



**HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT**  
**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**MAY 12, 2026**

The Commissioners' Court of Houston County met in a regular, called meeting on May 12, 2026 in **person and via zoom**, with the following members present, to wit:

The Court

Jim Lovell	County Judge	<b>PRESENT</b>
Gary Lovell	Commissioner, Precinct #1	<b>PRESENT</b>
Willie Kitchen	Commissioner, Precinct #2	<b>PRESENT</b>
Gene Stokes	Commissioner, Precinct #3	<b>PRESENT</b>
Jimmy Henderson	Commissioner, Precinct #4	<b>PRESENT</b>
Terri Meadows	County Clerk	<b>PRESENT</b>

County Officials/Employees in person:

Zak Bengé	Sheriff	Present
Sarah Bergman	First Assistant Auditor	Zoom
Dustin Brown	Assistant Jail Administrator	Present
Hugh Coleman	Assistant County Attorney	Zoom
Gordon Denman	Bailiff	Present
Kris Dyches	Insurance Coordinator	Present
Laura Goolsby	District Clerk	Present
Chalis Hooks	Assistant County Attorney	Present
Melissa Jeter	County Auditor	Zoom
Carl Johnson	Facilities Administrator	Zoom
Sheila Johnson	Grants Administrator	Present
Donavan Mahan	Jail Administrator	Present
Ryan Martin	Chief Deputy Sheriff	Present
Kristina Massey	County Attorney	Present
Todd McConnell	IT	Present
Les Neely	HCSO	Zoom
Jan Pigford	Assistant to County Judge	Present
Darrellyn Smith	Assistant to the County Commissioners	Present
Matthew Van Egmond	S/O	Zoom
Brittani Womack	Tax Assessor-Collector	Present

Media: Greg Ritchie (Messenger on Zoom)

Visitors: Matt Winchester (Oncor), Mark Whitfill (Airport), Sonny Hubbard (Live Oak Environmental), Joe Carter (GM of Live Oak Environmental), Amber Stelly (Consolidated Water), J.D. Hatten (Site Manager at Live Oak)

Environmental), Charlana Kelly (SpeakTruth Global), Craig Jones (Airport), Dallas Taylor (TKE – Elevator), Kasey Witherspoon, Tony Osborn (Dealer Services), Brian Henderson

(1) Welcome, Invocation and Pledges:

**On Tuesday, May 12, 2026, Commissioner Kitchen called the regularly scheduled Houston County Commissioners Court meeting to order at 9:01 a.m., Commissioner Stokes voiced the opening prayer followed by Commissioner Kitchen leading the Pledge to the American Flag and the Texas Flag.**

(2) Recognition and comments from guests. (For informational purposes only, with no deliberation and no action taken, except that the Court may discuss whether to include any matter on a future agenda for deliberation and/or action.) ***Mark Whitfill spoke about the airport contracts and asked if the county could give them a heads up on any changes that will be made.***

(3) Consider approval of prior Commissioners Court minutes. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the Commissioners Court minutes for April 28, 2026. Commissioner Henderson 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 Lovell made a motion to pay all the bills and expenses for a. (Accounts payable), b. (Fund transfers), and c. (Ratify Salary expenses). Commissioner Henderson seconded. The Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(6) Receive information, announcements and reports from County Departments:

- a. Community Service/Environmental Report
- b. District Clerk Report
- c. County Clerk Report
- d. Tax Assessor Report
- e. Auditor's Office

**Commissioner Kitchen moved to receive as information the Community Service/Environmental Report, District Clerk Report, County Clerk Report, Tax Assessor Report, and Auditor's Office Report. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

***\*\*Judge Lovell said that we had a successful County Government Picnic, and thanked those that cooked and organized the lunch.***

(7) Consider approving salaries for new and/or transfer employees.

**Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve the following salaries and Commissioner Stokes seconded. The motion carried 5 to 0.**

**\*Approve salary for new hire, Jessica Hobbs (Davis), as Full-Time Deputy Clerk in the Tax Assessor-Collector Office, at bi-weekly salary of \$1,426.40, in Pay Grade 16, effective May 12, 2026**

**\*Approve salary of new hire, Noah Hoch, as Full-Time Temporary Licensed Jailer, at annual salary of \$42,000.00 (County Base Rate \$39,676.00 and Supplement \$2,324.00), in Pay Grade (n/g), effective May 12, 2026**

**\*Approve promotion salary of Rebecca San Miguel, as Full-Time Licensed Dispatcher, at annual salary of \$40,000.00, in Pay Grade SO3, effective May 12, 2026**

**\*Approve promotion salary of Brittney Duval, as Full-Time Licensed Dispatcher, at annual salary of \$40,000.00, in Pay Grade SO3, effective May 12, 2026**

- (8) Discuss and consider approving payment of compensatory, and vacation time for County employees and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve payment of compensatory, and vacation time for County employees and necessary budget amendments for Hunter Ballard - \$4,404.59 at HCSO. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (9) Discuss and consider declaring received information as surplus inventory and approving transfers between departments. **Commissioner Kitchen moved to declare received information as surplus inventory and approving transfers between departments. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (10) Discuss and consider approving Modernization Proposal, from TKE, for the Houston County Courthouse elevator and approving payment schedule. (CJ) ***Carl Johnson, Facilities Administrator, talked about the length of the project to replace the elevator parts. Melissa Jeter, Auditor, directed the Court to look at page 9 of the contract for the payment breakdown.*** Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve the Modernization Proposal, from TKE, for the Houston County Courthouse elevator and approving payment schedule. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.
- (11) Discuss and consider approval of the “revised” Houston County Title VI Nondiscrimination Policy. ***Sheila Johnson, Grants Administrator, said this is an amendment to the original policy, and this brings us up to code – currently.*** Commissioner Lovell moved to approve the “revised” Houston County Title VI Nondiscrimination Policy. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.
- (12) Discuss and consider accepting donation in the amount of \$300.00 from BSB Logging LLC to CR 4090 in Precinct #3. **Commissioner Stokes moved to accept a donation in the amount of \$300.00 from BSB Logging LLC for improvements to CR 4090 in Precinct #3. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (13) Discuss and consider approving quote for replacements that are needed in the jail kitchen. ***\*Jail Administrator, Donovan Mahan, shared with the court the statute concerning how the kitchen at the jail must be maintained. The Court asked Melissa where the money for the replacements could come from, and she said the tax note.*** Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to table approving the quote for replacements that are needed in the jail kitchen. Commissioner Stokes seconded. (no vote taken)
- (14) Discuss and consider approving advertisement through Auctioneer Express 2016 Kenworth T800, 6415 John Deere Tractor and 2001 Ford F250, and all the items we listed as spare parts that didn't get bids on previous agenda. ***\*Melissa Jeter, Auditor, stated that she needs a list. Commissioner Kitchen said he would get her a list.*** Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve

advertisement through Auctioneer Express 2016 Kenworth T800, 6415 John Deer Tractor and 2001 Ford F250, and all the items we listed as spare parts that didn't get bids on previous agenda. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

(15) Discuss and consider actions on approving contracts with dealerships to become deputy dealers under the Houston County Tax Office. ***\*Tony Osborn, with Dealer Services Network was here to speak about this item. Commissioner Lovell asked Mr. Osborn how much they charge for their service and he said "\$10". He also shared that out of the \$10, \$5 of that goes back to the county on top of the regular registration.*** Commissioner Lovell moved to approve contracts with dealerships to become deputy dealers under the Houston County Tax Office. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

(16) Discuss and consider accepting proposal, from ERI Consulting, for asbestos and lead testing for multiple structures related to the Commissioner Court and Bank exterior renovations in the amount of \$5,250.00. ***\*Carl Johnson, Facilities Administrator, said this is necessary before the construction on the new Commissioners Courtroom can begin.*** Commissioner Lovell moved to accept proposal, from ERI Consulting, for asbestos and lead testing for multiple structures related to the Commissioner Court and Bank exterior renovations in the amount of \$5,250.00. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

(17) Receive as information the Houston County Airport hangar lease report through May 6, 2026. ***\*Mark Whitfill, with the Airport, shared that Craig Jones needs a new lease. He also stated the Airport does have an Advisory Board and they are going to rejuvenate some things. He shared there is a meeting with TXDot on lighting project, and he would like someone from the County to attend.*** Commissioner Kitchen moved to receive as information the Houston County Airport hangar lease report through May 6, 2026. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

