

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
REGULAR SESSION  
October 24, 2022

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Doug Siquefield, 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 October 24, 2022, Houston County Commission Regular Session. He declared a quorum as all commissioners were in attendance.

Chairman Culver welcomed everyone to the last commission meeting chaired by him and commented that it was an honor to have everyone present today. He added that today they would have their regular commission meeting and then a special presentation at the end.

Pastor Clark Cornelius, of Grace Anglican Church, gave the invocation and Commissioner Shoupe led in the pledge of the allegiance.

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

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

Chairman Culver reminded everyone that this is the last meeting until after the election and he encouraged everyone to get out and vote on November 8<sup>th</sup>. If you are not able to vote, he asked that citizens get an absentee ballot as voting is a right that was earned by a lot of blood sweat and tears and death. He announced that the swearing in of the new commission will be held on November 16<sup>th</sup> and the commission would not be meeting after today, unless an emergency arises, until the 16<sup>th</sup> of November. That meeting will be held at 5:30 p.m. with the swearing-in commencing at 5:00 p.m. and the meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. where they will set the meetings for the next quadrennium. Chairman Culver also reminded everyone about the time change will be on November 6<sup>th</sup> and the National Peanut Festival begins in a couple of weeks with the parade being held on November 12<sup>th</sup>. He asked that everyone make their plans and that tickets are available at various outlets

#### AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Proclamation – “Red Ribbon Week” – Dana Bonney, Executive Director, (334) Prevention Project

Chairman Culver stepped to the podium and announced that the first item is a presentation for “Red Ribbon Week” and called Dana Bonney to join him. Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the proclamation and Commissioner Herring seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Culver then read the proclamation and presented it to Ms. Bonney and thanked her for her work. He

said that he remembered when the Substance Abuse Partnership was formed a long time ago and the work that has been done over the years has been great and they have made a difference, particularly in the lives of youth, and he appreciates the organization continuing to do so and to please keep up the good work going forward. Chairman Culver then asked Ms. Bonney for comments and she began by thanking Chairman Culver for his long term support and from the entire commission as she has learned over the last year that with the power of prevention, lives have been saved and families have been spared the devastating effects of the consequences of substance misuse and abuse. She updated the commission that partnerships have been revived over the last year and new ones have been formed. Ms. Bonney said that they have an open door to 95% of the schools throughout the city, county and also private schools. She stated that last year they had ten youth council members and this year they had sixty-two and they are excited to work on the program. She ended by stating that they will continue their efforts and they appreciate the commission's time in honoring them today.

## 2. Proclamation – “Farm City Week” – Doug Sinquefield & Micah Johnson, Farm City Committee

Chairman Culver asked Micah Johnson and Commissioner Sinquefield to come down to the podium. Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the proclamation and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. Chairman Culver then asked Commissioner Sinquefield to read the proclamation and he proceeded. Commissioner Sinquefield presented it to Mr. Johnson and asked him for comments. Mr. Johnson stated that the week of November 18<sup>th</sup> is Farm City Week and the theme this year is “Down to Earth: Agriculture Sustains Alabama” and it just reiterates and deepens the understanding of the rural producers and our urban workers and that agriculture does not just stop in the county but it starts a very long supply chain with manufacturers, producers, drivers, and many more. Mr. Johnson said that in Houston County alone, it is over \$1 billion dollars in revenue through agriculture through the multiple steps. He added that people are fortunate to live in a county like ours that takes this serious and appreciates what the producers do. He thanked the commission for their support.

## CONSENT AGENDA

1. Appointment to the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens Board – James Ivey
2. Appointment to the National Peanut Festival Board – Ricky Herring
3. Appointment to the Wiregrass RC & D Council – Ricky Herring
4. Appointment to the SE Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission – Brandon Shoupe
5. Appointment to the Wiregrass Rehabilitation Center Advisory Council – Tracy Adams
6. Appointment to the Metropolitan Planning Organization – Brandon Shoupe & Tracy Adams
7. Appointment to the Houston County Department of Human Resources Board – Laura Everett
8. Appointment to SARCOA Board – Brandon Shoupe

