



**HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 14, 2023**

The Commissioners' Court of Houston County met in a regular, called meeting on February 14, 2023 **in person and via zoom due to Covid**, with the following members present, to wit:

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

County Officials/Employees in person:

Sharon Luker	Administrative Assistant to Commissioners
Terri Meadows	County Clerk
Cynthia Lum	Elections Administrator
Melissa Jeter	County Auditor
Jan Pigford	Administrative Assistant to the County Judge
Carl Johnson	Facilities Administrator
Janis Omelina	County Treasurer
Andy Biscamp	Bailiff
Randy Hargrove	Sheriff
Todd McConnell	IT
Laura Goolsby	District Clerk
Wanda Jordan	Historical Commission
Daphne Session	County Attorney
Jerrod Vickers	Sheriff's Office

County Officials/Employees by Zoom:

Brittani Womack	1 st Assistant Auditor
Sheila Johnson	Grants Administrator
Heath Murff	Emergency Management
Laronica Wooten-Smith	Tax Assessor Collector

Media:

Greg Ritchie - Messenger
Jan White – Courier (Zoom)

Visitors: Clayton Starr (Sons of Republic), Ruenette Starr, Tim Allen (Houston County Child Welfare Board), Lois Ball, Jenni Shartle (Houston County Child Welfare Board), Carey Minter (Houston County Appraisal District), Gwen Willis (Houston County Child Welfare Board), Rand Salter (A-Lert Roof System)

- (1) Welcome, Invocation and Pledges:

Judge Lovell called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., Commissioner Stokes led the opening prayer followed by Judge Lovell leading the Pledge to the American Flag and the Texas Flag.

AT THIS TIME JUDGE LOVELL ANNOUNCED THAT THE COURT WAS GOING TO TAKE UP ITEM 19 OUT OF ORDER (SEE ITEM 19)

- (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 January 24, 2023 and February 7, 2023. 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 Stokes. The Motion carried 5 to 0.

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

- a. County Treasurers Report
- b. County Clerk Report
- c. District Clerk Report
- d. Tax Assessor Collector Report
- e. Community Service/Environmental Report **Commissioner Henderson moved to receive the County Treasurers Report, County Clerk Report, District Clerk Report, Tax Assessor Collector Report, and Community Service/Environmental Report as information. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

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

- a. Part-time CDL Truck driver/Heavy Equipment Operator Pct #4

Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve salary of James Dean Decker as Part-time CDL Truck Driver/Heavy Equipment Operator in Precinct 4 at hourly pay of \$15.48 in pay grade 17. Commissioner Stokes seconded the motion. Motion carried 5 to 0.

- b. 3 Full time Jailers

Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve the salary of the following as Full time Jailers: Ashton Almeida and Mason King at \$1,179.29 bi-weekly in pay grade 16 and Johnny Romo at bi-weekly salary of \$1,282.07 in pay grade 16. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 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. **NONE**
- (10) Consider approving Probationary Cadet Employment Agreement with Michael W. Molnes, Jail Lieutenant and approving the salary for the transfer effective 02/27/2023. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve Probationary Cadet Employment Agreement with Michael W. Molnes, Jail Lieutenant and approving the salary from current pay of \$1,519.73 bi-weekly in pay grade 20 to \$1,215.77 bi-weekly in pay grade 16 effective date of transfer 02/27/2023. Commissioner Henderson seconded motion. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (11) Discuss and consider concerning the Houston County Veterans Service Officer:
- Accept the discharge of Joshua Caldwell **Commissioner Kitchen moved to approve discharge of Veterans Service Officer, Joshua Caldwell. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
 - Approve the appointment of Milton Ladnier **PASS**
- (12) Receive as information 2022 Annual Report from Houston County Historical Commission. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to receive as information 2022 Annual Report from Houston County Historical Commission as given by Wanda Jordan. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (13) Discuss and consider approving recommendations from Human Resource Committee for the Employee Handbook:
- Designate “no less than 30 days are required” for current employees seeking to retire with any eligible medical benefits to submit proper documentation.
 - Designate the Insurance Coordinator as the Retiree Medical point of contact.
 - Updating the policies concerning previous employees who are rehired with sick time hours and ending vacation accrual rate.
- Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to Designate no less than 30 days are required for current employees seeking to retire with eligible medical benefits to submit proper documentation, and to Designate Kris Dyches, the Insurance Coordinator, as the Retiree Medical point of contact, and update the policies concerning previous employees who are rehired with sick time hours and ending vacation accrual rate. Commissioner Henderson seconded the Motion. Commissioner Kitchen amended his motion to include that employees who are rehired should begin at the same accrual rate of sick time as when they left. Commissioner Henderson seconded the Amended Motion. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (14) Discuss and consider appointing members to Houston County Sick Pool Committee. **Judge Lovell made a motion to appoint Laura Goolsby to replace Carolyn Rains and Mike McCreight to replace Clyde Black on the Houston County Sick Pool Committee. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (15) Discuss and consider approving orders allowing retail fireworks permit holders to sell fireworks to the public in celebration of Texas Independence Day. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve orders allowing retail fireworks permit holders to sell fireworks to the public in**

celebration of Texas Independence Day. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.

