

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
REGULAR SESSION  
April 23, 2024

PRESENT: Chairman Brandon Shoupe, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Tracy Adams, Commissioner Ricky Herring, Commissioner James Ivey, Asst. County Engineer Tyler Reeder, 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 23, 2024, Houston County Commission Regular Session and declared a quorum as all commissioners were in attendance.

Commissioner Ricky Herring gave the invocation and Commissioner Tracy Adams led in the pledge of allegiance.

The minutes of the previous meetings 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 announcing that the Loop Music and Art Festival that was recently held in downtown Dothan was very well attended. He said that everyone did a great job and he commended Scott Parsons for his work on this successful event.

Chairman Shoupe stated that he recently had the opportunity to tour Troy Dothan and he wanted to thank Rachel Cox for inviting him. He is in hopes to get the entire commission to tour the campus in the near future.

#### AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

##### 1. Proclamation – “National Corrections Officers Week”

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

Commissioner Ivey stepped to the podium and asked the corrections officers, that were in attendance, to come forward. He added that “National Corrections Officers Week” will be held the first week of May. He then proceeded to read the proclamation and presented it to the officers. A round of applause was given by all. Chairman Shoupe commented that not too long ago, the county had an Employee Appreciation Day, and he had the opportunity of going to the

jail and help to serve food to the employees there. He said that they all had smiles on their faces, despite the tough job that they have working at the jail.

## 2. Proclamation – “Crime Victims’ Rights Week” – Katy Lewis, Outreach Coordinator – Wiregrass Angel House

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the proclamation and Commissioner Adams seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Herring stepped down to the podium and invited the Angel House representatives to join him. He then read the proclamation in its entirety and presented it to Ms. Lewis and asked her for comments.

Ms. Lewis began by stating that those at the Angel House advocate for and assist victims of violent crime in the Wiregrass area. She added that they serve eight counties, including Houston County, and their services range from counseling, dog therapy, court assistance, and they also perform crime scene and suicide cleanup. Ms. Lewis reported that “Crime Victims’ Rights Week” is a week that they bring awareness to the rights of crime victims and because of all the donors and support they receive, they are able to provide all these services for free to the families that they serve. She thanked the commission for all they do for Angel House.

## 3. Proclamation – “Fanconi Anemia Awareness Month” – Mr. Scott Farmer

Chairman Shoupe stepped to the podium and asked Mr. Scott Farmer to come forward. Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the proclamation for “Fanconi Anemia Awareness Month” and Commissioner Adams seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Shoupe then read the proclamation and presented it to Mr. Farmer. He added that when he first met Mr. Farmer was when they were in Rotary Club together about 10 years ago and it was amazing watching their family journey. He asked Mr. Farmer for comments. Mr. Farmer began by stating that he knows most have never heard of Fanconi Anemia as it is a very rare disease that only thirty people a year are diagnosed with. He added that his daughter is the only one in Houston County that has been diagnosed with the disease. He also said that they do know of a few cases in Alabama, but she is the only one in this area. Mr. Farmer reported that Fanconi Anemia is a genetic disease but that his daughter was not diagnosed until age 7. Last October she had a bone marrow transplant in Ohio and is doing very well at this time. He thanked everyone in Houston County, especially the Wicksburg community, for all their support during their journey. Mr. Farmer stated that even though it is a rare disease, there are a lot of ties with Fanconi Anemia and the cancer community. He said that it use to be a life expectancy of 18 years and now people are reaching adulthood with this rare disease. Mr. Farmer thanked the commission for this proclamation and for helping to make people aware of this disease. He added that even though there is no cure, a bone marrow transplant will help her to fight the disease.

#### 4. Proclamation – “Small Business Week” – Jessica Steltenpohl, Vice President of Investor Relations – Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce

Chairman Shoupe asked Ms. Steltenpohl to come forward. Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the proclamation for “Small Business Week” and Commissioner Ivey seconded. The motion passed. Chairman Shoupe then read the proclamation in its’ entirety and presented it to Ms. Steltenpohl. He added that small businesses are truly the lifeblood of this community and asked her for comments. Ms. Steltenpohl began by thanking the commission and said she is here today to promote small business. She added that May 6<sup>th</sup> – May 10<sup>th</sup> is declared as “Small Business Week” and that over 84% of the Chamber members are small businesses in the area. Ms. Steltenpohl encouraged everyone to get out and support them, not just during Small Business Week, but to continue to do so every day. She ended by thanking the commission for their support.

