

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION
February 23, 2026

PRESENT: Chairman Brandon Shoupe, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Tracy Adams, Commissioner Ricky Herring, Commissioner James Ivey, County Engineer Barkley Kirkland, Chief Administrative Officer Stacey Holland and County Attorney Pres Register.

Chairman Shoupe called the 10:00 a.m. meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the February 23, 2026, Houston County Commission Regular Session. He declared a quorum as all commissioners were in attendance.

The invocation was given by Commissioner Ricky Herring, and the pledge of allegiance was led by Commissioner James Ivey.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Shoupe welcomed everyone and recognized Commissioner Doug Sinuefield and Mr. Jerry Carl, Candidate for 1st District U.S., were in attendance today and that Mr. Carl would be sharing a few words momentarily.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Presentation – Jerry Carl, Candidate for 1st District, U.S. Congress

At this time, Chairman Shoupe asked Mr. Carl to come forward and let everyone know how the campaign trail is treating him and anything else he would like to talk about.

Mr. Carl began by stating that the campaign trail started early this morning at 4:30 a.m. and that he appreciates the commission letting him drop in. He commenced to say that he was a county commissioner for 8 years and he loved the job, and he respects what all they do. Mr. Carl continued by reporting that he spent 40 years in business for himself, with 8 years as a county commissioner and 4 years in Congress so he has some experience in a lot of things and he is here today to try to figure out what they can do to better serve Houston County, better serve Dothan and what can they do on this side of the district. Mr. Carl reported that most people do not realize that Dothan is probably the largest city in this congressional district so

there should be a lot of things that they should be doing that he needs to be made³ aware of. Mr. Carl stated that he hopes that they can begin to do more in the Dothan area. He thanked the commission for allowing him to speak today and thanked them for the job they do.

Chairman Shoupe thanked Mr. Carl for visiting today and that he understands that federal politics is a different level. He said that he thought that he was interested in the next level of politics, but that interest went away some years ago and he appreciates people like Mr. Carl for what they do.

2. Presentation – “The Future of Emergency Messaging” – Mark Powell, EMA Director

Chairman Shoupe then called up EMA Director Mark Powell to discuss future emergency messaging. He added that he and Mr. Powell have spoken extensively about how to best get information out there to the public and stated that Mr. Powell has a lot of great ideas and has been working hard on trying to find a good solution, so he is here today to speak on what he has found.

Director Powell began his presentation by saying that he titled this presentation “The Future of Emergency Messaging” on purpose because when we talk about the future of anything, he feels that it is exciting and it is optimistic. He stated that what he is about to discuss is very exciting and optimistic for his staff and he feels that it would be for the citizens of Houston County. To begin with he discussed terminology concerning emergency management and stated that the intergraded public alert warning system, or what they call IPAWS, is a system that is managed by FEMA. He continued that the IPAWS system has been around a long time and has been called this since about 2006. The use of this type of system goes back to the 60’s, and even as far back as the 50’s. He reported that during the cold war they needed a way to alert the public on a large scale, which back then was through the television. He stated that there are 2 components of the IPAWS system and the first is emergency alert systems. The second component is the wireless emergency alerts, which came about in 2012, and this is an alert system through cell phones that can geographically be alerted. Of course, the permission to do such wireless emergency alerts has to first be granted permission by FEMA and then a vendor has to be located that can use the alert. Director Powell added that there are 1600 alerting authorities nationwide that can do this type of emergency alerts, and Houston County is one of them. He reported that there are only 45 in the state of Alabama and there are only 42 counties out of the 67 counties in Alabama that has this ability and Houston County is one of them.

Director Powell said that going back to alert notifications, they are very prevalent in the nuclear world, and Farley Nuclear is located right here in Houston County. He stated that alert and

notification mean two entirely different things with “Alert” being the process of providing a warning signal to the public at risk, indicating a need to seek additional information regarding an emergency event in progress. This would include the sirens or a cell phone notification where the cell phone rings, but no detailed information is given. Director Powell said the alert and the notification need to be sent together as after alerting there needs to be a notification, which means “informing the public about the nature of the event and any protective actions”. He added that another term in messaging is “concise”, which means that communication is brief, clear and packed with information omitting unnecessary details, filtered and redundant information. Director Powell said it is very important that they have concise information, and they tell people exactly what to do. For example, people need to know the who, what, where and when and communicate that to the public, who is it from, what is the nature of the emergency, what can it do, what actions should citizens take and where exactly is the emergency. As everyone knows, sirens cannot tell these things to the public and they cannot activate certain sirens in certain areas as they all go off at the same time. The last thing is when, which means when it is over, and the emergency expires.