9. Request to award bid for Aluminized Roadway Drainage Pipe to lowest bidder meeting specs – Road & Bridge

After the reading of the consent items, Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the consent agenda items and Commissioner Sinquefield seconded. Chairman Culver stated that all the appointments will take affect with the new term in office with the exception of Laura Everett, whose term will begin November 1<sup>st</sup>. The motion carried unanimously.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to approve amended Subdivision Regulations as amended during the Administrative Agenda to include road frontage of 60 feet – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the request as read by the Chairman and Commissioner Harvey seconded. Commissioner Shoupe asked about the road width and discussions on that and were those to be considered now or when. Engineer Kirkland stated that when people park in the roads now in the subdivision, that it is hard to get a garbage truck, fire truck or whatever through there and he does not believe that roads need to be any narrower as it would be a safety issue. Chairman Culver stated that another issued that did arise during the public hearing regarded the health department and that does not need to be changed as the Health Dept. can sign or not sign so that should be fine. At this time, Chairman Culver recognized an audience member and he approached the podium. His name is Ryan Kriser with Smart Homes of the Wiregrass. He asked that when they engineer a subdivision, do they vote on it as it is presented or vote on today to make that an option as it went to a 30 foot to a 26 foot road. Chairman Culver stated that they are not changing the road. He asked if this was not what they are discussing and Commissioner Shoupe stated that this was brought up earlier but not being changed at this time. This could be brought up in another meeting. Chairman Culver stated that this is a safety issue. He thanked Mr. Kriser for his comment. Commissioner Sinquefield asked if the language could be changed about the Health Dept., but Chairman Culver said that this was discussed and the current subdivision regulations cover that part so it does not have to be changed. Commissioner Shoupe asked about the exceptions to those that already have things in the works and Chairman Culver stated that this is an administrative item and that if anyone submits a “letter of intent” by January 1, 2023, even if they have not already hired their surveyor, if they have the intent and are doing the work and in preparation of doing a subdivision, they can send Engineer Barkley a “letter of intent” by January 1, 2023, and they will be grandfathered in. Engineer Barkley added that the process would have to be actively pursuing the project. Chairman Culver responded that if the contractor will send in a letter stating what they have done to begin the process, they can be grandfathered in. When called for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to adopt resolution of official intent of county to issue its’ general obligation loan of the proceeds to SARCOA pursuant to Amendment 772

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the request to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Herring seconded. Chairman Culver reported that this was discussed on Thursday and they are basically acting as a conduit in order to allow SARCOA to build a new building and pay the funds back. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to adopt Resolution Authorizing Commission Chairman to Request Allocation from Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund

Commissioner Shoupe made a motion to approve the request to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Herring seconded. Chairman Culver commented that this will be an additional \$100,000 in federal money. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to accept property on Ennis Road from the City of Dothan for a Public Safety Building

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to accept property on Ennis Road from the City of Dothan for a Public Safety Building. Commissioner Harvey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Request to approve maintenance responsibility swap of certain roads with the City of Dothan effective January 1, 2023, and authorize Chairman to negotiate and sign documents

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to approve maintenance responsibility swap of certain roads with the City of Dothan effective January 1, 2023, and authorize Chairman to negotiate and sign documents. Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion. Chairman Culver commented that he wanted to mention that they appreciate the city and their willingness to work with the county and do what is best for the citizens of Houston County and the City of Dothan to get this work done. Chairman Culver said they were excellent to work with and as his good friend has always reminded him that “time and pressure are the two most important things” and today is “time and pressure”. When called for the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

6. Request to award bid for Disposal of Solid Waste to lowest bidder meeting specs – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Sinquefield made a motion to approve the request to award bid for Disposal of Solid Waste to lowest bidder meeting specs and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. Chairman Culver stated that he appreciates Waste Management, who will continue to work with us on this contract as they honored the price that we were already paying. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Request to award bid for Hot Plant Mix to lowest bidder meeting specs – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to award bid for Hot Plant Mix to lowest bidder meeting specs. Commissioner Harvey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

8. Request to approve final plat for Ryma Oaks Subdivision – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the final plat for Ryma Oaks Subdivision and Commissioner Shoupe seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

#### STAFF REPORTS

Chief Administrative Officer – No report but he wanted to take the opportunity to say that it has been an honor and privilege to work for this commission and specifically Chairman Culver for the last several years. He looks forward to continuing to do service to the county, the commission and to the incoming Chairman.

County Engineer – Engineer Kirkland said that he reiterates the words of Mr. Covert. Two closed roads include Roney Rd. and Taylor Rd. for cross drain replacements and Enterprise Church Rd. for culvert clean out. It will be closed during the day but open at night.

