



HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 8, 2023

The Commissioners' Court of Houston County met in a regular, called meeting on August 8, 2023 in **person and via zoom due to Covid**, 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

County Officials/Employees in person:

Terri Meadows	County Clerk
Todd McConnell	IT
Sharon Luker	Administrative Assistant to the Commissioners
Melissa Jeter	County Auditor
Jan Pigford	Administrative Assistant to the County Judge
Kris Dyches	Insurance Coordinator
Laronica Wooten-Smith	Tax Assessor-Collector
Janis Omelina	County Treasurer
Daphne Session	County Attorney
Sheila Johnson	Grants Administrator
Randy Hargrove	Sheriff

County Officials/Employees by Zoom:

Brittani Womack	First Assistant Auditor
Cynthia Lum	Elections Administrator
Carl Johnson	Facilities Administrator
Loyce Netardus	Treasurer's Office
Stacy Hand	Treasurer's Office
Jo Smith	Extension Office
Jessica Rosalie	Extension Office

Media:

Cheril Vernon (Messenger)

Visitors:

Dale McGonagill (Auctioneer Express), Adam Martin (Auctioneer Express), Ronnie Omelina, Melinda Miller – Anita Walton – Bill Brudnick – Angela Brudnick – Sue Duhon – George Bush – Mark D. Walton - Nancy Ford - Jerry Ford

– Michael E. Walton – Kay Gibbs (Neighborhood Road/Holcomb Property), Gerald Reichl (Voucher Program for spay and neuter)

(1) Welcome, Invocation and Pledges:

Judge Lovell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., Commissioner Lovell led 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.) **Gerald Reichl encouraged the County to continue the spay and neuter voucher system.**

(3) Consider approval of prior Commissioners Court minutes.

Commissioner Lovell moved to approve the Commissioners Court Minutes from July 25, 2023. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

(4) Consider approving budget amendments. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve the Budget Amendments as presented. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(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). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kitchen. The Motion carried 5 to 0.

****At this time (9:05 a.m.) Judge Lovell announced we would skip to Item 15 on the Agenda.**

****Came back to Item 6 at 9:28 a.m.**

(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. Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund Tourism Payments Report

Commissioner Lovell moved to receive the Community Service/Environmental Report, District Clerk Report, County Clerk Report, Tax Assessor Report, and Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund Tourism Payments Report as information. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

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

- a. County Clerk Temporary Part-Time Deputy Clerk
- b. Dispatcher Full-Time to Part-Time
- c. Dispatcher Part-Time to Full-Time
- d. Dispatcher Full-Time

- a. Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve salary of Litzy Cruz, County Clerk Temporary Part-Time Deputy Clerk at hourly wage of \$12.73 in Pay Grade 13, effective 8/7/2023. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.
- b. Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve salary of Reanna Meadows, from Dispatcher Full-Time to Part-Time at hourly wage of \$14.74 in Pay Grade 16, effective 8/8/2023. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.
- c. Pass. Employee is going to continue as Part-Time.
- d. Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve salary of Samantha Noyola, Full-Time Dispatcher, at bi-weekly salary of \$1,356.19 in Pay Grade 15. 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 to approve vacation/comp time payout to Hernan Gonzales, County Attorney Office, \$620.07; Kent Blanchard, District Attorney Office, \$1,120.42; Keytriana Ortiz, Tax Office \$252.16. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

****At this time (9:34 a.m.) Judge Lovell announced we would skip to Item 17 on the Agenda.**

****Commissioners Court took a brief recess at 9:51 a.m.**

****Came back to Item 9 at 10:00 a.m.**

(9) Discuss and consider declaring received information as surplus inventory and approving transfers between departments. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the surplus/salvage inventory and transfers as presented, and that all items from Precinct 2 should be sold through Auction Express. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(10) Discuss and consider action on a travel request for an extra night's stay for the County Court at Law Court Coordinator to attend the Probate Conference in San Antonio from August 30, 2023 to September 2, 2023. **Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve travel request for an extra night's stay for the County Court at Law Court Coordinator to attend the Probate Conference in San Antonio from August 30, 2023 to September 2, 2023 because of the lateness of the day that the conference ends. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(11) Discuss and consider action on approving the travel expenses for County Extension Agent Tasha Brent in the amount of \$1,264.91 for attending the Extension Agent Conference on July 25, July 26, & July 27, 2023. **Melissa told Commissioners Court that we do not have a policy for this and that is why it was placed on Commissioners Court Agenda. Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the County to pay the Hotel and Parking, but that Tasha Brent should be responsible to pay her mileage and meals since this conference was attended after she submitted her resignation to the County. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

****At 10:16 a.m. Commissioner Lovell stepped out of the Commissioners Courtroom.**

(12) Receive as information the increase to Juror pay effective September 1, 2023 of \$20 on the first day, previously \$6, and \$58 for each day thereafter, previously \$40. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to receive as information the increase to Juror pay effective September 1,**

2023 of \$20 on the first day, previously \$6, and \$58 for each day thereafter, previously \$40. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.

