

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION
April 8, 2024

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 April 8, 2024, Houston County Commission Regular Session and declared a quorum as a majority were in attendance.

ABSENT: Commissioner Tracy Adams

Pastor Chad Hixson, Rehobeth Baptist Church, 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 Harvey and seconded by Commissioner Herring. The motion carried unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Shoupe began by congratulating the Personnel Dept. for their efforts in lowering the job vacancy percentage from over 12% to 2.6%, as of yesterday. He commended the commission for investing in the employees and the Personnel Dept. for their hard work to get this number to where it is.

Chairman Shoupe announced that the first budget meeting will be held today at 1:30 p.m. in the 6th Floor Conference Room. He added that the budget process will be changed slightly and this will be the first meeting of this type. He invited the public to attend this meeting. He also added that the Farm Center is still a work in progress and he was in hopes that they could reveal the designs last month but now they do have the designs and they will be revealed at the next commission meeting. He invited everyone to attend.

Chairman Shoupe reported that the Loop Music and Art Festival will be held this Saturday at 10:00 a.m. on N. Foster St. He added that the Wiregrass Kidney Walk will also be held on Saturday at 9:30 a.m. at Kiwanis Park.

Commissioner Ivey announced that also on Saturday, the Annual Wiregrass Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club Charity Ride will take place. He invited everyone to come and support the Wiregrass Angel House, as all proceeds will benefit this non-profit agency. He added that

registration will begin at 9:00 a.m. at the Wiregrass Angel House on W. Main St. and then there will be a law enforcement led ride throughout the county, which is about 70+ miles.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Proclamation – “National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week”

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

At this time, Commissioner Ivey came to the podium and asked the 9-1-1 dispatchers, that were in attendance, to come forward and join him. He began by stating that this is just four of the faces that a lot of people do not get to see but get they do get to hear their voices as they are behind the scenes. These are just four of the dispatchers for the Houston County Sheriff’s Office and it is a privilege to honor all of them next week for Telecommunicators Week. Commissioner Ivey added that many people do not understand the stress that they are under just by answering the 9-1-1 calls.

Commissioner Ivey then read the proclamation and presented the proclamation to the telecommunicators. The commission thanked them for what they do on a daily basis and applause was given by all.

2. Proclamation – “National Child Abuse Prevention Month” – Laurabeth Thomas, Community Advocate – Southeast Alabama Child Advocacy Center

Chairman Shoupe stepped to the podium and asked Laurabeth Thomas to come forward to accept the proclamation for “National Child Abuse Prevention Month”. Commissioner Herring made a motion to accept the proclamation and Commissioner Ivey seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Shoupe began by thanking Ms. Thomas for coming today and saying that the commission appreciates what her organization does but, it is unfortunate that the organization is necessary. He added that he knows that it is a tough job to have. Chairman Shoupe then read the proclamation in its’ entirety. Upon completion, Chairman Shoupe stated that he was recently at the Southeast Alabama Child Advocacy Center ribbon cutting and he remembers someone saying that if you see something or suspect something, there is a responsibility to say something (concerning child abuse). He added that he imagines that there are people that suspect something and say something and there is usually absolutely nothing to it. But it is always good to say something. He presented the proclamation to Ms. Thomas and asked for comments.

Ms. Thomas began by thanking the commission for the proclamation. She said that her organization believes and knows that this is important work and that children are the most vulnerable and important commodities in society, and they want to protect them. Ms. Thomas

also added that everybody has some child in their life, whether it is your own or someone else's, and it is important as adults to protect them and take care of them as they are the future of our community. She also said that what they do is hard work, and it is unfortunate that they have to do it, but it is the reality that it does exist in the community and there are services to take care of the kids when something does happen. Ms. Thomas reported that they see about 350 kids per year because someone reported something. This is just as easy as calling your local DHR or in an emergency situation, calling 9-1-1.

3. Proclamation – “Community College Month” – Dr. Linda Young, President – Wallace Community College

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the proclamation for “Community College Month” and Commissioner Ivey seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Shoupe then asked Dr. Ashley Wilkins to come forward, as Dr. Linda Young was not able to attend due to illness. Chairman Shoupe then read the proclamation and presented it to Dr. Wilkins. Chairman Shoupe congratulated Wallace College on their 75th year and mentioned that he was a student at Wallace College many years ago and it prepared him well before he enrolled in Auburn. He said that while he has served on the commission for several years, he has come to appreciate and realizes just how vitally important Wallace Community College is to our economic development. Chairman Shoupe thanked Dr. Wilkins for being here and presented her the proclamation and asked for comments.

Dr. Wilkins began by saying that on behalf of Dr. Linda Young, who is under the weather, she thanked the commission for the proclamation. She said that, as Chairman Shoupe mentioned, they are celebrating 75 years of excellence this year and so much of this is because of the support from the commission and they appreciate all the work they do. Dr. Wilkins added that the commission is a wonderful partner with Wallace College, and they serve the college well. She said that she is hopeful that maybe they helped the personnel decrease their job vacancy rate, as they mentioned earlier. She thanked the commission again for the proclamation.