Director Powell continued to say that over the last two and-a-half years, since he has been at the county, they have gone through different vendors that have this technology. He added that last year they had some issues with a vendor when their entire website crashed, and they could not use it. Last year they went to a program called “Regroup” and this vendor can do so much more than the county has had before such as sending wireless alerts to cell phones located in Houston County, send alerts to TV and radio, it can send alerts through weather radios and it can also send group messages to Houston County residents that have signed up for these alerts. In addition, Regroup can make groups within the system to include public safety entities, schools, commissioners, department heads, mayors or other groups deemed necessary. This can all be done through email, text and it also has the ability to respond back. These alerts are all done by EMA by their cell phones, IPAD or internet. Director Powell did include that if the cell phone carriers went down, this technology can still send out by going through a T-Mobile tower.

Director Powell reported that EMA receives advisories, watches, and warnings from the National Weather Service, and they do not make the decisions of any kind on their own. They relay that information to the public as they need it. He referred to the tornado that hit near and at Dothan Preparatory Academy on the south side of Dothan. EMA was not notified in time to send out anytime of alert as the tornado was on the ground when they found out about it. Director Powell did say that EMA typically has a 10–15-minute heads up but this time they did not. This occurred on March 21, 2025, as the tornado touched down at 12:31 p.m. and the notification time was 12:32 p.m. from the Weather Service. The tornado dissipated at 12:35 p.m. which was a total of 4 minutes that the tornado had traveled 3.1 miles and there was a

total of 5 injuries. Director Powell said they had the technology, but they did not receive the alert from the Weather Service. During this incident, he realized that they have to be able to deliver the message faster and they must direct the message to who needs to know. This brought about the IPAWS for schools. This system would alert all those in a position to make decisions at the school whether it is the principal, assistant principal or teachers. School systems have their own emergency plans so this will alert them to begin their emergency actions. Director Powell indicated that this system allows him to set up emergency drills to be sent out to the school to practice for emergency preparations. He reported that this system can send out alerts to just the areas that need to be alerted immediately.

Finally, Director Powell stated that the future of emergency messaging is not only that he can send this out, but it can alert, notify, be clear and concise, easily understood, and target specific locations such as schools, neighborhoods. He can include the what, who, where and when in this alert systems.

Commissioner Adams asked if assistant principals will be tagged in this, and Director Powell said that anyone within the circle of emergency will get the alert. Commissioner Ivey asked if the public must go in and install the system, but Director Powell said that this system is automatic on new phones and can be enabled on older phones. He added that anyone that is in the area will get the notification whether they live here or not. Commissioner Ivey added that he appreciates Director Powell and his staff for looking towards the future for emergency alerts. Commissioner Adams asked when the alert goes off is the tornado within 1 mile and Director Powell said they will project it along the path when they are alerted from the Weather Service by projecting the path of the storm. Commissioner Harvey asked if Director Powell will be sending out the information and he stated that he and all his staff have access and are able to do this.

Chairman Shoupe thanked Director Powell and commented that he appreciates Director Powell and his style of leadership as he is always trying to find a way to do things better and safer.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Request to approve annual Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board License Fees for Houston County

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to approve the annual Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board License Fees for Houston County. Commissioner Adams seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to appoint Ms. Meagan Dorsey and Ms. Tamara Myers to the Dothan Houston County Library System Board

Commissioner Herring made a motion to appoint Ms. Dorsey and Ms. Myers to the Dothan Houston County Library System Board. Commissioner Adams seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Request to adopt Resolution Authorizing Notice of Public Hearing, Public Hearing, and Meeting to Address Amendments of the Subdivision Regulations for Houston County Alabama.

Commissioner Ivey made a motion to adopt the Resolution Authorizing Notice of Public Hearing Public Hearing and Meeting to Address Amendments of the Subdivision Regulations for Houston County Alabama and Commissioner Harvey seconded. Chairman Shoupe commented that he was looking through the regulations and said he did not see anything about grandfathering in any existing lots and asked if it needs to be put in there. County Attorney Pres Register stated that the regulations come in effect when someone comes to plot a piece of property are the regulations that they must comply to and by default, the grandfathering would begin once the regulations are approved. Chairman asked if the language had to be added or was it implied, and Mr. Register said yes. Mr. Register added that if they wanted to give a window of time, they could sunset the prior regulations for a period of time. Chairman Shoupe stated that may be what they want to do but it does not have to be in the regulations, but it would be when the regulations come into effect. Mr. Register stated that the other point is that the commission needs to set the time and date for the public hearing. Chairman Shoupe announced that the time would be 9:30 a.m. on Monday, March 9th, 2026. He added that the regulations would not be adopted that day as they will just hold the public hearing and if the commission chooses to adopt the regulations presented that would be at a future meeting. When called for further questions, the motion carried unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS

Chief Administrative Officer – No report

County Engineer – 4 closed roads: Cedar Springs, Sweetie Smith, State Line and County Road 95.

County Attorney – No report

Adjourned