



HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 27, 2026

The Commissioners' Court of Houston County met in a regular, called meeting on January 27, 2026 in **person and via zoom**, with the following members present, to wit:

The Court

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

County Officials/Employees in person:

Zak Bengé	Sheriff	Present
Hugh Coleman	Assistant County Attorney	Zoom
Missy D'Angelo	Assistant Auditor	Zoom
Gordon Denman	S/O	Present
Kris Dyches	Insurance Coordinator	Present
Meagan Frizzell	9-1-1 Addressing	Zoom
Laura Goolsby	District Clerk	Present
Melissa Jeter	County Auditor	Present
Carl Johnson	Facilities Administrator	Zoom
Sheila Johnson	Grants Administrator	Present
Al Kreger	Historical Commission	Present
Ryan Martin	Chief Deputy Sheriff	Present
Todd McConnell	IT	Present
Mike McCreight	JP 1	Present
Heath Murff	Emergency Management	Present
Les Neeley	S/O	Zoom
Jan Pigford	Assistant to County Judge	Present
Darrellyn Smith	Assistant to the County Commissioners	Present
Red Smith	Constable Precinct 2	Present
Matthew Van Egmond	S/O	Zoom
Brittani Womack	Tax Assessor-Collector	Present

Media: Greg Ritchie (Messenger on Zoom)

Visitors: Patrick McArthur (Perdue|Brandon)

(1) Welcome, Invocation and Pledges:

Judge Lovell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., Commissioner Kitchen voiced the opening prayer followed by Judge Lovell 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.) **None**
- (3) Consider approval of prior Commissioners Court minutes. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the Commissioners Court minutes for January 13, 2026. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 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 Stokes seconded. Commissioner Lovell amended the motion to approve to pay all the bills and expenses with a correction of \$55.60 to Precinct 1 Road and Bridge. The motion to amend was seconded by Commissioner Stokes. The Motion carried 4 to 0.

- (6) Receive information, announcements and reports from County Departments:
 - a. County Treasurers Report
 - b. Compensatory Report

Judge Lovell asked Sheriff Bengé to explain the equipment that was necessary for Dispatch that was approved the last Commissioners Court. Sheriff Bengé said that this equipment puts spoken words into written word on their system. If we did not have this equipment they would have to resort to analog and analog would not be picked up by the agencies.

Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve the County Treasurers Report and the Compensatory Report as presented. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.

- (7) Consider approving salaries for new and/or transfer employees.
Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve the following salaries and Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.

Jonathon Strong moving from Sgt Jailer to Cadet Program with requested annual pay of \$44,000.00 (\$39,676.00 County Base Rate and \$4,324.00 Supplement) in Pay Grade SO5. Effective 2/23/26.

Spencer Lightfoot moving from Jailer to Cadet Program with requested annual pay of \$44,000.00 (\$39,676.00 County Base Rate and \$4,324.00 Supplement) in Pay Grade SO5. Effective 2/23/26.

Taylor Budro moving from Basic Jailer to Jail Sergeant with requested annual pay of \$47,000.00 (\$41,926.56 County Base Rate and \$5,073.44 Supplement) in Pay Grade SO4. Effective 2/23/26.

Robert Stuart moving from Jailer to Corporal (Utilities/transport) with requested annual pay of \$45,500.00 (\$41,926.56 County Base Rate and \$4,324.00 Supplement) in Pay Grade SO7. Effective 1/27/26.

New Hire James Hallmark as Full Time Jailer with requested annual pay of \$44,000.00 (\$39,676.00 County Base Rate and \$4,324.00 Supplement) in Pay Grade SO5. Effective 1/27/26.

New Hire Emily Lewis as Full Time Jailer with requested annual pay of \$42,000.00 (\$39,676.00 County Base Rate and \$2,324.00 Supplement) in Pay Grade SO4. Effective 1/27/26.

New Hire Katelyn Charanza as Part Time Dispatcher with requested hourly pay of \$16.99 in Pay Grade SO5. Effective 1/21/26.

New Hire Katelyn Charanza as Full Time Dispatcher with requested annual pay of \$38,000.00 in Pay Grade SO2. Effective 1/27/26.

- (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 to: Brooke Steubing, HCSO/Dispatch, the amount of \$1,057.65. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 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 Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (10) Discuss and consider appointment of new member to Houston County Child Welfare Board, Sarah Carter Crow, as well as reappointment of current members: Jenni Shartle and Gwen Willis. **Commissioner Kitchen moved to reappoint current members, Jenni Shartle and Gwen Willis to the Houston County Child Welfare Board. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0. Sarah Carter Crow was not able to attend the meeting and it was discussed that she will be appointed and sworn in at a later date.**
- (11) Discuss and consider Spectrum to install 1,186' of fiber Optic Cable along CR 3070 N or FM 132 as part of a re-route to original design (PCT 2) **Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve Spectrum to install 1,186' of fiber Optic Cable along CR 3070 N or FM 132 as part of a re-route to original design. Commissioner Lovell and Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (12) Receive as information the 2025 Title III Expenditure Report. ***Melissa Jeter, County Auditor, noted that this is the last of these funds. Commissioner Kitchen moved to receive as information the 2025 Title III Expenditure Report. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

