

Houston County Commissioners Meeting September 19, 2023 Warner Robins, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in a regular session at 5:00 pm on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, at the Houston County Annex in Warner Robins, GA, with Chairman Perdue presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Gottwals, Robinson, and Talton present. Also present were County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar, Sheriff Talton, Chief Deputy Rape, District Attorney Will Kendall, Director of Operations Brian Jones, Director of Personnel Ken Carter, Utility Director Terry Dietsch, Director of Purchasing Vanessa Zimmerman, Chief Financial Officer Danyelle George, Coroner James Williams, Senior Accountant Will Davis, Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews, State Court Solicitor Amy Smith, and Community Planner Jake Cox.

Commissioner Robinson led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Lt. Matt Moulton gave the invocation.

Georgia State Representative Bethany Ballard read and presented a resolution from the Georgia General Assembly recognizing Sheriff Talton for his 50 years of service as the Sheriff of Houston County. This Resolution 350 recognized Sheriff Talton as the longest serving sheriff, not only in the state of Georgia, but also the United States.

Chairman Perdue expressed his appreciation to Representative Ballard.

Chairman Perdue as well as the Commissioners, Mr. Dunbar, and Mr. Hall, spoke of their admiration, appreciation, and the work that Sheriff Talton has done for the citizens of Houston County.

Sheriff Talton expressed his thanks, appreciation, and affection to all who were in attendance and thanked his staff and the citizens of Houston County.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the September 5, 2023 meeting.

Mr. Byrd presented a request from the MIS Department for approval of a quote to complete the installation of the VOIP phone system at the Houston County Annex.

Chairman Perdue stated that the delay on moving forward with this project was to give County Attorney Tom Hall time to review the proposal for the project presented by Mitel.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the quote from CNP Technologies, LLC., of Charlotte, North Carolina in the amount of \$72,826.50. This is a 2018 SPLOST funded project.

Richie Deason of Atlantic Coast Consulting presented a "Waste Management Needs" meeting regarding the expansion of the Construction and Demolition (C&D) portion of the Houston County Landfill. This presentation is required by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (Ga EPD). He advised that the C&D landfill has 6 years of "life" left and with the long process securing approval for expansion, the Board needed to begin the process now to secure approval for this expansion.

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

As there were no comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Because this was a required Public Hearing, no action was needed on behalf of the Commissioners.

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Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar presented a second reading of the new alcohol license for Saira LLC. for the sale of beer and wine retail on premises and liquor package store. The first reading was held at the September 5, 2023 meeting.

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

As there were no comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the alcohol license for the sale of beer and wine on premises and liquor package retail store at 2919 U.S. Hwy 341 South, Hawkinsville, GA.

County Attorney Tom Hall conducted a second reading of a proposed amendment to the Houston County Code of Ordinances. The proposed amendment would add a paragraph to the code concerning the purchases the County makes for the county road systems. The paragraph would be added to Chapter 2, Article V Purchase of Materials and Services. The first reading of this proposed amendment to the Houston County Code of Ordinances was held at the September 5, 2023 meeting.

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

Mr. Tom McMichael stated that this action should have been taken a long time ago.

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

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve an amendment to the Houston County Code of Ordinances by adding a paragraph to Chapter 2, Article V Purchase of Materials and Services. The paragraph shall read as follows:

Any purchases for materials, supplies, equipment or services to be utilized for the construction and maintenance of the county road systems shall comply with O.C.G.A. § 32-4-63.

County Attorney Tom Hall conducted a second reading of a proposed amendment to the Houston County Code of Ordinances. The proposed amendment would remove and replace the current Sec. 2-555 of Chapter 2, Article III, Division 9 titled Development Authority. The replacement of this paragraph is necessary to update the Houston County Code of Ordinances regarding the number of term years for Development Authority Board Members to be in compliance with O.C.G.A. § 36-62-4(a). This amendment will not apply to board members that are currently serving on the Development Authority. The amendment will only apply to board members appointed or reappointed after the amendment is heard and approved by the Board of Commissioners. The first reading of this proposed amendment to the Houston County Code of Ordinances was held at the September 5, 2023 meeting.

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

As there were no comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve an amendment to the Houston County Code of Ordinances by removing the current Sec. 2-555 of Chapter 2, Article III, Division 9 titled Development Authority. The revised paragraph shall read as follows:

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Sec. 2-555.-Membership.

The board shall consist of 7 directors. Each director shall be appointed by resolution of the Board of Commissioners to a four-year term of office. If, at the end of any term of office of any director, a successor thereto has not been elected, the director whose term of office has expired shall continue to hold office until his or her successor is so elected.

County Attorney Tom Hall conducted a second reading of a proposed amendment to the Regulations for Access Management and Encroachment Control, Chapter 3 – Commercial Driveways, Sec. 3A – When are Permits Required, as adopted in the Code of Ordinances, Houston County, Georgia at Chapter 54, Article IV, Sec. 54-90. The proposed amendment would add an exception clause to Paragraph 3A-6 of the Regulations for Access Management and Encroachment Control. The first reading of this proposed amendment to the Houston County Code of Ordinances was held at the September 5, 2023 meeting.