- (16) Consider adopting proclamation for Sons of the Republic celebrating Texas Independence Day. **Mr. Clayton Starr gave us an interesting history lesson on Texas Independence and at the conclusion Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to adopt a proclamation for Sons of the Republic celebrating Texas Independence Day. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (17) Discuss and consider approving donation to Road & Bridge Precinct #2 for improvements to County Road #2065 from Masters Timber, LLC in the amount of \$2800.00. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve a donation to Road & Bridge Precinct #2 for improvements to County Road #2065 from Masters Timber, LLC in the amount of \$2800.00. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (18) Discuss and consider action on an application request of the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal Agreement with Crockett Lions Club 61st Annual PRCA Rodeo to be held May 11, 12 & 13, 2023. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion to approve application request of the Hotel Occupancy Tax Fund and Interlocal Agreement with Crockett Lions Club 61st Annual PRCA Rodeo to be held May 11, 12 & 13, 2023. Commissioner Kitchen seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (19) ****THIS ITEM WAS TAKEN UP AFTER ITEM 1 ON THE AGENDA.** Discuss and consider appointing and swearing-in two new members for Houston County Child Welfare Board. **Commissioner Kitchen moved to appoint and swear-in Jenni Shartle and Gwen Willis as new members on the Houston County Child Welfare Board. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0. Judge Lovell gave the Oath to Jenni Shartle and Gwen Willis.**
- (20) Discuss and consider approving renewal contract with TransUnion to aid with investigations in the amount of \$125.00 monthly for Houston County Sheriff's Office. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to approve renewal contract with TransUnion to aid with investigations in the amount of \$125.00 monthly for Houston County Sheriff's Office. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (21) Discuss and consider removing Primerica and Edward Jones as supplemental insurance options for County employees. **Commissioner Kitchen made a motion to remove Primerica and Edward Jones as supplemental insurance options for County employees. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

AT THIS TIME JUDGE LOVELL ANNOUNCED THAT THE COURT WAS GOING TO TAKE UP ITEM 34 OUT OF ORDER (SEE ITEM 34)

****AT 10:53 A.M., AFTER TAKING ITEM 34 OUT OF ORDER, COMMISSIONER KITCHEN LEFT THE MEETING AND THE REMAINDER OF THE COURT TOOK A BREAK UNTIL 11 A.M.**

- (22) Discuss and consider designating county road sign making equipment and duties to a new county office. **Commissioner Stokes moved to designate the 911 Coordinator to take over making the road signs. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

- (23) Discuss and consider action on registering with the Texas Association of Counties to provide Cyber security training to all required county officials and employees as mandated under HB 3834 and designating Administrators. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion for Houston County to register with the Texas Association of Counties to provide Cyber security training to all required county officials and employees as mandated under HB 3834 and designating Todd McConnell, Information Technology, as Administrator.**
- (24) Discuss and consider action on accepting the price increase of 2.95% on the jail inmate health contract with Turn Key Health Clinics and necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Lovell and Commissioner Stokes simultaneously made a motion to accept the price increase of 2.95% (\$45 per month) on the jail inmate health contract with Turn Key Health Clinics and necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (25) Discuss and consider action to approve the 2023 agreement with Armstrong Forensic Laboratory, Inc. pertaining to blood and controlled substance analysis for the Houston County Attorney's Office. ***Daphne Session, County Attorney, said that this agreement is necessary because DPS no longer test misdemeanor amounts of marihuana, and hasn't since 2020.*** Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve the 2023 agreement with Armstrong Forensic Laboratory, Inc. pertaining to blood and controlled substance analysis for the Houston County Attorney's Office. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.
- (26) Discuss and consider action on a budget amendment for the Sheriff's office for Investigation Expenses for \$7,345.00 for upcoming case expenses. ***Sheriff Hargrove told the court that some things DPS cannot analyze and this is one of those things and having this done is necessary for a homicide case.*** Judge Lovell made a motion to approve a budget amendment from contingency to cover the \$7,345.00 necessary for the Sheriff's office Investigation Expenses for an upcoming case. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.
- (27) Receive as information upcoming time frame of March 1st – April 30th for reviewing voting precinct lines and making changes through commissioners' court per election code: 42.031. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to receive as information upcoming time frame of March 1st – April 30th for reviewing voting precinct lines and making changes through commissioners' court per election code: 42.031. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (28) Discuss and consider action on the Official Voting Precinct locations for:
- a. Precinct 1 (Currently Crockett Fire Station)
 - b. Precinct 6 (Currently Grapeland ISD)
- Commissioner Lovell made a motion to move the Official Voting Precinct location for Precinct 1 to Bethel Baptist Church. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- Commissioner Lovell made a motion to move the Official Voting Precinct location for Precinct 6 to Grapeland Sr. Citizen Center. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (29) Discuss and consider action on adjusting the policy to increase the maximum number of paid hours for election day workers to 15 hours per election code: 32.091 (b). **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve adjusting the policy to increase the maximum number of paid hours for election day workers to 15 hours per election code: 32.091 (b). Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

