

MINUTES OF HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION  
SEPTEMBER 26, 2005

PRESENT: Chairman Mark S. Culver, Commissioner Curtis Harvey, Commissioner Bobby R. Snellgrove, Commissioner Frances M. Cook, Commissioner Phillip L. Forrester, Gary Sherrer, Attorney, Mark Pool Engineer, and Roy Roberts, Administrator.

ABSENT: None.

Chairman Mark Cuvler called the 10:00 A.M. meeting to order. The invocation was given by Rev. Paul Holliman, Pastor, Greater Beulah Baptist Church. Commissioner Snellgrove led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting and the "called" meeting. Commissioner Harvey seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

There were no announcements.

1. Proclamation – "Hunger Awareness Month" – Ms. Kerry Farrell, Special Projects Coordinator – Wiregrass Area Food Bank.

Chairman Culver asked Ms. Kerry Farrell, Special Projects Coordinator, Wiregrass United Way Food Bank, to come forward and presented her with a Proclamation declaring the month of October as "Hunger Awareness Month in Houston County." Chairman Culver thanked Ms. Farrell and the staff of the food bank for the outstanding job they do in our community. Ms. Farrell thanked the chairman and the commission for the proclamation as well as their continued support in promoting the food bank. She then presented the chairman with an orange ribbon to display and individual ribbons for the commissioners to display on their vehicles.

2. Appointments – SE Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission – Mayor-Elect Pat Thomas and Matt Parker.

Chairman Culver reported there are two appointments. He stated one is the Mayor of the City of Dothan who has served as an appointment on that board. He pointed out that will be changing before the commission meets again, and that will be Mayor-Elect Pat Thomas. The chairman reported the other appointment was held by former commissioner Yelverton until the last few weeks, and because of declining health he has chosen to tender his resignation from that board. The chairman stated Mr. Matt Parker has been recommended to fill that term. Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the request to appoint Mayor-Elect Pat Thomas and Mr. Matt Parker to the SE Alabama

Regional Planning and Development Commission. Commissioner Forrester seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

ITEM #3. Re-appointment and appointment to the Houston County Department of Human Resources – Rev. Robert Jones.

Chairman Culver reported the agenda lists Rev. Earl Jones but it is Rev. Robert Jones as the re-appointment. He stated there is an additional vacancy and they are requesting a female appointee. The chairman stated if no one has the name of a female then it will be placed on the next commission agenda. He asked for a motion on the re-appointment of Rev. Robert Jones. Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to re-appoint Rev. Robert Jones to the board of the Department of Human Resources. Commissioner Harvey seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

ITEM #4. Request to approve 2005/06 budget.

Mr. Roy Roberts, Administrator, gave a presentation on the 2005/06 budget. Mr. Roberts thanked the department heads and elected officials of the county for being responsible, staying within their budget, and controlling their spending. He also thanked Mrs. Joan Clark and Ms. Nancy Bristow for the work they do in preparing the budget and in the day to day activities of the county.

Mr. Roberts reported the county is going to start the 2005/06 budget year with \$925,000.00 more than originally budgeted. He reported there is approximately \$6.1 million in reserve. He pointed out the county will be spending \$1.8 million more than it takes in on fuel costs, and the county will be dipping into the reserves this year. Mr. Roberts reported the county has no control over the fuel costs and the increase is \$342,000 without the addition of any vehicles. He also reported the costs for health insurance will increase. He stated the county has lost its "preferred rate" due to retirees and claims. Mr. Roberts pointed out Houston County will pay \$365,920 more in health insurance. The administrator reported the 1999 bond issue will require principal beginning next year and that cost will be \$1.1 million. Mr. Roberts reported the county employees will receive a 2.8 percent cost of living raise. He pointed out six full time employees and four part time employees have been added to the budget. Mr. Roberts reported the number of county employees continues to increase with a total of 416 for 2005/06. He stated each time a new employee is added to the county's payroll there is \$3.00 per hour in benefits for the county's portion, which is \$6,700 per year in family health insurance costs. Mr. Roberts reported the total budget is \$31.6 million, and the county should end the fiscal year with \$4.2 million in reserve. He stated this is a good budget and the county is finishing a good year, but it does have some red flags in it. He reported in future budgets the commission is going to have to take a hard look at labor and the benefit costs associated with the labor. He stated if the county does those things then they will

be able to continue down the road of keeping a reserve and looking out for the funds of the county.

