

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION
October 23, 2023

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 10:00 a.m. meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the October 23, 2023, Houston County Commission Regular Session. He declared a quorum as all commissioners were in attendance.

Major Linda Payton, Corps Officer at the Salvation Army, gave the invocation and Commissioner Ivey led in the pledge of allegiance.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Shoupe began by thanking Commissioner Harvey for leading the meeting last Thursday and he set a record time of three minutes for the meeting. Chairman Shoupe mentioned that he was out due to taking family members to Texas for some medical appointments and everyone got a clean bill of health.

Commissioner Ivey stated that he had the privilege of escorting the queens for the Peanut Festival Pageant from Thursday until Saturday night and said that it is always enjoyable dealing with those young ladies. He reported that the new National Peanut Festival Queen is Leah Whitehead from Jackson County.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Proclamation – “The Salvation Army” – Major Linda Payton, Corps Officer – The Salvation Army

Chairman Shoupe stepped to the podium and asked Major Payton to join him for the presentation. Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the proclamation for “The Salvation Army” and Commissioner Adams seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Shoupe read the proclamation and presented it to Major Payton and thanked her for all she and her organization do for the community. He said that the commission looks forward to the kettle campaign each year and asked her for comments. Major Payton thanked Chairman Shoupe for being their special guest at last years' event and then she thanked the community for all they do to help the Salvation Army be a conduit between those that want to help and for those that need help. Major Payton announced that November 9th is the kickoff for the Angel Tree and Red Kettle Campaign and she invited everyone to join them at 1007 S. Bell Street at 2:00 p.m. for this event.

2. Proclamation – “Farm City Week” – Micah Johnson, Farm City Committee

Chairman Shoupe asked Micah Johnson to join him at the podium. Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the proclamation for “Farm City Week” and Commissioner Ivey seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Shoupe then read the proclamation and presented it to Mr. Johnson and asked for comments. Mr. Johnson explained that “Farm City” is an ongoing program from the Farmer’s Federation to deepen the understanding between rural and urban citizens to complete the agricultural supply chain, which begins on the farm but takes a lot of workers through a supply chain between rural and city workers. He added that there are various programs throughout the year to include poster contest, peanut essay contest, farm tours and other events. Mr. Johnson said they appreciate the commissioners from the county and from the city to recognize this week as it is truly a year long process. Chairman Shoupe thanked Mr. Johnson and the farmers in the community.

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

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the “Red Ribbon Week” proclamation and Commissioner Adams seconded. The motion carried unanimously. He asked Ms. Bonney to come forward to the podium and then he commenced the reading of the proclamation. Upon completion, Chairman Shoupe said it is always sobering to see these statistics. He added that he has spoken to the deputies that are on the commission and they told him that almost all violent crimes stem from problems that she and her agency are working to solve. Chairman Shoupe thanked Ms. Bonney and presented her with the proclamation. Ms. Bonney began by thanking Chairman Shoupe and the commissioners for their time and their continued support for the past three decades. She stated that with the county wearing red, it places great value on the power of prevention and that consistent effort by the agency, which includes 50 youth council members representing all city, county and three private schools, 62 volunteers and the board of directors, and with all the various events they know that many lives have been saved since 1996 as a result of all these efforts. Ms. Bonney added that this isn’t just a result of the agency, but because of the partnership in the entire community and the collaboration with

many agencies as this community is agency rich compared to many parts of the country. She thanked the commission again and stated that she believes in the power of prevention.

Youth council member Ms. Kate Watson, from Rehobeth High School then approached the podium and stated that the youth council's mission is to advocate for substance misuse prevention education across the Wiregrass area. She added that they firmly believe that education is the key to prevention of living a drug free lifestyle and in learning the dangers of substance misuse.

Youth council member Emerson Trotter then approached the podium and began by stating that "Red Ribbon Week" is the largest drug abuse prevention campaign in the United States as it highlights the importance of living a drug free life. She added that it gives the community, parents, educators and families an opportunity to reinforce the drug free messages they share throughout the year. Ms. Trotter reported that during this week students will be dressing up with different theme days and today is "Wiregrass Goes Red Day" and they encouraged everyone to dress in red. Ms. Trotter stated that this year's theme is "Be Kind To Your Mind and Live Drug free". She also reported that drugs and alcohol can change the way you think, live and act in your daily life and drugs increase the neurotransmitters in our brains and also can block the brain from experiencing things, such as happiness, in normal daily activities. Ms. Trotter concluded by saying that being kind to your mind and living a drug free life can provide an opportunity to be positive and live an amazing and healthy lifestyle. She then thanked the commission for allowing them the opportunity to share the importance of living a drug free life and to always remember to be kind to your mind and live a drug free lifestyle.

