

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION
May 9, 2022

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Sinquefield, 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 May 9, 2022, Houston County Commission Regular Session. He declared a quorum as all of the commissioners were in attendance.

Pastor Lynn Miley, of Westwood Presbyterian Church, gave the invocation and Commissioner Harvey led in the pledge of allegiance.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Culver reminded everyone that this week is “Small Business Week” and he encouraged everyone to participate in the weekly events that the Chamber of Commerce has planned. He added that small businesses are the heartbeat of the community. Chairman Culver also mentioned that on Saturday, the “Homeless Connect” event will be taking place at Wiregrass 2-1-1, located at 545 W. Main St. They will be accepting donations and supplies and delivering those items to the different homeless communities.

Commissioner Shoupe announced he also wanted to recognize that it is “National Nurses Week”, May 6 – 12, and that he has a particular interest in this as he has several family members in the medical community, to include his mom and his wife. He added that he had received a message from an acquaintance that, after seeing a picture of Mr. Shoupe and his mom, his mom had saved this person’s son during childbirth in 1983. Mr. Shoupe added that he is so proud of his mom and his wife and that nurses are in high demand these days. He thanked all the nurses for what they do. Chairman Culver added that they are in high demand, as are moms, and yesterday was Mother’s Day. He wanted to thank all the mothers that are with us and those that have gone before us for their sacrifices.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Proclamation – “Mental Health Awareness Month” – Melissa Kirkland, SpectraCare Health Systems

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the proclamation and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Harvey met Mrs. Kirkland at the podium and she then introduced Ms. Theolynn Miller, Clinical Director of SpectraCare. Commissioner Harvey read the proclamation in its entirety and presented it to Mrs. Kirkland. Mrs. Kirkland thanked the Chairman and all the commissioners for allowing this time for a proclamation for mental health awareness month and added that through the pandemic this is an ever growing need in the community. She stated that it has been a tough two years and to those that suffer with mental illness, depression, and serious mental illness it has been a really hard time. Mrs. Kirkland stated that their services have grown and they are excited about a recent funding of a crisis center that will be built in the community which will help people get immediate help at the right time and the right place and that is so important. They will be working closely with law enforcement to make that handoff easy and to keep those facilities secure and safe. She ended by thanking everyone for letting them come to make people aware of this and to erase the stigma of needing help. Ms. Miller then spoke and thanked the commission and stated that the one thing that she wanted to highlight is the ripple effect of mental illness. She reported that about 18% of the nation’s population have some sort of mental illness episode; then there is the family with 32 hours of unpaid services averaged of taking care of someone with an illness; then there is the community, which the commission is very much interested in; then there is the homeless population with 21% having a mental illness; then it impacts the jails, local federal and state; it effects the hospital’s emergency room with 1 in 8 coming in with some type of mental illness episode; and finally the young people in juvenile services. Mrs. Miller reiterated that the ripple effect is so important for the community to be aware of and not only the person, not only the family, not only the community but it effects the world and one step further, the number one disability is depression. She ended by thanking the commission and she is happy just to be able to stand before them and talk of this important issue. Round of applause was given by all.

2. Proclamation – “Foster Care Month” – Torrie Nelson, Houston County Department of Human Resources

Chairman Culver asked Mrs. Torrie Nelson to come forward and stated that Commissioner Herring would be presenting the proclamation. Chairman Culver also recognized District Attorney Pat Jones, who is present to support this proclamation. Commissioner Shoupe made a

motion to approve the proclamation and Commissioner Harvey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

