

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
June 21, 2022
Warner Robins, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday June 21, 2022, at the Houston County Annex in Warner Robins, Georgia, with Chairman Stalnaker presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Robinson, Talton, and Walker present. Also present were Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Barry Holland, Director of Personnel Ken Carter, Director of Purchasing Mark Baker, Landfill Superintendent Terry Dietsch, Community Planner Jake Cox, Fire/HEMA Chief Chris Stoner, District Attorney William Kendall, Meg Mehserle, Jacqueline Rozier, Walton and Becky Wood.

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

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the meeting of June 7, 2022, and June 14, 2022.

Mr. Talton presented a request from the Landfill to fill the vacant Equipment Operator Position.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve hiring Joe Burress for the vacant Equipment Operator position at the Landfill at a Grade 10-C effective June 22, 2022.

Mr. Talton presented a request from the Superior Court Accountability Court to renew the contract with the Middle Flint Area Community Service Board.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing a contract for services with the Middle Flint Area Community Service Board to provide services for participants of the Houston County Accountability Court. The contract terms will be effective July 1, 2022 and terminate June 30, 2023.

Chairman Stalnaker remarked that Commissioner Robinson does serve on the Middle Flint Board, and it is a very worthwhile organization that does a lot for this community in the mental health arena.

Ms. Robinson agreed that the Middle Flint CSB does provide vital services for our area.

Mr. Talton presented a request for approval of a change order on the Courthouse Parking Lot Expansion project.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing Change Order #1 with JWS, LLC of Perry, GA on the Courthouse Parking Lot Expansion project. The current contract sum of \$62,500 will increase by \$2,375 for a new contract total of \$64,875. The contract time will increase by 31 days.

Ms. Robinson presented a request to change the classification of Boutwell Road to a "Collector Street".

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Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve the reclassification of Boutwell Road from a "Marginal Access Street" to a "Collector Street" connecting US Highway 341/SR11 to SR224.

Ms. Robinson presented a request from Engineering to enter into a services agreement on the Elberta Road widening project.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton to enter into a supplemental agreement for engineering services with R.K. Shah & Associates of Suwannee, GA for additional services on the Elberta Road widening project in the amount of \$99,023.76 amending the contract total to \$428,473.76.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that the additional work covered by this change order is due to some rescoping and right of way adjustments that the owner, both the County and the City, requested. Those changes will bring savings to the construction project overall on both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Motion approved unanimously to enter into a supplemental agreement for engineering services with R.K. Shah & Associates of Suwannee, GA.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a bid on the thinning of approximately 31 acres just south of the Landfill entrance.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the amendment of the current contract with Woodard Land and Timber, LLC to include the thinning of an additional 31 acres near the Landfill entrance at a bid of \$350 per acre and to extend the current contract time by three months to expire September 22, 2022.

Mr. Byrd presented a request to increase the tipping fees for tires at the Landfill.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the increase of the current \$180 per ton Landfill tipping fee for tires to \$200 per ton effective August 25, 2022.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) submitted by ICB Construction Group on the Health Department Additions and Modifications project.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing the amendment to the contract with ICB Construction Group of Macon on the Health Department Additions and Modifications project accepting the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) of \$5,700,000.

Mr. Byrd expressed appreciation for County staff, ICB Construction Group, and the SP Design team for getting us to this point on the project.

Mr. Byrd presented a request from the City of Perry for annexation of property located at 111 Hill Road.

Chairman Stalnaker called for public comment on the request pointing out that this was not a public hearing but rather a forum for anyone with concerns or anyone who wished to speak in support. He briefly explained the process by which the County would either concur or noncur on the request before it would be heard by the City of Perry for the final disposition.

