

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
April 20, 2021
Warner Robins, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday April 20, 2021, at the Houston County Annex in Warner Robins, Georgia, with Chairman Stalnaker presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Perdue, Robinson, and Walker present. Also present were County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Barry Holland, Director of Operations Robbie Dunbar, Director of Purchasing Mark Baker, Director of Personnel Ken Carter, Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews, Fire/HEMA Chief Chris Stoner, Superior Court Clerk Carolyn Sullivan, Tom McMichael, Walton and Becky Wood, MGRC Executive Director Laura Mathis, MGRC Senior Government Services Specialist Susan Landfried, MGRC Government Services Specialist Taylor Stickels, and MGRC staffer Caitlin Mee.

Commissioner Perdue led the audience in the Invocation and then the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Stalnaker recognized Superior Court Clerk Carolyn Sullivan who presented the Board with a check for a little over \$60,500. She explained that the Clerk of Superior Court is responsible for all real estate records in Houston County and that some time last year the Superior Court Clerk's Cooperative Authority authorized a project that involved creating a central database for all plats in each County. A \$3 per plat fee was added to help fund the hiring of a vendor to index and scan each plat. The Clerk's staff decided to perform this work themselves rather than pay a vendor so that they could return these funds back to the County. She praised her staff for their initiative and efforts completing this project in record time.

Chairman Stalnaker and each Board member thanked Ms. Sullivan and asked that she convey their appreciation to her staff.

Chairman Stalnaker recognized Chief Stoner and Perdue Farms Operations Director (Harvest) Lee Hiner who presented the Board with a ceremonial check for over \$12,000 from the Franklin P. and Arthur W. Perdue Foundation. Chief Stoner explained that the Fire Department was in need of replacing six thermal imaging cameras utilized by the department in the field and that this donation would pay for two of those cameras. The Houston County Volunteer Fire Fund purchased two more and this left only two cameras to be paid out of the department's budget. Chief Stoner, Chairman Stalnaker and each Board member thanked Mr. Hiner and praised Perdue Farms as a great community partner.

Chairman Stalnaker reminded everyone that Perdue Farms has helped the County in the past by donating the land upon which the Perdue Fire Station #6 was constructed among other things.

Chairman Stalnaker then recognized Middle Georgia Regional Commission Executive Director Laura Mathis who yielded the floor to Senior Government Services Specialist Susan Landfried and her colleague Taylor Stickels who briefed the Board on the Commission's efforts assisting Houston County and the three cities with a required update to the Houston County Joint Comprehensive Plan. The previous plan was adopted in February of 2017 and the updated plan is due to the State of Georgia by February 28, 2022. The plan helps to shape future growth and development by

identifying long-term vision and goals to help the community attain that vision. It is a requirement of the State that allows for governments to be Qualified Local Governments which makes them eligible for grants and a variety of other funding programs. Executive Director Mathis explained that the Regional Commission is the regional planning and development agency serving Houston and ten other Middle Georgia counties providing services in a wide variety of areas including Planning, Economic Development, Public Administration, Information Technology, Workforce Development and Aging Services.

The Chairman and each Board member thanked Ms. Mathis and her staff for their efforts in our community.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the meeting of April 6, 2021.

Mr. Perdue presented a request from the City of Perry for annexation on property located at Sanderfur Road and Danny Carpenter Drive.

Chairman Stalnaker briefly explained the process by which a property may be annexed into a city and commented that the general consensus of the Board is that the process needs some revision at the General Assembly level. He explained that the Board wanted to allow a public comment period before having to take action on the request.

Sara Kliethermes, 431 Sandefur Road, Kathleen commented that she and her family live nearest to the parcel in question and that they are adamantly opposed to the requested commercial zoning. She asked that the Board non-concur with this request and presented a petition with over 1,000 signatures in opposition. She explained that residents are concerned with increased traffic, noise, the safety of the neighborhood's children, property values and the destruction of Kathleen's rural character. She also felt that the rezoning request conflicted with the Houston County Comprehensive Plan which characterizes the Kathleen community as a rural village that has somewhat lost its character due to prior growth. She felt that the existing commercial developments just over a mile distance from this property were sufficient and that further commercial development was not warranted.

Dr. Edward Urbansky, 602 Stockport Court, Kathleen stated that he is vehemently opposed to the annexation and rezoning of this property for any kind of commercial development due to the inconsistency with the Joint Comprehensive Plan, that commercial development will reduce safety for middle school vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and that commercial development will increase the risk of blight.

Roland Berry, 216 Spanish Trail, Kathleen expressed his opposition to the annexation and rezoning stating that the owner of the lot was from Dallas, TX. He commented that the Perry Planning & Zoning Commission voted unanimously to deny this application to the city council. He believed that a precedent for non-concurrence was set back in April of 2017 when a similar request on the opposite corner was amended to remove any commercial rezoning. He felt that the commercial rezoning was totally incompatible with the character of the West Kathleen area and appealed to each commissioner to vote in non-concurrence on this application.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to non-concur with a City of Perry annexation request for a 1.62-acre property located at the northeast corner of Sandefur Road and Danny Carpenter Drive (Tax Parcel 000520 14C000).

