



## HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

### MINUTES

### REGULAR MEETING

### SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

The Commissioners' Court of Houston County met in a regular, called meeting on September 24, 2024 **in person and via zoom**, with the following members present, to wit:

#### The Court

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>
Terri Meadows	County Clerk	<b>PRESENT</b>

#### County Officials/Employees in person:

Kris Dyches	Insurance Coordinator
Yanira Garcia	Community Supervision
Laura Goolsby	District Clerk
Randy Hargrove	Sheriff
Melissa Jeter	County Auditor
Donna Kaspar	District Attorney
Morris Luker	Constable Precinct 1
Sharon Luker	Administrative Assistant to the Commissioners
Kristina Massey	Assistant District Attorney
Mike McCreight	JP Precinct 1
Heath Murff	Emergency Management
Jan Pigford	Administrative Assistant to the County Judge
Red Smith	Constable Precinct 2
Brittani Womack	1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant Auditor

#### County Officials/Employees by Zoom:

Arnita Cavender	DA Office
Missy D'Angelo	Assistant Auditor
Cynthia Lum	Elections Administrator
Matthew Van Egmond	S/O
Laronica Wooten-Smith	County Tax Assessor-Collector

Visitors: Troy Reed (EY), Gerald Byrd (EY), Erik Anderson (Candela Renewables), Jim Woodruff (Candela Renewables), Lynn Markham (Attorney), Evan Horn (EY), Cindy Doran (FUMC, Crockett), Craig Emmons (TXDOT), Danny Luna (TXDOT)

- (1) Welcome, Invocation and Pledges:  
**Judge Lovell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Reverend Cindy Doran 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 Lovell made a motion to approve the Commissioners Court minutes for September 10, 2024. Commissioner Henderson 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. County Treasurers Report
  - b. Compensatory Report
  - c. Financial Report - Auditor**Commissioner Lovell made a motion to receive as information the County Treasurers Report, Compensatory Report and Financial Report - Auditor. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**  
  
