



HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 9, 2024

The Commissioners' Court of Houston County met in a regular, called meeting on January 9, 2024 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 (came in at 9:13 a.m.)
Gene Stokes	Commissioner, Precinct #3	PRESENT
Jimmy Henderson	Commissioner, Precinct #4	PRESENT

County Officials/Employees in person:

Kris Dyches	Insurance Coordinator
Laura Goolsby	District Clerk
Melissa Jeter	County Auditor
Carl Johnson	Facilities Administrator
Sheila Johnson	Grants Administrator
Sharon Luker	Administrative Assistant to the Commissioners
Todd McConnell	IT
Terri Meadows	County Clerk
Jan Pigford	Administrative Assistant to the County Judge
Daphne Session	County Attorney
Laronica Wooten-Smith	County Tax Assessor Collector

County Officials/Employees by Zoom:

Randy Hargrove	Sheriff
Cynthia Lum	Elections Administrator
Heath Murff	Emergency Management
Brittani Womack	First Assistant Auditor

Media:

Greg Ritchie (Messenger) – via zoom

Visitors:

James Angerstein, Butch Patton

(1) Welcome, Invocation and Pledges:

Judge Lovell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Judge Lovell gave the opening prayer followed by 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 December 22, 2023. 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). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Henderson. The Motion carried 4 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. Treasurer Report – November & December 2023
- Commissioner Lovell moved to receive the Community Service/Environmental Report, District Clerk Report, County Clerk Report, Tax Assessor Report, Treasurer Report for November and December 2023 as information. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (7) Consider approving salaries for new and/or transfer employees.
- a. Full-time Deputy to Part-time Deputy **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve the move from Full-time Deputy to Part-time Deputy of Angelo Vela at hourly rate of \$20.13 (\$19.00 + \$1.13 SB22 Adjustment) in Pay Grade 20, Effective Date 01/08/24. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
 - b. Part-time Cook for Senior Citizens Center **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the hourly rate of Connie Easter as Part-time Cook for Senior Citizens Center at \$13.88 per hour in Pay Grade 12, effective 01/02/24. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
 - c. Retirement Letter – Tena Smith **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to receive as information the retirement letter of Tena Smith, as employee in the Tax Assessor Office. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
 - d. Part-time deputy Clerk for Tax Assessor **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve hiring of Lorenza Aldaco as Part-time Deputy Clerk in the Tax Assessor Office at hourly rate of \$15.21 in Pay Grade 16, effective 12/27/2023. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (8) Discuss and consider approving payment of compensatory, and vacation time for County employees and necessary budget amendments. **NONE**

(9) Discuss and consider declaring received information as surplus inventory and approving transfers between departments. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to declare surplus inventory and approve transfers between departments as presented. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