Mr. Walker presented a request from the State Court Clerk to hire Gretchen Roberts to fill the vacant Deputy Clerk position.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve hiring Gretchen Roberts for the vacant Deputy Clerk position in the State Court Clerk's office at a Grade 12-C effective April 20, 2021.

Mr. Byrd presented a request from the Engineering Department to extend a contract with Dixie Landscaping.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Perdue and carried unanimously by all to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing a one-year option with Dixie Lawn & Landscaping, Inc. of Cochran GA in the total amount of \$17,300 effective May 1, 2021 an expiring April 30, 2022.

Ms. Robinson presented a request from Public Works for the extension of four bonds.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve the extension of the cul-de-sac bond (Persons Banking Company Letter of Credit #432946 expiring May 1, 2021) at Rosales Drive of Harley Estates Subdivision Phase 2 for one year to give the developer an opportunity to perform the required work; the extension of the performance bond (SunMark Letter of Credit #210230-8 expiring April 29, 2021), the extension of the cul-de-sac bond (SunMark Letter of Credit #210230-9 expiring May 2, 2021), and the extension of the maintenance bond (SunMark Letter of Credit #210230-10 expiring May 2, 2021) for one year each to give the developer an opportunity to perform the required work. If the bond(s) are not extended by their respective expiration dates the County will draw the bond(s) and contract the work.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$2,900,185.35.

Chairman Stalnaker closed the regular portion of the meeting and opened Public Comments.

Carey Sharples, Weatherby Plantation Homeowner's Association Secretary, 206 Sansbury Trail, Warner Robins presented the Board with 79 letters from residents of the subdivision asking the Board to help them maintain the tracts of land north of Beulah Church Road to Feagin Mill Road as residential with no future commercial rezoning. She explained that the current owner, Southern Realty, was actively marketing the property at the intersection of Lake Joy Road and Duskmoore Drive as commercial real estate.

Chairman Stalnaker explained that this property was at the front of the subdivision but not part of the subdivision itself. He further explained that the County did non-concur with a request a few years ago on these parcels and that the County had since adopted new regulations on what could be developed on streets that served mainly residential purposes. Although the County has expected that a future request for rezoning may come to the Board, at this point we have not yet been notified of any such application.

Becky Wood, 426 Sandefur Road, Kathleen thanked the Board for their non-concurrence on the Perry annexation request at Sandefur Road and Danny Carpenter Drive. She thanked them for allowing the citizens of the unincorporated areas of the County to voice their concerns.

Chief Stoner thanked the Board and previous board members for the recent salary and compression adjustments.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that he received a letter from Houston EMS recently thanking Chief Stoner and other agencies for working together on a severe traffic accident that occurred on I-75 which injured a Sheriff's deputy and two young children.

Chief Stoner explained that it happened at Mile Marker 126 just south of Hwy. 26 in the Elko/Henderson area with significant injuries and hazards. He was thankful for the many agencies that assisted with the scene.

Director of Purchasing Mark Baker gave the Board an update on the State Court expansion project stating that we now have a detailed schedule in hand and that the contractor was on site today beginning to install silt fencing around the project. In the next week there will be materials delivery, construction entrance work and other progress being made. He then updated the Board on the progress at the Houston County Government Building construction project commenting that it was going very well with only a slight delay in the schedule. The TPO roof system is going in as well as metal studs and door and window frames.

Mr. Walker asked if the State Court expansion project was going to impact parking at the courthouse.

Mr. Baker explained that it would take roughly 25% of the parking lot but that there still should be plenty of parking available.

There being no further comments Chairman Stalnaker closed the Public Comments portion of the meeting and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Chairman Stalnaker then closed the regular portion of the meeting and opened Commissioners Comments.

Mr. Byrd recognized former Commissioner Tom McMichael who was in attendance thanking him for his long service to Houston County. He also remembered retired Houston County Sheriff's Department Sgt. Tim Chapman who passed away last week. He encouraged everyone to get vaccinated.

Mr. Perdue commented that it was a good meeting and thanked everyone for coming and sharing their concerns. He also echoed Mr. Byrd's encouragement for people to get vaccinated.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for coming and for engaging the Board with citizen input on matters concerning them. She likewise urged people to get vaccinated.

Mr. Walker thanked everyone for coming and thanked the outstanding employees of Houston County for their daily efforts. He concurred with the other Board members and urged everyone to get vaccinated.

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Chairman Stalnaker stated that the recent two-day Tire Amnesty event held by the County at three different locations yielded a total of 5,902 tires. He felt that this potentially represented tires that may have otherwise wound up being illegally dumped instead of being properly disposed. He felt that this tied into the upcoming Earth Day which is recognized worldwide to encourage the restoration of the world's ecosystems. Lastly, he announced that the County's 200th Anniversary celebration kick-off would be held on May 4th at 11:00 a.m. following the 9:00 a.m. Commissioner's meeting featuring speakers with long heritage as Houston County natives. This will be the first of many events occurring between the months of May and December.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all, meeting adjourned.

Barry Holland
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner