



HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

SEPTEMBER 10, 2024

The Commissioners' Court of Houston County met in a regular, called meeting on September 10, 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 |
| Gene Stokes | Commissioner, Precinct #3 | PRESENT |
| Jimmy Henderson | Commissioner, Precinct #4 | PRESENT |
| Terri Meadows | County Clerk | PRESENT |

County Officials/Employees in person:

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Andy Biscamp | Bailiff |
| Kris Dyches | Insurance Coordinator |
| Laura Goolsby | District Clerk |
| Randy Hargrove | Sheriff |
| Melissa Jeter | County Auditor |
| Sharon Luker | Administrative Assistant to the Commissioners |
| Cynthia Lum | Elections Administrator |
| Todd McConnell | IT |
| Heath Murff | Emergency Management |
| Janis Omelina | Treasurer |
| Jan Pigford | Administrative Assistant to the County Judge |
| Daphne Session | County Attorney |
| Laronica Wooten-Smith | County Tax Assessor-Collector |

County Officials/Employees by Zoom:

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Arnita Cavender | DA Office |
| Carl Johnson | Facilities Administrator |
| Sheila Johnson | Grants Administrator |
| Matthew Van Egmond | S/O |
| Brittani Womack | 1 st Assistant Auditor |

Media:

Visitors:

(1) Welcome, Invocation and Pledges:

Judge Lovell called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Commissioner Lovell 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 Henderson made a motion to approve the Commissioners Court minutes for August 27, 2024 and September 3, 2024. 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 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 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. Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund Tourism Payments (not available)
- f. Auditor's Report

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

***Judge Lovell recognized Daphne Session, County Attorney, for her birthday today, and Commissioner Kitchen for his birthday yesterday.**

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

- a. Full-Time Deputy

Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the salary of Skyler Laza as Full-time Deputy at the Houston County Sheriff's Office at bi-weekly salary of \$1,769.23 in Pay Grade 20, plus \$18.46 cell phone allowance effective September 10, 2024. Commissioner Kitchen 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 and Commissioner Stokes seconded to approve compensatory payment to Dwayne Hughes, Precinct 3 Road Hand, in the amount of \$261.84; Matthew Van Egmond, Deputy, in the amount of \$97.56; J'Darius Pruitt, Dispatcher in the amount of \$198.24; Rocky Hoch, Deputy, in the amount of \$1013.03; John Lowery, Jailer, in the amount of \$66.22; Theresa Hayes, Jailer, in the amount of \$291.75; Joshua Provins, Jailer, in the amount of \$271.65; Jerrod**

Vickers, Comm-Supervisor, in the amount of \$609.39; Thomas Flowers, Jailer, in the amount of \$268.3; Patricia Schulz, CCL Reporter, in the amount of \$911.47; Gordon Denman, Deputy at the HCSO, in the amount of \$108.89; and Matthew Graham, Jailer, in the amount of \$291.75. 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 approve transfers between departments. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (10) Discuss and consider action on the rental policy for the bank room. **Pass**
- (11) Discuss and consider action on setting Texas Department of Motor Vehicles Imposition of Optional Fees for Calendar Year 2025. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve, Option A – No change, on setting Texas Department of Motor Vehicles Imposition of Optional Fees for Calendar Year 2025. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (12) Receive and consider action on adopting the FY 2024-2025 Preservation Plan for the Houston County Clerk Office Records Management, Preservation and Archives. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve adoption of the FY 2024-2025 Preservation Plan for the Houston County Clerk Office Records Management, Preservation and Archives as presented by Terri Meadows, County Clerk. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (13) Receive as information Cybersecurity Certification of Completion for officials/employees' security awareness training for FT 2024, as required under Texas Gov't Code 2054.5191. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to receive as information Cybersecurity Certification of Completion for officials/employees' security awareness training for FT 2024, as required under Texas Gov't Code 2054.5191. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (14) Discuss and consider accepting a donation of 70 loads of field dirt from Jason Currie for Precinct 3. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to accept a donation of 70 loads of field dirt from Jason Currie for Precinct 3 at a value of \$100 a load. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (15) Discuss and consider approving purchase of the following items for the Sheriff Department:
- a. In-car video camera system (14) units for fleet patrol vehicles
 - b. Additional supplies and equipment from remaining SB22 funds.
- Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to table Agenda Item 15. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (16) Discuss and consider renewing the Pritchard & Abbott Inc Computer System Lease/License Agreement for January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2026. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to renew the Pritchard & Abbott Inc Computer System Lease/License Agreement for January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2026 for the Tax Assessor Collector Office. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- (17) Discuss and consider action to accept the FY 2025 RAMP (Routine Airport Maintenance Program) from TxDOT. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to accept the FY 2025 RAMP (Routine Airport Maintenance Program) from TxDOT. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (18) Discuss and consider action on interlocal agreement for housing out of county inmates with Cherokee County. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve interlocal agreement for housing out of county inmates with Cherokee County. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (19) Discuss and consider approving the payment for truck drivers training academy enrollment fee for full-time employee in Precinct 2 not to exceed \$2500.00 and necessary budget amendments. **Pass**
- (20) Discuss and consider action on approving a contract for Manhattan Life for supplemental GAP insurance to cover excess major medical costs as an additional employee-paid benefit option, effective October 1, 2024. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve a contract for Manhattan Life for supplemental GAP insurance to cover excess major medical costs as an additional employee-paid benefit option, effective October 1, 2024. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (21) Discuss and consider action on approving a contract for MetLife for supplemental Short-term & Long-term Disability Insurance as an additional employee paid benefit option, effective October 1, 2024. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve a contract with MetLife for supplemental Short-term & Long-term Disability Insurance as an additional employee paid benefit option, effective October 1, 2024. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (22) Receive as information the salary orders and Budget for FY 2025 for:
- 3rd Judicial District Court Reporters (**not provided**)
 - 349th District Court Reporters (**not provided**)
 - County Court at Law Court Reporters **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to receive as information the salary order and budget for FY 2025 for County Court at Law Court Reporters at annual salary in the sum of \$77,000.00 (\$72,162.58 plus cost of living \$2000.00 plus \$2837.42). Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried.**
 - County Auditor **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to receive as information the salary order and budget for FY 2025 for the County Auditor as set by the District Judges at \$88,278.66. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (23) Receive as information the availability of grant funds and authorize procurement of grant administrator and engineer for:
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) through the Texas Department of Agriculture. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to receive as information the availability of grant funds from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) through the Texas Department of Agriculture and that we designate Precincts 2 and 4 to receive any funds and that we authorize procurement of grant administrator and engineer. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
 - Disaster Recover Reallocation Program (DRRP) through the General Land Office (GLO)

Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to receive as information the availability of grant funds from the Disaster Recover Reallocation Program (DRRP) through the General Land Office (GLO) and that we designate Precincts 1, 2, 3, and 4 to receive any funds and that we authorize procurement of grant administrator and engineer. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

****Commissioners Court took a break at 9:58 a.m. and reconvened at 10:07 a.m.**

(24) Discuss and consider taking action on the following Election items:

a. Discuss and approve a Joint Election Contract between Houston County, the City of Crockett and Lovelady ISD for the November 5, 2024 election to be ran by the Houston County Elections Administrator. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve a Joint Election Contract between Houston County, the City of Crockett and Lovelady ISD for the November 5, 2024 election to be ran by the Houston County Elections Administrator. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

b. Approve appointment of judges and alternate judges from the names that appear on the "Order of Appointment for Election Judges and Alternate Judges" for one-year term beginning September 1, 2024 through August 31, 2025. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve appointment of judges and alternate judges from the names that appear on the "Order of Appointment for Election Judges and Alternate Judges" for one-year term beginning September 1, 2024 through August 31, 2025. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

c. Discuss and consider setting the maximum number of 4 clerks, with 1 Judge and 1 Alternate Judge, per polling locations 1-7 & 19 and the maximum number of 2 clerks, with 1 Judge and 1 Alternate Judge, in all other polling locations for the November 5, 2024 General Election. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to set the maximum number of 4 clerks, with 1 Judge and 1 Alternate Judge, per polling locations 1-7 & 19 and the maximum number of 2 clerks, with 1 Judge and 1 Alternate Judge, in all other polling locations for the November 5, 2024 General Election. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