****At 10:17 a.m. Commissioner Lovell returned to the meeting**

- (13) Discuss and consider approving an additional increase to juror pay for the second day of service, in addition to the state increase under House Bill 3474, which will be effective September 1, 2023. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion and Commissioner Kitchen seconded to approve an additional increase to juror pay (from \$58 to \$60) for the second day of service, in addition to the state increase under House Bill 3474, which will be effective September 1, 2023. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (14) Discuss and consider accepting submission of the 2023 Tax Rate Calculation for FY 2024 Fiscal Year Budget preparation. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to accept submission of the 2023 Tax Rate Calculation for FY 2024 Fiscal Year Budget preparation. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (15) Discuss and consider accepting application and declaring Neighborhood Road, which is proposed from end of the currently maintained CR 1695. **Several people were present in the courtroom and spoke on this item: Sue Duhon, Mark Walton, Anita Walton, George Bush and Angela Brudnick. The County Attorney, Daphne Session stated that in her research and in her opinion the Commissioners Court cannot declare a Neighborhood Road for private purpose only, it can only be approved for public purpose, and this appears to be for private purpose. Judge Lovell read the agenda item, again, and called for a motion. No motion was made so the Commissioners Court will not be accepting the application and Declaring Neighborhood Road.**
- (16) Discuss and consider adopting a Memorandum of Understanding between Kennard ISD Police Department and the Houston County Sheriff's Office. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to adopt a Memorandum of Understanding between Kennard ISD Police Department and the Houston County Sheriff's Office. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (17) Hear a presentation from Dale McGonagill with Auctioneer Express. **Mr. McGonagill was present and gave a presentation on all that Auctioneer Express has to offer our County.**
- (18) Discuss and consider approving a contract with Auctioneer Express. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the contract with Auctioneer Express, pending the addition of their mailing address to the contract. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (19) Discuss and consider action on authorizing the following items through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund and necessary budget amendments.
- a. Approve purchase and payment for a 2023 Ford F150, 4WD Pickup for Precinct 4 for \$49,711.50. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve the purchase and payment for a 2023 Ford F150, 4WD Pickup for Precinct 4 from Bill Fick Ford in Huntsville, TX at a cost of \$49,711.50, and approve budget amendment that the funds should be paid from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund, and this truck should be added to our current inventory. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
 - b. Approve purchase of (2) Pro-Turn 360 31 HP Kawasaki Mowers with 60" fabricated X-Factor decks for Environmental/Community Service from Ariens Company under Buy

Board contract #706-23 for \$22,579.44. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve purchase of (2) Pro-Turn 360 31 HP Kawasaki Mowers with 60" fabricated X-Factor decks for Environmental/Community Service from Ariens Company under Buy Board contract #706-23 for \$22,579.44 and approve budget amendment to pay for this purchase from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- c. Approve purchase of (2) Wells Ag Canopies to be attached to Kawasaki Mowers for Environmental/Community Service from Houston County Equipment for \$990.00. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion and Commissioner Stokes seconded to approve purchase of (2) Wells Ag Canopies to be attached to Kawasaki Mowers for Environmental/Community Service from Houston County Equipment for \$990.00 and approve budget amendment that the funds should be paid from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund, and this truck should be added to our current inventory. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- d. Approve purchase and payment for (8) Phillips Heartstart On Site Defibrillators (AEDS) to be installed – one at each County building for \$12,068.00. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve a budget amendment to pay for and purchase through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund (8) Phillips Heartstart On Site Defibrillators (AEDS) to be installed – one at each County building for \$12,068.00 from HeartSafe America, Inc. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- e. Approve purchase and payment for (14) Curaplex Stop the Bleed Intermediate Kits with CAT Tourniquets to be installed in connection with each Phillips Heartstart Onsite Defibrillator (AEDS) for \$1,063.86. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve budget amendment to approve purchase and payment of (14) Curaplex Stop the Bleed Intermediate Kits with CAT Tourniquets to be installed in connection with each Phillips Heartstart Onsite Defibrillator (AEDS) for \$1,063.86 through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- f. Approve purchase and payment for (27) First Aid Kits to be distributed to each County department for \$404.73. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve budget amendment to approve purchase and payment of (27) First Aid Kits to be distributed to each County department for \$404.73 through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- g. Approve purchase and payment for (23) Deputy Trauma Kits and additional restocking supplies for the Houston County Sheriff's department for \$7,472.98. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve a budget amendment to pay through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund for (23) Deputy Trauma Kits and additional restocking supplies for the Houston County Sheriff's department to, build the kits to fit the needs, for \$7,472.98. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(20) Discuss and consider action on setting the Open Enrollment for County Employees for August 24, 2023. **Judge Lovell recommended that the date, August 24, 2023 be approved. Commissioner Lovell moved to set the Open Enrollment for County Employees for August 24, 2023. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(21) Discuss and consider authorizing Employee Supplemental and Dependent Insurance payroll deductions changes:

- a. Setting date for first deduction for FY 2024 in October to begin September 15, 2023. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to authorize Employee Supplemental and Dependent Insurance payroll deductions changes and set the date for first deduction**

for FY 2024 to begin September 15, 2023. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

- b. Approving a plan with MetLife to provide additional supplement policies to employees. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve a plan with MetLife to provide additional supplement policies to employees. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- c. Removing Liberty National/Globe Life from eligible new employee enrollment. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve removing Liberty National/Globe Life from eligible new employee enrollment. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(22) Discuss and consider action on canceling contract with Lincoln Financial Group for county employee life insurance effective September 30, 2023 due to new coverage. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve canceling contract with Lincoln Financial Group for county employee life insurance effective September 30, 2023 due to new coverage. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(23) Discuss and consider action on approving the assignment of Piney Woods Sanitation Inc. to Live Oak Environmental, DBA Live Oak Waste and Piney Woods Sanitation for the solid waste collection service franchise contract. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the assignment of Piney Woods Sanitation Inc. to Live Oak Environmental, DBA Live Oak Waste and Piney Woods Sanitation for the solid waste collection service franchise contract with the correction of the date on the "first page Item 1. TERM from February 28, 2026 to December 31, 2025". Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(24) Adjourn. **Judge Lovell made a motion for the Commissioners Court Meeting to Adjourn. The motion carried by everyone rising and leaving the meeting at 10:55 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