



**HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT  
MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
OCTOBER 26, 2021**

The Commissioners' Court of Houston County met in a regular, called meeting on October 26, 2021, **in person and via zoom due to Covid**, with the following members present, to wit:

Jim Lovell	County Judge
Gary Lovell	Commissioner, Precinct #1
Willie Kitchen	Commissioner, Precinct #2
Gene Stokes	Commissioner, Precinct #3
Jimmy Henderson	Commissioner, Precinct #4

Also present:

Sharon Luker	Administrative Assistant to the Commissioners
Jan Pigford	Administrative Assistant to County Judge
Todd McConnell	IT
Brittani Womack	First Assistant Auditor (Zoom)
Laronica Wooten-Smith	Tax Assessor Collector (Zoom)
Heath Murff	Emergency Management (Zoom)
Terri Meadows	County Clerk
Sheila Johnson	Grants Administrator (Zoom)
Jennifer Kulms	911 Addressing (Zoom)
Daphne Session	County Attorney
Janis Omelina	County Treasurer
Melissa Jeter	County Auditor
Hernan Gonzales	Legal Assistant in County Attorney's Office
Roger White	Assistant County Attorney
Joel Martin	Chief Bailiff

Media:

Will Johnson	The Messenger (Zoom)
Jan White	Houston County Courier (Zoom)

Visitors:

Gerald Reichl (dog shelter), Liza Clark (Chamber Director),

(1) Welcome, Invocation and Pledges:

Commissioner Kitchen called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. Commissioner Henderson led the opening prayer and then Commissioner Kitchen led the Pledge to the American flag and the Texas Flag.

- (2) Recognition and comments from guests: Gerald Reichl spoke about the number of stray dogs and cats in Houston County and the need for an Animal Shelter.
- (3) **Commissioner Henderson moved to approve the Commissioners Court minutes from October 12, 2021. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (4) Consider approving budget amendments. **NONE**
- (5) Consider payment of bills and expenses:
  - a. Accounts payable
  - b. Fund transfers
  - c. Ratify Salary expenses**Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to pay all the bills and expenses for a. (Accounts payable), b. (Fund transfers), and c. (Ratify Salary expenses). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lovell. The motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (6) Receive information, announcements and reports from County Departments:
  - a. County Treasurers Report (not provided)
  - b. Compensatory Report
  - c. Melissa Jeter, County Auditor, announced that additional FEMA funds have been received
  - d. Certificate of Compliance for Houston County Jail**Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to receive the Reports as information. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (7) Consider approving salaries for new and/or transfer employees:
  - a. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the pay for Hernan Gonzales, Legal Assistant in the County Attorney's Office. Bi-weekly pay is \$1059.56 in Pay Grade 15. Commissioner Lovell seconded the motion. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
  - b. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the pay for Jerry Kaelin, Full time Deputy at the HCSO. Bi-weekly pay is \$1352.30 in Pay Grade 19 and a bi-weekly phone stipend of \$18.46. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 3 to 2 with Commissioner Lovell, Commissioner Kitchen, and Judge Lovell voting Yay. Commissioner Stokes and Commissioner Henderson voted Nay.**
  - c. **Commissioner Lovell moved to approve the bi-weekly pay for Matthew VanEgmond, Deputy at the HCSO in the amount of \$1352.30 in Pay Grade 19 and bi-weekly phone stipend of \$18.46. Commissioner Henderson seconded the motion. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
  - d. **Commissioner Lovell moved to approve salary for Henry Robinson as part time jailer at the HCSO at hourly rate of \$13.24 in Pay Grade 15 AND Christina Owens as full time jailer at the HCSO at bi-weekly salary of \$1059.56 in Pay Grade 15. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
  - e. **Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve the requested salary with budget amendment (that is requested in item 10 of agenda) for Roger White as Assistant**

