

**Houston County Commissioners Meeting
March 18, 2025
Warner Robins, Georgia**

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at the Houston County Annex in Warner Robins, 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 Robinson led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Pastor Matt Walls of Southside Baptist Church gave the invocation and shared the history of his church, mentioning that it was founded in 1953. He noted that his father served as senior pastor for almost 35 years before he took over the role two years ago. Pastor Walls then highlighted the additional campuses supported by Southside Baptist Church, including one in Kathleen and another on Pleasant Hill Rd, with new locations opening in Byron and Hawkinsville. He concluded his remarks by detailing the church's ministry focus and the For The 478 service initiative.

Chairman Perdue and each Commissioner thanked Pastor Walls for his focus of positively impacting Houston County and the middle Georgia region, his focus of helping those in need and service to the community.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the March 4, 2025, meeting.

Chairman Perdue stated that he became aware, after the agenda was published, of the need to add an Executive Session to the Commissioners' meeting agenda.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to add, at County Attorney Tom Hall's request, Item #13, entering an Executive Session pursuant to O. C.G.A. §50-14-2(1).

Mr. Gottwals presented a request from the City of Centerville to annex property containing 123.25 acres on William Drive.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for Public Comments.

As there were no comments the meeting continued.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to concur with the annexation of 123.25 acres on William Drive known as Tax Parcel 000720 001000 with a zoning change of County R-1 to City of Centerville R-2 with the following stipulations:

- Any development of this parcel will need to have 8-inch water mains throughout. There will also need to be an 8-inch water main installed on William Drive connecting the mains in the proposed subdivision to the existing county main on Houston Lake Road. This connection will be in addition to water feed coming from the Dunbar Road mains to the east.
- A traffic/trip generation study shall be performed to ensure county roads providing access are sufficient to support proposed traffic.
- The proposed subdivision streets shall connect to county roads wherever the existing right-of-way adjoins the development.

Mr. Byrd asked a question about adjoining unincorporated property being automatically annexed into the cities in such situations.

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County Attorney Tom Hall explained that any other property to be annexed would need to go through the annexation process, that it could not be done automatically.

Chairman Perdue then commented that he was generally opposed to allowing access or traffic flow from more densely zoned parcels to less densely zoned areas, explaining that this justified the final stipulation regarding the annexation.

Building Inspection & Planning/Zoning Assistant Rebecca Kidd presented Special Exception #2825.

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

Applicant James Pierce explained what he was requesting and why and that his application was for administrative work only related to his construction business.

Ms. Dara West, Mr. James Ryle, and Mr. Eric Everett spoke in opposition to the application.

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.

Mr. Byrd explained that this application was not for a rezoning of the property but was only a special exception to allow for the applicant to perform administrative work in his house for his business with no allowance for equipment to be stored.

Chairman Perdue answered each question brought up in the public hearing stating that when the applicant moved, the business license would end and that the stipulations placed on the application would not allow for any equipment storage at his house. He presented recourse that the neighbors had and could utilize in case the applicant began storing equipment at his house.

Mr. Gottwals presented his thoughts and observations on the application and spoke about what he observed and heard while present at the Zoning and Appeals Board meeting, where the applicant's application was discussed, and the neighbor's concerns about the situation. He stated that equipment would not be placed or parked at the residence. He then made a motion.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve Special Exception Application #2825 to include any and all stipulations as noted on the Zoning & Appeals recommendation and Section 95 Requirements staff report, and to restrict business equipment to include trailers being stored on the property.

Chairman Perdue thanked Mr. Gottwals for his consideration, comments and time spent on this application.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request for the abandonment of two County easements located adjacent to her properties at 131 and 137 Walnut Street, Bonaire, GA.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the requests submitted by Susan Cerka and the signing of the Resolution Abandoning County Interest in Easements Adjacent to 131 and 137 Walnut Street, Bonaire, GA.

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Ms. Robinson asked Director of Operations Brian Jones why these easements were in place and their possible use.

Mr. Jones explained that these easements may have been listed in case another way to access the property was needed.

Chairman Perdue stated that future property access through an alley or a future road being built would also require the easement.

Mr. Talton presented a request from the Water Department for Eric Hester, Treatment Plant Lead Mechanic, to receive a step increase for obtaining his Georgia Water Laboratory Analyst License. This license enhances water treatment by having additional staff as licensed lab analysts, which can allow more flexibility to assist with water samples and testing. Additionally, if one or both Lab Analysts must be off duty, this allows for continued operation, fees, rates, and charges.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the step increase for Mr. Eric Hester to Grade 17 step F, effective March 31, 2025.

Both Mr. Byrd and Mr. Talton congratulated Mr. Hester on his accomplishment.

Mr. Talton presented a request to enter into an Engineering Services Agreement for the Lashley Subdivision Road & Drainage Improvement Project.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of an agreement with Saunders Engineering Consultants, Inc., of Centerville, Georgia, to provide construction plans for improvements to 3rd street and 3rd Avenue in Lashley Subdivision. This agreement in the amount of \$74,500 will be paid by 2018 SPLOST, Blight Abatement.

Chairman Perdue stated that he was excited to see this possibility of improvements taking place in this neighborhood and thanked Saunders Engineering for their partnership and assistance with the work. He expressed his hopes that this type of work could take place in other locations in Houston County.

Mr. Talton presented a request for approval of a quote on school zone flashing signs for Old Perry Road at Veterans High School and Dunbar Road for Northside Elementary School.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the quote from Temple, Inc., of Decatur, Alabama for flashing school zone signs at a five-year fixed cost of \$31,578.04 for Connectivity and Support with a cost of \$1,357.94 per unit cost for every 5 years after. These items are on the Georgia Department of Transportation contract list and will be installed by the county with the assistance of the City of Warner Robins Traffic Signal Department. This purchase will be paid for by the Traffic Signs Department.