(18) Receive as information the final submission close out report for the American Rescue Plan Assistance (ARPA). ***\*Melissa Jeter, Auditor, gave a summary of the projects in the report, and bragged on how much our county was able to do with the money we received.*** Commissioner Henderson moved to receive as information the final submission close out report for the American Rescue Plan Assistance (ARPA). Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

***\*\*Commissioners Court took a brief recess from 9:48 a.m. to 9:51 a.m.***

(19) Discuss and consider action on an order granting a discretionary exemption from the purchasing requirements for invoice from First County Feed for diesel purchased outside the contract. ***Commissioner Kitchen gave some background on this purchase. There was discussion between the Commissioner and the Auditor about this issue.*** Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve an order granting a discretionary exemption from the purchasing requirements for invoice from First County Feed for diesel purchased outside the contract. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

(20) Discuss and consider action on applying for the unclaimed capital credits received from electric cooperative as authorized under LGS 381.004. **Commissioner Lovell moved to approve applying for the unclaimed capital credits received from electric cooperative as authorized under LGC 381.004.** Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

- (21) Receive as information the estimated appraisal values from the Houston County Appraisal District for FY 2027. **Short discussion included that these values will affect the County Budget this next year. No Action was taken.**
- (22) Discuss and consider action on an application and interlocal agreement to the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund for the following:
- a. The Piney Woods Fine Arts Crockett Civic Center, Mark Wills April 18, 2026
  - b. Houston County Youth Shooting Sports, Houston County 4-H Whizbang May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2026
- Commissioner Henderson moved to approve interlocal agreements to the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund with The Piney Woods Fine Arts Association for a concert with Mark Wills at the Crockett Civic Center on April 18, 2026 and Houston County Youth Shooting Sports for Houston County 4-H Whizbang on May 2, 2026 at \$1,000 to each organization. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

**Court entered into Closed Executive Session on the following items at 9:58 a.m.**

- (23) **Closed executive session** as authorized by Texas Government Code §551.071(1)(B) – Consultation with Attorney in a closed meeting on a matter in which the duty of the attorney to the governmental body under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct of the State Bar of Texas conflicts with Texas Government Code §551 and update on Hurricane Bayou bridge project case #CV6618 Houston County Texas vs M.Y.RL, LLC AND #CV6619 Houston County Texas vs Rebekah Lee Bear Riemenschneider.
- (24) **Closed executive session** as authorized by Texas Government Code §551.071: Discuss and consider consulting with attorney concerning possible franchise agreement for solid waste collection.
- (25) **Closed Executive Session** Commissioners court will convene in Executive Session pursuant to Sections 551.071 and 551.087 of the Texas Government Code to Consult with legal counsel and to discuss a proposed Non-Disclosure Agreement regarding prospective economic development matters in Houston County.
- (26) Discuss and consider action on cancellation of a Franchise Agreement with Live Oak Environmental formerly known as Piney Woods Sanitation Inc. **\*Sonny Hubbard with Live Oak Environmental was present and told the Commissioners Court that Houston County is one their top customers and they want to do whatever they can to keep our business. The Commissioners discussed back and forth with Sonny about missed trash pick up on multiple occasions. The GM, Joe Carter, spoke up and said that he can see communication has been a big issue, and they are working on ways to improve communication. The Commissioners asked if the drivers could give them a call to ask about the roads rather than emailing because when they are out working they are not looking at their email. Joe said, “absolutely”. No Action was taken on this item.**

(27)Adjourn. **Judge Lovell made a motion for the Commissioners Court Meeting to Adjourn. The motion carried by everyone rising and leaving the meeting at 11:18 a.m.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jim Lovell, County Judge

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gary Lovell, Commissioner, Precinct #1

\_\_\_\_\_  
Willie Kitchen, Commissioner, Precinct #2

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gene Stokes, Commissioner, Precinct #3

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jimmy Henderson, Commissioner, Precinct #4

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Terri Meadows, County Clerk

Date Approved: May 26, 2026