Chairman Culver thanked Mr. Roberts and Mrs. Clark for the presentation. The chairman stated as always, the department heads have done a tremendous job working hard to cut costs and stay within their budgets. He commended the commission for the great job they did on the budget. He reported they had requests for 30 new positions and employees, and they looked at the personnel costs and were able to cut it down to 5 part-time and 5 full time positions. He commended them for balancing the increases that were mentioned in gasoline and insurance costs along with everything else. He stated this has been an unusual budget year. He reported there is around \$1 million related to personnel that is almost out of the commission's control. The chairman reported in the future, they are going to have to look carefully at whether they add any new positions or not and look at the cost of living issues. Chairman Culver reported Mr. Roberts stated they had \$6.1 million at the end of this year and they will be spending \$1.8 million more than the county would be bringing in. He stated the county's goal is to keep the \$4 million balance. He stated that is a safe, secure amount. He pointed out the \$6.1 million was probably more money than they needed in the bank; instead, the county needed the money out on the roads and in the Sheriff's Department. He reported the budget would be worse but the commission voted to advance the resurfacing that was taken out of the engineer's budget and the county saved around \$60,000 by doing the resurfacing the commission is getting ready to approve in this year's budget because of cost. Chairman Culver reported there is a 2.8% cost of living for the employees. He stated the commission's position over the last several years has been to try to provide a cost of living commensurate with that of the southern states, and he felt they have done a pretty good job of that. He pointed out as Mr. Roberts mentioned, the county is getting to the point that personnel has gotten really large and the commission may have to evaluate that policy. He stated the commission would like to give cost of living raises every year but they may have to look into putting a cap on it next year. Chairman Culver reported the budget also enables the DROP Program effective September 1, 2006, and a cost of living raise for retirees. Chairman Culver also reported the county has to work hard to get the "preferred rate" on the insurance back. He pointed out part of the experience has been higher and the county has to continue to work on healthy employees. The chairman stated the fuel costs are concerning and the county budgeted a big increase. He stated he wanted Mr. Roberts to get all the department heads together and meet shortly after the budget is put together to discuss ways to conserve fuel. He reported the sheriff and the engineer have already taken some steps to conserve fuel. Chairman Culver reported he thought it was a good budget overall and he commended the commissioners for doing the best job they could with what they had to work with. He stated he knew there had been discussion about some items that needed to be adjusted but he thought with as much time as has been spent he felt it would be better to come back later and take care of those if anyone has any adjustments. Commissioner

Cook made a motion to approve the 2005/06 budget along with any resolutions relating to personnel issues. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

ITEM #5. Request to adopt Rules of Procedure for Meetings and Policy for Recording Proceedings per the Open Meetings Law.

Chairman Culver reported they went over the procedural items in depth at the meeting on Thursday. He stated beginning October 1<sup>st</sup>, the county will have to come under the guidelines and regulations of the Open Meetings Law. He pointed out part of that requires that the county adopt Rules of Procedure which was done in depth on Thursday. The chairman reported copies of the Rules of Procedure are available for anyone wanting to get a copy after the meeting. He pointed out there are some differences beginning with the next meeting. The chairman reported it would take the commission some time to get used to the differences and they would probably be stepping on each other's toes for a while. He felt these changes would make the meetings flow a little better and be more professional. Chairman Culver reported there is also a policy for recording. He reported part of the Open Meetings Law states that any member of the media or an individual has the right to record any of the public meetings. He stated at the suggestion of the attorney there is a document that basically gives policy for recording. Commissioner Cook asked if this would be on the website? Chairman Culver stated yes. Commissioner Harvey made a motion to approve the request to adopt the Rules of Procedure for Meetings and Policy for Recording Proceedings per the Open Meetings Law. Commissioner Forrester seconded; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached in Minute Book)

ITEM #6. Request to enter into agreement with Emfinger Steel, Inc., for the bell from the old county courthouse bell tower.

Chairman Culver showed a picture of the old county courthouse being torn down around 1960. He stated the bell was taken out to Emfinger Steel Company when the courthouse was torn down, and has been out there ever since sort of on display. He stated there have been discussions in the past about getting the bell and they were not able to work it out. He reported Mr. Isaac Mitchell, Revenue Commissioner's Office, recently had some conversation with the Emfinger family and they have agreed to allow the county to use the bell. He stated the courthouse architect is working to develop a display at no charge, and they would like to have the dedication of the bell on October 28<sup>th</sup> because that is the day the courthouse was originally dedicated in 1905. He stated he thought it would be nice to have the bell displayed on the courthouse lawn. The chairman reported the agreement before the commission for approval states that if at a later date, the commission decides that they have no use for the bell, then it would revert back to the Emfinger family. Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to approve the request to authorize the chairman to enter into an agreement with

Emfinger Steel, Inc., for the bell from the old county courthouse bell tower. Commissioner Cook seconded; and the motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Cook stated she appreciated the Emfinger family for allowing the county to have one of its historical items to be displayed.

ITEM #7. Request for appropriation to the Houston County Water Authority.

Chairman Culver reported the amount that was discussed is \$40,000. He asked Mr. Roberts if it would be better if it was done in the new budget year or if it made any difference? Mr. Roberts stated it did not make any difference. Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to approve the request for a \$40,000 appropriation to the Houston County Water Authority. Commissioner Cook seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

ITEM #8. Request to adopt budget amendment for indigent burial.

Chairman Culver reported all of the allotted funding for indigent burials has been used and we need a budget amendment in the amount of \$200.00 to handle another request. Commissioner Cook made a motion to adopt a budget amendment in the amount of \$200.00 for the indigent burial of Mr. Joe Bennett Poke. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached Budget Amendment in Minute Book)

ITEM #9. Request to renew uniform contract for Sheriff's Department.

Chairman Culver reported the request is to extend the current contract. Commissioner Cook made a motion to approve the request to renew the uniform contract at the current price for the Sheriff's Department. Commissioner Harvey seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

ITEM #10. Request to authorize Revenue Commissioner to execute computer software agreement.

Chairman Culver reported this is on the Delta software. He stated the agreement had already been approved and it is a matter of authorizing Mrs. Matthews to sign the documents. Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to approve the request to authorize the Revenue Commissioner to execute the computer software agreement with Delta. Commissioner Forrester seconded; and the motion carried unanimously.

ITEM #11. Request to adopt Resolution commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act.

Chairman Culver reported he understood the Voting Rights Act will be coming up for reauthorization in 2007. He stated organizations across the country have asked bodies such as the county commission to be supportive of the Voting

Rights Act, and he reported this commission is certainly in favor of the Voting Rights Act. Chairman Culver stated Commissioner Harvey had made the request to put this on the agenda, and he asked him if he had any comments? Commissioner Harvey reported Mr. Earl Jones, President, ADC, and Mr. Jerome Gray, State Field Coordinator, were present and he stated they are really working hard doing positive things in the community. At that time, Rev. Jones stated this year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and they are celebrating the event and its impact on the electoral process. He reported activities will continue up until October 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> which will be the Alabama Democratic Conference in Montgomery. He thanked the commission for acknowledging this and enlisted the members continued support. Commissioner Harvey made a motion to adopt the Resolution commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. Commissioner Snellgrove seconded; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see in Resolution Book)

ITEM #12. Request to approve agreement for estimated cost of replacement of bridge on Prevatt Road.

Mr. Pool reported the bids will be open Friday by the Highway Department. He stated the construction would be paid with Garvey money, county's federal funds and some matching funds from the county. Chairman Culver asked Mr. Pool if this is the next step in getting the bridge replaced? Mr. Pool stated yes. Commissioner Snellgrove made a motion to grant the request to approve the agreement for the estimated cost of the replacement of the bridge on Prevatt Road. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion. Chairman Culver asked the engineer when they anticipated the bridge being re-opened? Mr. Pool stated going through the state's process he felt like by June, 2006 it should be completed. (Please see in Resolution Book)

ITEM #13. Request to award bids for MC70 prime, seed, disposal of waste material, cement, concrete block, concrete pipe, bituminous coated pipe, herbicides, signs, sign faces, striping, legends & markers, and oil, grease, & fluids.

Commissioner Cook made a motion to award the bids for MC70 prime, seed, disposal of waste material, cement, concrete block, concrete pipe, bituminous coated pipe, herbicides, signs, sign faces, striping, legends & markers, and oil, grease & fluids to the low bidder meeting specs in each category. Commissioner Harvey seconded; and the motion carried unanimously. (Please see attached Bid Summary Sheets in Minute Book)

ITEM #14. Administrator's Report.

Mr. Roy Roberts reported the budget process gets more difficult each year, and he expressed his appreciation to the commission for their work and the seriousness they take on the budget as well as the care they take in handling the

taxpayer's money. He stated as a citizen and a taxpayer he appreciated them being pretty tight with a dollar. Chairman Culver thanked Mr. Roberts for his comments. The chairman also pointed out that those who know Mr. Roberts know he is tight and treats the county's money as his own. He stated the commission is not trying to be difficult but they are trying to make sure all the funds are expended in an efficient manner. The chairman stated the commission appreciated Mr. Roberts, Mrs. Clark and Ms. Bristow and the staff that put the budget together this year.

ITEM #15. Engineer's Report.

Mr. Pool reported at last Tuesday's MPO meeting, two projects were approved-- \$270,000 for the Omussee Road bridge replacement in 2006, and in 2007, resurfacing of Headland Avenue from Ross Clark Circle to Highway #431 in the amount of \$462,000, for a total of \$732,000.

Chairman Culver recognized Commissioner Harvey's wife, Kim.

ITEM #16. Adjourn.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Forrester seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.