

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION
May 22, 2023

PRESENT: Chairman Brandon Shoupe, 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 10:00 a.m. meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the May 22, 2023, Houston County Commission Regular Session. He declared a quorum as a majority of the commissioners were in attendance.

ABSENT: Commissioner Curtis Harvey

Dr. Charles Lewis, Senior Pastor at Dothan Community Church, gave the invocation and Commissioner Herring led in the pledge of allegiance.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Shoupe began by congratulating all the graduates from the area high schools and colleges, as he spoke last evening at the Troy Spring Commencement, and he wished all the young people, and older that are getting their college degrees, the best in their endeavors. He also congratulated Dr. Curtis Harvey as he received his doctorate degree last week in theology and he has worked hard on this accomplishment for several years. Chairman Shoupe announced that the Sanitation Dept. will be picking up garbage on Monday as normal even though it is a county holiday and he encouraged everyone to have their garbage cans out by 6:00 a.m.

Chairman Shoupe then reported on the legislative efforts from the state house as they have had a productive year. He stated that ACT 2023-130 was approved and it limits municipalities from establishing speed limits on county maintained roads. Chairman Shoupe said that the county has not had this issue, as far as he is aware, but certain parts of the state have. He added that ACT 2023-135 increases the threshold dollar amount on the bid law from \$15,000 to \$30,000 for labor, materials, and supplies due to the increase in inflation in the past couple of years and the bid law needed to be revised. He continued with ACT 2023-204 which increases supplemental funding for local EMA agencies, establishes the standards for course work for local EMA director certificates and makes other changes strengthening our local EMA agencies.

Chairman Shoupe reported that HB 168 didn't pass but if it is sent to the house it is much like HB-2023-135, which is also trying to adjust things for inflation. This would adjust the bid threshold for public works projects from \$50,000 to \$100,000. He added that it is impossible to build anything for \$50,000. This also reduces advertising requirements.

Commissioner Ivey congratulated the Wicksburg Varsity Softball team for placing 2nd in the 2A State Championship tournament last week. He added that they played six games in two days and they played very well. He congratulated each one for the job they did.

Chairman Shoupe stated that Houston Academy won the state title in baseball and he congratulated them for that honor.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Presentation – Friends of Dupree School – Steven Smith

Mr. Smith approached the podium and said that it was an honor to be in attendance today and he represents a local landmark, Historic Dupree School, which started as a log cabin back in the late to mid 1800's. He said that the structure that is standing now at the crossroads has been there for well over a hundred years and was originally built in 1904. It was revamped and modernized in 1937 through public works. They added gables, porches, and windows but did not add electricity or plumbing at that time. Mr. Smith said that he is the son of the Wiregrass and his primary home is in Charlotte, North Carolina. His mom was present and she was a student of the Dupree School in the 1930's along with his grandparents who attended school there in the 1900's. His great-grandfather was a pole manager there from 1920 to about 1940. Mr. Smith also recognized the committee that was present today. He said it all started about two years ago with about two people when the Dupree School was almost lost as a man thought he owned the land and was having the school moved. He added that's when the community began to rise up and formed a non-profit organization to help to save the school. He announced those on the board and that the advisory board included our own county commissioner Tracy Adams, former county commissioner Doug Siquefield, John McDaniel, Bruce Wozow, Steve Hicks, Brad Kimbro and many others. Mr. Smith said that today he wanted to give tribute the City of Ashford and Mayor Barfield as they have donated \$10,000 to the project. Overall the organization has raised close to \$50,000 and they are going to begin working on the school. Mr. Smith also stated that Rep. Paul Lee came out when they had the Historic Dupree School Day, and he stated that he was amazed that this particular project has gained so much and he also gave \$5,000. He added that Senator Chesteen is working in Montgomery to get help with the project and gave \$2,500. Mr. Smith said that when they started this project that it was more than just patching up an old building but the process is preserving history. The majority of those that attended the school were children from

sharecroppers and from the pictures they have most did not even have shoes. But, they received an education which was important. Mr. Smith mentioned Ms. Thelma Myers that walked to school each day and she was from a single parent household as her father passed when she was a child and she continued by serving in the US Navy. He said that the person that owned the one acre that the house stands on, Mr. Simon Harper, still has a house within the eye view of the school. Mr. Smith said that the Dupree School is on track to become listed on the National Historic Register. At this time, they are establishing a foundation so that Dupree School will not go away. They have filed for grants at this time as they have raised all funds thus far and are excited to work with college and universities to have an extension program for music. They are also working with local agriculture programs to have a farm support program at the school as well and also working towards having a cultural center that will tell the story of the American farmer in southeast Alabama. He ended by thanking the commission and hopes that Houston County will find a way to value this great jewel they have at the crossroads of Coot Adams and Antioch Church Road.

