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**Houston County Commissioners Meeting**

**April 7, 2015**

**Perry, Georgia**

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 7, 2015 at the Houston County Courthouse in Perry, Georgia with Chairman Stalnaker presiding and Commissioners Thomson, McMichael, Walker, and Robinson present. Also present were Director of Administration Barry Holland, Director of Operations Robbie Dunbar, Human Resource Director Ken Carter, Purchasing Director Mark Baker, HEMA/Fire Chief Jimmy Williams, Asst. Chief Kevin Noles, MIS Director Gail O’Quinn, Sr. Computer Programmer James Faulkner, Putnam County Commissioner Billy Webster, Utility Service Manager Jeff Chandler, Senior Animal Control Officer Dale Newberry, Animal Control Officer Alan Smith, Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews, Walton and Becky Wood and County Attorney Tom Hall.

Commissioner McMichael led the audience in the Invocation.

MSgt. Terry Zimmerman, USAF, (ret.) led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance and then detailed his 24 year military career. After joining the service in 1970 at the age of 19, the Michigan native who had never traveled outside his home state spent his career in assignments such as Incirlik Air Base, Turkey; Minot, North Dakota; Michigan; Florida; England; and lastly Robins Air Force Base. After retiring in 1994, he took advantage of the G.I. Bill, went back to college and received his degree. He spent the next twenty years working for a defense contractor. Currently he keeps himself busy with a small home-based woodworking business.

Chairman Stalnaker presented a resolution to Lions Club member Mr. J.C. Coefield, representing the Houston County Lions Club, declaring April 2015 to be “Lions White Cane Month.” The Chairman encouraged the citizens of Houston County to give generously to White Cane Month and to work with the Houston County Lions Club in their efforts to save the sight of the needy in our community. Mr. Coefield remarked that the Lions Club provided for over 500 eye surgeries during the past year with 11 of those surgeries here in Houston County. He also announced that a new Lions Club in Perry would be established this month.

Chairman Stalnaker presented a resolution to Tim Hawkins, Commander of the Lt. James T. Woodward Camp 1399, and others declaring April 2015 as Confederate History and Heritage month in Houston County, Georgia and encouraged all residents to increase their knowledge of the role played by the Confederate States of America and her people in our County’s history.

Chairman Stalnaker recognized CEO Bob Ray and Lineman Shane Malcom and Jacob Harper of Flint Energies as well as Area Manager Joe Brownlee and Lineman Kenny Cranford and Blake Thomas of GA Power. Chairman Stalnaker presented both with a resolution proclaiming April 2015 to be National Lineman Appreciation Day in Houston County. He explained that lineman are often first responders during storms and other catastrophic events and therefore work under dangerous conditions maintaining the energy infrastructure that we all enjoy.

Chairman Stalnaker recognized President/CEO Darlene McLendon and Chairman of the Executive Board Joe Brownlee of the Perry Chamber of Commerce, who presented the Board with a Dogwood Festival wreath asking them to hang it with pride at the County courthouse.

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Chairman Stalnaker recognized Putnam County Commissioner Billy Webster who was in attendance.

Motion by Mr. McMichael, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of March 17, 2015.

Rezoning Application #1863 was presented by Tim Andrews. Mr. Andrews explained that Mr. Morath has applied to rezone 1.28 acres at 1256 Houston Lake Road from R-1 to C-2. The intended use is as a fencing business. Planning & Zoning recommends unanimous approval.

Chairman Stalnaker then opened a public hearing on application #1863. The applicant was present but had nothing further to add.

Mr. Walton Wood, 426 Sandefur Road, Kathleen stated that the applicant did a fine job constructing a fence on his property and that his business would be an asset to the County.

There was no opposition.

There being no comments, the hearing was closed.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously to approve Re-zoning Application #1863.

Special Exception Applications #1862, #1864 and #1865 for home occupation businesses

were presented by Tim Andrews. Mr. Andrews stated that all three applications comply with Section 95 of the Comprehensive Land Development Regulations and that the Board of Zoning & Appeals recommends approval of each application. He explained that the applicant for #1862 would be writing poetry and selling bookmarks with her poetry inscribed on them through the internet. The applicant for #1864 does hold a valid Georgia license for the proposed mobile home set-up and repair business. The applicant for #1865 wishes to sell pre-packaged ice cream at school and sporting events. There were no questions from the Board.

County Attorney Tom Hall 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 occupation businesses. The Board of Commissioners does not enforce these covenants.

Chairman Stalnaker then opened a public hearing on applications #1862, #1864 and #1865. Each applicant was present but had nothing further to add. There was no opposition.

There being no further comments, the hearing was closed.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. McMichael and carried unanimously to approve

Application #1862 subject to no signage; Application #1864 subject to no signage, no customers to the home, and that all tools be stored inside the work van; and Application #1865 subject to no signage, no customers to the home, and the condition to allow the use of a 6’ x 8’ open trailer.

MIS Director Gail O’Quinn briefed the Board on the Paymentus telephone vendor payment system that will allow customers to call a 1-800 number for telephone credit card payments on utility bills and also on the Arista Information Systems online bill payment link for the County’s website that will allow utility customers to pay online with a credit card or by e-check.

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She explained that the utility clerks currently process as many as 500 credit card payments over the phone per day and that this would save considerable staff time. She estimated 4 to 6 weeks for the implementation if approved.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Thomson and carried unanimously to approve

Chairman Stalnaker to sign all contract documents necessary with Paymentus, Inc. for

the telephone vendor payment system; and with Arista, Inc. for the online bill payment link on the County’s website for the County’s water and solid waste collection customers.

Ms. Robinson introduced a Memorandum of Understanding that spells out the arrangement whereby Perdue Foods will donate 4.62 acres of land adjacent to the Perdue complex on the Hwy 247 Spur to the County for the purposes of constructing a new fire station.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously to approve Chairman Stalnaker to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Perdue Foods, LLC whereas Perdue donates 4.62 acres of land adjacent to the Perdue Foods chicken plant on the Hwy 247 Spur for the purposes of the County constructing a new fire station.

Chairman Stalnaker recognized Wally Hunter, Director of Operations (Fresh Plant); Craig Pugh, Director of Operations (Cook Plant); and Maria Rivera, Human Resources Manager of the Perdue Farms chicken plant. Both Mr. Hunter and Mr. Pugh remarked that the company was pleased to partner with the County and look forward to the completion of the station. Mr. Hunter related that Perdue Foods has a $515 million economic impact in Georgia with most of that being right here in Houston County. Chief Williams remarked that he was appreciative of the good working relationship between the County and its major industries and looked forward to providing improved fire service to the area. He recognized Assistant Chief Noles and three firefighters who were also in attendance. Chief Williams thanked the Board for their support and vision. Chairman Stalnaker hoped that construction on the fire station would be well underway by the end of the calendar year.

MIS Director Gail O’Quinn briefed the Board on a necessary upgrade to the wireless system that serves the Courthouse, Detention Center, Purchasing Department and the Public Works complex. The current system has been in place over ten years and is not stable enough to handle the wireless traffic that the proliferation of today’s many devices demand. The upgrade will improve the coverage area greatly increasing the access points from the current nine to a total of thirty-three.

Mr. Thomson asked if the $50,021 was a one-time cost. Ms. O’Quinn explained that it was except for a small yearly maintenance fee.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Thomson and carried unanimously to approve the award of the wireless system upgrade at the Courthouse, Detention Center, Purchasing Department and Public Works to Infinity Network Solutions of Macon in the amount of $50,021 which includes one year maintenance.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. McMichael and carried to reappoint Commissioner Walker to the Houston County Hospital Authority effective April 7, 2015 and expiring December 31, 2018. Upon voting, Ms. Robinson, Mr. McMichael and Mr. Thomson voted yes and Mr. Walker abstained.

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Ms. Robinson recognized Senior Animal Control Officer Dale Newberry who briefed the Board on why the wavier for animal limitations granted to Ms. Laverne Rucker should be revoked. Officer Newberry explained that since the Board’s approval of the waiver in February of 2012 the Animal Control Department has received numerous complaints from neighbors and Ms. Rucker has been cited on three separate occasions for various infractions. She has been found guilty all three times in Magistrate Court and is currently on probation for the last offense. She owns another property a few houses down the street where her son lives and the situation is just as bad in that location. Officer Newberry also explained that Ms. Rucker has indicated to him and his staff that she will continue to feed the stray cats and, in fact, Animal Control has received a number of complaints in the last few days. He is concerned about the repeated violations, the health of the animals, the health concerns that unvaccinated and unhealthy cats present to the neighborhood, and the neighbors who have expressed repeatedly that they are overrun with cats.

Mr. Thomson asked Officer Newberry if he had any suggestions concerning a solution to the overall problem. Officer Newberry suggested that it may be possible for Animal Control to coordinate help from various local rescue groups to relocate the cats, but Ms. Rucker would have to be receptive to the idea and, to date, she has not been cooperative.

Chairman Stalnaker recognized Ms. Rucker who stated that the real problem was her son’s cats at his residence and that she kept her cats inside and well-cared for. Chairman Stalnaker stated that since the Board’s approval in 2012 of the waiver they had hopes that she would conform but that has not occurred. He explained that the County has been inundated with complaints, that Animal Control has spent an excessive amount of time on enforcement efforts, and that she simply could not continue to ignore the laws governing pet ownership. He asked for her cooperation in resolving the issue.