**County Attorney of \$2792.81 bi-weekly in Pay Grade 32. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- (8) Discuss and consider approving payment of compensatory, and vacation time for County employees and necessary budget amendments. **NONE**
- (9) **Commissioner Kitchen moved to PASS on taking action to initiate a burn ban for unincorporated areas of Houston County. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (10) Discuss and consider action on a request for a budget amendment from the County Attorney to fund the Assistant County Attorney salary position to the midpoint on the pay scale. **(This matter was taken care of in Agenda Item 7d)**
- (11) **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve request for budget amendment from the Senior Citizens Center to repair/replace the compressor on the air conditioner in the amount of \$4995.00. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (12) **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve Crockett Civic Center Rental and Use Agreement with Certificate Liability Coverage for District Clerk's Jury Selection to be held on October 19, 2021 and November 16, 2021. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (13) **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the contract with Vyve for additional phone lines to be placed in the Houston County IT Support Office and County Clerk Records Office. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (14) **Judge Lovell recommended to approve the job description for Facilities Administrator and to place the position at 23 on the Pay Scale. Commissioner Lovell seconded the recommendation. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (15) Discuss and consider taking action by approving Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund Application and Interlocal Agreement:
  - (a) **Commissioner Kitchen made the motion to approve \$1000 to Piney Woods Fine Arts Association for Dicken's Christmas Carol to be held on December 6, 2021. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
  - (b) **Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve \$1000 to Crockett Area Chamber of Commerce for 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Tree Decorating Contest to be held at the Crockett Civic Center on November 20, 2021 through December 25, 2021. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
  - (c) **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion and Commissioner Henderson seconded to approve \$2000 to Crockett Area Chamber of Commerce for "Christmas in Crockett Event" to be held on November 20, 2021. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
  - (d) **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve \$2000 to Crockett Area Chamber of Commerce for 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Shop Local/Shop Late Event to be held in Downtown Crockett on December 9 and December 16, 2021. Commissioner Henderson seconded the motion. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- (16) Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve and set December 3, 2021 as the date for awarding longevity for Fiscal Year 2021. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.
- (17) Commissioner Kitchen made a motion and Commissioner Henderson seconded to award Re-sale of Trust Properties to the highest bidders. Motion carried 5 to 0.
- (18) Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to award bids on 1995 GMC Sierra Truck, 2012 Chevrolet Impala, 1989 Chevrolet 2500 Truck, and John Deere D100 riding lawnmower to highest bidders. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.
- (19) Commissioner Kitchen made the motion to approve 3 additional storage facilities, The Space Place in Crockett owned by Mr. Richard Curry, Cochino Storage owned by Keith and Michelle Rowe in Kennard, and 228 Mini Storage in Grapeland owned by Sheila and Terry Woods, to be used for evictions by law enforcement. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.
- (20) Commissioner Kitchen made a motion and Commissioner Lovell seconded to approve contract with Garratt-Callahan Company to provide a water treatment chemical program and service for Courthouse chiller system from October 18, 2021 until October 18, 2022.
- (21) Closed Executive session per Texas Government Code §551.071.
- (22) Discuss legal update and briefing regarding pending litigation, County of Houston vs. Purdue Pharma, L.P., et al Cause No 18-0124; National Prescription Opiate Litigation, MDL 2804; Eastern Division, Northern District of Ohio and Master File Cause No. 2018-63587: In Re: Texas Opioid Litigation, in the 152<sup>nd</sup> District Court of Harris County Texas.
- (23) Closed executive session as authorized by Texas Government Code §551.072 to discuss the county's potential purchase, lease, sale, or exchange of real estate and/or the value of the real estate and contemplated litigation per Local Government Code §551.071.
- (24) COURT ENTERED CLOSED SESSION AT 9:58 A.M. AND RETURNED TO OPEN SESSION AT 10:27 A.M.
- (25) Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve signing necessary documents to regarding approving settlement agreement between Houston County and Johnson and Johnson, County of Houston vs. Purdue Pharama L.P., et al Cause No. 18-0124. Commissioner Henderson seconded Motion carried 5 to 0.
- (26) Commissioner Kitchen moved that Houston County convey to City of Crockett 100% ownership of parking lot located between the Moosehead Café and 5<sup>th</sup> Street and also our 50% interest in ownership of 20 acre tract located near the Armory in exchange we will receive the Armory and an amount of land around it to be specified by a future survey. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

**(27) Judge Lovell made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried by everyone standing and leaving the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.**

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Jim Lovell, County Judge

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Gary Lovell, Commissioner, Precinct #1

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Willie Kitchen, Commissioner, Precinct #2

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Gene Stokes, Commissioner, Precinct #3

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Jimmy Henderson, Commissioner, Precinct #4

Attest:

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Terri Meadows, County Clerk