

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
April 7, 2026
Perry, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at the Houston County Courthouse in Perry, Georgia. Chairman Perdue presided, and Commissioners Byrd, Gottwals, Robinson, and Talton were present. Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar, County Attorney Tom Hall, and Director of Operations Brian Jones were also present.

Commissioner Gottwals gave the invocation.

Commissioner Byrd led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

SMSgt Benjamin Braithwaite provided an overview of his 23-year military career, noting his enlistment in 2003 following the 9/11 attacks. He highlighted his progression from a KC-135 mechanic in North Dakota to deployments in the Middle East to serving as a flying crew chief on C-17 aircraft. After health issues ended his flying duties, he transitioned to a First Sergeant role at Langley AFB, Virginia. He currently serves as First Sergeant for Air Force Reserve Command at Robins Air Force Base, overseeing approximately 1,400 airmen. SMSgt Braithwaite concluded by expressing appreciation for the welcoming and supportive Houston County community and shared that he and his family are pleased to call the area home.

The Commissioners expressed their appreciation to SMSgt Braithwaite for his service and thanked him for his message of inspiration and perseverance.

Chairman Perdue and the Commissioners recognized former Perry City Councilmember Phyllis Bynum-Grace for her 27 years of service to the residents of Perry. Mayor Randall Walker offered remarks highlighting her dedication to serving all citizens and noted her distinction as a Georgia Municipal Association Hall of Fame member, with over 400 hours of government training through the Georgia Municipal Association and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. He also acknowledged her birthday. Ms. Bynum-Grace thanked the Chairman, Commissioners, and attendees for the recognition and well-wishes.

Chairman Perdue read and presented a proclamation to Robert Slaughter, representative for LifeLink of Georgia, proclaiming April as National Donate Life Month. Mr. Slaughter, himself a recipient of a life-saving donation, thanked Chairman Perdue and the Commissioners for their commitment to recognizing the need to promote organ and tissue donation.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the March 17, 2026, meeting.

Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews presented Special Exception Applications numbers 2907, 2910, 2913 through 2917, 2921, 2922, 2924, and 2925.

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

Applicant #2907 was present; there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2910 was not present; there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2913 was present; there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2914 was present; there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2915 was present; there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2916 was present; there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2917 was present; there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2921 was present; there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2922 was present; Ms. Emily Ard and Mr. Sherman Fallanah spoke in opposition, Pastor Alfredo Batista Sauri spoke in favor of the application.
 Applicant #2924 was present; there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2925 was present; there was no opposition.

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There being no 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 taken by the Board of Commissioners. The actions taken by the Board will not change any provision within the covenant that prohibits any commercial or business activity.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, 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:

#2907	Tyler & Hannah Mackey	Dumpster Rental
#2913	Melissa Stone	Mobile Mechanic
#2914	James & Ashley McMahon	Telehealth
#2915	Paul & Melissa Clark	Lawn Care
#2916	Leslie Sannerman	Cleaning
#2917	Bryan Ulloa	Woodworking & Crafts
#2921	Kristie Whisler	Handmade Jewelry & Home Décor
#2922	Alfredo R. Batista Sauri for Gran Comision Inc.	Church
#2924	Valerie Martin	Web Design & Business Marketing
#2925	John Rich III	Specialty Firearms Sales (Broker)

and to deny the following Special Exception Application:

#2910	Lee D. Ramirez Alvarado	Taxi Service
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Mr. Andrews informed the approved business license applicants that the next step in obtaining their business license was to apply at the Commissioner's Office.

Mr. Andrews presented Rezoning Applications numbers 2918 and 2920.

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

Applicant #2920 was present; Mr. Jeff Liszewski and Mr. Brian Braun spoke in favor of the application; Ms. Alisa Sikes, Mr. Kevin Ford, and Mr. Cameron Andrews spoke in opposition.

Commissioner Talton shared that he is experiencing similar challenges with residential development encroaching on his farm, including nearby neighborhoods and a golf course. He acknowledged the increasing pressure on the agriculture industry as development expands, noting that, in many cases, land becomes more valuable for sale to developers than for agricultural use. He added that some farmers ultimately face the decision to sell their land, either to pay off debt or to relocate to neighboring counties to continue farming.

Chairman Perdue asked the other Commissioners and County Attorney Tom Hall if they had any comments to add.

Mr. Byrd said that the Board must balance owners' property rights, county regulations, and the impact on surrounding property owners.

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County Attorney Tom Hall advised that the County's land use plan is a picture in time, and things change as time moves on. Most of the time, the Comp Plan is referenced regarding commercial and residential, not residential-to-residential, and, in his opinion, legally, he does not see how this rezoning could not be approved as presented.

