

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION
November 25, 2024

PRESENT: Chairman Brandon Shoupe, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Tracy Adams, Commissioner Ricky Herring, Commissioner James Ivey, Acting 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 November 25, 2024, Houston County Commission Regular Session and declared a quorum as all commissioners were in attendance.

Chairman Shoupe gave the invocation and the pledge of allegiance was led by Commissioner Ricky Herring.

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 thanking and congratulating Commissioner Adams on chairing his first meeting last Thursday, during his absence. He also recognized former Chairman Mark Culver as being in attendance today and Mr. Sonny Brasfield and Lauren Hodge, from the Alabama County Commission Association in Montgomery. Chairman Shoupe added that the commission is blessed with the leadership that they have in Montgomery with the ACCA staff. Lastly, he recognized Representative Paul Lee who is in attendance for a special recognition and he thanked him for the work he does for the county.

AWARDS & PRESENTATIONS

1. Recognition – 4th Quarter Anniversaries – Anisa McKenzie, Payroll/Retirement Administrator

Chairman Shoupe called Ms. McKenzie up to the podium for the recognition of the 4th Quarter Anniversaries. She then invited all that were in attendance to come forward and join her. Those being recognized are as follows and most were in attendance.

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| Mitch Murkerson | Sheriff's Dept. | 5 yrs. |
| Hiram McGriff | Road & Bridge | 5 yrs. |
| Haley Berry | Sheriff's Dept. | 5 yrs. |
| Katelyn Lapham | Sheriff's Dept. | 10 yrs. |
| Brandon Shoupe | Commission | 10 yrs. |
| Leanne Richardson | Probate Dept. | 10 yrs. |
| Ray Arnold | Sheriff's Dept. | 10 yrs. |
| Drew Ruble | Sheriff' Dept. | 10 yrs |
| Kelly Crowell | Commission | 15 yrs. |
| Shannon Martin | Reappraisal | 15 yrs |
| Erika Tyson | Comm. Corr | 20 yrs |
| Dewayne Whitehead | Rod & Bridge | 20 yrs |
| Heath Phillips | Jail | 20 yrs |
| Rachel Ford | Comm. Corr. | 20 yrs |
| Kelita Moore | Jail | 25 yrs |
| Donovan Arias | Sheriff's Dept. | 25 yrs |
| Donald Valenza | Sheriff's Dept. | 45 yrs |

A round of applause was given by all and Chairman Shoupe thanked them for their dedication and hard work.

2. Special Recognition – Chairman Brandon Shoupe

Chairman Shoupe stepped to the podium and then asked Community Corrections Director Tony Weber to join him. (This was a surprise to Mr. Weber). Chairman Shoupe began by saying that he had something to present to Mr. Weber. He then stated that recently, Mr. Weber was selected as the State's Community Corrections Director of the Year and this was the second time, which has never happened in the state of Alabama. Chairman Shoupe reported that Mr. Weber became the Director here in Houston County in 2012 and the program was losing money at that time, but since Mr. Weber's take over, the program has made money. He added that Houston County is recognized for having the premier program for community corrections in the state of Alabama. Chairman Shoupe also said that in 2023, Mr. Weber was recognized for having the only department, in 12 years, with zero turnovers with employees.

Chairman Shoupe told Mr. Weber that the commission appreciates all that he does for Houston County as he does an excellent job and then proceeded to read a certificate that was given to Mr. Weber from Governor Kay Ivey. He then presented the certificate to Mr. Weber and asked him for comments. Mr. Weber began by saying that he did not do this as it is his staff that he gets to work with every day that does the work, and he is glad to work alongside them. A round of applause was given by all.

3. Special Recognition – Sonny Brasfield, Executive Director – Association of County Commissions of Alabama

At this time, Chairman Shoupe asked Mr. Sonny Brasfield, Executive Director of the ACCA, to come forward for a special recognition. Mr. Brasfield began by thanking the commission and stated that he is here this morning with the ACCA Executive Director Lauren Hodge who has a special presentation for Representative Paul Lee. Mr. Brasfield stated that he has been around the Alabama Legislation a long time as he came to work in Montgomery in 1983 so he has been in and around the legislative process since then. He continued to say that Houston County is extremely blessed with the representation that they have in the legislature with members that are responsive to and open to local elected officials who listen to problems that arise at the local level and then find solutions for those. Mr. Brasfield said that Ms. Lauren Hodge will come up and tell them about one that was addressed in the 2024 Regular Session because of the leadership of Representative Paul Lee and they wanted to come and thank him. He thanked Mr. Lee and asked Ms. Hodge to come forward.

