



HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

FEBRUARY 11, 2025

The Commissioners' Court of Houston County met in a regular, called meeting on February 11, 2025 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	PRESENT
Terri Meadows	County Clerk	PRESENT

County Officials/Employees in person:

Zak Bengé	Sheriff
Kris Dyches	Insurance Coordinator
Laura Goolsby	District Clerk
Melissa Jeter	County Auditor
Sheila Johnson	Grants Administrator
Donavan Mahan	HCSO/Jail Administrator
Joel Martin	Bailiff
Ryan Martin	Chief Deputy Sheriff
Kristina Massey	County Attorney
Todd McConnell	IT
Heath Murff	Emergency Management
Jan Pigford	Administrative Assistant to the County Judge
Darrellyn Smith	Assistant to the County Commissioners
Matthew Van Egmond	S/O

County Officials/Employees by Zoom:

Cynthia Lum	Elections Administrator
Brittani Womack	1 st Assistant Auditor

Media:

Visitors: Jason Frizzell (Crockett Fire Chief), Jes Rathke (American National), Rhonda Anderson (Charter), Randy Brazell (Spectrum), Tommy Davis (Spectrum), Scott Horne (Charter), Troy McKinney (E-Cigs for Inmates), Byron Underwood (George P Bane Co), Mike Brown

(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.) **Take up at the appropriate agenda item**

- (3) Consider approval of prior Commissioners Court minutes. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the Commissioners Court minutes for January 28, 2025 and January 31, 2025. Commissioner Kitchen 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 Henderson 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 Stokes. 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. Sheriff's Report

Commissioner Lovell made a motion to receive as information the Community Service/Environmental Report, District Clerk Report, County Clerk Report, Tax Assessor Report, and Sheriff's Report as presented. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

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

- a. Delivery Driver-Home Delivered Meal Program – **Commissioner Henderson made a motion approve the salary of Julie Small as Home Delivered Meal Program Delivery Driver, part-time, at hourly pay of \$14.84 in Pay Grade 12, effective February 11, 2025. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- b. Part-time Dispatcher to Full-time Dispatcher – **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the promotion/pay of Brooke Steubing from part-time Dispatcher to full-time Dispatcher at bi-weekly pay of \$1,399.58, in Pay Grade 16, effective February 11, 2025. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- c. 6 month pay raise for Assistant District Attorney – **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve the 6 month pay raise for Lawson Hamilton, Assistant District in Attorney, at \$3,436.53 in Pay Grade 32, effective February 11, 2025. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- (8) Discuss and consider approving payment of compensatory, and vacation time for County employees and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion and**

Commissioner Lovell seconded to approve compensatory payment to Jaidan Jones, Dispatcher, in the amount of \$220.20; J'darius Pruitt, Dispatcher, in the amount of \$220.20; Zachary Allen, HCSO/Deputy, in the amount of \$550.56; and Jerrod Vickers, HCSO, in the amount of \$6,571.60. Motion carried 5 to 0.

- (9) Discuss and consider declaring received information as surplus inventory and approving transfers between departments. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to receive as information the surplus inventory and approving transfers between departments as presented. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (10) Receive as information the Continuing Education Hours for James Angerstein, Houston County Tax Assessor-Collector. **Commissioner Henderson moved to receive as information the Continuing Education Hours for James Angerstein, Houston County Tax Assessor-Collector. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (11) Consider adopting proclamation for Sons of the Republic celebrating Texas Independence Day. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to adopt a proclamation for Sons of the Republic celebrating Texas Independence Day on its 189th Anniversary on March 2, 2025. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0. We were all saddened that Clayton Starr was not able to be with us to present a Texas History Lesson because of his upcoming back surgery.**
- (12) Discuss and consider action on updating the Requisition Policy. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve updating the Requisition Policy. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Melissa Jeter, County Auditor, shared how the cost of everything has risen, and that it is necessary to raise the preapproved limits from \$250 to \$500 for supplies/materials and from \$1500 to \$2500 for vehicle repairs/service or improvements. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (13) Discuss and consider action on renewing the contract for 2025 with Texas Association of Counties Health and Employee Benefits Pool for required Affordable Care Act Reporting and Tracking Services (ARTS) and designating the County Treasurer as the primary contact.