Mr. Gottwals said he had read all of the emails and answered all the calls, and that he has spent more time on this rezoning item than any other agenda item to date. He stressed to those in attendance that the owner of the property and the buyer/developer are not enemies, but fellow Houston County residents.

Ms. Robinson commented that as south Houston County grows and develops, land is getting more expensive. She commented that lot sizes larger than 1 acre are not required in any zoning ordinance in Houston County, but suggested she would be willing to consider increasing lot-size requirements in R/AG. She concluded her comments saying that during the time she has lived in her house, neighborhoods have been developed near her property.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, to approve the Rezoning Application #2918 as recommended by the Houston County Planning Commission. Upon voting Ms. Robinson, Mr. Byrd, and Mr. Talton voted yes, Mr. Gottwals voted to deny. Motion carried.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to table Rezoning Application #2920.

Chairman Perdue paused the meeting for a comfort break.

Upon returning Chairman Perdue called the meeting back to order.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a quote for network infrastructure upgrades at multiple County facilities.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve a quote from CNP Technologies in the amount of \$150,409.95 to replace end-of-life network switches and upgrade infrastructure. This project, funded by the 2018 SPLOST, is a FY26 budgeted project.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of sponsorships for the City of Centerville, the City of Perry, and the City of Warner Robins in support of the America 250 Celebrations.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the following sponsorships for America 250 Celebrations:

City of Centerville	Liberty Title Sponsor	\$10,000
City of Perry	Presenting Sponsor	\$15,000
City of Warner Robins	Main Stage Partnership	\$15,000

Chairman Perdue thanked the Board for their support of these sponsorships. He stated that, when considering how the County could participate locally in the 250th Anniversary, it was determined that the best course of action was to partner with the Cities on their events.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of a second addendum to the Employment Contract between the Board of Commissioners of Houston County and Courtney Bridges, dated June 3, 2025.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve signing the second addendum to the Employee Contract allowing Ms. Emery Sims to provide court reporting services for Judge Amy Smith, with payment instalments of \$5,791.66 for the services rendered for the month of May and \$5,791.74 for the month of June.

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Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval to fill the vacant Legal Secretary position in the Public Defender's Office.

Mechelle McMullen to fill the vacant Legal Secretary position in the Public Defender's Office at a Grade 13, Step D, effective April 8, 2026. Personnel staff have reviewed her qualifications and confirmed that she meets the criteria for the D Step.

Chairman Perdue recognized Sara Meyers, Houston County Public Defender, and expressed his appreciation for her help in providing legal services for those in Juvenile Court.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to fill the vacant Deputy Clerk position in the Juvenile Court.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve hiring Jennifer Phillips to fill the vacant Deputy Clerk position in the Juvenile Court at a Grade 14 Step B effective April 8, 2026. Personnel staff have reviewed her qualifications, and she meets the criteria for the B step placement.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request for a one-step increase for four Public Works employees who obtained their Class A Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDL).

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve a one-step increase for Daniel Pitzer, James Bryant, Larry Jolly, and Gordon Moncrief who have obtained their Class A Commercial Driver's Licenses:

Mr. Byrd expressed his appreciation for these County employees advancing their skill set for the benefit of Houston County.

Chairman Perdue thanked the Board for continuing to support efforts to reward employees who advance their skillset to better serve Houston County Citizens.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to hire election day workers for the May 19, 2026 General Primary / Nonpartisan / Special Election.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve hiring the following election day workers for the May 19, 2026 General Primary / Nonpartisan / Special Election:

		AMOUNT	TOTAL
17	Managers (Precinct)	\$175.00	\$2,975.00
34	Assistant Managers (Precinct)	\$125.00	\$4,250.00
112	Clerks	\$115.00	\$12,880.00
163	Training	\$25.00	\$4,075.00
5	Training (Backup Workers)	\$25.00	\$125.00
3	Janitors -Schools	\$15.50	\$46.50
1	Janitor	\$25.00	\$25.00
306	BMD (Ballot Marking Device)	\$2.00	\$612.00
1	Election Supply Load Out Help	\$75.00	\$75.00
3	Election Night Equipment Return Help	\$75.00	\$225.00
2	Election Night Check-In Clerks	\$75.00	\$150.00
17	Supply pick-up / return supplies (Managers)	\$10.00	\$170.00
17	Cell Phones	\$10.00	\$170.00
1	Ballot Scan Clerk	\$100.00	\$100.00
	TOTAL		\$25, 878.50

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Chairman Perdue expressed his appreciation to the Board of Elections and Debra Presswood for the excellent job they do.

Mr. Talton presented a request for approval of changes to the water connection fees to help meet demands and expansions of the County water system.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the following changes to the water connection fees effective April 7, 2026:

Effective	1-inch Meter	2-inch Meter	4-inch Meter	6-inch Meter	8-inch Meter
2026	\$2,500	\$5,500	\$8,500	\$11,500	\$14,500
2027	\$3,500	\$6,500	\$9,500	\$12,500	\$15,500
2028	\$4,800	\$7,800	\$10,800	\$13,800	\$16,800
2029	\$6,500	\$9,500	\$12,500	\$15,500	\$18,500

- Connection fees for meters larger than 8 inches and all industrial accounts will be assessed after application and determined on an individual basis by Public Works.
- County will furnish and install 1-inch and 2-inch meters for residential Houston County accounts only. All other meters will be the responsibility of the owner to furnish and install.
- The crossing of highways/roads and other factors may increase costs to owner, as determined by Public Works.
- Transition meters will not be assessed a fee. Fees will be assessed for all downstream meters or customers.
- Meters serving commercial accounts will be assessed based on the number of units served, as determined by Public Works.
- A cut-on fee of \$200 will be charged for opening an account served by existing meters.

Chairman Perdue stated this was a phased increase for connection fees to both County customers and those served behind a transition meter to help fund water capital improvement plans without impacting existing users. He explained that the County used \$25 million in ARPA funds on water projects and that \$17 million more in water capital improvement projects have been requested.

Mr. Talton expressed his appreciation to Director of Operations Brian Jones and Utility Superintendent Terri Dietsch for their work on this idea and proposal.

Mr. Byrd commented that this was a very proactive effort on behalf of the Chairman and senior staff to meet with the developers to get their input.

Chairman Perdue concluded his comments by saying that the plan is to fund these water capital improvement requests through fees, not by increasing rates for water customers.

Mr. Talton presented a request for approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between Houston County and the City of Centerville for the purposes of a partnership to perform necessary repairs and improvements to Carl Vinson Parkway.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve entering a Memorandum of Agreement with the City of Centerville for repairs to Carl Vinson Parkway with the following terms:

The City of Centerville will contribute 100% of their 2026 LMIG allocation, in the amount of \$122,736.76, plus an amount equal to 30% of the 2026 LMIG match allocation \$36,821.03 for a total amount of \$159,557.79. The County will contribute 100% of the remaining cost necessary to complete the Project using funds from their 2018 Countywide SPLOST funds.

Chairman Perdue commented that this is a good use of County-Wide transportation SPLOST funds and that this partnership with Centerville will expedite the work on Carl Vinson Parkway.

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Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$4,938,107.89.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for Public Comments.

With no comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Comments portion of the meeting and opened the floor for Commissioner's Comments.

Ms. Robinson commented on what an interesting meeting it had been. She stated that the decision made, she felt, was the best decision for all of Houston County, and that the County will keep moving forward. She concluded her comments by thanking everyone for coming and sharing.

Mr. Byrd expressed his appreciation to the Chairman and other Board members for the time they spent on these agenda items and the efforts they put into their decisions. He stated he was thankful to serve on the Board with members who put the work in ahead of the meeting and stay well informed. He expressed his support for those in the armed services and asked that everyone pray for the service members families while their loved ones are in harm's way and expressed his condolences to the family of James "Deryl" Hall, retired maintenance supervisor with the County, on his recent passing.

Mr. Talton expressed his appreciation for serving on the Board and appreciated the time and effort they put in. He stated that he stood by his promise to the voters who elected him to never stand in the way of progress in Houston County. He stated that is what he felt occurred today. He closed by expressing his appreciation for Easter and the meaning behind it, and for the privilege of serving a risen God.

Commissioner Gottwals commented that there is no fame or glory in being a commissioner. He concluded his comments by saying that whether you are for or against a decision, there is one thing that we can all agree on and that is that Houston County is the best County to live in by far.

Chairman Perdue noted that, prior to the next Commissioners meeting, both Commissioner Gottwals and Commissioner Talton will be celebrating birthdays. He continued by expressing appreciation for his fellow Board members, stating that they approach each decision with care, concern, and a spirit of service. He acknowledged the significant time they devote to reviewing complex issues, considering public input, and interpreting materials that are not always clear-cut. He closed by recognizing the Easter holiday and reflecting on its meaning, including the celebration of a risen King and Savior.

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