

## Houston County Commissioners Meeting

May 7, 2024

Perry, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in a regular session at 9:00 am on Tuesday, May 7, 2024, at the Houston County Courthouse in Perry, Georgia, with Chairman Perdue presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Gottwals, Robinson, and Talton present. Acting County Attorney John Hulbert, Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar, and Director of Operations Brian Jones were also present.

Commissioner Gottwals gave the invocation and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chief Master Sergeant Ronald Bartsch spoke about his military career. With 16 years in the United States Air Force and 10 years of service in special operations, he said he has 2 years left until he retires. He spoke about his work with the 5th Combat Communications Group at Robins, where he is the senior enlisted member. He and his wife Sarah have two children, and they are considering staying in Houston County when he retires. He stated his family has lived in Idaho, Florida, Wyoming, and Virginia. He said that they know the slogan EDIMGIAFAD is legitimate because it is displayed both on and off the base.

Chairman Perdue and each of the Commissioners expressed their appreciation to CMSgt Bartsch for his service, faith, and kind words about the Base and the Houston County community. They thanked him for sharing his stories of service.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the April 23, 2024 meeting.

Chairman Perdue stated that Item #5 a Rezoning Application had been withdrawn by the applicant and needed to be removed from the agenda.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve removing Item #5, a Rezoning Application from the agenda.

Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews presented Special Exception Applications #2755, #2757, #2762-#2765, #2769 and #2770.

Acting County Attorney John Hulbert made a blanket statement for the benefit of all applicants for Special Exceptions for home occupations, that 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 These restrictive covenants are not superseded by any action the Board of Commissioners takes.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.

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

Mr. Edward Tucker spoke on behalf of the Overlook Homeowners Association in opposition to Special Exception Application #2755 submitted by Mr. Alvin Striggles.

Mr. Alvin Striggles spoke in favor of his application, answering some of the questions raised by Mr. Tucker.

Mr. Austin Clements spoke in favor of his Special Exception Application #2764, asking for a clarification of the home-based business rules.

Chairman Perdue asked Mr. Andrews to answer the question.

Mr. Andrews stated that the point of a special exception approval for a business is for the business to operate in an inconspicuous manner, such as performing paperwork or office work, not having personnel come daily to the home, or having deliveries to the residence.

Mr. David Edmondson spoke in opposition to Special Exception Application #2764. He commented on the large delivery trucks from Lowes delivering construction material to Mr. Clement's house and his workers coming into the neighborhood, causing a safety hazard.

Without further comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Motion by Mr. Talton, 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:

#2757	Antti Palomaki	Painting and Art Sales
#2762	Tamyrik Andrews	Dessert Baking
#2763	Walter Biavaschi	Seal Coating & Striping
#2765	William & Wendy Bellamy	Accounting
#2769	Jason Bright	Metal Artwork

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to disapprove the following Special Exception Applications:

#2755	Alvin Striggles	Framing Contractor Business
#2764	Austin Clements & Baylee Irby	Fencing & Patio
#2770	Charlie Kersey	Mobile Automotive Repair

Mr. Byrd stated that the Commissioners encourage entrepreneurial behavior and find it rare to have this much concern which speaks to a possible history of non-compliance.

Mr. Talton commented that he hoped that the three business applicants whose applications were denied would be able to find a way to comply and resubmit their special exception applications for the Board to reconsider.

Mr. Andrews instructed those applicants whose applications were approved on the next step in getting their business license, which is to go to the Commissioner's Office and apply for the license.

Mr. Andrews presented Rezoning Application #2759 submitted by Mr. Mitulkumar Barot.

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

Mr. Barot did not have anything to add.

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Chairman Perdue advised the applicant that the County's current ordinance would not allow commercial exit on Story Road as it is primarily a residential street.

Tony Widener, representing the applicant, stated that Public Works personnel advised him that exits onto Story Road would be allowed.

Director of Operations Brian Jones stated that he had not authorized any exits onto Story Road for the applicant and was unaware of anyone at the Public Works department authorizing this.

Chairman Perdue advised Mr. Widener that he would need to go through the variance process with the County to get permission to exit onto Story Road.

Without further comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the following Rezoning Application as recommended by the Houston County Planning:

#2759                      Mitulkumar Barot                      1058 Hwy 247

Mr. Talton presented a request for approval of the FY22 Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) in the amount of \$26,000.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the acceptance of an Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) to install county-owned generators and transfer switches at three fire stations and replace ten mobile message board batteries. The total cost breakdown will be grant funds of \$26,000 and Houston County matching funds of \$26,319.40, for a total of \$52,319.40. Matching funds will be funded from the 2018 SPLOST.