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

As there were no comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve an amendment to Paragraph 3A-6 of the Regulations for Access Management and Encroachment Control which shall read as follows [new language is italicized for emphasis only]:

3A-6 A Commercial driveway will not be permitted on any county road determined to be used primarily for residential purposes by the Houston County Public Works Department, *except for property that was zoned commercial prior to the adoption of the amendment dated December 17, 2019.*

Chairman Perdue mentioned that property zoned commercial prior to the adoption of the amendment dated December 17, 2019 would be exempt so as to not cause damage to existing land owners who had property zoned commercial prior to that date.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request from the Personnel Department to fund a Projects Coordinator position in the Commissioner's Office. This request is to classify this position at a Grade 16 and to utilize it for various administrative tasks.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the funding of a Projects Coordinator position (#016) at Grade 16 effective September 20, 2023, and for the accounting department to make any necessary budgetary adjustments.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request from Personnel to add a Senior Building Maintenance and Construction Supervisor position to the Houston County Position Control Listing.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the addition of a Senior Building Maintenance and Construction Supervisor position to the Houston County Position Control Listing at Grade 23 effective September 20, 2023. Also, to approve the Accounting Department to make any necessary budgetary adjustment.

Chairman Perdue mentioned that the public buildings maintenance team was short on staff and is looking forward to this addition to the team.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request from the Personnel Department to add an additional Assistant Solicitor to the Houston County Position Control Listing.

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Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the addition of one Assistant Solicitor to the Houston County Position Control Listing at Grade 30 Step A, effective September 20, 2023. Also, to approve the Accounting Department to make any necessary budgetary adjustment.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request from the Personnel Department to add a Clerk to work at the new Bonaire precinct. This position is Grade 10 and will be utilized for clerical and receptionist duties at the new Sheriff's Precinct.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the addition of a Clerk Position to the Houston County Position Control Listing at Grade 10 and being effective September 20, 2023. Also, to approve the Accounting Department to make any necessary budgetary adjustment.

Chairman Perdue advised that he is looking forward to the increase in customer service for Houston County citizens when this public safety building comes online and the addition of this Sheriff's Department staff member at the new precinct will assist in meeting resident's needs.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the appointment of Alan Everidge to the DFCS Board to fulfill the unexpired term of Kathy Wallace. The term will be 09/19/2023 through 06/30/2025.

Mr. Talton presented a request from the Purchasing Department for approval of a bid on one new 145 HP Tractor for use at the Landfill.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of the bid for one new 145 HP Tractor to Lasseter Tractor of Unadilla, Georgia for a total purchase price of \$154,385.82. This purchase will be funded from Landfill Capital Funds. Delivery is expected in April 2024.

Chairman Perdue thanked purchasing department staff for their cooperation and work with public works and the landfill in helping to find and buy equipment that is needed.

Mr. Talton presented a request from the Purchasing Department for approval of a bid on one new Flex Wing Rotary Cutter for use at the Landfill.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of a bid for one Schulte Model FX-1800 Flex Wing Rotary Cutter in the amount of \$32,295.68 to Atlantic & Southern of Dothan Alabama. This purchase will be funded from Landfill Capital Funds. Delivery is expected in March of 2024.

Mr. Talton presented a request from the Purchasing Department for approval of a bid on one new in-stock 2023 Ford Explorer (Admin Pkg.) for use by the Houston County Sheriff's Department, Juvenile Division.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of a bid on one new in-stock 2023 Ford Explorer (Admin Pkg.) to Phil Brannen Ford in Perry, GA in the amount of \$40,775. This purchase will be funded from 2018 SPLOST.

Mr. Talton presented a request from the Purchasing Department for approval of a bid on two new 2023 Ford Mavericks for use in the Tax Assessors Office.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of a bid on two new 2023 Ford Mavericks to Phil Brannen Ford of Perry Georgia in the total amount of \$58,400 with a delivery of 4-5 weeks. This purchase will be funded from 2018 SPLOST.

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Chairman Perdue asked Purchasing Director Vanessa Zimmerman how confident she was in the delivery of these vehicles.

Ms. Zimmerman replied that the vehicles were in production and believed the time quoted from the dealer was accurate.

Mr. Talton presented a request from the Purchasing Department for approval of a bid for one new in-stock RAM 1500 Crew 4X4 to be used in the Roads and Bridges Department.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of a bid on one new in-stock RAM 1500 Crew 4X4 to Jeff Smith Chrysler of Perry Georgia at a cost of \$48,900. This purchase will be funded from 2012 SPLOST.

Mr. Byrd presented a request from the Purchasing Department to hold a public auction for the sale of items declared surplus by the Houston County Commissioners.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve a Surplus Auction for the sale of items declared surplus by the Houston County Commissioners. The auction will be held on Wednesday, October 4, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. at the Houston County Warehouse, with a rain date of Wednesday, October 11, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Byrd presented a request from the City of Warner Robins for the addition of three developments to the Water Purchase Agreement between the City of Warner Robins and Houston County.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the addition of the following to the Water Purchase Agreement between Houston County and The City of Warner Robins contingent upon the developers posting a bond covering more than 125% of the construction cost for work performed on the Houston County Water System:

1. The Valvoline Instant Oil Change, 758 Hwy 96
2. The Central Retail Plaza Phase 4, 860 Hwy 96
3. The Robins Pharmacy & Shops, 608 S. Houston Lake Rd.