County Attorney – No report

## SPECIAL PRESENTATION

At this time Chairman Culver proceeded to the podium. He began by thanking everyone for being in attendance for a very special day for Commissioner Sinquefield and himself. He asked Commissioner Sinquefield to join him at the podium. Chairman Culver began by saying that he met Doug Sinquefield over twelve years ago at the Broadway Café in Ashford and if you know where that is then you know that is where you meet everybody in Ashford. He added that he is a pretty good judge of people when he meets them and he knew that when he met Doug Sinquefield that he was one of the good ones. Chairman Culver continued by saying that many of you are aware of Paul Harvey's "God Created a Farmer", well Doug Sinquefield is the man he created. He has been a farmer for all of his life; he has served his country as a veteran, he has served his community as a leader, he has served his earth as a farmer, he has served this county for twelve years as a tremendous elected official, he has worked on the ACCA Workman's Comp. Board as a dedicated Chairman, he has served on the RC & D Council, he has served with the Farm City Week, he has served with the National Peanut Festival Board, and he is a dedicated ALFA Representative. Chairman Culver added that most importantly to him is that Commissioner Sinquefield has been a professional partner on the Houston County Commission with everyone that they have served with. He also stated that Mr. Sinquefield is the best singer for a County Commissioner that he has ever heard. Chairman Culver said that personally, after today and on into the future, he wants him to know that they will always be friends and he appreciates everything they have done together and he appreciates his service to the citizens of Houston County. Chairman Culver then presented Commissioner Sinquefield with a plaque in appreciation of twelve years of service and dedication to the Houston County Commission. He congratulated him and asked him for comments. (Applause by all)

Commissioner Sinquefield began by saying that he cannot say enough good things about his friend Chairman Culver for the last twelve years that he has had the opportunity to work with him and see the accomplishments and the many things he has done for the people of Houston County and the surrounding towns. Mr. Sinquefield said that he has watched Chairman Culver in his leadership positions and looking at everything they did for the county and he relied on Chairman Culver for many questions that he had and he could always sit down and talk with him and he would always take the time to explain things to him to help to vote for the right things for the people of Houston County. He added that he has provided knowledge, wisdom and understanding in his leadership qualities and he thanked Chairman Culver. Commissioner Sinquefield acknowledged that he had his wife Mary present today and his son Shane. He said that he does not know how he would have made it without Mary, his wife. He said that he met Mary in 1969 at a college dance and they have been dancing ever since and she has meant so much to him and has always been his strength and his hope carrying him through the good times and the bad times. Commissioner Sinquefield added that he looks at Shane, his son, and his other son Derek that lives in Clarksville, Tennessee, and their four grandchildren, Emmy, Ann-Davis, Max and Grayson and that Emmy and Grayson are a junior and sophomore in Auburn at this time. Commissioner Sinquefield continued by saying that over the years and being a farmer, working thirty years for a corporation, and being involved with so many things that he enjoyed serving on all the different boards that he has in the past. He commended his Executive Director of the ACCA, Sonny Brasfield, and his great leadership for the state of Alabama, 67 counties, and one voice. Commissioner

Sinquefield said he would always remember what Sonny said “it doesn’t matter till it matters” and it matters now as they move forward. He also said that he is looking forward to the future and he wishes to stay involved and do things as he loves the people of Houston County. He added that he is going to get like Bob Woodall and not wear socks (laughter by all). Commissioner Sinquefield continued by saying that he cannot say enough good things about all the department heads of the county and the employees of Houston County as they have meant so much to him. He said that relationships and friendships have been made and these friendships are for life. He appreciates all the Houston County employees for their dedicated service to making things happen for the people of Houston County and serving the people of Houston County. He said that he cannot name everyone as there are over 400 employees and they have meant the world to him. He also said that he cannot say enough good things about the Sheriff’s Dept., as law enforcement is so important in today’s world as they stand in the front line to protect the citizens. He commends the Sheriff and all the deputies. Commissioner Sinquefield thanked Matt Parker for their working relationship with the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce along with the City of Dothan. He knows that the county will continue to see great progress going forward in the future. (Applause and standing ovation by all)