Javan Frazier, 2081 Main Street, Perry stated that the property in question borders the southern end of his five-acre lot. He and his wife live there and have three horses on that lot. His concerns are about what is going to happen with that acreage once it is annexed into the City of Perry. It is clear according to the supporting documentation that they want to develop it along with the other 25 acres adjacent to the property in question into a housing development but single family residential is very different from residential agricultural which is what his and his neighbor's lots are. He is concerned with the effect on property values. He was also concerned with the 20-foot buffer that is indicated on the paperwork. Lastly, he expressed concerns with the increase in traffic. They have already experienced vehicles running into their fence, their trees, and recently their barn. Increased traffic will likely make this more of a concern.

Chairman Stalnaker reiterated that the application for annexation comes before the County before it is even heard by the city. The annexation process will be changed effective July 1st which will change the timeline but for now we are asked to concur or noncur before the city even hears it and expresses their views. He encouraged Mr. Frazier to attend the city's meetings and commented that the City of Perry has been very receptive of comments from unincorporated residents of the County who may be affected by certain annexations and rezonings.

Mr. Byrd offered that the concur or non-concur decision before the County tonight is based on whether the request is for compatible zoning and whether it is contiguous to the existing city limits. If it meets those criteria, then the Board is bound by law to concur. It then goes to the City of Perry for more in-depth conversation and approval or non-approval.

County Attorney Hall clarified that only a 4.95-acre portion of the property was before the Board for consideration tonight.

Jody Batchelor, 115 Hill Road, Perry lives adjacent to the property in question and is concerned that the annexation will make his property an unincorporated island.

Mr. Hall explained that it would not create an island based on the property across the road being in the County. The road does not stop that connectivity.

Mr. Batchelor was concerned that the City of Perry would eventually force him into the city limits.

Mr. Hall assured him Perry would not force him into the city.

Mr. Byrd thanked those in attendance who brought forth their concerns.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to concur with a City of Perry annexation request for the property described as:

a portion of Tax Parcel# 000580 034000 consisting of 4.95 acres located 111 Hill Road, Perry, GA 31069.

Mr. Walker presented a request from the Board of Elections to hire poll workers for the General Primary/Nonpartisan Run-Off Election on June 21st.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to approve hiring the following workers for the General Primary/Nonpartisan Run-Off Election on June 21st:

| | AMOUNT | TOTAL |
|---|----------|------------------|
| 16 Managers (Precinct) | \$175.00 | \$2,800.00 |
| 32 Assistant Managers (Precinct) | 125.00 | 4,000.00 |
| 83 Clerks | 115.00 | 9,545.00 |
| 6 Janitors | 15.50 | 93.00 |
| 4 Janitors | 25.00 | 100.00 |
| 118 BMD (Ballot Marking Device) | 2.00 | 236.00 |
| 2 Election Supply Load Out Helpers | 75.00 | 150.00 |
| 3 Election Night Equipment Return Helpers | 75.00 | 225.00 |
| 3 Election Night Check-In Clerks | 75.00 | 225.00 |
| 16 Supply Pick up / Return Supplies | 10.00 | 160.00 |
| 16 Cell Phones | 10.00 | 160.00 |
| 1 Ballot Scan Clerk | 100.00 | 100.00 |
| 1 Election Day Tech | 250.00 | 250.00 |
| GRAND TOTAL | | 18,044.00 |

Chairman Stalnaker commented that this amount is on the low side for elections because it is a runoff election. The costs are normally much higher than this for elections. He also commented that the turnout for today’s election has been extremely low so far.

Mr. Walker presented Juvenile Court Contract Attorney Agreements for FY23 as recommended by Judge Wilburn.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing Independent Contractor Agreements with Caralyn J. Huddleston at \$24,500 per year; Danielle D. D’Eor-Hynes at \$50,000 per year; and Kameyan Sims at \$52,500 per year to provide for the defense of indigent persons appearing in the Houston County Juvenile Court. Each agreement will be effective July 1, 2022 and remain in effect until June 30, 2023. These agreements may be renewed from year to year subject to an annual review of performance conducted by the County in conjunction with the Juvenile Court.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$2,263,514.83.

