

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
REGULAR SESSION  
November 28, 2022

PRESENT: Chairman Brandon Shoupe, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Tracy Adams, Commissioner Ricky Herring, Commissioner James Ivey, County Engineer Barkley Kirkland, Chief Administrative Officer Peter Covert and County Attorney Pres Register.

Chairman Shoupe called the 10 a.m. meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the November 28, 2022, Houston County Commission Regular Session. He declared a quorum as all commissioners were in attendance.

Commissioner Harvey gave the invocation and Commissioner Herring led in the pledge of the 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 Shoupe began by stating that the next Commission meeting will be on Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022, with the Administrative Meeting being held at 9:00 a.m. and the Commission Meeting at 10:00 a.m. The Administrative Meeting the Thursday before will not be held due to the ACCA Legislative Conference. He also reported that the annual County/City Red Kettle Bell Ringing Competition will be held on Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. at the Northside Wal-Mart.

Commissioner Ivey announced that he may have to step out early due to an appointment.

#### AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

##### 1. Presentation – “Visit Dothan” – Aaron McCreight

Chairman Shoupe introduced Mr. Aaron McCreight, President of Visit Dothan, and he approached the podium. Mr. McCreight said he is here today to speak and he will begin by talking about sports as he stated that sports are a huge business for the City of Dothan and Houston County. He said that when he talks about sports, he is mostly speaking about youth and amateur tournaments. Mr. McCreight emphasized that these are massive tournaments that come nearly every weekend to our area. This year alone, so far, there have been sixty-one tournaments and they still have more before the year ends with multiple tournaments going on at the same time of different sports, different facilities, and different fields. Mr. McCreight said that the area has tremendous facilities here already but more are coming and they are overloaded with sports. He added that those tournaments equate to over 44,000 room nights at local hotels which generate taxes for the city and the county and the revenue is three times

what it was four years ago. Mr. McCreight said that everyone needs to work together to continue to grow the facilities by building and improving what there is already in place. James Oates Park, which was constructed in 2017, has already received uplift by placing artificial turf in the infields and this helps with play when there is rain. He continued by stating that baseball and softball are the major sports but what was needed was flat fields which host soccer, flag football, football, freebie and anything else that requires a flat field. He said that Mr. Izell Reese enters the picture and begins working on flat fields at the old Grandview Elementary School. He thanked the county for their portion that they did on this project with grading the area and prepping it for the turf installation which the city is approving at their upcoming meeting. Mr. McCreight reported that this will be a full size FIFA soccer field of turf and it can be used for that but also used for flag football and tackle football as this is a multi-purpose use facility. He said that the City is working on Wiregrass Park by taking down three baseball/softball fields and will install six NFL Flag fields. Mr. McCreight stated that with the work at Rip Hewes Stadium and Wiregrass Park, there will be over twenty flag football fields in Dothan and it just so happens that Mr. Reese is the Executive Director of NFL Flag Football so they foresee many tournaments in the future.

Mr. McCreight reported that beside sports, they also promote leisure and their job is to get people to Dothan to spend the night and they do that two ways; mostly through sports activities but also with leisure as Dothan is a pass through to the beaches of Florida. He emphasized that they would like for them to stop and enjoy what Dothan has to offer so they developed a contest that offered free nights at hotels, restaurant gift cards, and other things. They did this for the fall season and now they are starting a Christmas Campaign giveaway in hopes of getting attention on the website to put information about Dothan out there to visitors. They plan to do another giveaway in the spring as well.

Chairman Shoupe commented that recently he spoke to a gentleman that had moved down from Pennsylvania as he had family in Destin and always drove through Dothan to visit them so when it was time to retire, he chose Dothan. Chairman Shoupe then asked about the Rivals Camp and Mr. McCreight said that it is in the works at this time as Izell Reese also oversees the MLB Pitch, Hit and Run, the Junior Homerun Derby, major league soccer youth department, Junior NBA and NHL Street Hockey as those are all under his RCX umbrella. He added that RIVALS has a combine every year in about eight or ten locations across the country and they are hopefully looking to bring one of those to the Dothan area and that would be thousands of visitors. Mr. McCreight said that other locations for RIVALS are NFL cities and when they started working on the Grandview project they applied for a grant from the NFL foundation and they received \$250,000 to build the fields and he was proud to say that Dothan is the first city to ever in the world to have this facility built in a city that does not have an NFL team. He ended by thanking the county for doing the ground work and getting this project started.

## REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to authorize resolution and approve sub-recipient agreement to expend ARPA Funds for the City of Taylor infrastructure project

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the resolution and Commissioner Ivey seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Request to approve budget amendment for the ARPA Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund – Peter B. Covert, CAO

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the budget amendment for the ARPA Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund and Commissioner Herring seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Request to adopt resolution authorizing a loan to the County from Synovus Bank in the amount of \$2,000,000 to be evidenced by the issuance of the County's \$2,000,000 general obligation warrant to Synovus Bank

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Adams seconded. Commissioner Harvey asked for some collaboration on this as he missed this part of the Administrative Meeting. Chairman Shoupe explained that item #3 and #4 are tied together and this is the resolution to authorize the county to issue the warrants for the bond in order to receive the \$2,000,000 and Agenda item #4 is to turn around and give the money to SARCOA for the construction of a building. When called for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to adopt resolution authorizing a loan of the proceeds of the County's \$2,000,000 general obligation warrant to SARCOA pursuant to Amendment 772

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve and Commissioner Harvey seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Request to approve budget amendment for marketing services and authorize chairman to negotiate agreement

At this time, Chairman Shoupe asked Melody Lee to come forward to explain the marketing services she is representing. Ms. Lee stated that she had spoken with Chairman Shoupe a few months ago concerning hiring issues with the county and she is seeing that this is a problem that is common today with other clients as well. She noted that the main thing that the county has going for them as an employer, is their four day work week and that is huge right now in

the market. Ms. Lee said that people want to get away from working seventy hours a week as they want to enjoy their lives outside of work. She continued that she starting working on a campaign for Houston County and entitled it "Houston County Growing". Ms. Lee stated that in the beginning stages, the campaign would concentrate on the first three months of growing the team and it would be an exclusive employment campaign that would feature specific employees that work for the county. She said that she was really surprised that a lot of employees have other side businesses they can do with their three day weekend that they have each week. For example, they have florists, cake bakers, preachers, and several others that have other occupations because they can do that with working a four day work week. Ms. Lee added that with all the paid holidays and the benefits that it is a large list and it's something that very few employers in the area can offer to anybody. She said that her company's task would be to put together an enticing campaign focusing on the current employees that the county has that love their jobs and they want to spread the message that the county is a great place to work. Ms. Lee said the campaign will begin in January, 2023, with a story telling video that features county employees telling the reasons why they love working for Houston County. Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn would be the social media platforms used in the campaign. She added that the first few months would focus solely on employment, but down the road they would use this for "Houston County Growing" in all aspects to include economy, schools and other items. Chairman Shoupe commented that he is looking forward to this and hopefully it will make a difference as the county struggles in hiring younger employees and the majority of them are on social media. Commissioner Adams stated that he has heard from others that you have to actually know someone that works for the county in order to get hired and he feels that several years ago that was the case. Ms. Lee said that the success with this campaign is going to be one hundred percent reliant on the feedback from, not only the commission, but from employees of the county during the interviews in regards to the questions that they ask them. She feels that a lot of the misconceptions will be addressed in the campaign to bring clarification.

Commissioner Harvey asked how will they address the salary disparity, as that is where the real issue is and how will it be addressed in this campaign? Chairman Shoupe responded that it is certainly an issue. Ms. Lee said that she believes it all started during COVID and when the world shut down most people had their 9-5 jobs and then they were sent home. At that time she feels that the mindsets shifted and more people wanted quality of life instead of the actual money and the biggest perk of the county is to have that lifestyle to spend more time at home or with family. Chairman Shoupe reported that a pay study is coming and the county will never be able to pay as much as private employees but they do have to remain competitive.

At this time, Chairman Shoupe asked for a motion on this item. Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the budget amendment and authorize the chairman to negotiate the agreement and Commissioner Adams seconded. Commissioner Herring asked about the cost as

the estimated cost is \$2,500 per month and \$30,000 per year and Chairman Shoupe said that is correct and after the first year they can look and reevaluate this. This contract is for one year.

When called for the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

6. Request to award bid for (7) Chevrolet Tahoe's to lowest bidder meeting specs and approve accompanying budget amendment– Sheriff's Dept.

Commissioner Herring made a motion to award the bid for (7) Chevrolet Tahoe's and approve accompanying budget amendment. Commissioner Adams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

7. Request to add the following item to GovDeals: 2010 Chevrolet Malibu (Sherriff Department)

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Adams seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

#### STAFF REPORTS:

Chief Administrative Officer – No report

County Engineer – One closed road Taylor Road and will be closed for another week.

County Attorney – No report

Meeting Adjourned