4. Proclamation – “National Library Week” – Chris Warren, Director – Dothan Houston County Library System

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the proclamation for “National Library Week”. Commissioner Harvey seconded and the motion carried unanimously. Chairman Shoupe invited Mr. Warren and his guests to come forward. He thanked them for what they do as they have provided a lot of resources to a lot of people that do not have access to books, technology and other items. Chairman Shoupe then read the proclamation and presented it to Mr. Warren and asked for comments.

Mr. Warren said that he brought friends with him because it does take a village to have the wonderful library that they do. He introduced them as Everlie Bolton, President of the Friends

of the Library, Deja Bertucci, Assistant Director of Public Services and Kristin North, who is Assistant Director for Programs and Outreach. He also announced that Dr. Ashley Wilkins, who accepted the proclamation for Wallace College, is the Chair of the Board of Trustees and Sara Willis, who is the Marketing and Communications Coordinator.

Mr. Warren said that apparently a lot was going on in Dothan in 1949, as Wallace Community College was founded and the Library because a true public library. He said that they are as old as Jeff Bridges, Lionel Richie and NATO (laughter by all). Mr. Warren added that 75 years is a long time but the one thing that has not changed is the commitment to the community, early literacy, lifelong learning and economic development and quality of life. He said that it is all because of the great community partners they have, which include the Houston County Commission, for the support they provide. He thanked the commission for the proclamation and said they look forward to another 75 years.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to award bid for Inmate Reloadable Debit Card System to lowest bidder meeting specs – Tony Weber, Community Corrections

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to award the bid for the Inmate Reloadable Debit Card System to lowest bidder meeting specs. Commissioner Ivey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to reclassify Grant Manager/PIO position in EMA – Sheri Garner, Personnel Director and Mark Powell, EMA Director

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the request to reclassify the above mentioned position. Commissioner Harvey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to approve budget amendment for worker's compensation insurance premium audit adjustment – Peter Covert, CAO

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the budget amendment for the worker's compensation audit adjustment and Commissioner Herring seconded. When called for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to approve Resolution to Authorize the Allocation of American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Eligible Water Infrastructure Project for the Town of Columbia – Peter Covert, CAO

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

5. Request to approve budget amendment for jail body scanner service agreement – Major Bill Rafferty, Sheriff's Dept.

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the budget amendment for jail body scanner service agreement and Commissioner Harvey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Request to approve budget amendment for vehicle maintenance for the Sheriff's Dept. – Major Bill Rafferty, Sheriff's Dept.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the budget amendment for vehicle maintenance for the Sheriff's Dept. Commissioner Ivey seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

7. Request to approve budget amendment for overtime for the Sheriff's Dept. – Major Bill Rafferty, Sheriff's Dept.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the budget amendment for overtime for the Sheriff's Dept. Commissioner Ivey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

8. Request to approve budget amendment for overtime in the Sanitation Dept. due to storm cleanup – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the budget amendment for overtime in the Sanitation Dept. due to storm cleanup and Commissioner Ivey seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Request to approve budget amendment for repairs and maintenance in the Sanitation Dept. due to storm cleanup – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the budget amendment for repairs and maintenance in the Sanitation Dept. due to storm cleanup. Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

10. Request to approve budget amendment for ADEM storm water grant revenue – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the budget amendment and Commissioner Herring seconded. Chairman Shoupe commented that this budget amendment is for \$400,000. The motion carried unanimously.

11. Request to approve budget amendment for overtime in the Road & Bridge Dept. due to storm cleanup – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the budget amendment for overtime in the Road & Bridge Dept. due to storm cleanup. Commissioner Ivey seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

12. Request to approve budget amendment for materials and supplies for storm recovery and storm water grants – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the budget amendment for materials and supplies for storm recovery and storm water grants. Commissioner Herring seconded the motion. Chairman Shoupe reported that this item is for a \$860,000 budget amendment. When called for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS

Chief Administrative Officer – No report

County Engineer – 10 closed roads: Ashford Rd., Hicks Rd., Sigma Pit, Prevatt, Jack Bruner, Old Webb, Ebenezer, Pansey, Lamp Bros., Hunter.

County Attorney – No report

Commissioner Harvey asked when the projected date is to finish the Farm Center project. Chairman Shoupe asked Mr. Tommy Dixon to come forward for the update. Mr. Dixon reported that they had a pre-bid meeting this past week and the two contractors came down to look at the roof. The bids should be opened this Thursday and they hope to start as soon as possible. He said they will know by Thursday afternoon. Chairman Shoupe mentioned that they are having to do the roof first because of the hail damage that the building received but the beams are cross laminated timber and they do not need to be moist for a long period of time. Mr. Dixon said that after the last storm, they can really see where the leaks are in the roof and they are everywhere. He said there is damage and if they do not move forward they will be further damage to the beams, which are irreplaceable. Mr. Shoupe said that the roof will take a little while and once that is done, they will start the construction on the inside. Mr. Dixon said this could take about one year to two years to complete. The roof materials will take about 16 weeks to get. Commissioner Harvey asked if they are trying to maintain those beams as is and Mr. Dixon said yes they are as they want to save those beams as they will be resealed.

Adjourned