Chairman Stalnaker explained that the vice chair rotates between the four commissioners by Post every calendar year. Mr. Perdue was on the board in Post #4 at the beginning of 2022 and was appointed vice chair. Due to his resignation to run for Chairman and Mr. Talton’s subsequent election to the Post #4 seat, Mr. Talton would serve the remainder of the 2022 calendar year as vice chair. Beginning January 1st, Mr. Byrd in Post #5 will take over and serve as vice chair.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson to approve the appointment of Commissioner Tal Talton as the Vice Chair of the Board of Commissioners for the remainder of 2022 effective June 21, 2022. Upon voting Mr. Walker, Ms. Robinson and Mr. Byrd voted yes. Motion carried.

Chairman Stalnaker congratulated Mr. Talton.

County Attorney Hall briefed the Board on the various code violations ongoing at the 201 Virginia Dare property where the home burned about a year ago including debris, shopping carts, travel trailers with occupants, and also being a congregating place for the homeless. Numerous attempts to contact the homeowner have been unsuccessful and it is now time to seek legal action in Superior Court with a Complaint for Injunctive relief. If the Board agrees and signs the Verification Mr. Hall can then move forward with filing the complaint.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the Board of Commissioners reviewing the Complaint for Injunctive Relief against the homeowner and occupants of 201 Virginia Dare Drive, in the unincorporated area of Houston County, regarding the code violations of the Houston County Code of Ordinances, Sec. 30-36 (nuisances) and the Comprehensive Land Development Regulations for Houston County, Sec. 66.3 pertaining to travel trailers with occupants on the property and the collection of debris on the property. Then upon review of the Complaint, the Board of Commissioners signing the Verification for the County Attorney to be able to move forward with filing the Complaint in Superior Court.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that the hope is that some resolution to this problem could be achieved before having to actually go into court.

Chairman Stalnaker presented the FY23 budget commenting that it was very difficult to put together and it would not have come to fruition without the cooperation of County employees, department heads, elected officials, and constitutional officers. This budget was balanced with no anticipated millage rate increase. The millage rate has been at 9.935 for thirteen years and the fire tax has been at 1.177 for sixteen years. He is extremely proud to say that Houston County's millage rate is the lowest in Middle Georgia which range from 23.11 mills for Houston County to 38.43 mills. FY23's proposed General Fund budget of \$68.8 million compares to that of the amended FY22 budget which is \$68.2 million and only a \$645,000 increase. He also reiterated that the County has no general obligation debt in the General Fund nor the Water System or Solid Waste fund. The budget does include salary adjustments which totaled \$2.9 million for recruitment and retention of employees.

Chairman Stalnaker then read the FY23 Budget Resolution into the record.

Whereas, the Houston County Board of Commissioners has prepared a line-item budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023; and

Whereas, the Houston County Board of Commissioners has adhered to the provisions of O.C.G.A. Section 36-81-3, as amended; and

Whereas, a public hearing was held on June 14, 2022, and it is now in the best interest of the County that the budget be adopted,

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Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Houston County Board of Commissioners that the annual budget for Houston County for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023, attached hereto and made a part hereof, is hereby approved and adopted in the amount of:

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| General Fund | \$ 68,838,521 |
| E911 Telephone Fund | \$ 4,900,293 |
| Fire District Fund | \$ 3,488,686 |
| SPLOST Fund | \$ 52,769,151 |
| Water Fund | \$ 8,554,000 |
| Solid Waste Fund | \$ 10,829,890 |
| Internal Service Fund | \$ 13,324,661 |
| Special Revenue Funds | <u>\$ 705,000</u> |
| | \$163,410,202 |

Be it further resolved that during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023, the General Fund shall appropriate \$49,499 from prior year fund balance for the County's "Code Red" early warning communications system and outdoor siren maintenance. The E-911 Fund shall appropriate \$255,392 from prior year fund balance. The Solid Waste Fund shall appropriate \$126,150 in prior year host fees for equipment to be transferred out to the General Fund. The Solid Waste Fund shall also appropriate \$195,392 in prior year fund balance for Closure/Post Closure of Landfill cells and other costs. Prior year SPLOST revenue in the amount of \$19,270,428 shall be appropriated for construction.