Mr. Talton presented a request for approval of a quote for roadside litter pickup.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve a quote from Dixie Lawn & Landscaping Inc. of Cochran Georgia at a cost of \$285.00 per mile of service or \$6,968.25 per service. This cost will be funded by Host Fees.

Mr. Gottwals commented on the need to be mindful of litter and littering because it costs money.

Chairman Perdue agreed with Mr. Gottwals. He said this especially applies to roads leading to the landfill, where trash flies out of unsecured loads on trucks and trailers. He further explained that the Host Fees were fees paid by people from outside the County to use the Landfill.

Mr. Byrd mentioned he was thankful for the advancement of right-of-way maintenance in the County and appreciated efforts to keep our county roads clean.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request for approval of a bid for vehicle maintenance.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the acceptance of two bids for vehicle maintenance, Five Star of Warner Robins, and Phil Brannen Ford of Perry. The term of this bid is July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025 with an option to extend from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

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Chairman Perdue stated that the Fire Department and Sheriff's Office were looking for ways to lower vehicle maintenance expenses and decrease downtime for vehicles being out of service. He said these bids for vehicle maintenance work should help with this issue.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request for approval of the acceptance of the FY24 Violence Against Women Act Grant (VAWA).

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the acceptance of the FY24 Violence Against Women Act Grant for the time period of January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024. The grant, in the amount of \$64,842, will be administered by the District Attorney's Office. The County's required matching funds of \$21,614 will be funded by the General Fund.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to fill the vacant Lab Analyst II position at the Water Department.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the hiring of Matthew Scott to fill the vacant Lab Analyst II position at the Water Department at Grade 17 Step B effective May 8, 2024. Staff has reviewed his qualifications, and Mr. Scott does exceed the requirements. Also, for the Accounting Department to make any necessary adjustments.

Mr. Andrews presented Rezoning Application #2761 submitted by Mr. Jason Maloy.

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

There being no comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the following Rezoning Application as recommended by the Houston County Planning:

#2761                      Jason Maloy                      120 Old Hwy 96

Chairman Perdue spoke about his first paying job at Davidson's Grocery, next door to this rezoning application.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of a quote to seal and stripe the County's parking lot at 310 Snellgrove Drive.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the acceptance of a quote from Houston Asphalt Paving and Sealcoating, of Macon Georgia, in the amount of \$19,800 to seal and stripe the County's parking lot at 310 Snellgrove Drive. This project will be funded by Host Fees and has a completion date of June 28, 2024.

Chairman Perdue commented that the Central GA Soccer Association and the Warner Robins Little League use this parking lot and the County wants to keep it in good shape.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of the acceptance of grant funds from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to purchase and install 4 fixed generators at different remote wells and water treatment sites.

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Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the acceptance of the Hazard Mitigation Grant in the amount of \$409,800 with a breakdown as follows: Federal Funds of \$368,820, State Funds Share of \$16,392, and the County's share of \$24,588. Based on the current pricing quote of \$502,219, the County would be responsible for an additional \$92,419. The County's portion will be funded by Water Capital Funds.

Chairman Perdue expressed his appreciation to Chief Stoner and Utilities Supervisor Terry Dietsch for finding these grants for the generators, which will work to keep water flowing in the event of a power outage.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for additions to the Water Use Agreement between the Houston County Board of Commissioners and the City of Warner Robins.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the addition of commercial properties located at 951 Feagin Mill Road and at 946 Hwy 96 to the Water Use Agreement between the Houston County Board of Commissioners and The City of Warner Robins with the following stipulations:

- That the developer posts a bond covering 125% of construction cost for work performed on the Houston Water System.
- Adherence of the rate structure approved by the Houston County Board of Commissioners on November 19, 2019.
- The issuance of a utility permit to the City of Warner Robins based on all conditions being met according to "Houston County Utility Accommodations".

Mr. Andrews presented Rezoning Application #2766 submitted by Katie Greer-Davis.

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

There being 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 the following Rezoning Application as recommended by the Houston County Planning:

#2766                      Katie Greer-Davis                      Commodore Drive

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a bid on the Elberta Water Treatment Plant Renovation.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the bid on the Elberta Water Treatment Plant Renovation from Plumline Construction, LLC of Warner Robins, Georgia in the amount of \$47,737.30 for the renovations of the exterior of the Elberta Water Treatment Plant. This project will be funded by Water Funds.

Chairman Perdue commented that this water treatment facility was built in the early seventies.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval for the installation of a sidewalk and concrete pad at the Ed Dunbar Law Enforcement Training Facility.