- (13)Receive as information the 2025 Road and Bridge Lateral Road Report. **Commissioner Kitchen moved to receive as information the 2025 Road and Bridge Lateral Road Report. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (14)Discuss and Consider action on the HR Committee policy. **Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve the update to the HR Committee Policy concerning Pregnant Workers Fairness Act Policy and to update the HR Committee Members as presented (DA – Daphne Session, District Clerk – Laura Goolsby, County Treasurer – Janis Omelina, County Tax Assessor/Collector – Brittani Womack, Road & Bridge Employee – Dwayne Hughes, Law Enforcement Employee – Ryan Martin, County Auditor – Melissa Jeter – non-voting, HR Administrator – Kris Dyches – non-voting, Assistant to the County Judge – Jan Pigford – non-voting). Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (15)Discuss and consider action on the Employee Sick Pool policy updates. **Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve the Employee Sick Pool Policy updates as presented. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (16)Discuss and consider taking action to approve new job description for deputy constable for Precinct 2. **After much discussion the Court agreed to not take any action at this time and for the Sheriff and Constable Precinct 2 to get together and come up with a plan.**
- (17)Discuss and consider approving resale bids of county struck-off properties. (Perdue Brandon Attorney) **Commissioner Lovell moved to approve resale bids of county struck-off properties in Cause No. 23-0152 Houston County vs Julia Ann Frazier, et al, awarded to Efrain Fajardo for Fifteen thousand dollars and 00/100 (\$15,000.00). Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (18)Receive as information the Continuing Education Hours for Terri Meadows, Houston County Clerk, for 2025 calendar year. (CC) **Commissioner Kitchen made the motion to receive as information the Continuing Education Hours for Terri Meadows, Houston County Clerk, for 2025 calendar year. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (19)Receive as information for the Continuing Education Hours for Laura Goolsby, District Clerk for 2025 as prescribed in Section 51.605 of the Texas Government Code. (DC) **Commissioner Lovell moved to receive as information the Continuing Education Hours for Laura Goolsby, District Clerk for 2025 as prescribed in Section 51.605 of the Texas Government Code. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (20)Discuss and consider action on the Houston County Sheriff's Department Deputy Cadet Program
- a. Receive selection of Jail Sgt Jonathon Strong and Jailer Spencer Lightfoot into the program. **Commissioner Kitchen moved to receive selection of Jail Sgt Jonathon Strong and Jailer Spencer Lightfoot into the Houston County Sheriff's Department Deputy Cadet Program. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
 - b. Approve Cadet agreements to attend the East Texas Police Academy with county-paid tuition and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Lovell moved to approve Cadet agreements to attend the East Texas Police Academy with county-paid tuition and necessary budget amendments for Jonathon Strong and Spencer Lightfoot. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

- c. Approve employee status change request for cadets effective February 23, 2026. **Commissioner Stokes moved to approve employee status change request for cadets, Jonathan Strong and Spencer Lightfoot, effective February 23, 2026 (see agenda item #7 for details). Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

(21)Hear Update from the Historical Commission and consider action on placement on the Courthouse grounds of the Travis Plaque project, a large bronze plaque containing Col. William Barrett Travis's Alamo "Victory or Death" letter, and necessary budget amendments. ***Al Kreger from the Historical Commission shared the details on the Travis Plaque Project and requested permission for placement on the Courthouse grounds. He also shared that the dedication is set on March 2, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.*** Commissioner Lovell moved to approve that the Colonel William Barrett Travis Alamo "Victory or Death" letter that is a large bronze plaque be placed on the southeast quadrant of the Courthouse grounds. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.

(22)Discuss and consider action on Application to the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal agreements for Houston County Fair & Youth Livestock Show, March 28-April 4, 2026. (CA) **Commissioner Lovell moved to approve Application to the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal agreements for Houston County Fair & Youth Livestock Show, March 28-April 4, 2026 in the amount of \$3,000.00. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

(23)Discuss and consider action on approving purchase for Precinct 2 FY 2026 Mack Dump Truck Guarantee-Buyback Program including: (CA)

- a. Authorize trade in of 2025 Mack Dump Truck in the amount of \$155,000.00 under FY 2025 Buyback program
- b. Approve the purchase of a 2026 Mack Dump Truck for Precinct 2 in the amount of \$189,211.01 from East Texas Mack Sales under TIPS purchasing contract.
- c. Approve Lease Purchase with Cadence Bank for the purchase of 2026 Mack Dump Truck.
- d. Receive as information the guarantee buyback program for 2026 Mack Dump Truck in the amount of \$165,000 (Feb 2027).
- e. Approve the County Judge as the Authorized Signer.

Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve purchase for Precinct 2 FY 2026 Mack Dump Truck Guarantee-Buyback Program including: a. Authorize trade in of 2025 Mack Dump Truck in the amount of \$155,000 under FY 2025 Buyback program, b. Approve the purchase of a 2026 Mack Dump Truck for Precinct 2 in the amount of \$189,211.01 from East Texas Mack Sales under TIPS purchasing contract, c. Receive as information the guarantee buyback program for 2026 Mack Dump Truck in the amount of \$165,000 (February 2027), and e. Approve the County Judge as the Authorized Signer. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.

(24)Discuss and consider authorizing the Houston County Sheriff to apply for the Sheriff Immigration Law Enforcement Grant Program. Senate Bill 8 establishes a grant program supporting the sheriffs who have entered into an immigration law enforcement agreement as described by Government Code Section 753.051. (SJ) **Commissioner Stokes moved to authorize the Houston County Sheriff to apply for the Sheriff Immigration Law Enforcement Grant Program. Senate Bill 8 establishes a grant program supporting the sheriffs who have entered into an immigration law enforcement agreement as described by Government Code Section 753.051. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

(25)Adjourn. **Judge Lovell made a motion for the Commissioners Court Meeting to Adjourn. The motion carried by everyone rising and leaving the meeting at 10:13 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: February 10, 2026