Be it further resolved that merit and longevity pay increases remain suspended for all employees. The FY2023 Position Control listing, attached hereto, is hereby approved, and adopted.

Be it further resolved that any increase in appropriation for any department or salary line-item in excess of the approved budget shall require approval by the Board of Commissioners authorizing said funds to be expended.

Be it further resolved that any SPLOST expenditure exceeding \$2,500 shall require approval by the Board of Commissioners authorizing said funds to be expended.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve Chairman Stalnaker to sign the FY23 Budget Resolution adopting the FY23 budget totaling \$163,410,202 as presented.

Chairman Stalnaker then asked the Board members if they would like to comment on the proposed budget.

Mr. Walker thanked the Chairman for his leadership preparing this budget and all others for their efforts as well. He is very proud of this budget as presented.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone involved for making this budget happen. It is a good budget, and she is glad that it could be presented for adoption tonight.

Mr. Talton thanked the Chairman, Commissioners, and staff for their hard work on the proposed FY23 budget remarking that we are all blessed to live in a County that is so fiscally sound.

Mr. Byrd thanked everyone for the hard work preparing this budget. He remarked that it is best summarized by Mr. Holland's words in the Home Journal article from last week in which he stated that "We're all here to serve and provide services to the citizens of Houston County. That's our one goal; that's what we work together towards."

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

Walton Wood, 426 Sandefur Road, Kathleen expressed his appreciation for all of the help and support that he and his wife Becky received during and after her recent medical situation. He remarked that he is proud of the Board of Commissioners as there is not a better County Commission in the state of Georgia.

Marilu Cowan, 137 Bear Lake Drive, Warner Robins stated that residents in her neighborhood have expressed concerns about various things happening in the neighborhood. She has encouraged any and all to come to the Board meetings to express what those concerns were. She then deferred to one of the other residents in the neighborhood, Mr. Jackson, who was also in attendance.

William Jackson, 307 Northfield Drive, Warner Robins is concerned about the entrance to his subdivision which is County on one side and City of Warner Robins on the other side. He has spoken with Public Works staff and Corp. Little in Code Enforcement about cutting the approach to the subdivision on the County side when they are cutting along Dunbar Road. Sometimes they will cut it and sometimes they do not. He would like to see that situation corrected as well as the dumping of trash on the side of the road. He related that he has the same problem with the city-side of the road as well. Chairman Stalnaker commented that he could certainly have the County portion of the problem resolved and offered to speak with Mayor Patrick about the city portion.

Ms. Cowan further shared several other concerns including the process of obtaining a homestead exemption; access to crime data; the lack of public recreational areas or parks between Russell Parkway and the City of Perry; and finally, the lack of library resources in the Bonaire/Kathleen area.

Chairman Stalnaker explained that any interested parties could contact the Tax Assessors about a homestead exemption. Also, he thought that crime data may be available already and offered to follow up on that to see if it was on a website or something else that could be publicly viewed. Chairman Stalnaker explained that the three cities manage the recreational parks in the community and the County manages the three branches within the library system. As far as there being no available recreational opportunities in the area between Russell Parkway and the City of Perry, Chairman Stalnaker did name the ones that he was familiar with such as Jesse Tanner Park on this side of Russell Parkway; Ted Wright Park on Moody Road; the joint-use tennis facility operated by the City of Warner Robins and the Board of Education; the Little League Complex which is public/private as well as the soccer fields. In addition, the natatorium, or swim complex, is coming to the same area and will be completed sometime in the latter part of next year. He felt that the Cities are doing a good job playing catch-up on recreational facilities. The County does try to assist or participate as much as it can with the three cities on recreational opportunities.

Mr. Walker thanked Ms. Cowan and Mr. Jackson for coming and sharing their concerns. Chairman Stalnaker complimented Ms. Cowan for being engaged in County business.