Ms. Lauren Hodge came forward and began by thanking Chairman Shoupe and the Commission for allowing them time on the agenda today. She said that it is the ACCA's pleasure to be here to recognize Representative Paul Lee. She continued to say that one of the ACCA's legislative priorities during the 2024 session was to deal with an issue that many of the counties are facing and that is increased cost and housing of juveniles in the regional detention centers. Ms. Hodge also stated that they have worked with the Department of Youth Services to come up with a solution and Representative Lee was at the forefront of those conversations to help them get to a place that took advantage of efficiencies, which have not been taken advantage of. She said that a few of those are efficiencies in the court system, with the juvenile probation officers, report filings and things like that that can streamline the process so that those juveniles that have been sentenced to DYS custody, get to that custody quicker. She continued by reporting that getting them to custody quicker means that the juveniles are recipients of the resources of DYS, that they have been sentenced to and they get the help they need in a timelier manner, and everyone can be supportive of that. Ms. Hodge then called

Representative Lee to come forward to recognize him today and she asked everyone to join her in recognizing his work in seeing the passage of this ACCA priority during the 2024 Legislative Session. A round of applause was given by all.

Chairman Shoupe asked for comments and Representative Lee said he never turns down an opportunity to speak. He then thanked everyone and said he was not expecting this as it was a normal day at work. Representative Lee said that they recognized there was a problem when it was brought to them and rather than it taking months to make these transfers for these kids to get to the right place, now they will be transferred within 30 days. He added that not only were the kids not getting the attention or appropriate care, it was costing the county and they were having to pay for this out of their pocket. So this in turn helps both situations but most importantly the kids are going to get the attention they need as quickly as they can.

Representative Lee said that they were just talking a few minutes ago that the few they were dealing with at state were all for it but they thought there was more money that was going to come with it to help them pay. He held the line and this means they are suppose to do what they are suppose to do when they are suppose to do it rather than taking advantage of the local counties that are having to pay the bill. Representative Lee said they killed two birds with one stone and that COVID is in the rear view mirror, as it was an excuse for a lot of things for the last year and half, but we need to move on and get down to business and do the work that the people put them to do. He ended by thanking everyone.

4. Proclamation – “National Diabetes Month” – Michael Jackson

Chairman Shoupe approached the podium and asked Mr. Jackson to come forward with his guests to accept the proclamation for “National Diabetes Month”. Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the proclamation and Commissioner Harvey seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Shoupe then read the proclamation in its entirety and presented it to Mr. Jackson. Chairman Shoupe commented that this disease affects a lot of folks that we all know.

Mr. Jackson began by thanking the commission for allowing them this moment as it is extremely important. He continued by saying that 15 years ago they started Aunt Katies Community Garden at 602 Linden Street. They have expanded from a ½ acre to about 4 acres in downtown Dothan. Fifteen years ago the issue of the day was childhood obesity and as a result of that they gave kids an experience with a safe environment where people of different cultures can relearn how to share and work together so they began by working with the kids. Mr. Jackson then paused and asked when was the last time childhood obesity was spoken about? He said it has been quiet because in the last 15 years those kids have become adults and in America you can pick any county in any state and those kids have become adults and in America you can pick any county in any state and 1/3 of the population has undiagnosed pre-diabetes. If you do not do anything about that, in the next 10 years those people will develop full fledge diabetes and as a community there is an issue with education and awareness of this particular issue. Mr. Jackson then reported some national stats on diabetes, heart disease, heart attacks, strokes, vegetable consumption, fruit consumption and physical activity and Houston County is not doing enough to bring awareness. At Aunt Katie’s garden, they want to engage the community, starting today with this National Diabetes Month Proclamation and this will go through December by participating in workshops in order to get more people involved in getting the information out. He then introduced Trinet Stafford, NP, that helps with the program. Ms. Stafford said she is not only a NP, but a diabetes educator. She said that her role is to find out where the people are and what they want and work with them to develop a program in order to improve their health. Ms. Stafford reported that right now there is a lack of services in our community as there is only one Endocrinologist, one diabetes center and not

many diabetes educators. Her role is to educate nurses in order to fill in the gap to provide those services that people so readily need.

