

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
March 4, 2025
Perry, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 9:00 a.m., on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, at the Houston County Courthouse in Perry, Georgia. Chairman Perdue presided, and Commissioners Byrd, Gottwals, Robinson and Talton were present. County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar, and Director of Operations Brian Jones were also present.

Commissioner Gottwals gave the invocation and led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MSgt. Larios, Air Force Reserve Command Headquarters, spoke on his thirty-one-year military career spanning both the Army and the Air Force Reserve. He joined the Army after high school to learn personal growth skills and be on his own. Following his service in the Army, he joined the Air Force Reserve, where he works in cargo transportation on the C-5 and C-17 transport aircraft.

Chairman Perdue and each Commissioner thanked MSgt. Larios for his service and work at Robins Air Force Base. They thanked him for sharing his experiences, thanked his wife, who was also in attendance and closed by offering assistance if needed.

The Board recognized John Harley, the Prior City of Centerville Mayor, for his service as Mayor. Chairman Perdue presented Mr. Harley with a plaque of appreciation and a proclamation recognizing his years of service and leadership.

Chairman Perdue thanked Mr. Harley for his service on the many community boards and organizations he had served.

Mr. Byrd thanked Mr. Harley for his service to the citizens of Centerville and Houston County and for his cooperation on community projects.

Mr. Talton thanked Mr. Harley for all his work for the City of Centerville, Houston County, and the State of Georgia.

Ms. Robinson thanked Mr. Harley for his friendship and service and for the many outstanding accomplishments he completed for the City of Centerville.

Mr. Gottwals thanked Mr. Harley for the remarkable advice he had given to him before running for office and his faithful service.

Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar stated that he had worked with Mr. Harley when he was Centerville's City Administrator and that Centerville had grown tremendously under Mr. Harley's leadership. He thanked him for his friendship.

Mr. Hall said that Mr. Harley was a great influence on the Houston County community, that it had been a pleasure to work with him, and that he wished him well during his retirement.

Mr. Harley introduced Shirley, his wife of 59 years, his daughter Kim, son John II and granddaughter Sky. He thanked Chairman Perdue and the Board for their support of the City of Centerville while he was mayor and for the help and assistance the County had been over the years. He also introduced Mr. Michael Evans, the Mayor Pro Tempore of Centerville, who accompanied him to the meeting.

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Jake Cox, Community Planner and campaign coordinator for the County's United Way campaign, gave an update on last year's campaign and the total for the United Way car raffle drawing. He then proceeded to hold a drawing, with the assistance of Ms. Robinson, for County participants in the United Way car raffle.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the February 18, 2024, meeting.

Building Inspection & Planning/Zoning Assistant Rebecca Kidd presented Special Exception Applications: #2817, #2825, and #2832 through #2839.

Chairman Perdue closed the regular portion of the meeting and opened a Public Hearing.

Applicant #2817 was not present as the item was denied.
 Applicant #2825 was not present, there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2826 was not present as the item was withdrawn.
 Applicant #2832 was present, there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2833 was present, there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2834 was present, there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2835 was present, there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2836 was present, there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2837 was present, there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2838 was present, there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2839 was present, there was no opposition.

With no further comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

County Attorney Tom Hall made a blanket statement for the benefit of all applicants for Special Exceptions for home occupations: even if the Board of Commissioners approves an application, neighborhood covenants may still impose certain restrictions upon or against home businesses. These restrictive covenants are not superseded by any action the Board of Commissioners takes. The actions taken by the Board will not change any provision within the covenant that prohibits any commercial or business activity.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the following Special Exception Applications to include any and all stipulations as noted on the Zoning & Appeals recommendation and Section 95 Requirements staff report:

#2832	Jessica Gaston	Plant Sales Business
#2833	Daniel and Michelle Matthews	Property Inspection Business
#2834	Nicholas Maddox	Cleaning Service Business
#2835	Kevin Ford	Sale of Commodities Raised on Premises
#2836	Leslie and Jenna Scott	Heating and Air Conditioning Business
#2837	Dusin Riner	Heating and Air Conditioning Business
#2838	Scott and Stacy Peterman	Plant Nursery Business
#2839	Stuart and Jennifer Slappey	Veterinary Medicine Business

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to disapprove the following Special Exception Applications:

#2817	Dylan & Hannah Swafford	Landscaping Business
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Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to table the following Special Exception Applications:

#2825 James Pierce Construction Business

Chairman Perdue commented that the applicant for #2825 had a death in the family and requested their application be tabled. He said their application would be heard at the March 18th Board meeting in Warner Robins at 5:00 pm at the Annex Building.

Ms. Kidd informed the approved applicants that the next step to obtain their business license was to apply at the Commissioner's Office.

Mr. Talton presented a request to amend the Water Purchase Agreement between the Houston County Board of Commissioners and the City of Perry.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the addition of property located at Agricultural Estates – Moss Oaks Road, Perry, to the Water Purchase Agreement between the Houston County Board of Commissioners and The City of Perry with the following stipulations:

- That the developer posts a bond covering 125% of construction cost for work performed on the Houston Water System.
- Adherence of the rate structure approved by the Houston County Board of Commissioners on February 18, 2025.
- The issuance of a utility permit to the City of Perry based on all conditions being met according to "Houston County Utility Accommodations".

Mr. Gottwals presented a request for approval of harvesting timber.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the harvest and sale of timber at the Landfill, including 86 acres of saw timber pine to be replanted after harvest and to harvest 20 acres of non-merchantable timber for future landfill expansion. American Forest Management, Inc., of Charlotte, NC, will handle the timber sale.

