, and closer to the time a press release will be sent out. He stated when they make the announcement people need to try to avoid that section from Saunders Road to County Road #33. Mr. Pool reported they will be applying a G treatment and there could be a wait of up to 30 minutes. He stated they have some work on New Hope Road also. Mr. Pool stated at the next meeting, he should be able to report on two bridges they will be starting.

Mr. Pool then showed a sample of some base dirt. He stated the county is looking to purchase some land or just to purchase the dirt. Mr. Pool reported when his crews build a road the base dirt is the top six inch layer before the asphalt goes down. He reported the dirt has to be a special mix of sand and clay in order for the road to hold up. Mr. Pool urged anyone who might have this dirt to call his office and they will come out and check it. He pointed out they need the dirt to be located in the middle, upper, or lower part of the county. Mr. Pool reported Wicksburg is covered. He reported by the county having pits that are not so far away, they save a lot of money on fuel because they only have to haul the dirt a few miles.

c. County Attorney – there was no report.

Adjourn

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