**\*Emergency Management Coordinator, Heath Murff, shared with the Court that the Houston County Search & Rescue had a missing person drill this past weekend. He said that it was a good drill and they were able to use some of the new technology.**
- (7) Consider approving salaries for new and/or transfer employees.
  - a. Part-Time Equipment Operator Precinct 3 **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve the part-time salary of Joe David Driskell as Equipment Operator for Precinct 3 at \$15.00 an hour in pay grade 14, effective 9/24/24. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
  - b. Part-Time Office Clerk to Full Time Deputy Clerk 1 – County Clerk Office **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the salary change for Kayla Walker from part-time Office Clerk to full-time Deputy Clerk I in the County Clerk’s Office at bi-weekly salary of \$1,198.40 plus \$18.46 cell phone allowance in pay grade 15, effective 10/1/2024. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
  - c. Full-Time Jailer **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the salary of James D. Lowery as full-time Jailer at the Houston County Jail at bi-weekly salary of \$1,626.92 in pay grade 17, effective 9/26/2024. 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 Kitchen made a motion and Commissioner Lovell seconded to approve compensatory payment to Rocky Hoch, Deputy, in the amount of \$576.65; Carl Smotherman, Jailer, in the amount of \$612.48; Johnny Romo, Jailer, in the amount of \$271.65; Joshua Provins, Jailer, in the amount of \$271.65; Thomas Flowers, Jailer, in the amount of \$107.34. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (9) Discuss and consider declaring received information as surplus inventory and approving transfers between departments. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to receive as information the surplus inventory and approve transfers between departments. Commissioner Henderson and Commissioner Lovell simultaneously seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (10) Discuss and consider approval for the SB22 Certification Form submitted by the Sheriff's Department. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to pass on this request and leave the SB22 Certification Form submitted by the Sheriff's Department as it was previously approved. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (11) Discuss and consider taking action on approving purchases for the Sheriff's Department using SB-22 funds and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve Option B – to approve the purchase of 2 Vehicles for the Sheriff's Office at a cost of \$46,089 each and \$558 for ammo, tools, supplies for a total cost of \$92,736.00. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (12) Discuss and consider action on adopting the FY 2024 Longevity Policy and setting disbursement date. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to adopt the FY 2024 Longevity Policy and set the disbursement date for December 13, 2024. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (13) Discuss and consider adopting Order setting day of week of regular Commissioners Court meetings during FY 2025 Texas Local Government Code §81.005(a). **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to adopt Order setting day of week of regular Commissioners Court meetings during FY 2025 per Texas Local Government Code §81.005(a) to the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 9:00 a.m. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (14) Discuss and consider action on approving the FY 2025 calendars for:
- a. County Holidays for officers and employees
  - b. Pay Day Calendar.
- Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the County Holidays for officers and employees and the Pay Day Calendar for FY 2025 as presented. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (15) Discuss and consider reviewing and setting Sheriff and Constable Fees effective January 1, 2025 Texas Local Government Code §118.131(d). **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion per Texas Local Government Code §118.131(d) to adopt the same Sheriff and Constable fees as last year to be effective January 1, 2025. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- (16) Discuss and consider approving the change of location of all real property tax suit sales (Constable & Sheriff) from the East door of the Courthouse to the East Courthouse entrance. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the change of location of all real property tax suit sales (Constable & Sheriff) from the East door of the Courthouse to the East Courthouse entrance. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (17) Recognizing and proclaiming Tuesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 as National Night Out in Houston County. A nationwide crime prevention program, encouraging neighbors to meet with each other and local law enforcement agencies. In order to fight crime through prevention programs. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to proclaim Tuesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 as National Night Out in Houston County. A nationwide crime prevention program, encouraging neighbors to meet with each other and local law enforcement agencies in order to fight crime through prevention programs. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (18) Recognizing and proclaiming the week of October 6<sup>th</sup> thru October 12<sup>th</sup> as Fire Prevention Week in Houston County. A nationwide program to help people to practice fire safety to save lives and property. This year's theme is Smoke Alarms. Make them work for you. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to recognize and proclaim the week of October 6<sup>th</sup> thru October 12<sup>th</sup> as Fire Prevention Week in Houston County. A nationwide program to help people to practice fire safety to save lives and property. This year's theme is Smoke Alarms. Make them work for you. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (19) Discuss and consider approving purchase of equipment for Constable Precinct 1 office protection.
- a. Mossberg 12 gauge pump shotgun, model 590
  - b. Ruger .556 Nato Patrol Rifle, Model AR-556
  - c. Eotech Holographic Weapon Sight, model EXP520 (to be mounted on rifle)
  - d. 2 additional Magpul PMag rifle magazines
  - e. Winchester 20 gun safe with E lock, sku# 1965574, Tractor Supply \$499.99
- Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to table this agenda item until the first Commissioners Court meeting in October, 2024. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (20) Receive as information the salary orders and Budget for FY 2025 for:
- a. 3rd Judicial District Court Reporters
  - b. 349th District Court Reporters. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve a the Salary Orders and Budget for FY 2025 for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District Court Reporter and 349<sup>th</sup> District Court Reporter. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (21) Discuss and consider action on a budget amendment request and receive as information the salary reduction affidavits for FY 2025:
- a. County Judge to Administrative Assistant
  - b. District Judges to District Court Coordinator
- Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve a budget amendment request and receive as information the salary reduction affidavits for FY 2025 from the County Judge to Administrative Assistant and the District Judges to District Court Coordinator. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

- (22) Discuss and consider action on application for the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and agreement with Grapeland Chamber of Commerce for the Peanut Festival to be held October 10, 11, & 12, 2024 at the Grapeland City Park. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the application for the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and agreement with Grapeland Chamber of Commerce in the amount of \$3000 for the Peanut Festival to be held October 10, 11 & 12, 2024 at the Grapeland City Park. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried.**
- (23) Discuss and consider action on a budget amendment transfer from General Funds to Precinct 2 for budget shortfall, pending FEMA reimbursement. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve a budget amendment transfer from General Funds to Precinct 2 for budget shortfall, pending FEMA reimbursement. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (24) Discuss and consider action on authorizing out-of-state travel request for the DA Investigator to attend conference October, 2024 in Hilton Head, South Carolina. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to authorize out-of-state travel request for the DA Investigator to attend the ROCIC Conference October, 2024 in Hilton Head, South Carolina with the expenses to be paid out of District Attorney's Forfeiture Funds. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