Chairman Perdue stated that he has spoken with Mayor Patrick regarding the subject of master meters and billing county water for city commercial property at the retail and wholesale rates.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for a distribution of funds from the Non-Profit Organizations Revenue Support line item of the ARPA Budget Plan.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the issue of funds from the Non-Profit Organizations Revenue Support line item of ARPA Funds to the Houston County Volunteer Medical Clinic in the amount of \$35,000.

Chairman Perdue stated that he recently spoke with Dr. McEver, who works with the Houston County Volunteer Medical Clinic. He said that the clinic meets an important medical need for those individuals who are working but who do not have health insurance. Dr. McEver advised him that these funds would be of tremendous help to the clinic.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$3,607,869.75.

Chairman Perdue closed the regular portion of the meeting and opened Public Comments. He then let the public know that Public Comments would be limited to five minutes per individual speaking today.

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Meg Mehserle spoke about election integrity issues in Georgia.

Former Commissioner Tom McMichael had a question about APRA expenditures listed in the bills.

Chairman Perdue said that most of the funds were for water line expansion.

Mr. Dunbar added that some of the funds could also be for the Health Department.

Jacqueline Rozier had comments and questions for the Board regarding the status of improvements for the northern entrance to Houston County crossing the Echeconnee Creek.

Chairman Perdue stated that the County had applied for a Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program grant that would have created public access to the creek along with canoe and kayak launches, an elevated boardwalk, restroom facilities and improved parking. He continued saying that Houston County's submission was not approved, but that the County would reapply for this grant.

Ms. Rozier also inquired about the mowing of SR 247 on the north end of Houston County and asked why this right of way was so overgrown.

Chairman Perdue replied that this right of way was the State of Georgia's responsibility as it is a state road. He continued saying that the County uses its personnel and equipment to mow this right-of-way in the summer, and that keeping up with mowing an area this large was quite a challenge. He further stated that the County has a contractor mowing and maintaining the urbanized county rights-of-way which have curbs, and gutters with sidewalks.

Donna Sant, chair of the Houston County Republican Party, spoke about election issues, the voting process and encouraged everyone to get involved in the elections process and volunteer. She congratulated the Houston County Board of Elections staff for the great work they do during each election.

Ned Sanders, former Chairman of the Houston County Commissioners, expressed his appreciation to Sheriff Talton and Chief Rape for the fantastic job they and their deputies do daily, and on behalf of the former Commissioners and Chairman, thanked him for the cooperative way he worked with them while they were in office.

Norman Woodward spoke about election integrity issues in Georgia.

Chief Chris Stoner expressed his appreciation to Sheriff Talton for his leadership, example and help which has assisted him personally in his career. He also expressed his appreciation for the way that the Fire Department works so well with the Houston County Sheriff's Department. He concluded by advising all those in attendance about the building dedication and grand opening of the new Public Safety Complex in Bonaire and that the dedication ceremony begins Friday at 9:30 am.

Daryl Allen spoke at length of his dissatisfaction on several topics. He spoke regarding the appearance of the north side of Houston County, taxes, the state of the roads, development in the County, and the lack of information and notices on the County's Facebook page for residents.

Without further comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Comments portion of the meeting and opened the floor for Commissioner Comments.

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Mr. Gottwals spoke of the wonderful public servants and first responders we have in Houston County and how blessed we are to have them and to have Sheriff Talton leading our Sheriff's Department.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for attending the meeting and recognized Sheriff Talton for his service and the amazing milestone of his 50 years of service. She also recognized former Chairman Ned Sanders and former Commissioner Tom McMichael who were in attendance and expressed her appreciation to all the County employees.

Mr. Talton thanked everyone for being at the meeting and expressed how glad and appreciative he and his family are to live in Houston County. He thanked Sheriff Talton for his outstanding service and for setting the bar so high for law enforcement agencies in the surrounding area and state of Georgia. He also expressed his appreciation to the Houston County Fire Department and Sheriffs' Office personnel for their work to help with recent storm cleanup and opening the roads.

Mr. Byrd said that he has a lot to be thankful for and one of those many things is living in Houston County. He recognized former Chairman Ned Sanders and former Commissioner Tom McMichael for their attendance. He expressed his deep appreciation to Sheriff Talton and Chief Rape for their great example of being servant leaders. He finished by saying he is thankful for the way that Houston County supports the law enforcement and public safety community here.

Chairman Perdue commented how nice it was to have Representative Ballard present at the meeting this evening and thanked her and the Houston County delegation for their recognition of Sheriff Talton. He thanked Sheriff Talton for his service and advised that he is very much deserving of all the accolades he receives for his service, leadership and example.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all. Meeting adjourned.

Robbie Dunbar
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

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