****Commissioner Kitchen joined the Court already in session at 9:13 a.m.**

(10) Discuss and consider action on additional Full-time Custodial Position and necessary budget amendments and approve Part-time Custodian to Full-time Custodian. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve an additional Full-time Custodial Position and necessary budget amendments and approve the move of Cynthia Lee from Part-time Maintenance/Custodian to Full-time Maintenance/Custodian at a bi-weekly salary of \$1,181.19 in Pay Grade 13, effective 1/9/2024. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(11) Consider approving Marisol Tovar as a Volunteer with the County Attorney's Office from January 9, 2024 through June 9, 2024. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve Marisol Tovar as a Volunteer with the County Attorney's Office from January 9, 2024 through June 9, 2024. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(12) Receive as information the required filing of the annual continuing education transcript for Laronica Wooten Smith, Tena Smith & Addie Hicks. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to receive as information the required filing of the annual continuing education transcript for Laronica Wooten Smith, Tena Smith & Addie Hicks of the Tax Assessor-Collector Office. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(13) Discuss and consider designating Parking Space for the Maintenance Department at the Houston County Courthouse. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to designate a Parking Space for the Maintenance Department at the Houston County Courthouse. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(14) Discuss and consider accepting a financial donation from Meadowood Owners Association for road improvements to Meadowview, Briargrove and Creekwood located in Precinct 4 and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to accept a financial donation of \$40,000 from Meadowood Owners Association for road improvements to Meadowview, Briargrove and Creekwood located in Precinct 4 and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(15) Discuss and consider action on application requests for the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal Agreement with Downtown Crockett Association for The Camp Street Blues Jam to be held on March 8 – March 10, 2024 at E. Goliad Ave. & Camp Street, Crockett, Texas. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve application requests for the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal Agreement with Downtown Crockett Association for The Camp Street Blues Jam to be held on March 8 – March 10, 2024 at E. Goliad Ave. & Camp Street, Crockett, Texas in the amount of \$3000.00, pending their resubmission of the request to reflect the correct amount of money requested. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- (16) Discuss and consider action on application requests for the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal Agreement with Nitty Gritty Productions, LLC for the Nitty Gritty Chopper City to be held on March 22 – March 24, 2024 at the Salmon Lake Park in Grapeland, Texas.
Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve application requests for the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal Agreement with Nitty Gritty Productions, LLC for the Nitty Gritty Chopper City to be held on March 22 – March 24, 2024 at the Salmon Lake Park in Grapeland, Texas in the amount of \$3000.00. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.
- (17) Discuss and consider action on application requests for the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal Agreement with Unity in the Community for the Martin Luther King Jr. Parade & Celebration to be held on January 15, 2024 at I.T. Williams Park in Crockett, Texas.
Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve application requests for the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal Agreement with Unity in the Community for the Martin Luther King Jr. Parade & Celebration to be held on January 15, 2024 at I.T. Williams Park in Crockett, Texas for \$1000.00 with the stipulation that a post report be provided. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.
- (18) Discuss and consider action on a Budget Amendment for Roof Renovations or Replacement within the Permanent Improvement Fund for the newly acquired Buildings on E. Goliad Ave. Crockett, Texas. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve a Budget Amendment of \$75,000 for Roof Renovations or Replacement within the Permanent Improvement Fund for the newly acquired Buildings on E. Goliad Ave. Crockett, Texas and to include the awning over the meeting room into the bids. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (19) Discuss and consider action on extending the grant contract for FY 2024 through September 20, 2024 with Deep East Texas Council of Governments and Houston County Aging Services for Home Delivered Meals to eligible clients and Senior Center Operations. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve extending the grant contract for October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024 with Deep East Texas Council of Governments and Houston County Aging Services for Home Delivered Meals to eligible clients and Senior Center Operations pending correction of the date within the body of the contract. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (20) Discuss and consider designations to apply for the SB 22 Rural Law Enforcement Grant:
- a. Authorize the County Judge to apply on behalf of the Houston County Sheriff's Office.
 - b. Authorize the County Attorney, Daphne Session, to apply on behalf of the Houston County Attorney's Office.
 - c. Authorize the District Attorney, Donna, Kaspar, to apply on behalf of the Houston County District Attorney's Office
- Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve designations to apply for the SB22 Rural Law Enforcement Grant by (a) Authorizing the County Judge to apply on behalf of the Houston County Sheriff's Office, (b) Authorize the County Attorney, Daphne Session, to apply on behalf of the Houston County Attorney's Office, and (c) Authorize the District Attorney, Donna Kaspar, to apply on behalf of the Houston County District Attorney's Office. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- (21) Discuss and consider action on budget transfer to the Texas Department of Agriculture Grant fund:
- a. Additional matching funds needed from unbudgeted prior year Opioid settlement received - \$24,689.27.
 - b. Funds necessary to pay vendors pending reimbursement from TDA and necessary budget amendments from the General Fund.
 - c. Approval of change orders for the Texas Community Development Block Grant Program to reflect the final quantity of materials purchased and transported.
 - d. Receive as information the Certificate of Construction Completion for Materials on the TxCDBG Contract No. CDV21-0354.

Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve budget transfer to the Texas Department of Agriculture Grant fund and approve (a) Additional matching funds needed from unbudgeted prior year Opioid settlement received - \$24,689.27. (b) Funds necessary to pay vendors pending reimbursement from TDA and necessary budget amendments from the General Fund. (c) Approval of change orders for the Texas Community Development Block Grant Program to reflect the final quantity of materials purchased and transported. (d) Receive as information the Certificate of Construction Completion for Materials on the TxCDBG Contract No. CDV21-0354. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

- (22) Discuss and consider action to approve the 2024 agreement with Armstrong Forensic Laboratory, Inc. pertaining to blood and controlled substance analysis for the Houston County Attorney's Office. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the 2024 agreement with Armstrong Forensic Laboratory, Inc. pertaining to blood and controlled substance analysis for the Houston County Attorney's Office. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- (23) Discuss and consider approving Advanced Funding Agreement for Voluntary Maintenance and Resolutions with Texas Department of Transportation for the updates for RR Crossings on:
- a. CR 2121 in Latexo, Texas
 - b. CR3450 in Lovelady, Texas

Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve Advanced Funding Agreement for Voluntary Maintenance and Resolutions with Texas Department of Transportation for the updates for RR Crossings on: CR 2121 in Latexo, Texas and CR3450 in Lovelady, Texas. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

- (24) **Closed Executive session** as authorized by Texas Government Code §551.071 for a consultation with the attorney for the county and legal representatives about pending litigation, a settlement offer, claims, legal issues, potential liabilities, or other matters for which the attorney's duties to the client under the Texas State Bar Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct conflicts with the Open Meetings Act. **Commissioners Court entered into Closed Executive Session at 9:38 a.m.**

- (25) Reconvene. **The Commissioners Court Reconvened into regular open session at 10:18 a.m.**

- (26) Discuss and consider action if any, to be taken from Closed Session. **No Action**

(27)Adjourn. **Judge Lovell made a motion for the Commissioners Court Meeting to Adjourn. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. The motion carried by everyone rising and leaving the meeting at 10:18 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