

MINUTES OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION

JANUARY 13, 2014

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Jackie Battles, Commissioner Melinda S. McClendon, Gary Sherrer, County Attorney, Barkley Kirkland, County Engineer, and William J. Dempsey, Chief Administrative Officer

ABSENT: Commissioner Doug Siquefield

Chairman Mark S. Culver called the 10:00 A. M. meeting to order, declared a quorum present, and welcomed everyone. Rev. Lyle Peluso, Pastor, The Vineyard Christian Fellowship, gave the invocation. Commissioner Harvey led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Commissioner Battles seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

Announcements and Public Comments from Chairman and Commissioners

Chairman Culver thanked Mayor Mike Schmitz for allowing the county to use the City Commission Chambers for their meetings. He stated it is working well and that the county may take some of the concepts the city uses back with them. The chairman thanked the mayor for his continued partnership in allowing them use of the room.

The chairman reported notification was received over the holidays that Commissioner Doug Siquefield had completed the Honors Courses from the Alabama Governmental Training Institute and he joins 63 other county commissioners across the state that have the distinction. He pointed out these are not the mandated courses, and Commissioner Harvey is one of the 63. He pointed out Commissioner Battles is working on completing his. Chairman Culver congratulated Commissioner Siquefield in his absence on this achievement and stated he would be honored at the ACCA's Annual Meeting in August. The chairman reported it is important that each of the commissioners get all the training and knowledge they can to assist them in doing a better job.

Awards and Presentations

1. Check Presentation – Mrs. Barbara Gibson, Director, Choctawhatchee, Pea & Yellow Rivers Watershed Management Authority

Chairman Culver asked Mrs. Barbara Gibson, Director, Choctawhatchee, Pea, and Yellow Rivers Watershed Management Authority, former Representative Joe Carothers, Commissioner Melinda McClendon, and Barkley Kirkland to come forward. The chairman reported this is a check presentation and he thanked Mrs. Gibson for the job she does. He then turned it over to Mrs. Gibson who thanked the chairman and commissioners for the opportunity to be on the agenda. She reported they are a state agency and they manage the watershed in several counties in SE Alabama. Mrs. Gibson reported last year the Houston County Road and Bridge Department had applied for a grant from their agency to help with a problem on Cumbie Road. Mrs. Gibson asked Mr. Kirkland to give details on the project. He stated when the Choctawhatchee Pea and Yellow Rivers Watershed Management Authority have money they apply for grants and they go in and stabilize ditch banks and slopes in an effort to keep silt and sand out of the watershed area. Mr. Kirkland then showed a picture of the project. Mr. Kirkland pointed out the Choctawhatchee, Pea, and Yellow Rivers Watershed Management Authority pays for materials and the county crews provide the labor. Mrs. Gibson asked Representative Joe Carothers, who serves on the board, to make comments. Mr. Carothers stated it was a pleasure to attend the meeting, and he thanked the Chairman, Commissioner McClendon, and Mr. Kirkland. He reported not all of Houston County is in the Choctawhatchee, Pea, and Yellow Rivers Watershed Authority. He reported only the western part of the City of Dothan and Houston County, and he stated they hoped to consolidate the entire county one day. Mr. Carothers pointed out this is the first time that the board has been able to fund a project in Houston County. He stated he hoped their board would be able to fund some future projects. Chairman Culver thanked Mr. Carothers and Mrs. Gibson. The check in the amount of \$20,000 was then presented for the project.

2. Annual Financial Report – Bill Dempsey, CAO

Mr. Bill Dempsey, CAO gave the Annual Financial Report. He stated each commissioner had a copy before them and he was going to give the highlights as follows:

County Wide sales tax collections increased by 1.26%, and they now exceed the 2007/08 slump collection rates

New telephone system installed for the county

BBVA Compass was awarded a 3 year banking service contract with the county for 2013-2015

Entered into agreements with Chevron, Trane, and NORESKO, all Energy Services Companies to perform energy audits . Trane has been awarded the contract and is working on the project.

Barkley Kirkland was appointed new County Engineer

Steve Carlisle was appointed new EMA Director

The first annual employee appreciation dinner occurred in December 2012

The county refinanced the 2004 Bond

Changed the county's dental insurance plan from local to the State Employees Plan.

Houston County 's Bond Rating was upgraded to Moody's Aa2 and S&P AA-. He stated this was during the time most governmental agencies were being downgraded.

Mr. Dempsey also covered the Road and Bridge's major projects:

Resurfaced Prevatt Road 1.9 miles

Completed A-TRIP Resurfacing Projects: Rocky Creek Road 11.84 miles, Judge Logue Road 5.42 miles, Fortner Street 5.83 miles

Completed 49.98 miles of shoulder work

Completed clearing on Billy Snell Road

Replaced 40 Cross Drains

Cleaned out 40.79 miles of roadway ditches

Cleaned out 6 off right-of-way ditches

Site work completed at Columbia Senior Center, Downtown (Dothan) Library, West Gate Library, Houston County House Parking Lot

Completed the Cumbie Road Ditch Stabilization Project (Watershed Management Project)

Replaced bridge bearing pads on 4 bridges

ACOM/Drew Road Project (College of Osteopathic Medicine) included base, pave, drain, and added additional turn lanes on Highway 84

Road and Bridge Department completed the entire year without a recorded medical case

All work was completed with an above average rain fall of 82.45" (Normal average rainfall is 56")