Chairman Stalnaker then recognized Mr. Carl Hammond, 111 Hampshire Lane, Warner Robins, who stated that he lives in the neighborhood across the street from Ms. Rucker’s son. He stated that the neighborhood is overrun by a multitude of cats coming from both of Ms. Rucker’s properties and that the stench from the son’s home is overwhelming. He stated that the cats have been fed from both houses and that he has photographic evidence. He stated that he is also a pet owner and does not have an issue with those who properly care for their pets.

Ms. Robinson asked County Attorney Tom Hall if the original waiver was granted for Ms. Rucker’s house at 201 Wakefield Drive or 207 Wakefield Drive where her son lives. Mr. Hall replied that the waiver was granted for Ms. Rucker at 201 Wakefield and that 207 Wakefield never had a waiver.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. McMichael and carried unanimously to approve the revocation of Ms. Laverne Rucker’s Waiver for Animal Limitations to keep more than the allowed three cats at her residence.

County Attorney Tom Hall conducted a first reading of an amendment to the Code of Ordinances concerning Conservation Use Assessment (proposed under Chapter 58, Article 1, removal of Sec. 58-4). At the August 17, 2010 meeting the Board set the minimum number of acres for qualifying for current use assessment for ad valorem tax purposes at 20 acres for a single tract.

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A subsequent change in the state law necessitates that the 20 acre minimum requirement be removed. Sec. 58-4 would be removed in its entirety. A second reading and public hearing on this amendment will be held at the April 21st meeting after which action may be taken.

County Attorney Tom Hall conducted a first reading of an amendment to the Code of Ordinances concerning bad check charges (proposed under Chapter 2, Article IV, and titled as Sec. 2-282 Dishonored Instrument [check] Charge).

The charge for bad checks for all Houston County departments will mirror state law O.C.G.A. §16-9-20(j), which is $30 or 5% of the face amount of the check, whichever is greater, plus any fee charged to Houston County by its bank. A second reading and public hearing will be held at the April 21st meeting after which action may be taken.

Motion by Mr. Thomson, second by Mr. McMichael and carried unanimously to approve Chairman Stalnaker to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Flint Energies memorializing the current informal agreement between the County and Flint for use of the parking lot on Snellgrove Drive in the case of a declared federal, state or local emergency or disaster. Flint would use the parking lot as a temporary staging area for materials, equipment and personnel to support third-party crews brought in to assist with electric utility restoration.

Motion by Mr. Thomson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously to approve Chairman Stalnaker to sign Change Order #1 on the Haynesville Well Upgrade project with Greene’s Water Wells, Inc. The change order increases the original contract amount of $63,942.13 by $38,010.00 to amended total of $101,952.13 with no increase in contract time.

Motion by Mr. McMichael, second by Mr. Thomson and carried unanimously to approve the award of the Danny Carpenter Pond (Phase 2) SPLOST 2006 project to Waters & Sons of Macon in the amount of $19,560; the award of the Pinewood Village drainage improvements project to LaKay Enterprises, Inc. of Fort Valley in the amount of $24,610; the award of the Audrey Way Pipe Replacement project to LaKay Enterprises, Inc. of Fort Valley in the amount of $48,000; the award of the Trader’s Pass Pipe Replacement project to LaKay Enterprises, Inc. of Fort Valley in the amount of $12,480; and the award of the Statham’s Landing Hole No.7 Pipe Replacement project to ABI Grading & Paving of Warner Robins in the amount of $27,949.

Motion by Mr. McMichael, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously to approve the payment of bills totaling $3,408,455.73.

Chairman Stalnaker then opened the meeting for public comments.

Becky Wood, 426 Sandefur Road, Kathleen thanked the Board and all County staff for the prayers, calls, flowers and support she received in the wake of her mother’s death.

Walt Wood, 426 Sandefur Road, Kathleen asked County Attorney Tom Hall if the Magistrate Court Judge could issue an arrest order for Ms. Rucker if the situation concerning the cats continued. Mr. Hall stated that the Magistrate Court Judge had limited power to put someone in jail, but the County could take the matter to Superior Court to obtain an injunction. Mr. Wood asked the Board to please give credence in the future to neighborhood concerns and opinions before granting any waiver or exceptions to the County’s ordinance.

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Billy Webster, Putnam County Commissioner, stated that he appreciated the Board’s hospitality as he has visited six different Counties and their commission meetings and found Houston to be extremely well run and was impressed with the professional manner in which the Board handled the County’s business. He was most impressed by the level of audience participation that was allowed. Chairman Stalnaker thanked Mr. Webster for his comments and attendance.

There being no further public comments, the meeting was continued.

The Chairman then asked for comments from the Commissioners.

Each of the Board members conveyed their condolences to Ms. Wood for the loss of her mother Ms. Lucile Hammock.

Mr. McMichael reminded everyone that April 15th was the filing deadline for taxes.

There being no further comments, the meeting was continued.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Thomson and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

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Director of Administration

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