d. Discuss and consider the potential branch Early Voting locations for the November 5, 2024 election. **No vote necessary because no additional branches were requested**

e. Receive as information the list of designated deputy early voting clerks by the EA for the November 5, 2024 election. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to receive as Information the list of designated deputy early voting clerks by the EA for the November 5, 2024 election. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

f. Approve the appointment of the presiding judge and alternate judge for the Early Voting Ballot Board by the County elections Board for the November 5, 2024 election: **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the appointment of the presiding judge and alternate judge for the Early Voting Ballot Board by the County elections Board for the November 5, 2024 election. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

g. Approve the appointment of the following experienced personnel for the Central Counting Station for the November 5, 2024 Election:

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|---|----------------|
| Manager: | Cynthia Lum |
| Tabulation Supervisor: | Richard Gattis |
| Assistant Tabulation/Intake Supervisor: | Gail Thompson |

Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve the appointment of the following experienced personnel for the Central Counting Station for the November 5, 2024 Election:

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|--|-----------------------|
| Manager: | Cynthia Lum |
| Tabulation Supervisor: | Richard Gattis |
| Assistant Tabulation/Intake Supervisor: | Gail Thompson |

Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

- (25) Conduct Public Hearing on Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2025. ***At 10:22 a.m. Judge Lovell opened the Public Hearing on Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 and after a time of silence he closed the Public Hearing at 10:22 a.m.***
- (26) Conduct Public Hearing on Proposed Tax Rate for Fiscal Year 2025. ***At 10:23 a.m. Judge Lovell opened the Public Hearing on Proposed Tax Rate for Fiscal Year 2025 and after a time of silence he closed the Public Hearing at 10:23 a.m.***
- (27) Discuss and consider adopting the Houston County Budget for Fiscal Year 2025. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to adopt the Houston County Budget for Fiscal Year 2025. Commissioner Lovell seconded. The record vote was unanimous with Judge Lovell voting Aye, Commissioner Lovell voting Aye, Commissioner Kitchen voting Aye, Commissioner Stokes voting Aye, and Commissioner Henderson voting Aye.**
- (28) Discuss and consider action on adopting FY 2025 County Tax Rate of \$0.423000 cents
- a. 0.375398 for Maintenance and Operation
 - b. 0.047692 for Interest and Sinking Tax Rate of
 - c. 0.423000% Total Tax Rate
- Judge Lovell moved that the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of a tax rate of .423000, which is effectively a 3.67% increase in the tax rate. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. The motion carried unanimously with a Record Vote of Judge Lovell voting Aye, Commissioner Lovell voting Aye, Commissioner Kitchen voting Aye, Commissioner Stokes voting Aye, and Commissioner Henderson voting Aye.**
- (29) Discuss and consider action on ratifying total tax rate for Fiscal year 2025 as \$0.4230 cents. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to ratify total tax rate for Fiscal year 2025 as \$0.4230 cents. Commissioner Stokes seconded. This was unanimous with a record vote with Judge Lovell voting Aye, Commissioner Lovell voting Aye, Commissioner Kitchen voting Aye, Commissioner Stokes voting Aye, and Commissioner Henderson voting Aye.**
- (30) Discuss and ratify the increase of property tax revenue by 3.67% in the FY 2025 Budget. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to ratify the increase of property tax revenue by 3.67% in the FY 2025 Budget. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion passed unanimously with a Record Vote of Judge Lovell voting Aye, Commissioner Lovell voting Aye, Commissioner Kitchen voting Aye, Commissioner Stokes voting Aye, and Commissioner Henderson voting Aye.**
- (31) Discuss and consider setting salaries for all the officers and employees of Houston County for the Fiscal Year 2025. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve setting salaries for all the officers and employees of Houston County for the Fiscal Year 2025 with the correction to the Custodian Salaries. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(32)Adjourn. **Judge Lovell made a motion for the Commissioners Court Meeting to Adjourn. Commissioner Henderson seconded. The motion carried by everyone rising and leaving the meeting at 10:47 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: September 22, 2024