Mr. Dempsey reported the county ended the year with a fund balance of \$7,947,000, with \$5.8 million in the General Fund. He stated the county grew approximately \$500,000. He stated the Fund Balance continues to grow. He reported the three main areas of the budget that make up the largest percentage are: Revenue Commission due to property taxes with 36% of the total, county sales tax makes up 15% of the total, and the Probate Department makes up 11%. He stated Houston County is located in a very stable area that has seen positive growth each year since the '80's. Mr. Dempsey reported there was a dip in sales tax, and now there is a record in the sales tax even though it only makes up 15% of the total. He stated labor is approximately 49.54% of the spending with operating being 48.71% and capital 1.75%. Mr. Dempsey reported most of the capital purchases are operating under leases. He stated the largest area of spending is on Law Enforcement with \$1.00 out of every \$3.00 being spent. Mr. Dempsey stated as of October 1, 2013, the county had \$23,016,000, including principal and interest on the bonds, and three years of outstanding leases. He pointed out the refinancing saved the county around \$300,000. He reported the county continues to be very stable from a financial standpoint, and is now at the point that the expenses and revenues are roughly the same. Mr. Dempsey reported that the premium last year for Workers Comp was \$511,561, and this year the county is at \$470,000. He pointed out once a liability case in on the books, it takes three years for it to come off. He stated Mrs. Kelly Crowell, Safety Director, started 3 years ago, and the level has dropped. Mr. Dempsey reported Liability Insurance is the same story with a lot of incidents going on, and this past year it was down to \$454,611. He stated it also takes 3 years for these claims to go away and they are beginning to see a difference. Mr. Dempsey

reported during 2013, the Road and Bridge Department experienced something unheard of in that they had zero medical cases filed.

Chairman Culver reported Houston County is very blessed with assets, the financial where with all to be able to do the things they do, and he stated the county should really be thankful for its department heads and employees. He stated without them doing what they do, working with the commission when there are issues, and coming up with ideas to save money, the financial report would not look anything like it does. The chairman reported that the commission does not say enough about the great job the department heads and employees do. Chairman Culver reported there were 2 different numbers on the sale tax collections. He stated one was \$16,631,000, and the other was \$5,000,000. He pointed out the county only gets 30% and the other 70% goes to education. He stated there is a 1 cent sales tax in Houston County and that is the county's portion. The chairman reported it also says good things about the revenue for the 2 school systems. Chairman Culver reported on the last sales tax report, the county showed a 9% increase from the same period last year. He stated that is a significant increase and almost unheard of. Chairman Culver reported in these times of difficulty, governmental agencies and other organizations around the country were filing bankruptcy, and during that period the county was able to control cost and get the county's bond rating upgraded. He pointed out very few governmental agencies in the state were able to get their bond rating increased. The chairman thanked Mr. Dempsey, the Accounting staff, the commission team, the department heads, and employees.

Mr. Dempsey stated there are approximately 50 different departments that are budgeted each year, and of those, 45 came in under budget, and the other 5 had very legitimate reasons as to why they were not under budget. He reported there is a great awareness between the department heads and their budgets throughout the year. The chairman thanked Mr. Dempsey.

Regular Agenda

1. Request to approve Agreement with the City of Dothan for the housing and disposition of animals.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the request to enter into an Agreement with the City of Dothan for the housing and disposition of animals. Commissioner McClendon seconded the motion. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request to approve Employee Assistance Program Agreement with Bradford Health Services.

Commissioner McClendon made a motion to approve the Employee Assistance Program Agreement with Bradford Health Services. Commissioner Battles second the motion. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Request from EMA to accept 2013 LEL (Law Enforcement) Grant for \$60,000 from Alabama Law Enforcement Agency – Steve Carlisle, EMA Director.

Commissioner Battles made a motion to accept the 2013 LEL (Law Enforcement) Grant for \$60,000 from Alabama Law Enforcement Agency. Commissioner McClendon seconded the motion. The chairman called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously.

4. Request from Sheriff to award bid for 2014 Chevrolet Silverado Crew Cab to low bidder meeting specs.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the Sheriff's request to award the bid for a 2014 Chevrolet Silverado Crew Cab to Solomon Chevrolet, low bidder meeting specs, in the amount of \$33,675.50. Commissioner McClendon seconded the motion; and it carried unanimously. (Please see attached Bid Sheet Summary in Minute Book)

5. Request to approve HVAC replacement at the Houston County Health Department as per policy.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the HVAC replacement at the Houston County Health Department as per policy. Commissioner McClendon seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

6. Request to award bids for sign making materials, herbicides, concrete pipe, signs, sign faces, and MC70 Prime to the low bidders meeting specs.

Commissioner McClendon made a motion to award the bids for sign making materials, herbicides, signs, and sign faces to the low bidders meeting specs by categories, and to award the bid for concrete roadway drainage pipe to Hanson Pipe and Products Southeast, low bidder meeting specs, in the amount of \$77,049.60, and to award the bid for MC70 Prime to Ergon, low bidder meeting specs, in the amount of \$3.00 per gallon. Commissioner Battles seconded the motion. Chairman Culver called for the question; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached Bid Sheets in Minute Book)

Staff Reports:

Chief Administrative Officer –

Mr. Dempsey thanked Sean Curtis and Danny Cumbie and the members of their staff for the great job they did on the move to the old Meyer Building. He stated everything went very smooth.

County Engineer –

Mr. Kirkland reported they would be putting out the trash cans around Madrid on January 13th and 14th, and he encouraged anyone who has not signed up to please do so.

County Attorney – there was no report

Adjourn

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner McClendon seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.