Mr. Jackson then introduced Spencer Pearce, who is the herbalist at the gardens to recognize that element in the education process. Mr. Pearce approached the podium and introduced himself and stated that he had been in the holistic wellness area for about 6 years now. He reported that the numbers are astounding and there is not enough services, awareness, conversations and this illness is directly impacting the families and the children. Mr. Pearce said it all starts with nutrition, physical activity, awareness, services and having the conversations. Baby steps are the beginning and he is here to serve this county in this role. A round of applause was given by all.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to approve FY 2023-2024 Departmental Over/Under Spending Summary Report – Peter Covert, Chief Administrative Officer

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the FY 2023-2024 Departmental Over/Under Spending Summary Report and Commission Adams seconded. Mr. Covert began his presentation and reported that the department heads have once again exercised good duties with the expenditures of the county funds. He added that only a few of the departments went over but most all went under. Mr. Covert said that overall they came in under budget, as a county, and under budget by many departments and he applauds them all for being so diligent with their spending. When called for the motion, it passed unanimously.

2. Request to award ACCA Joint County Bids for heavy equipment

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the awarding of the ACCA join county bids for heavy equipment. Commissioner Adams seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to approve budget amendment from the capital replacement fund in the amount of \$25,146 for the purchase of a Tilt Skillet for the Houston County Jail – Tommy Dixon, County Buildings Director

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve a budget amendment from the capital replacement fund in the amount of \$25,146 for the purchase of a Tilt Skillet for the Houston County Jail. Commissioner Adams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

4. Request to approve Resolution to Provide Notice to the Alabama Department of Revenue of Levy of Local Lodging Tax

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the Resolution to Provide Notice to the Alabama Department of Revenue of Levy of Local Lodging Tax and Commissioner Adams seconded. Chairman Shoupe commented that this resolution will authorize the Alabama Dept. of Revenue to collect the 1% lodging tax, which was recently approved. When called for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

5. Request to approve Resolution for the Second Amendment to the Association of County Commissions of Alabama Investing in Alabama Counties Program Maintenance and Support Membership Agreement – Peter Covert, CAO

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the Resolution for the Second Amendment to the Association of County Commissions of Alabama Investing in Alabama Counties Program

Maintenance and Support Membership Agreement. Commissioner Ivey seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

6. Request to approve budget amendment in the amount of \$24,000 for the Cottonwood Rescue Squad – Peter Covert, CAO

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the budget amendment in the amount of \$24,000 for the Cottonwood Rescue Squad. Commissioner Harvey seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

7. Request to approve Resolution to Authorize the Allocation of American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Highway Department – Peter Covert, CAO

Commissioner Adams made a motion to approve the Resolution to Authorize the Allocation of American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Highway Department. Commissioner Ivey seconded the motion. Chairman Shoupe said that this resolution is for revenue replacement funds and is eligible for asphalt projects. When called for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

8. Request to approve Supplemental Resolution to Authorize the Allocation of American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Eligible Storm water Projects – Peter Covert, CAO

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the Supplemental Resolution to Authorize the Allocation of American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Eligible Storm water Projects and Commissioner Adams seconded. Chairman Shoupe reported that this resolution is for the Enumerated Uses Funds. The motion carried unanimously when called for the vote.

9. Request to approve Amended Resolution to Authorize Allocation of American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Eligible Water Infrastructure Project and Delegate Authority to Enter into a Sub award with the Town of Cowarts – Peter Covert, CAO

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the Amended Resolution to Authorize Allocation of American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Eligible Water Infrastructure Project and Delegate Authority to Enter into a Sub Award with the Town of Cowarts. Commissioner Adams seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

10. Request to approve budget amendment in the amount of \$2,040 for the Sheriff's Dept. for the costs of animal cruelty cases pending court action – Major Bill Rafferty

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the budget amendment in the amount of \$2,040 for the Sheriff's Dept. for the costs of animal cruelty cases pending court action. Commissioner Adams seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

11. Request to authorize Chairman to enter into a short-term extension agreement with Trinity Services Group, Inc., for the jail meals contract – Peter Covert, CAO

Commissioner Herring made a motion to approve the request to authorize Chairman to enter into a short-term extension agreement with Trinity Services Group, Inc., for the jail meals contract. Commissioner Adams seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS

Chief Administrative Officer – Mr. Covert stated that Policy #43 for the commission called "Identity Theft Prevention Program" requires that annually Mr. Covert reach out to those departments that accept credit cards and that there are no items to come to their attention in

the way of fraud or indication of fraud by any activity in the processing of that. All departments have reported that there is not detected fraudulent activity.

County Engineer – Closed roads: Bruner, Leo Pynes, Sherman Brunson, Strong

County Attorney – No report

Adjourned