***\*\*Commissioners Court took a break at 9:50 a.m. and reconvened at 9:57 a.m.***

- (25) Discuss and consider taking action to approve the upgrade of five of Adult Probation's Microsoft 365 accounts through TAC from Plan 1(basic) to Plan 2 (standard) to have access to the full version of the Office Suite. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the upgrade of five of Adult Probation's Microsoft 365 accounts through TAC from Plan 1(basic) to Plan 2 (standard) to have access to the full version of the Office Suite and that Houston County receive the money for payment every month from Anderson County. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (26) Discuss and consider action on the FY 2025 Resolution for the Texas Indigent Defense Commission Formula Grant for improved indigent defense services and to designate the County Judge as the Authorized Official to apply for and accept the award. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve the FY 2025 Resolution for the Texas Indigent Defense Commission Formula Grant for improved indigent defense services and to designate the County Judge as the Authorized Official to apply for and accept the award. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (27) Discuss and consider action on renewing the County Choice Silver Texas Association of Counties Retiree Medical Insurance policy pending funding from 2025 Budget. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to renew the County Choice Silver Texas Association of Counties Retiree Medical Insurance policy and to stay with package 1, our current package, and approve funding in the 2025 Budget. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (28) Consider authorizing and directing the submission of a payroll census to the Champ Health Plan (a voluntary supplemental plan for employees) to obtain a comparative payroll analysis showing the take-home pay increase of each eligible employee. **Lynn Markham, a local attorney, spoke about this plan and the benefits to us. Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve authorization of a payroll census to Champ Health Plan to obtain a comparative payroll analysis showing the take-home pay increase of each eligible employee pending a discussion with the County Treasurer. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(29) Discuss and consider action on accepting renewal quote for Liability Insurance for the Houston County Airport for the period 11/14/2024 - 11/13/2025 through Old Republic Insurance Company. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to accept renewal quote for Liability Insurance for the Houston County Airport for the period of 11/14/2024 – 11/13/2025 through Old Republic Insurance Company noting there are no changes to the policy. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(30) Discuss and consider action on designating specific FY 2024 operating expenses for Precinct 1 as eligible for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to designate specific FY 2024 operating expenses for Precinct 1 as eligible for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(31) Discuss and consider action on authorizing the following items through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund and necessary budget amendments:

- a. Discuss selection of a company from received quotes to replace ceiling tiles, paint ceiling grids and clean and remove all debris in the Courthouse and approve payment terms. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to award to 4L Construction from received quotes to replace ceiling tiles, paint ceiling grids and clean and remove all debris in the Courthouse and approve payment terms at a total amount of \$12,490 and that the work should be completed by the end of this year (2024) and authorizing this be paid through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Fund and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

***\*Commissioner Henderson left the Commissioners Court at 10:22 a.m.***

(32) Discuss and consider signing “Notice of Election” for the November 5, 2024 Joint General/Special Election. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve signing the “Notice of Election” for the November 5, 2024 Joint General/Special Election. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

***\*Commissioner Henderson returned to the Commissioners Court at 10:25 a.m.***

(33) Discuss and consider approving Entrust Solutions Group (Spectrum) to install Fiber Optics in 2” conduit via directional bore:

- a. CR 3485 E of CR 3480
- b. CR 3456 N or FM 2915
- c. CR 3455A S of FM 2915
- d. CR 3495 W of CR 3515

**Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve Entrust Solutions Group (Spectrum) to install Fiber Optics in 2” conduit via directional bore on CR 3485 E of CR 3480, CR 3456 N of FM 2915, CR 3455A S of FM 2915, and CR 3495 W of CR 3515. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(34) Receive As information a presentation from Erik Anderson to provide an update of the project’s status and its potential impact on the community. **Erik Anderson, with Candela Renewables spoke on the potential Solar Project off of 2022 in Houston County. He was joined by Troy Reed and Evan Horn. This was for informational purposes only and no action was necessary.**

***\*Commissioners Court took a brief recess from 11:14 a.m. to 11:17 a.m.***

(35) Discuss and consider action on County Citibank card policy and canceling authorization. **After much discussion about some credit card policy issues at the Sheriff's Office Commissioner Kitchen made a motion that it is necessary to approve a budget amendment to pay the expenses for the lost receipt for supplies that were purchased with a County issued Citibank credit card for the Sheriff's Office and cancel Lt. Jerrod Vickers and Chief Deputy Roger Dickey as authorized users of the County Issued Citibank Credit Card. Commissioner Stokes seconded the motion. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

(36) 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 10:26 a.m.**

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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**

**Date Approved: October 8, 2024**