Chairman Perdue stated that his goal was that all school zones under Houston County Public Works jurisdiction have these types of signs which would give additional attention to and improved safety for students. He thanked the City of Warner Robins for its technical assistance with the installation of these signs. He concluded by stating that the scheduling and monitoring of the signs could be done remotely to minimize staff burden.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval to enter into a Service agreement for a feasibility study for County Operated Sanitary Sewer Systems.

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Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve entering a service contract in the amount of \$140,000 with Carter & Sloop of Macon, Georgia, to perform an engineering study of the feasibility of the County constructing and operating a wastewater treatment plant with associated sanitary sewer system. The study is estimated to take a year to complete. The study will be funded by Water Department Professional Services.

Chairman Perdue emphasized that this was strictly a feasibility study aimed at assessing whether there is a need and viable business case to serve county residents either within a service delivery area for sewage that has not been added yet or those outside of a service area who would lack sewer access without County intervention. He concluded that the study's primary role was to ascertain the presence of a business case, assuring that the County would be completely informed prior to making any decisions.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a bid on one Ford F-150 for use in Animal Control.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the bid of \$41,121 from Phil Brannen Ford of Perry, Georgia, for one new Ford F-150 for use in Animal Control. This purchase will replace a 2010 vehicle with over 200,000 miles and mechanical issues. This purchase will be funded by 2018 SPLOST.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a bid on one new 2026 Tandem Dump Truck for use in the Roads and Bridges Department.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the bid, in the amount of \$154,500, from Middle Georgia Freightliner of Macon, Georgia, for the purchase of one 2026 Freightliner 114SD Automatic Allison 4500RDS with a delivery of June 2025. This purchase will replace a 2007 Tandem Dump Truck with 395,346 miles. This purchase will be funded by 2018 SPLOST.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of a bid on the Houston County Solid Waste Disposal Facility Haul Road Paving Project.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the bid in the amount of \$132,287 from Reames and Son Construction Company, Inc., of Valdosta, Georgia for the paving of the Haul Road at the Houston County Solid Waste Disposal Facility. This project will be funded by Host Fees.

Mr. Talton asked Mr. Jones how many feet would be paved.

Mr. Jones replied approximately 350 feet.

Chairman Perdue thanked Public Works and Purchasing departments for their help in moving this action forward for this improvement at the landfill.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of a change order on the Houston County Sheriff's Department/ State Courthouse Renovation.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve change order #4 from International City Builders, Inc., of Macon, Georgia, for the Houston County Sheriff's Department / State Courthouse Renovation decreasing the contract amount by \$39,274.53 bringing the total contract amount to \$6,383,302.57. This will finish this project under budget.

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Mr. Byrd spoke of his appreciation to International City Builders for their excellent work on this project.

Chairman Perdue stated that improved customer service was made through the availability of the drive through window at the Tax Commissioner's office.

Ms. Robinson mentioned that she was glad to see that this project came in under budget.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$3,806,521.65.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve entering executive Session pursuant to O.C.G.A. §50-14-2(1).

The Board returned from the Executive Session, with no action taken, and Chairman Perdue called the meeting back to order.

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

Mr. Jim Taylor spoke about the recent Robins Regional Chamber of Commerce's State of the Base event, the information that was presented by senior staff, the economic impact of the Base, and plans and missions on the way. He also congratulated the Board on its attention to the arts and theatre through the upcoming SPLOST project to build a cultural arts center.

Mr. Tim Bergle spoke at length on the topics of traffic and transportation in Houston County. He spoke about the increase in population and how it is still growing.

Chairman Perdue commented on Mr. Bergle's interest and deep knowledge of the subject, and mentioned a map he thought Mr. Bergle would find interesting.

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

Mr. Gottwals thanked everyone for attending. He mentioned that the agenda was now being posted to social media, as well as on the County website, in an effort to be transparent and to inform the public about what the Board was doing.

Mr. Talton expressed his appreciation to County staff for their work and research in preparing the agenda and for Mr. Taylor and Mr. Bergle's comments. He concluded by saying that at the end of the day the Board works for the citizens of Houston County and that they strive to do the best job they can.

Mr. Byrd echoed Mr. Talton in his appreciation of County staff. He thanked Mr. Bergle for his comments about traffic and transportation in Houston County. He spoke about the State of the Base meeting and how well it was attended, the strong economic impact of the Base and the existing and new missions coming to Robins. He then spoke about his appreciation to all active-duty military members, civilian and contractors who work on the Base and for the veterans and base retirees who live in Houston County.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for attending and for the community's support. She concluded by saying it was an honor to serve the citizens of Houston County.

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Chairman Perdue notified everyone of a lane closure on Hwy. 96 that he found out about right before the start of the meeting. He told everyone to be aware of this detour and adjust driving times. He stated that March was Donate Life Month in Georgia and that the Commissioners had recently signed a proclamation supporting this designation. He commented on the many lives saved or improved through the donation of organs.

Ms. Robinson stated that March was also considered National Women’s History Month as well.

Chairman Perdue mentioned possible changes to the County’s use of a purchasing inventory warehouse, saying that it wasn’t as necessary to have stock on hand with the availability of next-day delivery. He thanked Purchasing Director Vanessa Zimmerman for her help in investigating the possibilities. He concluded his comments by mentioning the State of the City event hosted by Mayor LaRhonda Patrick and how he was excited to hear all about the positive initiatives going on with the City of Warner Robins.

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