



## HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT MINUTES REGULAR MEETING MARCH 25, 2025

The Commissioners' Court of Houston County met in a regular, called meeting on March 25, 2025 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>ABSENT</b>
Terri Meadows	County Clerk	<b>PRESENT</b>

### County Officials/Employees in person:

James Angerstein	Tax Assessor-Collector	Present
Zak Bengé	Sheriff	Present
Sarah Clark	CCL Judge	Present
Kris Dyches	Insurance Coordinator	Present
Missy D'Angelo	Assistant Auditor	Zoom
Laura Goolsby	District Clerk	Present
Melissa Jeter	County Auditor	Present
Carl Johnson	Facilities Administrator	Present
Sheila Johnson	Grants Administrator	Present
Ronnie Jordan	JP 2	Zoom
Cynthia Lum	Elections Administrator	Zoom
Ryan Martin	Chief Deputy Sheriff	Present
Kristina Massey	County Attorney	Present
Todd McConnell	IT	Present
Heath Murff	Emergency Management	Present
Jan Pigford	Admin Assistant to the County Judge	Present
Darrellyn Smith	Assistant to the County Commissioners	Present
Red Smith	Constable Precinct 2	Present
Brittani Womack	First Assistant Auditor	Zoom
Stephanie Yorgensen	County Clerk Deputy	Present

### Media:

Maria Gonzalez	KTRE NEWS	Present
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Visitors: Mark Whitfill (Airport Lease), Cindy Doran (FUMC Minister)

- (1) Welcome, Invocation and Pledges:

**Judge Lovell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Rev. 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 March 11, 2025. 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 Kitchen 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 Lovell. The Motion carried 4 to 0.**

- (6) Receive information, announcements and reports from County Departments:

- a. County Treasurers Report
- b. Compensatory Report
- c. County Airport Hangar Lease Report

**Commissioner Lovell made a motion to receive as information the County Treasurers Report, Compensatory Report, and the County Airport Hangar Lease Report as presented. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

**Judge Lovell, County Judge, reminded everyone that this is County Government Month and that we will be celebrating the employees with a Hamburger Cookout in the park on April 17 at Noon.**

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

- a. Sheriff's Office – Full time Deputy **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve the bi-weekly salary of James Carter Catoe as Full-time Deputy at the HCSO at \$1,749.23.38 (includes base rate \$1,646.11, Allowance \$18.46, and Supplement \$84.66) in Pay Grade 20, Effective March 28, 2025. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- b. County Clerk Office – Deputy Clerk 1 – 6 month raise **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve the 6 month raise for Deputy Clerk 1 in the County Clerk Office, Kayla Walker, moving her from bi-weekly pay of \$1,216.86 to \$1,264.80 (includes \$18.46 cell phone allowance) in Pay Grade 15, Effective April 1, 2025. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 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 payment of compensatory, and vacation time and**

necessary budget amendments to Jaidan Jones, Dispatcher, in the amount of \$220.20; J'darius Pruitt, Dispatcher, in the amount of \$220.20; and Dwayne Hughes, Precinct 3 Road Hand, in the amount of \$39.87. Motion carried 4 to 0.

- (9) Discuss and consider declaring received information as surplus inventory and approving transfers between departments. **None**
- (10) Discuss and consider adopting Resolution Requesting Regulation of PFAS and Other Harmful Chemicals in Biosolid Fertilizers in Houston County. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to adopt a Resolution Requesting Regulation of PFAS and Other Harmful Chemicals in Biosolid Fertilizers in Houston County. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Judge Lovell shared that other counties in our state have adopted this Resolution, and he feels it is important for us to do the same. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (11) Consider adopting proclamation designating the month of March as "Red Cross Month". **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to adopt a proclamation designating the month of March as "Red Cross Month". Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (12) Discuss and consider adopting a Resolution requesting the Texas Department of Transportation to re-designate Texas State Highways 7, 19, and 21 and US Highway 287 so they run concurrently with TX-LOOP 304 and re-designate the original footprints of Texas Highways 7, 19, and 21 and US Highway 287 inside TX-LOOP 304 be designated as Business Highways 7, 19, 21, and 287. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to adopt a Resolution requesting the Texas Department of Transportation to re-designate Texas State Highways 7, 19, and 21 and US Highway 287 so they run concurrently with TX-LOOP 304 and re-designate the original footprints of Texas Highways 7, 19, and 21 and US Highway 287 inside TX-LOOP 304 be designated as Business Highways 7, 19, 21, and 287. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (13) Discuss and consider approving bond and overweight permits for Precincts 1, 2, 3 & 4. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve bond and overweight permits for Precincts 1, 2, 3 & 4. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (14) Discuss and consider approving entering into agreement with USIO to mail all Tax Statements for County Tax Office and necessary budget amendments. **James Angerstein, Tax Assessor-Collector shared that he would like to see this agreement approved because it would help with the workload that is on his staff at tax time. Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve entering into agreement with USIO to mail all Tax Statements for County Tax Office and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (15) Discuss and consider action on advertising to accept bids for the County Depository Contract. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to advertise to accept bids for the County Depository Contract. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (16) Discuss and consider action on extending the grant contract through September 30, 2025 with Deep East Texas Council of Governments and Houston County Aging Services for Home Delivered Meals to eligible clients and Senior Center Operations. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve extending the grant contract through September 30, 2025 with Deep East Texas Council of Governments and Houston County Aging Services for Home Delivered Meals**

to eligible clients and Senior Center Operations. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.

(17) Discuss and consider action on approving a refund of service fees paid in FY 2024 to Houston County Constable Precinct 1 due to Non-Service. ***\*\*Melissa Jeter, County Auditor, explained the letter she had written to Constable Precinct 1 when she received the letter requesting a refund for non-service of documents. She also shared the Constables response. The Court asked some questions and for clarification. Judge Lovell said he would like to see the Constable present to discuss this issue. The Sheriff offered his offices services to help alleviate this service issue.*** Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve a \$300 refund of service fees paid in FY 2024 to Houston County Constable Precinct 1 due to Non-Service. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.

(18) Discuss and consider renewal of Airport hangar Lease agreement, terms and amount of liability insurance coverage for Chris Haeckler. ***\*\*First it was noted that the name in this Agenda Item is incorrect and should be Craig and Alice Jones, not Chris Haeckler. Mark Whitfill was present to answer questions concerning the lease.*** Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve renewal of Airport hangar Lease agreement, terms and amount of liability insurance coverage for Craig and Alice Jones. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0. ***\*\*After Court recessed it was noted that changing the amount of liability insurance in the Lease was not a part of the motion, and that the parties would not sign this lease, and that it will be brought back at the next Court.***

***\*\*Commissioners Court took a short break from 9:45 a.m. until 9:58 a.m.***

(19) Discuss and consider action on finalized electricity contract for all Houston County buildings. Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve finalized electricity contract for all Houston County buildings. Commissioner Stokes seconded. ***\*\*It was discussed that the rate increase for the 5 year contract is about \$75,000.*** Motion carried 4 to 0.

(20) Discuss and consider action to approve the 2025 agreement with Armstrong Forensic Laboratory, Inc. pertaining to blood and controlled substance analysis for the Houston County District Attorney's Office. Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the 2025 agreement with Armstrong Forensic Laboratory, Inc. pertaining to blood and controlled substance analysis for the Houston County District Attorney's Office. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.

(21) Discuss and consider accepting a financial donation of \$4,000.00 from Leonard and Melissa Simmons for improvements to CR 2170 and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to accept a financial donation of \$4,000.00 from Leonard and Melissa Simmons for improvements to CR 2170 and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.

(22) Discuss and consider action on renewing subscription service for Houston Co. Airport Fueling Station credit card processor with QTPOD. Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to renew subscription service for Houston Co. Airport Fueling Station credit card processor with QTPOD. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.

- (23) Discuss and consider action on a contract with Motorola to provide in-car camera software and storage for the Houston County Sheriff's Office and necessary budget amendments of \$14k. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve authorize a contract with Motorola to provide in-car camera software and storage for the Houston County Sheriff's Office and necessary budget amendments of \$14k. Commissioner Kitchen seconded the motion. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (24) Discuss and consider action on a budget amendment for the Houston County Sheriff's Office:
- Additional funding for Deputy & Bailiff uniforms - \$30k **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to approve a budget amendment from Contingency Funds for the additional funding for Deputy and Bailiff uniforms at an approximate cost of \$30K. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
  - Additional funding for outfitting 2 Patrol trucks purchased with SB 22 funds - \$15k
  - Allocating available budget within Timber/Title III to outfit newly purchased Patrol vehicles - \$28k. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve a budget amendment first from available Timber/Title III funds and the remainder from contingency to outfit 2 Patrol trucks purchased with SB 22 funds at a cost of \$15K and outfit newly purchased Patrol vehicles at a cost of \$28K. Commissioner Stokes seconded this motion. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (25) Receive report from Sheriff Zak Benge on the recent active shooter incident at the Sheriff's Office and discuss possible security upgrades. **Sheriff Benge spoke about the shooting that took place outside of the Sheriff's Office on 3/15/25. Crockett Police Department is handling the investigation because the Sheriff Office is the victim. The Sheriff announced that the shooter is in Federal custody on additional charges.**
- (26) Consider and approve Magistrate Court Policy regarding open court requirements and use of zoom. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve Magistrate Court Policy regarding open court requirements and use of zoom. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (27) Discuss and consider approving reserved parking around the courthouse:
- For elected prosecutors
  - For elected clerks
- \*\*County Attorney, Kristina Massey, feels that reserved parking around the courthouse is a matter of safety and security for the elected prosecutors and clerks. Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve reserved parking around the courthouse for the elected prosecutors and the elected clerks. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.***
- (28) Discuss and consider action on amending the Vyve telephone contract to add a line in the Justice of the Peace Precinct 2 office and necessary budget amendment. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to amend the Vyve telephone contract to add a line in the Justice of the Peace Precinct 2 office and necessary budget amendment. Commissioner Stokes seconded. *The County Auditor, Melissa Jeter, shared that the cable had previously been run, and this amendment is necessary to turn on the phone.* Motion carried 4 to 0.**

- (29) Discuss and consider action on advertising to accept bids or extending contracts with current vendors for the period May 1, 2025 through April 30, 2026:
- a. Road materials **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to advertise to accept bids for Road Materials for all precincts for the period May 1, 2025 through April 30, 2026.**
  - b. Delivery of Road Materials to County Precinct Barns and Road Locations **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to renew the current contract for delivery of Road Materials to County Precinct Barns and Road Locations for another year. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
  - c. Gas and Diesel for County vehicle and equipment
  - d. Airport Fuel (AV Gas) **Commissioner Kitchen moved to extend the current contracts for Gas and Diesel for County vehicle and equipment and Airport Fuel (AV Gas). Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (30) Discuss and consider action on the renewal application to Texas Association of Counties for building and mobile equipment insurance coverage for the period July 1, 2025 through July 1, 2026. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the renewal application to Texas Association of Counties for building and mobile equipment insurance coverage for the period July 1, 2025 through July 1, 2026. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (31) Discuss and consider making updates to the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) for Houston County:
- a. Daphne Session change job title to District Attorney
  - b. add Zak Bengé to the Sheriff position
- Commissioner Stokes made a motion to update the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) for Houston County to (a) Daphne Session change job title to District Attorney and (b) add Zak Bengé to the Sheriff position. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (32) Discuss and Consider changes to the Sick Pool Policy recommended by the Sick Pool Committee:
- a. Removing the requirement to have accrued sufficient sick leave (must have minimum 48 hours accredited after donating 8 hours to the pool) and only require an 8 hour minimum donation. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to change the Sick Pool Policy to allow an employee to donate 8 hours to be eligible for the sick pool, and doing away with the policy to have a minimum of 48 hours remaining after donating 8 hours to the pool, and the employee donate 8 hours every year thereafter. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (33) Discuss and consider action on the award of seized property to the Houston County Sheriff's Office:
- a. Receiving Shop Built Trailer as seized property to HCSO
  - b. Transferring ownership of trailer to the Houston County Search & Rescue
- Commissioner Stokes made a motion to award seized property of Receiving Shop Built Trailer as seized property to HCSO and transferring ownership of trailer to the Houston County Search and Rescue. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (34) Relocate meeting to old Bank building and conduct **Workshop** to discuss future plans for renovations. **At 10:57 a.m., Judge Lovell said that the Court would enter into executive session, as allowed by Government Code, Chapter 551, to relocate to the old Bank building and conduct Workshop to discuss future plans for renovations. The Court reconvened into Open Session at 11:47 a.m.**

(35)Adjourn. **Judge Lovell made a motion for the Commissioners Court Meeting to Adjourn. The motion carried by everyone rising and leaving the meeting at 11:47 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: April 8, 2025