At this time, Judge Lovell called on Ronnie Omelina to speak because he had filled out a public comment form to address Agenda Item 13. Mr. Omelina began to ask about the new Commissioners Court Secretary, the door/wall for District Clerk's Office, and why had the mirror for security purposes not been procured for the Treasurer's Office. Judge Lovell told him that since he was not addressing an Agenda Item, the Court could not comment or act on his requests.

Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve renewing the contract for 2025 with Texas Association of Counties Health and Employee Benefits Pool for required Affordable Care Act Reporting and Tracking Services (ARTS) and designating the County Treasurer as the primary contact. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

- (14) Discuss and consider action on advertising to accept bids for the purchase of a Patrol Truck for the Sheriff's Office using SB 22 Grant funds. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve advertising to accept bids for purchase of a Patrol Truck for the Sheriff's Office using SB22 Grant Funds. Commissioner Henderson seconded the motion. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- (15) Discuss and consider action on authorizing the purchase of weapons, holsters, lights, ammo, duty belts, handcuffs and defense spray for the Deputies and Jailers using SB22 Grant funds. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to authorize the purchase of weapons, holsters, lights, ammo, duty belts, handcuffs and defense spray for the Deputies and Jailers using SB22 Grant funds, at a cost of \$27,295.40 + \$6,627.12. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (16) Discuss and consider action on approving a contract with Life Check Systems for electronic monitoring devices in the Houston County Jail and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve a contract with Life Check Systems for electronic monitoring devices in the Houston County Jail and necessary budget amendments. The total startup cost is \$6,271 and the monthly service fee is \$500. The Agreement Term is 3 years. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (17) Discuss and consider action on approving a contract for generator maintenance at the Justice Center and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve a contract for generator maintenance at the Justice Center at a cost of \$5,250.00, and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (18) Discuss and consider authorizing a contract with Denson Plumbing to repair the water heater system at the Justice Center and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to authorize a contract with Denson Plumbing in the amount of \$19,156.98 to repair the water heater system at the Justice Center and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (19) Discuss and consider action on receiving donation from Texas Department of Public Safety in-car camera systems and in-car radar units for Sheriff's Department. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to receive a donation from Texas Department of Public Safety in-car camera systems and in-car radar units for Sheriff's Department. Sheriff Benge shared this donation would be a considerable savings to the county. Completely new equipment would cost around \$300,000. The Court thanked the Sheriff for getting this donation and saving the County some expense. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (20) Discuss and consider removing the no-tobacco provision for the Houston County Jail to make nicotine items available for sale within the Commissary. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve removing the no-tobacco provision for the Houston County Jail to make nicotine items available for sale within the Commissary. Commissioner Stokes and Commissioner Lovell seconded simultaneously. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (21) Receive as information the Sheriff's Department uniform policy. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to receive as information the Sheriff's Department uniform policy as presented. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (22) Discuss issues with Spectrum concerning trespassing and easements with Sheriff Benge. **Scott Horne with Charter was here to address these concerns. He said that since he has come on the project he has gotten signage for the vehicles, is working on getting permission to enter individual's property, and plans on a town hall meeting. The Sheriff and the Commissioners shared all the concerns that the constituents have voiced to them. They encouraged Mr. Horne to take the action he says is being taken.**

(23) Discuss and consider action on an amendment to the contract for inmate health care services through Turn Key Health Clinics to add a module for electronic medical records and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve an amendment to the contract for inmate health care services through Turn Key Health Clinics to add a module for electronic medical records, and necessary budget amendments. There is a one-time fee of \$6000 and then \$500 per month. Commissioner Stokes seconded. . The Jail Administrator, Auditor, and County Attorney all agreed this is necessary to keep the records electronically, secure and confidential. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(24) Grant Workshop to discuss Community Wildfire Defense Grant project plan and implementation. The Grant Workshop began at 9:55 a.m. with Sheila Johnson, Grants Administrator, handing out a list of questions to the Commissioners and Judge. At 10:34 a.m. the Commissioners Court took a brief recess until 10:38 a.m. The Workshop ended at 10:48 a.m.

(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 10:48 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 25, 2025