Chairman Perdue thanked Utility Director Terry Dietsch and Director of Operations Brian Jones for managing unused landfill property. He stated that timber harvesting on landfill property is a prime example of that.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request for an adjustment to disposal rates.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the increase in solid waste collection and landfill disposal rates by 5.2%, or \$1.20 which will be effective April 1, 2025 based on the *U.S. Department of Labor Consumer Price Index (CPI)* for water, sewer, and trash. Landfill disposal rates will also increase by 5.2% per ton for all categories effective the first billing cycle after July 1, 2025. Landfill disposal rates will be adjusted annually thereafter based on the current rate for the January Consumer Price Index for sewer, water and trash.

Chairman Perdue explained that the Consumer Price Index is a percentage measurement of inflation taken from December to December. This percentage would be utilized January of each year to determine the amount of any increase to landfill and garbage rate increases.

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Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of the use of county roads for the upcoming Annual "Run 2 End Alzheimer's at the Landings" to benefit the Georgia Alzheimer's Association.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the use of county roads for the upcoming Annual "Run 2 End Alzheimer's at the Landings" to benefit the Georgia Alzheimer's Association. This event will take place on Saturday, April 5, 2025. The Landing Pointe Plaza in Bonaire will serve as both the start and finish for the 5K and 10K runs. The Sheriff's Department has agreed to help with traffic control.

Chairman Perdue recognized Mr. John Rowlands, director of the annual "Race 2 End Alzheimer's 5K and 10K runs.

Mr. Rowlands gave details about the run, expressed his appreciation to the County and Sheriff's Department for their assistance with planning and traffic control, and spoke about the impact of Alzheimer's on our state and nation. He closed his comments by advising that an additional donation had come in, which increased to \$56,000, the amount collected last year to support Alzheimer's research, and that in the previous 14 years, over \$400,000 has been raised.

Mr. Byrd presented a request to enter into an agreement for software services.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve entering into an agreement with TrueRoll of Chicago, Il, for auditing of homestead exemptions. This contract will begin March 1, 2025 with an annual cost of \$48,084 along with a one-time setup fee of \$1,500. The first year will be prorated bringing the total cost to \$112,561.00. This agreement will be funded by professional services.

Mr. Byrd commented that this software would ensure the accuracy of the County's tax roll.

Chairman Perdue agreed and commented that with the new floating homestead tax exemption, accuracy of the County's tax roll was increasingly important. He mentioned that property rentals, marriages, and deaths impact homestead tax exemption allowability and that this software would flag any property needing a staff member's review.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a change order.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to approve Change Order No. 1 with Reams and Son Construction Company, Inc. of Valdosta, Ga. for the 2024 LMIG in the amount of \$39,020.53. This change to cover the cost of the addition of Church Street and Smithville Church Road will bring the contract total to \$3,137,507.52. There is no change in the contract time.

Chairman Perdue asked Director of Operations Brian Jones if this work on Smithville Church Road was for paving or striping, and Mr. Jones said it was for striping only.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$3,497,972.50.

Chairman Perdue closed the regular portion of the meeting and opened the floor for Public Comments.

Rev. Dr. Rutha Jackson spoke about her views on the lack of minority representation on the Board of Commissioners and the need for a change to Districts.

As there were no further Public Comments, the Chairman opened the floor to Commissioner's Comments.

Mr. Gottwals spoke about the different businesses that had been approved at today's meeting. He mentioned being at a recent Zoning and Appeals Board meeting where two heating and air contractors were approved for a home business. He said a comment about them both being approved for the same industry had been made. One of the business owners, according to Mr. Gottwals, noted that there was plenty of work to go around in Houston County. Mr. Gottwals expressed how good that made him feel about the economic growth and strength of the County, as evidenced by that comment.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for attending and thanked the military speaker and his wife for staying through the entire meeting. She reminded everyone of the Race 2 End Alzheimer's on Saturday, April 5th. She concluded by saying she was happy to serve the citizens of Houston County.

Mr. Talton thanked John Rowlands for his efforts to help with Alzheimer's research through the Race 2 End Alzheimer's, recognized Mr. Harley for his attendance, and wished Michael Evans good luck in his race for Mayor of Centerville.

Mr. Byrd thanked the county employees for their hard work putting together the agenda each time and requested that Chairman Perdue give an update on the trash collection transition.

Chairman Perdue spoke about the process and selection of the new garbage collection contractor. He then described the new service levels available for residents to pick from with the idea that residents would only pay for the type of service they wanted and that sign-ups for service would be for a year's duration.

Mr. Byrd thanked Mr. Perdue for his explanation and for moving to a plan where residents can pay for their desired level of service.

Chairman Perdue highlighted the accomplishments of the day's meeting and expressed gratitude to County staff for their work on behalf of the citizens of Houston County. He then shared the County's SPLOST projects website, where residents can find updates, details, and financial information regarding the ten county-wide SPLOST initiatives. He proceeded to mention a podcast he recently listened to, in which the speaker discussed our nation's motto – *e pluribus unum* – (out of many, one) and noted how divided our country is at present, as well as our County in some respects. He thanked Dr. Jackson for her heartfelt remarks and said he was open to collaborating with anyone focused on improving Houston County.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve adjourning the meeting. Meeting adjourned.

Robbie Dunbar
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner