

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
REGULAR SESSION  
March 14, 2022

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Sinuefield, Commissioner Ricky Herring, Commissioner Brandon Shoupe, County Engineer Barkley Kirkland, Chief Administrative Officer Peter Covert and County Attorney Pres Register.

Chairman Culver called the 10:00 a.m. meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the March 14, 2022, Houston County Commission Regular Session. He declared a quorum as all commissioners were in attendance.

Pastor Clark Cornelius from Grace Anglican Church gave the invocation and Commissioner Harvey led in the pledge of allegiance. The commission wished Pastor Clark a Happy Birthday as today is his birthday.

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

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Culver began by stating that obviously all in attendance set their clocks forward and those they did not would be here in about an hour. He added that it is good to have the extra time of daylight in the afternoon and hopefully one day it will be set to this time all the time. He also mentioned that St. Patrick's Day is Thursday and all meetings are on normal schedule for the coming weeks.

#### AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

##### 1. Proclamation – "Gussie Mae Gibson Day"

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the proclamation for "Gussie Mae Gibson Day" and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

At this time, Chairman Culver turned it over to Commissioner Harvey and he began by stating that very seldom do they get to bestow an honor to a great lady and he has known her all his life. He thinks the world of her and that he cannot take all the credit for this proclamation. Commissioner Harvey said that about four months ago, a lady named Mary Hayes said that they needed to recognize Ms. Gussie Gibson and he could not believe that she was going to be 100 years old as she still looks just as good as she did the first day he meet her. At this time,

Commissioner Harvey read the proclamation (attached to the original minutes) and presented it to Ms. Gibson. Applause was given by all. Ms. Gibson approached the podium and stated that it was a pleasure for her to be here this morning and that she was very thankful for Commissioner Harvey. She also said that she appreciates the commission accepting her this morning and it is a great pleasure to be here as the Lord has blessed her to see one hundred years. Ms. Gibson said she would not have believed it if anyone had told her that she would live this long but that the Lord has us all in his hands and she thanked each commissioner and told them that she loved them all. Another round of applause was given and a standing ovation as well. At this time, everyone sang Happy Birthday to Ms. Gibson

## 2. Presentation – Legislative Report – Commissioner Brandon Shoupe

Commissioner Shoupe began by stating that there is just two items of concern in the legislation this week and one is an update and one is a new item. HB 371 is the new item and it has been passed by the house and has been sent to the senate and it allows tax lien auctions to be conducted online, as right now they have to be conducted in person. Commissioner Shoupe added that this is important as it would allow more people to bid on these auctions which would increase the revenue of the county that is generated from these auctions and lessen the burden for the taxpaying public.

HB 70, which he spoke of two weeks ago, has been passed by the house and now it has been approved by the senate judiciary committee and is awaiting consideration by the full house. This would help get people that need mental health services more appropriate treatment than sending them to the county jails.

## REGULAR AGENDA

### 1. Request to approve priority projects utilizing American Rescue Plan Act Funds

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the request for the priority projects and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. Chairman Culver stated that the projects total \$14,750,000 of the total granted amount which is \$20,572,337, which leaves us roughly five to six million dollars to discuss at a later time and what they intend to do with it. The priority projects at this time are:

Distribution Park/231 S. Water Line and Water Tank	\$5,000,000
Admin. Bldg. Window Replacement	\$4,500,000
Industrial Property Infrastructure	\$1,000,000
Homeland/Sheriff Bldg.	\$1,000,000
Downtown Project Greenspace	\$1,000,000

Taylor/Kinsey, Rehobeth, Cowarts Sewer	\$1,750,000
HVAC upgrades	\$500,000

Commissioner Shoupe commented that these projects will be bided out and that one item that has gotten a lot of attention is the \$4,500,000 window replacement and that he wanted to be clear that they have not selected a contractor and have not agreed to pay anyone \$4,500,000. Commissioner Shoupe added that if anyone is a contractor and they think they can do it for less they would greatly appreciate them bidding on this project as we would love to pay less than the stated amount. He said that Sean, Building Maintenance Director, has done his research and this is what he estimated the project to be but they hope to get a lot of bids on this project to get this cost down. Chairman Culver said that there is more to this project than just windows as it is not just a matter of popping windows out and popping windows in, as there is some construction work and other things involved in this. Chairman Culver added that because of the type of funds that are used, there are significant restrictions on the expending of the money and it will have to be done accurately.

Commissioner Sinquefield stated that another matter of consideration in these priority projects, and with the remainder of over \$5,000,000, he would like to focus on what the restrictions allow them to do. He has mentioned that the senior adults are facing issues with inflation and the cost of gas and also that there are 17 volunteer fire departments that need to be looked at and what can be done according to the US Treasury Guidelines. He would like to see some of these considered in the future as they move forward on these priority projects. Chairman Culver stated that, as discussed on Thursday, they will be meeting and deciding on how that money will be earmarked based on the requests from several volunteer organizations and there are some other capital projects to include the jail if they decided on expansion.

When called for the question and vote, the motion passed unanimously.

2. Request to approve Resolution to Adopt Model Policies and Procedures Applicable to Federal Awards as Required by 2 C.F.R. Part 200

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the resolution and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. Chairman Culver stated that these are federal requirements that have been updated concerning expending of the federal funds. When called for the question, the motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to approve Resolution to Authorize the Allocation of American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Eligible Water Infrastructure Project and approve Chairman to enter into a sub-recipient agreement with the Houston County Water Authority

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the resolution and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. Chairman Culver reported that this project is the first priority project that was approved in item number one. He added that this project allows the county to enhance the services to the citizens in the southern end of the county and allows an increase in capacity that has been much needed. This will be paid for with funds that have been received from the federal government so it will not affect the water authority budget or the commissions. Chairman Culver said that this will help to provide a better quality of water and service to the distribution park and in hopes that this will create some opportunities there. He stated that this is all around a good project and they are very excited about it.