At this time Commissioner Herring read the proclamation and presented it to Mrs. Nelson. She began by thanking the commission for allowing them to be here today and that the Houston County DHR is honored to recognize this month as “Foster Care Month”. Mrs. Nelson stated that she brought a special guest with her today, Mrs. Alisa Fripp. She went on to say that Mrs. Fripp, and her husband, are foster parents for the county and that they do an amazing job as they have been a licensed foster family since 2018. They have opened up their hearts and opened up their home to help many children in the county. Mrs. Nelson said that as of this morning there are 167 children in foster care in Houston County alone and they have 34 licensed foster families locally and they are working to increase that number as the need is there. They are working with 8 more families to get them licensed as they have just finished their TIPS training, which is the required training for all foster and adopted parents must complete, and Houston County offers that training. Mrs. Nelson announced that they have an upcoming training session in September and she encourages anyone that is interested to sign up. She then asked Mrs. Fripp to add anything she would like and Mrs. Fripp said that foster care is an amazing journey but not every moment is beautiful as there are some tough ones and there are some amazing ones and especially when they can reunite children with their biological families. Mrs. Fripp stated that they are in need of more families to foster as the need is there. They have families ranging from their twenties and up to their seventies and that everyone can contribute something from mentoring, helping a foster family by providing a meal, babysitting and even just by providing friendship. She urges people to help as everyone can do “hard things” and she thanked Mrs. Nelson for all she does.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to appoint Robert Hewes to fill vacancy on the Houston County Port Authority

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the appointment of Robert Hewes and Commissioner Siquefield seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to adopt Resolution for Municipal Water Pollution Prevention (MWPP) Program

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the resolution and Commissioner Harvey seconded.

At this time, Chairman Culver recognized an audience member and they approached the podium. He identified himself as George Trotter of 4218 S. County Rd. 203, Dothan, AL. He said he had not known this was on the agenda, but it gives him an opportunity to address the

extremely important thing that faces them everyday which is municipal and/or water pollution. He continued by saying that the greatest single problem in the state of Alabama is the lack of waste water treatment systems in homes and businesses that are going in throughout the county and there is not appropriate sewer systems. He said that he has private well but he does not dare use it in his home due to it being checked every year and the chloroform is off the scale and it only comes from one source and that is wastewater pollution. Mr. Trotter continued by stating that the problem is that the need is that wastewater treatment should be addressed across the county and he just wanted to mention it and bring it forward to the public. Chairman Culver commented that this particular resolution only relates to the wastewater treatment facility at the distribution park and it is annual approval to maintain the facility. He added that one of the reasons there is two million dollars in ARPA funds approved to help with municipalities to expand sewage treatment facilities in the county and the commission believes it is important also. When called for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to donate 2004 Ford Econoline Van to Eufaula Police Dept. SWAT Team – Sheriff's Dept.

Commissioner Sinuefield made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Harvey seconded. Chairman Culver asked County Attorney Pres Register if this would van would need to be declared surplus before donating. Attorney Register answered yes. Chairman Culver stated that the motion would need to be amended to read "Approve the request to donate a 2004 Ford Econoline Van to Eufaula Police Dept. SWAT Team and declare the vehicle surplus". Commissioner Sinuefield made a motion to amend the motion as stated and Commissioner Harvey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to award bid for reflectorized thermoplastic pavement marking material to lowest bidder meeting specs – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to award the bid and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS

Chief Administrative Officer – Mr. Covert reported that progress is continuing on the Houston County Water Authority Project for which the commission has given preliminary approval using ARPA Funds. There are many steps that need to be in place to use the funds and IAC has been assisting to insure that all the requirements for eligibility using the federal funds. He added that they are in the process of drafting a sub recipient agreement, which will be brought back to the commission at a later time for their review and a resolution to actually fund that project.

Chairman Culver said that other projects should be ready soon to bring before the commission to approve to begin this process.

County Engineer – 2 closed roads; Providence Road and Searcy. He mentioned that since the dirt roads were brought up at the Admin. Meeting and since they have had a lot of tickets turned in, they will begin grading on Fridays and Saturdays.

County Attorney – No report

Commissioner Sinuefield thanked Engineer Kirkland for the dirt road grading update and for making that happen on Fridays and Saturdays as this will help with the calls coming in on the dirt road conditions. Chairman Culver stated that they will be keeping an eye on the over time for the Friday and Saturday work in grading the roads.

Meeting adjourned