At this time, Chairman Shoupe asked, if there were no objection, he would like to swap the order of item #5 and #6 so that the check presentation could go ahead of the presentation of the Farm Center. Commissioner Ivey made a motion to swap the order of the items and Commissioner Adams seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

#### 5. Presentation – Check Presentation to the Town of Cottonwood from HEDA

At this time, Chairman Shoupe asked Commissioner Adams to come to the podium and asked Mr. Bill Durden to come forward as well. Commissioner Adams introduced Bill Durden, from HEDA, and announced that HEDA offered to donate some money to go to the tornado fund. A concert was held at the Center Stage and HEDA matched the funds that were taken in and presented a check for \$20,000 to the Town of Cottonwood. Mr. Durden thanked the commission and said he was representing HEDA today and they have put several hundreds of thousands of dollars back in the community. He added that after the tornado occurred, they wanted to help in some capacity as there were no federal or state funds available. Mr. Durden said that Mr. Dylan Kelly, local vocal artist, had the idea of a concert and once announced, the concert sold out. They raised nearly \$10,000 and HEDA matched it with an additional \$10,000 and presented a check for \$20,000 to the Town of Cottonwood. He thanked the commission for allowing them to present this at the meeting today. A round of applause was given by all.

#### 6. Presentation – Houston County Farm Center Update – Andy Gosselin, Architect – Gosselin Architecture

At this time, Mr. Andy Gosselin, Gosselin Architecture, came forward to give his presentation of the newly redesigned Houston County Farm Center. Mr. Gosselin stated that he was here

today to give an update on the design of the Farm Center. He had a slide show for the presentation which included several pictures of the proposed project. Mr. Gosselin then gave a quick history of the Farm Center. He said that the Farm Center was built in 1960 and was designed by local architect, Mr. Joe Donofro. This project was a state, city and county funded project and at 35,000 square feet, the cost to build in 1960 was \$180,000, which was \$13.00 per square foot.

Mr. Gosselin continued by announcing that they will be doing a green way setting that will surround the farm center and from the west side, they will create a concourse from the parking lot. There will be shade trees that will line up and beautify that entry and more trees will be used to beautify the parking lot. Mr. Gosselin added that one of the key features of the building is that they are converting it to an open-air canopy arena and the roof will be an independent structure that allows them to take the exterior walls out. This will create more daylight and openness to give it more of an outdoor space. Mr. Gosselin announced that the beams and arches will be kept and used as the arches span 200 feet. The beams were imported from Washington State, in 1960, and at that time they used glue laminated technology, which is what SmartLam does now here in Dothan. At the time, that was a new technology in 1960 for the beams. Mr. Gosselin presented another slide which showed how open the area will be looking north to south and from the south end plans are to have a farmer's market area with a height of three stories in the middle. The steel structure from the end walls will be kept as well. Mr. Gosselin then presented a floor plan of the project, and a layout was also presented showing the music type venue that could seat up to 2,750 people with a large stage area. He added that this is one of the things they could envision with the farmers market being able to accommodate up to 50 vendors. They could also hold events to include theater events and it is also large enough to host a basketball event, skating, pickle ball, family movie night and of course wrestling (laughter by all).

At this time, Mr. Gosselin took questions and comments from the commission. They were all very impressed and look forward to completion. Chairman Shoupe said he has heard a lot of excitement from people, as when they originally decided to sell the building to the city a few years back, some were very disappointed. He also thanked the City of Dothan for working with the county through the process. Chairman Shoupe said he believes this is an impressive structure and it keeps with the historical use of the farm center by moving the Farmer's Market to this location and keeping the overall design of the dome building so not much is changing. He knows it will look a lot better and will be more useful for different events. The commission looks forward to this venture. Mr. Gosselin mentioned that he recently found a 1959 article about the Farm Center project in the Dothan Eagle newspaper, and he thought it was fitting that Senator Carl Farmer had stated that "this should be a show place and a monument to Southeast Alabama farmers". Chairman Shoupe said to save that quote as they may want to etch that in stone somewhere at the facility.

## REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to approve software hosting contract with SmartFusion and authorize Chairman to execute all documents pertaining to this agreement – Peter Covert, CAE

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the software hosting contract with SmartFusion and authorize Chairman to execute all documents. Commissioner Harvey seconded the motion. Chairman Shoupe said that Mr. Harvey had a question on Thursday concerning savings cost. Mr. Covert reported that the savings come to about \$10,000 per year but there will be substantial savings as they will not have to be engaging with the IT Dept. to continue to patch and fix issues. He added the software will allow them to possibly discontinue paper paystubs as those can be accessed online by the employees by a software module. Mr. Covert has also verified with the HR Dept. that there is no legal requirement that the stubs have to be issued by paper. Chairman Shoupe added that this is going to relieve a lot of technical debt as it will free up the IT Dept. to work on other issues. Commissioner Herring asked if this will be used for payroll as well and Mr. Covert mentioned that there is a timekeeping module that has already been approved that will integrate into this software as this is mostly a financial record keeping side of the software. Commissioner Ivey commented that this will be able to integrate and getting away from paper checks will save IT time from printing check/stubs and relieves personnel from sorting all the stubs for the different departments. This saves time and money and is a definite cost savings. Commissioner Harvey commented that will this require people to be updated on technology and will they have to have email as some currently do not. Mr. Covert reported that this will be accessible on all platforms to include IOS, Windows and MAC devices. Which in turn means that if an employee has access to the internet, they can get to the portal to retrieve their information at any time.

When called for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to award bid for Houston County Farm Center roof project – Tommy Dixon, County Buildings

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to award the bid for the Houston County Farm Center roof project. Commissioner Harvey seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Request to approve pass-through grants for EMA for the City of Dothan and approve accompanying budget amendment – Mark Powell, EMA Director

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the pass-through grants and Commissioner Adams seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Request to authorize Chairman to negotiate final purchase agreement with the City of Dothan regarding the Houston County Court House parking lot

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the request and Commissioner Herring seconded.

Chairman Shoupe asked County Attorney Pres Register to step forward for questions. Chairman Shoupe stated that Mr. Register had prepared a resolution that allows the Chairman to negotiate this agreement within certain parameters. Chairman Shoupe asked if the request needs to be reworded to acknowledge the resolution. Mr. Register answered that an amendment to the request would be appropriate to state “pursuant to the resolution parameters”. At this time an amendment to the motion is presented to read “Request to authorize Chairman to negotiate final purchase agreement with the City of Dothan regarding the Houston County Courthouse Parking Lot pursuant to the parameters in the stated resolution”. Commissioner Harvey made a motion to amend the request as stated above and Commissioner Adams seconded. The motion carried unanimously. At this time, the amended motion was approved with motion by Commissioner Harvey and seconded by Commissioner Adams. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Shoupe added that the resolution states that the property will be sold for not less than \$2 million dollars and the City will provide public parking of at least 111 spaces with spaces being unrestricted in terms of time and usage and such spaces will be in certain bounds of the courthouse. He added that the 111 is 30 more than what they currently have. Also, according to the agreement, the city is not able to start construction of the new city hall until at least 81 parking spaces are provided to the north side of the courthouse. Chairman Shoupe added that this means that they are not going to get the 111 immediately, but they will get to that eventually once the city is finished with construction.

5. Request to approve increase for ADEM clean-up contract agreement from \$150,000 to \$200,000 for a September 2024, completion date and approve accompanying budget amendment – Road & Bridge

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request for an increase in the ADEM Clean-up contract agreement. Commissioner Adams seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS

Chief Administrative Officer – No report

County Engineer – 8 closed roads: Cureton Rd., Ashford Rd., Hicks Rd., Prevatt, Jack Bruner, Old Webb, Ebenezer and Pansey.

Chairman Shoupe asked about an update on the storm damage and the materials needed. Mr. Reeder stated that most of the material is in, and they are currently working on three of the projects, which one will be completed this week and another the next week. That will put them down to five roads and things will start to progress quickly.

County Attorney – No report

Adjourned