



**HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT  
MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 13, 2022**

The Commissioners' Court of Houston County met in a regular, called meeting on September 13, 2022 **in person and via zoom due to Covid**, with the following members present, to wit:

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>

County Officials/Employees in person:

Todd McConnell	Information Technology
Jan Pigford	Administrative Assistant to County Judge
Terri Meadows	County Clerk
Sheila Johnson	Grants Administrator
Sharon Luker	Administrative Assistant to the Commissioners
Melissa Jeter	County Auditor
Cynthia Lum	Elections Administrator
Randy Hargrove	Sheriff
Daphne Session	County Attorney
Laronica Wooten-Smith	Tax-Assessor Collector
Heath Murff	Emergency Management Director
Janis Omelina	Treasurer
Andy Biscamp	Bailiff

County Officials/Employees by Zoom:

Carolyn Rains	District Clerk
Carl Johnson	Facilities Administrator
Brittani Womack	First Assistant Auditor
Laura Goolsby	Office Manager in DA Office

Media:

Greg Ritchie	Messenger
Jan White (Zoom)	Courier

Visitors:

Meme Thomas (Perdue Brandon) via Zoom, Taylor Lewis (Perdue Brandon), Tami Barugh (citizen), Chester Jordan (Red Cross)

- (1) Welcome, Invocation and Pledges:  
**Judge Lovell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Commissioner Stokes 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.) **None**
- (3) Consider approval of prior Commissioners Court minutes.  
**Commissioner Lovell moved to approve the Commissioners Court Minutes from August 23 , 2022 and August 29, 2022. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (4) Consider approving budget amendments. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the Budget Amendments as presented. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (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. Environmental Report
  - b. Community Service (**not available**)
  - c. County Clerk's Fine Report (August 2022)
  - d. District Clerk's Fine Report (August 2022)**Commissioner Kitchen moved to receive available reports as information. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (7) Consider approving salaries for new and/or transfer employees:
  - a. **Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve the employment of Kristen Wells as Full Time Crime Victim Coordinator/Grand Jury Clerk in the DA's Office at \$1343.39 bi-weekly in pay grade 17, effective 9/6/2022 with cell phone allowance of \$18.46 to be effective 10/1/2022. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**  
  
**Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve the 6 month raise of:**
    - b. **Reanna Meadows, S/O Dispatcher at bi-weekly salary of \$1,112.54 in Pay Grade 15.**
    - c. **Brooke Steubing, S/O Dispatcher at bi-weekly salary of \$1,112.54 in Pay Grade 15**
    - d. **Theresa Hayes, S/O Jailer at bi-weekly salary of \$1,112.54 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 Henderson made a motion to approve pay out for compensatory and vacation time to: Jovondrick Williams, Jailer, \$529.60; Cristian Hernandez, Dispatcher, \$1,798.81; Jennefer Cruz, Dispatcher, \$1,887.87. Commissioner Stokes seconded the motion. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (9) Receive as information the 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District Court Reporters and County Auditor salary orders and budget for FY 2023. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to receive as information the 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District Court Reporters and County Auditor salary orders and budget for FY 2023. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (10) Receive as information:
- a. Houston County Appraisal District 2023-2024 Reappraisal Plan
  - b. TX DOT Completion of bridge replacement & approaches on CR 2235.
- Commissioner Henderson made a motion receive as information the Houston County Appraisal District 2023-2024 Reappraisal Plan and the TX DOT completion of bridge replacement and approaches on CR 2235. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (11) Discuss and consider approving contract with Pritchard & Abbott, Inc. for tax collection software from October 1, 2022 – December 31, 2024. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion approving renewal contract with Pritchard & Abbott, Inc. for tax collection software from October 1, 2022 – December 31, 2024. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (12) Discuss and consider action on an application request and possible budget amendments for the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal Agreement with:
- a. World Championship Fiddlers Festival to be held on September 23 & 24, 2022 at the Porth Ag Arena.
  - b. Pineywoods Fine Arts Association for Cory Morrow Concert to be held on November 1, 2022 at the Crockett Civic Center
  - c. The Loft of Crockett Ariel Hutchins and Band Concert to be held on November 19, 2022.
- Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal Agreement with necessary budget amendments for \$2000 to World Championship Fiddlers Festival to be held on September 23 & 24, 2022 at the Porth Ag Arena, \$1000 to Pineywoods Fine Arts Association for Cory Morrow Concert to be held on November 1, 2022 at the Crockett Civic Center, and \$1000 to The Loft of Crockett for Ariel Hutchins and Band Concert to be held on November 19, 2022. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0. Commissioner Kitchen also suggested that the Court take a look at the policy for the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and possibly revise.**
- (13) Discuss and consider accepting donation on behalf of the Senior Citizens Center from Stetsi Beer Garden in the amount of \$821.00 and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to accept a donation on behalf of the Senior Citizens Center from Stetsi Beer Garden in the amount of \$821.00 with necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- (14) Discuss and consider approving premises use policy to Saint Francis of the Tejas for the life Chain Event to be held on October 2, 2022. **Commissioner Lovell moved to approve premises use policy to Saint Francis of the Tejas for the life Chain Event to be held on October 2, 2022. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (15) Consider reappointment of Dr. Chris Haeckler as County Health Authority. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve reappointment of Dr. Chris Haeckler as County Health Authority. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (16) Discuss and consider taking action to make payment to Pennington Water Supply in the amount of \$16,329.00 for expenses to move water line due to TX DOT bridge replacement project on CR 4555 in Precinct 4 and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to make payment to Pennington Water Supply in the amount of \$16,329.00 for expenses to move water line due to TX DOT bridge replacement project on CR 4555 in Precinct 4 and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (17) Discuss and consider action on setting the allocation of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act grant between Title I and Title III funding options for FY 2023 timber revenues. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to set the allocation of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act grant between Title I and Title III funding options for FY 2023 timber revenues at 100% to Title I. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (18) Discuss and consider action on renewing contract with Lexis Nexis for legal research services for the County and District Attorney offices for FY 2023. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to renew contract with Lexis Nexis for legal research services for the County and District Attorney offices for FY 2023. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (19) Discuss and consider action on refinancing a lease purchase with Bancorp South for a 2022 Mack Truck with Dump bed for Precinct 2 for a period of 13 months in the amount of \$122,000 and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve refinancing a lease purchase with Bancorp South for a 2022 Mack Truck with Dump bed for Precinct 2 for a period of 13 months in the amount of \$122,000 and necessary budget amendments, and to designate Jim Lovell as the signer on the note. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (20) Discuss and consider action to order and certify the Houston County Sheriff's Department be authorized to use Title III funding up to \$74,336.00 for two pickups previously authorized under ARPA and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to order and certify the Houston County Sheriff's Department be authorized to use Title III funding up to \$74,336.00 for two pickups previously authorized under ARPA and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (21) Discuss and consider awarding bids for purchase and hauling of 2000 tons State Base for CR 3095 from ARPA grant funds Precinct 2. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to award the purchase for 2000 Tons State Base for CR 3095 from ARPA grant funds Precinct 2 to Conners Construction at \$8.50 per ton for the material with a total cost for the purchase \$17,000. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion**

carried 5 to 0. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve re-advertise with dates for hauling of 2000 tons State Base for CR 3095 from ARPA grant funds Precinct 2 because no one bid on the hauling. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(22) Discuss and consider approving contract with Rene Bates Auctioneers, Inc to conduct online auctions for used equipment and surplus inventory items. **Commissioner Lovell moved to approve contract with Rene Bates Auctioneers, Inc to conduct online auctions for used equipment and surplus inventory items. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(23) Discuss and consider accepting the modified service rates for inmate lab services of 6% provided by Quest Diagnostics. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to accept the modified service rates for inmate lab services of 6% provided by Quest Diagnostics. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(24) Discuss and consider action on a budget amendment to transfer funds from General Fund to Precinct 2 for DR-4223 receivable in the amount of \$50,000 and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve a budget amendment to transfer funds from General Fund to Precinct 2 for DR-4223 receivable in the amount of \$50,000 and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(25) Discuss and consider a change to the Early Voting hours and potential branch Early Voting locations for the November 8, 2022 election. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the change of the Early Voting hours from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. as presented in the Proposal from the Elections Administrator for the November 8, 2022 election. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0. Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve all 3 of the Early Voting locations for the November 8, 2022 election as presented by the Elections Administrator. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(26) Discuss and consider setting the maximum number of workers per polling locations for the November 8, 2022 General Election. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to set the maximum number of workers per polling locations for the November 8, 2022 General Election as presented by the Elections Administrator. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(27) Receive as information:

- a. The list of designated deputy early voting clerks by the EA for the November 8, 2022 election.
- b. Receive appointment of the presiding judge and alternate judge for the Early Voting Ballot Board by the County Elections Board for the November 8, 2022 election.
- c. Receive the appointment of the following experienced personnel for the Central Counting Station for the November 8, 2022 Election.