At this time, youth council member Kelsey Barnes approached and stated that she is a sophomore at Wicksburg High School. She said that on behalf of the (334) Prevention Project Youth Council, they would like to thank the commission for always supporting their efforts to spread awareness of the dangers of underage drinking and drug misuse in Houston County. She then passed out red ribbons to the commission.

Chairman Shoupe thanked the ladies for all the work they do and a round of applause was given.

4. Recognition – Sanitation Safety Record – Barkley Kirkland, County Engineer

At this time Chairman Shoupe asked Engineer Kirkland to come to the podium. Mr. Kirkland then invited all the Sanitation workers that were in attendance to come to the front as well as Safety Director Kelly Crowell. Mr. Kirkland began with some background on this recognition and he stated that years ago Worker's Compensation cost on this particular group was higher than the rest of the county combined. Mrs. Crowell then reported that in 2009 they had 30

injuries in that year and she is surprised it was not higher than that as each truck services 500 homes a day. Mrs. Crowell said that they put some things (safety measures) in place and in 2014 the commission and the Road & Bridge Dept. had the foresight to look into automated trucks. This eventually got the workers off the back of the trucks and also put one person per truck instead of three. She added that the last medical case this group had was on October 12, 2015, and that was when a citizen t-boned the truck and it was no fault of our driver or the county. Mrs. Crowell stated that in years past, they paid more in Worker's Compensation fees for the sanitation department than they did for the police officers. It has been eight years since they have had a worker's compensation case and she mentioned that the commission should be proud. She added that they are saving the community money, not only with injury cost but with workers compensation premiums. Mrs. Crowell also said they are up to six trucks now and three knuckle booms and the commission should be proud of their accomplishments.

Chairman Shoupe thanked the department for their safe work. Commissioner Herring commented that he appreciates them being respectful to the residents and for sticking to policy in the way of sanitation pickup and their hard work does not go unnoticed and he appreciates them.

Round of applause was given by all.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to award ACCA Joint County Bid for Debris Removal Monitoring Services

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the request to award the joint county bid. Commissioner Herring seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

2. Request to appoint Mark Powell to the Southeast Alabama EMS Council

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to appoint Mark Powell to the EMS Council and Commissioner Adams seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to adopt Resolution For Expenditure of American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Government Services – Peter Covert, Chief Administrative Officer

Chairman Shoupe called on Mr. Covert to comment on this request. Mr. Covert stated that these are allocated revenue replacement funds from the ARPA Funds received from the federal government. He added that this particular resolution is for the Homeland Security storage building which will be built on Ennis Road. Commissioner Ivey made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Harvey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to award bid for Hot Asphalt Plant Mix & Resurfacing for ARPA Storm Water Projects – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to award the bid and Commissioner Ivey seconded. County Engineer stated that they had to rebid the asphalt bid due to a clause that was in the original bid. Chairman Shoupe asked when the projects will begin and Engineer Kirkland stated they begin now. When called for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

5. Request to approve final plat for a replat of Cotton Patch Subdivision – Road & Bridge

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

6. Request to approve American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Project Agreements with ADEM – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the ARPA Project Agreements with ADEM and Commissioner Ivey seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Engineer Kirkland commented that there are two agreements associated with this with one being \$150,000, that was granted to all 67 counties in Alabama, and one for \$300,000. He stated that the \$300,000 grant was a competitive bid project with first in gets the money. Engineer Kirkland said he received a text one day at 11:00 a.m. announcing that 3 million dollars were being allotted and it was first come first serve for an amount up to \$300,000. Mr. Kirkland stated that one of his assistants had a bid in by 11 p.m. that night and they were second in line for the money. He recognized Will Herring for his diligence in working on this grant and because of his efforts, the county received the grant money. A round of applause was given to Mr. Herring.

7. Request to approve in-kind services for land clearing for the Dothan Animal Shelter Project – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request for in-kind services for the Dothan Animal Shelter Project and Commissioner Ivey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Request to approve in-kind services for land clearing and building pad for Landmark Park – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the request for in-kind services for Landmark Park and Commissioner Adams seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Chief Administrative Officer – No report

County Engineer – Two closed roads; Garrett Road & Enon Road

County Attorney – No report

Adjourn