Chairman Culver then came to the podium and began by saying that those that know him know that he has a counter on his watch that has been counting down the days and that he still has twenty-two days and today is not the last day but it feels like it. He said that there are a couple of people that he would like to recognize before he begins. He thanked Sonny Brasfield for being here today as he drove down from Montgomery and he did not know that he was going to be here today. Chairman Culver said that Sonny Brasfield has been one of his dearest friends and has taught him all the political stuff that he knows, and tries to forget, that he doesn’t feel is important, but that you have to have knowledge of and he looked at Sonny and said “you know where you are and I don’t have to say”. Chairman Culver then recognized his son Cannon Culver and said that he is the youngest and he drove down from Huntsville today. He said that his eldest son had to work today and his daughter-dentist is fixing someone’s teeth or traveling whatever it is she does and could not be here. He thanked Cannon for being here today and said that he is so proud of him as he is a chemical engineer now that he just graduated. Chairman Culver said he would not be a normal person if he wasn’t thinking about his mother, grandparents who got him here, his former wife that spent twenty-five years with him helping him to be here and is still his dear friend. He said that it takes a lot of people to make thirty-six years happen as you just don’t do it by yourself. He continued by saying that today is his 824<sup>th</sup> meeting and if you count administrative meetings it has been over 1600 meetings.

Chairman Culver said that when he started he was twelve (laughter by all) and there was no cell phones and no internet and the commissioners shared a closet as their office on the first floor of the courthouse, which is now Carla Woodall’s’ office. They had one four-drawer file cabinet and that each of them had a file drawer and they shared that small space. Chairman Culver then thanked the Sheriff for his partnership over the years as well. He proceeded by saying that sometimes we question God when he speaks to us and more often we don’t realize when God is speaking to us. He absolutely believes that he being here today is a God thing in his life as there is no way that there is any other sane explanation for somebody doing this (job) for thirty-six years and feeling as blessed as he does today after nine terms and there is no way this could not be a God thing. Chairman Culver said that a simple

“Thank you” to all the people that have been involved in this minimizes significantly how he feels today but he whole heartedly thanks God and the citizens of this county for the last thirty-six years. He said that people have asked him “What are you most proud of?” and he surprises them when he says that he is happy for the things they built, the buildings they bought, the roads they paved, the partners they have funded, and the fiscal responsibility they had because they have done all that and it has been great. But he said those things are just concrete and asphalt and things that they were supposed to be doing and he is proud of that and the growth, but it is the people whose lives we have touched that he is the proudest of.

Chairman Culver said that he can think back on people and events that ring so clearly in his mind. He can remember when they were thinking of buying this (administrative) building and they had a public hearing and everyone said that they were spending too much money. He was a first term commissioner and young and he did not know any better. He said that he looked at all of them, which was a room full, and said “you know if it gets me un-elected, so be it”. From then on Robert Crowder called him “so be it” and when something controversial would arise, he would ask “what do you think about it so be it?” (Laughter from all) Chairman Culver said that he can remember he and Sonny Brasfield were sitting in front of a governor and they were about to bring him (the governor) a bunch of prisoners and he was giving them a lesson in how they were being bad little children. Chairman Culver said that he looked at that governor and said “that’s all well and good Governor but we are bringing you a bunch of prisoners in the morning” and he got up and walked out of the Governor’s office and ever since when Sonny gives a speech, he says “that’s all well and good Governor”. He said that they did take those prisoners and they got rid of all the prisoners around the state. He reflected on the day in this very room (Commission Chambers) and the only time he lost control of a commission meeting, even with George (Trotter), this room was slam full when they were thinking about building a jail. He said that people present that day had their hands held up singing “We Shall Overcome” and they would not sit down and they would not let him control them. But Chairman Culver said that God has a way of working and these church people did not want the jail where it was going to be located behind the Administrative Building, and they all came with their tooth brushes and were ready to go to jail. He said that the current location of the jail fell out of the sky and it was put there and it worked out well and the pastor and himself got to be best friends and went to leadership Alabama together. Chairman Culver said “God is good people, God works”. He said that he stood in this room with George Jones and they proclaimed “George Jones Day” in Houston County and he enjoyed that and he enjoyed everything about that project and he still hopes one day it comes to fruition. He added that he enjoyed standing with Houston County Queens that he saw as little bitty people and are now big people being successful in life. The Jules Singley’s of the world, that he loves to death, and is now Ms. Wicksburg, the Red Ribbon Presentations, the people that are recognized for doing good works in the county, as those are the things he remembers. The People are the things he will take with him when he leaves here in twenty-two days, not today (laughter). Chairman Culver stated that is things like that they have done for citizens.