- (30) Discuss and consider action on reviewing and adjusting the rental rates of new electronic voting equipment. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to leave the current rental rate of \$75 on the new electronic voting equipment. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (31) Receive as information the FY 2022 County Lateral Road and Bridge Expenditure Annual Report. **County Auditor, Melissa Jeter, gave a brief overview of the report to the Court. Commissioner Henderson moved to receive as information the FY 2022 County Lateral Road and Bridge Expenditure Annual Report. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (32) Discuss and consider action on an agreement with Todd, Hamaker and Johnson to perform the annual audit of the financial records of Houston County for FY 2022. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve the agreement with Todd, Hamaker and Johnson to perform the annual audit of the financial records of Houston County for FY 2022 at a fee of \$33,000 for the financial statement portion of the audit and \$6000 for the single audit portion (this amount is for the ARPA and LATCF Grant Funds). Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (33) Discuss and consider action the FY 2023 Houston County Appraisal District increased entity funding requirements and any necessary budget amendments. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to table. Commissioner Lovell seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

ITEM 34 WAS TAKEN OUT OF ORDER AND HEARD AFTER ITEM 22. THAT WAS BEFORE COMMISSIONER KITCHEN LEFT THE MEETING.

- (34) Discuss and consider action on the allocation and budget amendments for Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund (LATCF). **Commissioner Stokes made a motion to set aside \$100,00 from the LATCF Funds to purchase vehicles for the County Attorney and District Attorney with necessary budget amendments, and divide the remainder of \$274,658.49 by the usual percentages for each Road and Bridge Precinct. Commissioner Kitchen spoke to the Court and asked if they could all work together, and from this point forward he would like to see percentages for Road and Bridge to be divided equally. The Court was in agreement. Commissioner Stokes amended his motion to divide the remaining \$274,658.49, equally, at 25% to each of the 4 Precincts. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- (35) Discuss and consider action on authorizing a contract for sheetrock, painting and other repairs at the Senior Citizens center and approve payment terms per contract for A-Affordable Construction and necessary budget amendments. Total cost \$4,500.00. **Commissioner Lovell made a motion and Commissioner Henderson seconded to authorize a contract for sheetrock, painting and other repairs at the Senior Citizens center and approve payment terms per contract for A-Affordable Construction and necessary budget amendments. Total cost \$4,500.00. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- (36) Discuss and consider action on authorizing a contract with A-Affordable Construction for renovations including sheetrock, painting and flooring at the JP building and approve payment terms per contract. Total cost \$20,000.00. **Commissioner Stokes made a motion authorize a contract with A-Affordable Construction for renovations including sheetrock, painting and flooring at the JP building and approve payment terms per contract. Total cost \$20,000.00. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

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

- a. Authorize contract with Lucas Roofing to remove (3) domed skylights and replace with CD plywood on the roof at the old jail and approve payment terms per contract. Total \$2,890.00. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to contract with Lucas Roofing to remove (3) domed skylights and replace with CD plywood on the roof at the old jail and approve payment terms per contract for a total of \$2,890.00 with necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- b. Authorize contract with Sabre Electric to install a temporary ATS switch and order new ATS switch to replace temporary and retrofit to the generator at the old jail. Total \$12,355.00. **Commissioner Stokes a made a motion to authorize contract with Sabre Electric to install a temporary ATS switch and order new ATS switch to replace temporary and retrofit to the generator at the old jail for a total of \$12, 355 with necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Henderson seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**
- c. Approve purchase and authorize payment to Lonestar Truck Group for 91) 2017 Raptor Bottom Dump Trailer vin.#4027 for Road and Bridge Precinct 4. Total \$30,103.71. **Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve purchase and authorize payment to Lonestar Truck Group for 91) 2017 Raptor Bottom Dump Trailer vin.#4027 for Road and Bridge Precinct 4. For a total \$30,103.71 with necessary budget amendments. Commissioner Stokes seconded. Motion carried 4 to 0.**

(38) Adjourn. **Judge Lovell made a motion for the Commissioners Court Meeting to Adjourn. The motion carried by everyone rising and leaving the meeting at 11:45 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