Chairman Shoupe thanked them for coming today and for what the committee is doing to preserve the cultural history as it means a lot.

2. Presentation – EMA & Volunteer Fire Association Updates – Chris Judah, EMA Director

Mr. Judah approached the podium and stated that he had a presentation but that would have to be at a later date. He said that he provided a package to the commission with updates and he will be going over some summaries of the Houston County VFA and EMS as well as EMA. He began by stating that the VFA has a lot going on is changing the “it’s always been this way” approach and moving forward. They have initiated more training county wide to include about 60-70 participants and they have increase their relationship with the Red Cross Association and National Reporting Center in regards to Hazmat issues. Mr. Judah thanked the county attorney, as well as the commission, in helping to organize some financial committees to establish accountability within the association. He added that Pres Register is assisting in re-writing the county by-laws for the VFA. In regards to EMA, he will be initiating a monthly package with updates on EMA as his department has grown in the last six years and they are making progress. They are doing continuous training and are partnering with other agencies and entities to provide this training to them and others. Mr. Judah stated that they are also working to build up the volunteer fire and their response times have improved drastically with a 3 – 5 minute response time and with 3 – 4 partners responding as well. He reported that they also work closely with the EMA in local counties as they have great working relationships.

Mr. Judah reported that he will come back to give a report on the weather sirens as they have a lot of issues with those at this time. He stated that Houston County EMA is growing and they have a lot going on and they are preparing for the upcoming hurricane season.

Commissioner Herring commented and thanked Mr. Judah for what he does for EMA and he appreciates it and how he represents the commission.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to approve resolution to vacate a portion of James Lane

Commissioner Adams made a motion to approve the resolution to vacate a portion of James Lane and Commissioner Herring seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Request to approve resolution authorizing the issuance of a General Obligation Warrant to SmartBank – Peter Covert, CAO

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

3. Request to approve budget amendment for revenue and associated expenditures relating to Pistol Permit Grant Reimbursement Fund – Peter Covert, CAO

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

4. Request to approve budget amendment to record revenues from Johnson & Johnson Opioid settlement – Peter Covert, CAO

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

5. Request to approve budget amendment for Alabama Mutual Aid System pass through grants and Strategic National Stockpile grant – Peter Covert, CAO

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

6. Request to authorize Chairman to negotiate purchase and sale of 172 Prevatt Road for no more than \$290,000

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to authorize Chairman to negotiate purchase and sale of 172 Prevatt Road for no more than \$290,000 and Commissioner Adams seconded.

At this time Chairman Shoupe said there was a privilege of the floor request from Mr. George Trotter and he approached the podium. Mr. Trotter approached the podium and stated that it is a pleasure to hear transparency, accountability and training. He then stated that his name is George Trotter and he resides at 4218 County Road 203, Dothan, AL 36301. Mr. Trotter said that he has a question and would love an answer back on it. He said that the commissioner is talking about spending no more than \$290,000 for real property off Prevatt Road. His first question is why are we buying property to rebuild or increase the size or make it pretty or whatever of a human resources building. He asked the Chairman if this is correct and Chairman Shoupe stated that this is Mr. Trotter's opportunity to talk. Mr. Trotter said that they have 42 acres near this building and why are they contemplating or even considering buying another piece of land to build another building as the county and city are playing games with the public of Houston County, the tax payers, going on 18 years for a prime piece of property and they are talking about buying another piece of property to build a building. Thank you.

When called for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS

Chief Administrative Officer – No report

County Engineer – 2 closed road: W. Cook & Fortson

County Attorney – No report

Adjourn