He wanted to mention a couple of groups of people and he began with the commissioners that he has served with, twelve commissioner and one Chairman, and they have been professional, honorable, and he has been blessed to serve with every one of them, even Curtis (laughter) who gives him a hard time every day but has been a great friend. Chairman Culver said that when he first got elected, he watched

the news and he saw the Vernon Town Council having a meeting and they were throwing chairs at each other, and acting like Vernon, he said “that is not what I want the Houston County Commission to be” and he has worked hard as the Chairman to make sure the citizens are proud of what they do. Secondly, it’s the relationships that they have had with the community and the region, not just professionally, but as friends, such as Matt Parker, Mike Schmitz, David Money, both Mayor Saliba’s, Bob Woodall, Pat Thomas, and on and on and on. Chairman Culver said they have made the region not where the city was the city and the county was the county, but they are all in this together for the good of the citizens. He said “that didn’t just happen, did it Mike (Schmitz)” and Mr. Schmitz responded “you did it all” (laughter) and Chairman Culver said “you are out of order” and he always wanted to say that (laughter). He said that what he is the most proud of is how they (the commission and others) have formed a region to work together for the good of the citizens and that’s important.

Lastly, and most importantly, he said that he is so grateful for the employees that the county has, both hired and contracted, as they have made everything possible for the last thirty-six years. Chairman Culver said that they get elected and they sit up there and think they are important, and he said they really are not. But it’s the employees that make the things happen and they could not do anything without the employees as services could not be provided without them. Chairman Culver asked if anyone noticed the trees on each side of the door and wondered what they were. He continued by saying that a very good friend of his, that he loves and respects greatly, gave him a suggestion about those trees. He thought it was a little crazy at first but the more he thought about it and the more the days came down, he felt compelled to do something for the employees that have given so much to him. That includes employees that are his friends and acquaintances, and many he does not even know, but he knows what they have done for the county. Chairman Culver said that those are four peach trees that represent four decades that he has served on the commission and he bought them in honor of his family, his three children and his mother. He stated that those trees will be planted in the island in front of the building and he hopes that the trees grow over the years and when they produce peaches he hopes employees in this building can enjoy that fruit forever. Chairman Culver said that is his way of giving back, always giving back, to the people that made our (the commission) jobs what it is; made us (the commission) what they are. He said that it is not much, maybe just a peach five years from now, but when the employees enjoy the peach he wants them to remember how much they are appreciated and how thankful they (the commission) are of them and how much they mean to the commission.

Chairman Culver said that he could stand up all day and tell all kinds of stories but Jackie (Culpepper) is already making eyes and telling him to make it short and she is still the boss for twenty-two more days. He ended by saying that for his eight hundredth and some odd meeting, he wanted to give just a little bit of advice. Chairman Culver stated that this has not been a chapter in his life, but it has been the Whole Book. The only advice that he would give to the incoming commission is “don’t take all this stuff so serious; this is just politics, it ain’t real life, all these folks are real life and your family is real life”. Chairman Culver said “don’t worry about the mule going blind, just load the wagon” (laughter). He added “don’t let the politics and the nay-sayers get in the way of doing the right thing as you were elected to serve”.



Chairman Culver then quoted Winston Churchill “You’ll never reach your destination if you stop and throw rocks at every dog that barks along the way”. He said that he believes that and to know what is important and know what is just noise and filter the noise; work together and give credit to those in lesser positions because they probably deserve it. He then quoted Ronald Reagan “We can get a lot done if we don’t worry about who gets the credit”. With that he thanked everyone one last time and he turned it over to Commissioner Brandon Shoupe. (Standing ovation and applause)

Commissioner Shoupe then approached the podium and said that it is an honor, and always has been an honor, to serve with Chairman Culver, and he predicts that the building that they are standing in will one day bear his name. He added that he has learned a lot from him (Chairman Culver) and he has always tried to steer him in the right direction and he greatly appreciates his friendship and his service. He stated that Chairman Culver is correct as it is about the people that we serve. He is in hopes that the future commissions will take that message to heart.

At this time the portrait of Chairman Mark Culver was unveiled and another applause and standing ovation was given.

Meeting adjourned.