

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION
November 27, 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 November 27, 2023, Houston County Commission Regular Session. He declared a quorum as all commissioners were in attendance.

Commissioner Curtis Harvey 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 recognizing former Commissioner Doug Sinuefield as he is in attendance today. He added that the ACCA Legislative Conference will be held this week and some of the commissioners will be attending. Chairman Shoupe also announced that the Dothan Christmas Tree lighting is this Thursday at 5:30 p.m. at Wadlington Park on N. Foster. He added that Rehobeth will have their Christmas activities on Friday, Gordon's Christmas Parade is scheduled for Saturday at 11 a.m. and Cottonwood has theirs scheduled for Sunday at 6:00 p.m. Chairman Shoupe said that a golf tournament will be held on Friday and this is the Sheriff's Inaugural tournament that will benefit the Miracle Field at Westgate Park. Chairman Shoupe ended by announcing that the Town of Columbia will hold their Christmas activities on Friday, December 8th, at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Ivey announced that Cowarts will hold their Christmas parade on Friday, December 1st, at 6:00 p.m. Commissioner Adams added that Ashford will have their activities on December 8th.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Special presentation by Commissioner Ricky Herring

Chairman Shoupe began by stating that Commissioner Herring has a special presentation today. Commissioner Herring began by inviting those present that represent volunteer fire in his district (District 3). Commissioner Herring said that this year the commissioners have \$2,500 discretionary funds to give out to someone or to an organization in the community. He said that he chose the volunteer fire departments in his district and those include Southern Junction, Madrid, Hodgesville, Taylor and Rehobeth. Commissioner Herring stated that these volunteers go in everyday to their regular jobs and then they take time to volunteer with the fire departments in their area. They go out each day and do not know what they will be called to do. They handle the situations professionally and help the citizens or they may have to save someone's life. Commissioner Herring thanked the volunteer firefighters that were present and presented them with a \$500 check for their units. He added that they are very much appreciated.

Chairman Shoupe thanked Commissioner Herring for the presentation and said that Houston County is blessed to have such dedicated volunteers for fire and rescue as that is not the case throughout the country. He thanked the volunteers for what they do.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to approve FY 2022-2023 departmental over/under spending summary report – Peter Covert, Chief Administrative Officer

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Adams seconded. CAO Peter Covert began by stating that this is summary of the over/under expenditures by department and each department has been excellent stewards of their funds that are budgeted to them. He said that there were a few instances where there was an overage of expenditures and he will go over those. With a visual presentation, he showed that the commission was over budget by just under \$100,000 due to three things; 1) utilizing county attorney more than budgeted; 2) bill came in late from Avenue (tax collector) for August billing and 3) during transition of the new accounting manager, there were funds used for contract services. Mr. Covert stated that in the Sanitation Dept., the sanitation equipment was paid for instead of financed. ARPA Fund items were added in this fiscal year due to some delays in paperwork. He ending by saying that the county came in with a grand total of \$16 million under budget in expenditures and \$6 million over budget in revenues which totals \$22 million in the positive but they will be expended in 2024.

Chairman Shoupe asked for any comments from the commission. Commissioner Herring asked how much of the \$22 million was ARPA money and Mr. Covert said about \$9 million was ARPA money. Chairman Shoupe added that in the past couple of years there has been an overage in

the legal side of things due to many questions being asked as a new Chairman. With there being no further questions, the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to award ACCA joint county bids for heavy equipment

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the request to award the ACCA joint county bids. Commissioner Adams seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to adopt resolution in support of the State of Alabama Site Evaluation Economic Development (SEEDS) funding for industrial development – Matt Parker, Industrial Development Administration

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

4. Request to approve budget amendment for the Reappraisal Dept. due to price increase of cabinet materials – Greg Holland, Chief Appraiser

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the budget amendment. Commissioner Adams seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

5. Request to approve budget amendment in the amount of \$15,000 to the Sheriff's Department for the purchase of a new vehicle – Major Bill Rafferty, Sheriff's Dept.

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the budget amendment in the amount of \$15,000 and Commissioner Adams seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Chief Administrative Officer – Mr. Covert updated the commission on the status of resolution 2019-18, "Establishing Rules and Procedures Regarding Fire Protection Services and Appropriations with Volunteer Fire Departments and Houston County Volunteer Fire Association". He continued by saying that the commission may recall that in accordance with the resolution all volunteer fire fighter organizations and associations needed to comply and to be eligible for a tax exempt organization. Mr. Covert reported that most of the organizations in Houston County have submitted their documents, or are in the process of waiting on the IRS approval, with the exception of three organizations. Those include Hodgesville and Lucy both need confirmation of the IRS filing, and Wicksburg as well. Chairman Shoupe reminded the commission that the resolution was approved by the previous commission in 2019 and the rules were established. He added that Wicksburg should be filing theirs and the others are working on their filings as well. The deadline was November 16 for submission and the working deadline is the December commission meeting.

County Engineer – Two closed roads; County Rd. 75 N and Decatur.

County Attorney – No report

Adjourn