**Commissioner Kitchen made a motion receive as information the following:**

- a. **The list of designated deputy early voting clerks by the EA for the November 8, 2022 election.**
- b. **Receive appointment of the presiding judge and alternate judge for the Early Voting Ballot Board by the County Elections Board for the November 8, 2022 election.**
- c. **Receive the appointment of the following experienced personnel for the Central Counting Station for the November 8, 2022 Election.**

**Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(28) Discuss and consider action to accept the FY 2023 VCLG (Victim Coordinator and Liaison Grant) from the Office of the Attorney General. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to accept the FY 2023 VCLG (Victim Coordinator and Liaison Grant) from the Office of the Attorney General. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(29) Discuss and consider action to accept the FY 2023 RAMP Grant (Routine Airport Maintenance Program) from TXDOT. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to accept the FY 2023 RAMP Grant (Routine Airport Maintenance Program) from TXDOT. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(30) Discuss and consider action to accept the FY 2023 SAVNS Grant (Statewide Automated Victim notification Service) No. C-00309 from the Office of the Attorney General. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to accept the FY 2023 SAVNS Grant (Statewide Automated Victim notification Service) No. C-00309 from the Office of the Attorney General. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(31) Discuss and consider action to accept the FY 2023 Services Agreement with Appriss Insights, LLC to provide SAVNS to Houston County. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to accept the FY 2023 Services Agreement with Appriss Insights, LLC to provide SAVNS to Houston County. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(32) Discuss and consider action on the "Resolution for County of Houston – Approval of Hazard Mitigation Plan" as required by the Federal Disaster Mitigation act of 2000 and FEMA. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the "Resolution for County of Houston – Approval of Hazard Mitigation Plan" as required by the Federal Disaster Mitigation act of 2000 and FEMA. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(33) Discuss and consider approving Emergency Notification System Interlocal Agreement with Deep East Texas Council of Governments to participate in the Regional Emergency Notification Project Genasys Inc., a mass notification system for the benefit of the public. **Commissioner Lovell made the motion to approve the Emergency Notification System Interlocal Agreement with Deep East Texas Council of Governments to participate in the Regional Emergency Notification Project Genasys Inc., a mass notification system for the benefit of the public. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

**\*\*Commissioner Kitchen excused himself from the Court at 9:57 a.m. and returned at 10:06 a.m.**

(34) Discuss and consider action to cancel the Agreement with Hyper-Reach for Mass Notification System. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to cancel the Agreement with Hyper-Reach for Mass Notification System. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

**\*\*Commissioners Court recessed from 9:58 a.m. to 10:06 a.m.**

(35) Conduct Public Hearing on Proposed Tax Rate for Fiscal year 2023. **Judge Lovell opened the public hearing at 10:07 a.m. and then closed the public hearing at 10:08 a.m.**

**\*\*At this time Item 38 was moved up before Item 36 and 37.**

(38) Budget Workshop. At 10:08 a.m. Judge Lovell announced the Budget Workshop. During this time Commissioner Kitchen moved to transfer \$300,000 from Fund Balance to Contingency for a possible real estate purchase. He noted if the purchase is not made then the funds would be moved back. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0. After hearing nothing further, Judge Lovell closed the Budget Workshop at 10:10 a.m.

(36) Discuss and consider adopting the Houston County Budget for Fiscal Year 2023. Commissioner Kitchen moved to adopt the Houston County Budget for Fiscal Year 2023. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Commissioner Lovell voted Aye, Commissioner Kitchen voted Aye, Judge Lovell voted Aye, Commissioner Stokes voted Aye, and Commissioner Henderson voted Aye, making the vote unanimous.

(37) Discuss and consider action on adopting FY 2022 County Tax Rate of \$0.47470 cents:

a. Maintenance and Operations Tax Rate of \$0.420168

b. Interest and Sinking Tax Rate of \$0.54532

Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to adopt the FY 2022 County Tax Rate of \$0.47470 cents

a. Maintenance and Operations Tax Rate of \$0.420168

b. Interest and Sinking Tax Rate of \$0.054532

Commissioner Henderson seconded the motion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

(38) See above before (36)

(39) Discuss and ratify the increase of property tax revenue by 5.63% in the RY 2023 Budget. Judge Lovell said, "I move that the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of a tax rate of .474700, which is effectively a 4.55% increase in the tax rate." Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

(40) Discuss and consider setting salaries for all officers and employees of Houston County for Fiscal Year 2023. Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to set salaries for all officers and employees of Houston County for Fiscal Year 2023 as presented. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

(41) Adjourn. Judge Lovell made a motion for the Commissioners Court Meeting to Adjourn at 10:24 a.m. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

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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