Commissioner Shoupe commented on broad band and that he had talked to Brad Kimbro and they believe that there will be broadband at the park by next year. So with both of these updates it will definitely help to increase activity at the distribution park. Chairman Culver added that he had spoken to Matt Parker on Thursday and being there is enough telecommunications to service McLane Trucking, now there would be a need for more. When called for the question and vote, the motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to approve offer to sell Houston County's interest in the Farm Center property to the City of Dothan, and accompanying documents and addendums, and authorize Chairman to finalize and approve documents

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Siquefield seconded. Chairman Culver began by asking County Attorney Pres Register if he had any comments concerning this and he stated that he would answer any questions. Chairman Culver stated that the addendum clears up the agreement stating that Houston County is selling and City of Dothan is buying and that is not quite accurate as the County is selling their interest as the City already owns some interest in the Farm Center. The addendum clears that and it also sets a closing date of January 9, 2023 or before. The Chairman would be authorized to change any minor items.

Commissioner Siquefield commented that he was concerned, as he mentioned in the Administrative Meeting, if the different departments, which are located at the Farm Center, have been given a timeline of relocation. Chairman Culver responded that they are working on that currently to relocate the Water Authority, In Home Services, Extension Office and a temporary location for the VA as they will be moving to the Moody building project in downtown Dothan when it is completed. Discussions have been made but no decisions have been made.

At this time, Bobby Lewis approached the podium and stated that he had presented the Commission with a statutory deed where the Fellows investment sold approximately 1.2 acres

to the Tindall Credit Union for \$450,000/acre and the commission is talking about conveying 42 acres for \$2.2 million. Mr. Lewis thinks that this needs to be put on hold as there is a tremendous amount of interest in that property. He stated that he left Mr. Culver a message to contact him about another individual that is interested in it and he never heard from him. He said that there is a group of individuals that are interested in purchasing this property and make a farm to market facility to include processing. Mr. Lewis stated that he had planned on being one of those investors but has since declined as he is running for Chairman and he thinks this would be a conflict of interest. He said that in the meeting that each of them commented about secretly selling this, Commissioner Shoupe indicated that he had a potential buyer but they have not heard anything about that. Mr. Lewis reported that based on records, the City owns 16.8 percent of the Farm Center and in that same meeting the commission discussed spending about \$200,000 a year on maintenance. He asked if the City had paid their proportions share of the maintenance all these years and he also asked if they were alerted that there was a potential offer that he was bringing to the table. Mr. Lewis asked that this be tabled, if not totally done away with, until the other offer is put before the commission. He added that this would be local, Wiregrass area producers that grow vegetables and fruit. They would create a market place that would be a state of the art farm-to-table market, processing, wholesale, retail and this will put people to work. Mr. Lewis said they would put greenhouses on the back side of the property and insulate the sound coming from the development. He reported that he had looked at it two years ago and the people that he has spoken to are in love with the idea so he is asking each of the commission to not take this offer and at the very least to table it for ninety days to six months. Mr. Lewis said that the questions he has is about those comps obviously at \$450,00/acre and this 42 acres is about \$18 million and the commission is talking about \$2.2 million.

Chairman Culver reported that the City owns 16% or more so they cannot sell the property without their approval and they want to buy it and they are not going to give their approval and this offer is not only the best offer but the only offer as long as the City wants to buy it. They had a previous offer that they tried to run through and the City pretty much stopped that. They have also had a couple of other calls, besides Mr. Lewis', but as long as the city was in a position of wanting to buy it and had to be part of that purchase, they were pretty much in control of wherever the purchase came from. Chairman Culver feels that they were very fair with their price as the appraisal was significantly lower than the price they are paying and this was a certified professional appraiser and he thinks that what they are doing is good for the citizens of the county because if not they would not be doing it. He told Mr. Lewis that his idea is not a bad idea and he suggest that he take it to the city commission and see if they would be interested in it.

At this time, Mr. George Trotter approached the podium and said he would like to echo what Mr. Lewis said and that he feels that for the last sixteen years the commission has been

irresponsible. Mr. Culver told Mr. Trotter that he would not allow him to make comments like that. He can stand there and ask questions and make comments but he is not going to allow him to make derogatory comments about this county commission and he can address them if he wants in a professional matter. Mr. Trotter then stated that he suggests that since for the last sixteen years they have not taken care of the property and not doing something with it. He said that each commissioner is responsible for this and that in nine months they will have a brand new county commission. He suggest that they lay it on the table and get some input from the public, the tax payers and citizens across the county and what to do with it and allow a little vision before it is sold to the city. Mr. Trotter said that the City will have the money in nine months to purchase it if it is up for sale. He thinks that this commission owes it to the people of Houston County to allow them to have input.

When called for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

5. Request to approve budget amendment for the required RSA employer matching contributions for court reporters – Peter B. Covert, Chief Administrative Officer

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the budget amendment and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Request to approve EMA budget amendment – Chris Judah, EMA Director.

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the budget amendment in the amount of \$100,000 and Commissioner Harvey seconded. Commissioner Herring asked what this was for and Chairman Culver said that this is basically to enhance the volunteer firefighters building and expand its use and also some upgrading on R2. These were to be requested in budget, but they will not have to be in next budget. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Request to sell miscellaneous office equipment from the Revenue & Probate Dept. on GovDeals

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to sell the above items on GovDeals. Commissioner Shoupe seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

#### STAFF REPORTS

Chief Administrative Officer- No Report

County Engineer- 3 Closed roads: Suggs Rd., Walden, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.

County Attorney- No Report

Meeting adjourned.