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Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously to approve the bid from Appling Brothers Company, of Macon Georgia, in the amount of \$38,975 to install a sidewalk connecting the parking lot to the pole barn, and a concrete pad under the pole barn at the Ed Dunbar Law Enforcement Training Facility. This project will be funded by the 2018 SPLOST.

Chairman Perdue stated that the barn had been constructed for gatherings and equipment storage when needed. He then asked Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar if he had any comments.

Mr. Dunbar replied that it was needed and much appreciated.

Ms. Robinson presented a request to dispose of \$9,665.40 worth of items that are no longer used by the county or are expired.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the write off of the expired and obsolete merchandise at the Purchasing Warehouse in the amount of \$9,665.40.

Mr. Byrd complimented the Purchasing staff on their good job of managing the inventory.

Mr. Talton advised this inventory had become obsolete or expired over the course of several years.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$4,521,789.22.

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

Mr. Dan Rhoades, of the 21st Century Partnership, presented information about the Department of Defense and USAF budgets. He spoke of future workload coming to Robins AFB and a bill recently signed by Governor Kemp that would streamline state licenses for military spouses having a similar license from another state being recognized in Georgia.

Chairman Perdue asked about the possibility of an increase in the F-15X.

Mr. Rhoades answered Chairman Perdue's question about the increase in F-15X that yes, production will increase for that airframe.

Commissioner Byrd expressed his appreciation to Mr. Rhoades and all the staff who work at the 21st Century Partnership.

Mr. Tom Davidson spoke about the withdrawal of the rezoning application at Hunt and Houston Lake Road regarding the owners' plans moving forward.

Chairman Perdue advised that he had no additional information other than that it was requested to be withdrawn and that the owner could apply for a rezoning later.

Mr. Davidson had another question regarding inmates picking up trash.

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Chairman Perdue said that COVID-19 impacted the number and availability of inmate work crews for picking up trash, and that impact is still being felt. He also said that when this occurred and right-of-way maintenance had to be contracted out, residents were very complimentary about the increase in the quality of the work done.

Karen Mertens had questions about traffic signals at intersections, specifically Hunt and Houston Lake Roads and Tara Estates and Hwy. 96.

Chairman Perdue replied that the State Department of Transportation had to be contacted for any traffic signalization on state highways, which Hwy. 96 is. He continued by saying that the County had petitioned the Georgia Department of Transportation about several busy intersections in the County that are on State highways but that the GA DOT's assessment said the traffic level did not warrant traffic signals. He concluded by saying that he would see what the County could do at the intersection of Hunt and Houston Lake Road.

Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar said that the County had written letters of request for traffic signals at some of these intersections on state routes and even stating that the County would pay for the signal but have yet to receive any permits allowing for any signal installation.

Mr. Larry Hunt spoke about the sharp curves on Hunt Road and requested that should a rezoning of the property at Hunt and Houston Lake Road come before the Board again, to consider the increase in traffic and these sharp curves. He advised that vehicles routinely come through too fast and run off the road at these curves and that commercial development would only increase traffic on Hunt Road.

Meg Mehserle spoke about her views on election integrity issues, and her feelings about being let go as a poll worker from the Houston County Board of Elections.

Houston County Library Director, J. Sara Paulk, spoke about the summer reading program at all the libraries in Houston County and mentioned how popular this program is in Houston County.

Chairman Perdue paused Public Comments due to Ms. Robinson needing to leave the meeting early.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for attending the meeting and remarked on how productive it was. She thanked everyone for their understanding of her need to leave the meeting early.

After Ms. Robinson left Chairman Perdue asked for any further Public Comments. As there were no further comments Public Comments was closed.

Chairman Perdue opened Commissioner's Comments.

Mr. Gottwals said that communication is a key issue to remember and that sometimes, a lot of issues can be handled just by having a face-to-face conversation. He also spoke about the civility of the meeting, where several controversial items were presented.

Mr. Talton thanked the County staff and Chief Stoner for finding and applying for the grants approved at the meeting. He expressed his appreciation to Dan Rhodes and the staff with the 21st Century Partnership for their work. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting and bringing their concerns before the Board.

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Mr. Byrd thanked the County staff and the other Commissioners for their work and commented on the topics that came before the Board: personnel, land use, and bid and grant approvals. He also thanked the Planning & Zoning Board and Tim Andrews for their work. He encouraged everyone to early perdue and finished by recognizing John Hulbert for handling the County Attorney duties in place of County Attorney Tom Hall.

Chairman Perdue thanked everyone for attending the meeting and was glad to see Tim Andrews being able to walk a little more now. He finished by saying that he was continuing to pray for the healing of this foot.

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

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Robbie Dunbar  
Director of Administration

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Chairman

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Commissioner

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