Ken Lett, 111 Sycamore Road, Kathleen thanked the Board for addressing the recreation question but stated that the CGSA soccer field and Little League fields were not always available to the public. He was interested in recreational facilities that would be always open to the public. A more standard park with basketball courts and walking trails would be great. He indicated that he was not aware of the natatorium construction.

Chairman Stalnaker explained what the natatorium facility would offer and that the Board of Education planned on transporting children from the schools from a certain grade to get swimming lessons.

Mr. Byrd thanked Mr. Lett for coming to the meeting and sharing his concerns remarking that this is how the process of improvement begins with conversation.

Mr. Lett asked the Chairman if there would be a cost to utilize the natatorium when it was finished.

Chairman Stalnaker was not sure how to answer that question since the Board of Commissioners will not be the owner of the facility but rather the City of Warner Robins would be. He felt sure that there would be some level of cost involved to help cover the operation and maintenance of the facility, but the school district would not be paying to give the school children swimming lessons.

Mr. Talton remarked that Second Baptist Church is building a park behind Warner Robins Fire State #8 on Hwy. 96 that, although parts of it will be closed off from time to time, other parts will be open and available to the public.

Jacqueline Rozier, 317 Dunbar Road commented that at their June 7th meeting the Board reappointed several individuals to various Boards or Authorities and wondered how an average citizen could have an opportunity to serve.

Chairman Stalnaker replied that the citizen just needs to express interest to the Board and offered to put together a list of Boards and Authorities that exist.

As there were no further comments Chairman Stalnaker closed the Public Comments portion of the meeting and opened Commissioners Comments.

Chairman Stalnaker recognized recently sworn-in District Attorney Will Kendall remarking that he had the honor and privilege along with Sheriff Talton and a representative from the State Patrol to attend the ceremony at the Governor's office last week. He felt proud to have DA Kendall represent and defend the people of Houston County.

DA Kendall thanked the Chairman and Board members remarking that he took over as acting District Attorney on September 1, 2021 and the District Attorney's office mission is to protect and serve the citizens of Houston County. They do so by implementing proactive law enforcement efforts, by prosecuting the cases before them, and by looking into their cold cases so that they never forget them. Since September 1st approximately 1,600 felony cases have been closed. Currently they are in the middle of a 31-week trial calendar, so they are in court trying cases three weeks out of the month. After the 14-month COVID shutdown, this year's focus is about handling serious violent felony cases and that is what he and his staff of twelve attorneys are working on.

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Each Commissioner thanked DA Kendall for his and his staff's efforts keeping Houston County a safe place.

Mr. Byrd thanked everyone for coming and making their opinions and concerns known. He remarked that it is a big deal for the County to adopt the balanced budget. He welcomed Commissioner Talton to the Board. Lastly, he commented on today's grand opening ceremony for the new Perry-Houston County Airport terminal building and corporate hangar calling the airport an outstanding asset to our community. At the ceremony today it was announced that the terminal building was being named after Chairman Stalnaker.

Mr. Talton remarked that he was excited to be here working with the other board members. He thanked them and past commissioners for laying the groundwork for the next generation to serve. He thanked those who expressed their concerns tonight and said that it was now his job to help try to meet those concerns.

Ms. Robinson congratulated Mr. Talton and welcomed him to the Board. She likewise thanked everyone for coming and expressing their concerns.

Mr. Walker thanked the Chairman for his leadership over the years as well as for his friendship. He welcomed Commissioner Talton stating that he will be an outstanding public servant.

Chairman Stalnaker also congratulated Commissioner Talton. He presented the Board members with a revised schedule of certain Commissioner's functions such as bill presentation and invocations. The next Board meeting will be Tuesday, July 5th at 9:00 a.m. at the Perry courthouse. There will be a change of command next week on Tuesday June 28th which impacts this community in both a positive and a sad manner. Brig. General Jennifer Hammerstedt will be leaving Robins AFB next week for an assignment in Virginia. He felt that she has done a fantastic job over the last two years and that she had a bright future ahead in the military.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all. Meeting adjourned.

Barry Holland
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner