

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

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in a regular session at 5:00 pm on Tuesday, December 19, 2023, at the Houston County Annex in Warner Robins, GA, with Chairman Perdue presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Gottwals, Robinson, and Talton present. County Attorney Tom Hall and Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar were also present.

Commissioner Byrd led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Bishop Harvey Bee, Senior Pastor of The Winning Church in Warner Robins, gave the invocation. He then spoke about his church's beginnings in 1962 with six people in a member's home. He stated that this has since multiplied to several locations, a school, an accredited Bible College, and plans for further expansion and future locations.

Mr. Talton expressed his appreciation for Bishop Bee's attendance, moving invocation, and positive impact on the Houston County community.

Mr. Byrd thanked Bishop Bee for his attendance and his brief but broad rundown of all that his church has accomplished. He finished by saying he looks forward to hearing more about his church's expansion, growth, and impact in Houston County and beyond.

Chairman Perdue expressed his thanks to Bishop Bee for his and his wife's attendance at the meeting and for his work in Houston County.

Chairman Perdue read parts of a proclamation posthumously recognizing Bill Schwanebeck, former Chairman of the Houston County Planning & Zoning Commission. He also recognized the family members of Mr. Schwanebeck present at the Commissioners meeting.

Chairman Perdue then recognized Tim Andrews, Houston County Planning and Zoning Director, who shared a few remarks.

Mr. Andrews spoke in appreciation of the work, guidance, and direction that Mr. Schwanebeck gave to the Planning Board. He then recognized Mr. Holcomb and Mr. Williams, the Planning and Zoning Board members present at the Commissioners meeting.

Chairman Perdue recognized Ms. Schwanebeck and other family members present and expressed his condolences on the passing of Mr. Schwanebeck.

Chairman Perdue recognized Brig. General John Kubinec (ret.) and staff of the 21st Century Partnership. He then read part of a proclamation that was presented to the organization in May of this year on the organization's 30th anniversary. He concluded his comments by saying that the Commissioners are presenting an additional \$30,000 gift to the Partnership.

Brig. General Kubinec (ret.) expressed his appreciation to the Board for supporting Robins Air Force Base, the 21st Century Partnership, and those who serve and work at Robins. He thanked his predecessors who began the 21st Century Partnership. He also spoke of the JSTARS mission leaving Robins and the new and exciting missions on the way to replace them. He concluded his remarks by saying that the EDIMGIAFAD slogan in Houston County is not only a slogan, but a way of life and is exhibited in businesses, schools, churches, and governments throughout Houston County.

Chairman Perdue thanked Dan Rhodes, Lori Freeman, Debra Cox, and Bob Herrmann, staff members of the 21st Century Partnership.

Mr. Byrd expressed his appreciation to General Kubinec and the staff of the 21st Century Partnership and stated that it was indeed Houston County's honor to be the host county for Robins Air Force Base.

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Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the December 5, 2023 meeting.

Chairman Perdue presented an add-on item to be added to the agenda.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve add-on item #18 being added to the agenda.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for the Abandonment of Easement for property located on Mossy Lake Road.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of the Resolution Abandoning County Interest in Drainage Easement approving the application submitted by J & B Capital Group for the abandonment of any and all interest Houston County may have in a 20' drainage easement that traverses the property located at 235 Mossy Lake Road, Perry, Georgia 31069. The approval and signing of said Resolution will further authorize Chairman Perdue to sign a quit claim deed conveying any and all interest Houston County may have in the existing drainage easement to the property owner.

Mr. Byrd commented that this was not only an abandonment but also that a replacement drainage easement will take its place.

Chairman Perdue spoke about the next two items on the agenda. He said that the Board as a courtesy allowed public comments during motions on annexation but that it was not a public hearing. He explained that there would be a limit to the number of people allowed to speak for the annexations and against them and each person would be allowed three minutes.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for annexation of property located at 2717 HWY 127 and 727 Old Perry Road.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for Public Comments.

Ms. Teresa Bennet, Mr. Chad Bryant, and Mr. Keith Newton spoke in favor of the annexation request.

Mr. Terry Mock, Ms. Heather Talton, and Ms. Sherry Englehart spoke in opposition to the annexation request.

Chairman Perdue asked if any Commissioners had comments.

Mr. Byrd asked County Attorney Tom Hall to explain the options of concur and nonconcur.

Mr. Hall explained what each would mean for the property owners, the options, and what legal avenues the Board had available in these annexation requests.

Mr. Byrd thanked Mr. Hall for his explanation. He then expressed his understanding of the landowner for wanting to seek the highest and best use of their property. He noted the respectable developer interested in developing the property. He finished by thanking all of those who came and spoke both in favor and against the annexation and rezoning of the property in a respectful and orderly manner.

Mr. Gottwals commented that he was not in full agreement with most of the points of concern that those in opposition to the annexation brought up. He explained that his concerns were mostly about fire coverage for that area if annexed, rezoned and developed.

Chairman Perdue expressed his agreement with the positions of both Commissioners.

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Mr. Byrd said that he would be making a motion to nonconcur with the annexation request to allow for more time for planning and consideration regarding the next steps for this property.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to nonconcur with the annexation of property located at 2717 HWY 127 and 727 Old Perry Road containing 13.53 acres, also known as Tax Parcels # 001050 085000 and #00105 038000. This property is zoned RAG, and the proposed zoning is City R1 & City C2.

Mr. Byrd presented a request to annex property located on Latham Drive, which contains 4.4 acres.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for Public Comment.

Mr. Chad Bryant spoke in favor of the annexation.

Mr. Rodney Bogue, Mr. Jason Ellingson, and Ms. Fontella Hamilton spoke in opposition to the annexation.

Chairman Perdue asked if any Commissioners had comments.

Mr. Byrd thanked those who supported and opposed the annexation for their comments and requested County Attorney Tom Hall to give his legal opinion.

Mr. Hall advised that unlike the previous annexation, where there was to be a change in zoning of the property, this annexation would keep the zoning designation the same going from the County to the City of Warner Robins. Because there would be no zoning change, he advised that the Board would have no grounds to give a nonconcur vote.

Mr. Gottwals advised those in attendance who were not for the annexation to remain involved with the process with the City of Warner Robins Planning and Zoning and Council meetings anytime this property was mentioned.

Chairman Perdue thanked Mr. Hall for his legal interpretation and explanation. He stated to those in attendance that with no zoning changes planned for the property, the County would have no basis to offer a vote to nonconcur with the annexation and would have to concur with the annexation request.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to concur with the annexation of property located on Latham Drive containing 4.4 acres, also known as Tax Parcel #000770 082000. This property is zoned County R-2, and the proposed zoning is City R2.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for an addition 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 the commercial property, located at 1277 Houston Lake Road, 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."

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Mr. Talton presented a request for approval of a change order for the 2023 LMIG.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve Change Order #1 for the 2023 Houston County Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) project. This change is an adjustment to increase the contract price by \$29,426.61 from \$1,145,231.30 to \$1,174,657.91 with no change in contract time. This will meet the shortfall in the County's 30% matching funds as required by the Georgia Department of Transportation for the LMIG.

Chairman Perdue stated that this action is needed to utilize all available matching grant funds.

Mr. Talton presented a request for approval of a change order on the Houston County State Court & Sheriff's Department Renovation.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve Change Order #1 for the Houston County State Court and Sheriff's Department Renovation in the amount of \$232,330.21, bringing the contract total to \$6,232,330.21. These additional funds will include additional site work, additional landscaping, replacement of doors on the Annex side, and handrails on the employee entrance by the drive-through.

Chairman Perdue stated that these necessary changes are needed to complete the renovation.

Mr. Talton presented a request to approve a bid on the Woodfield Drainage Improvement Phase 2 project.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of a bid on the Woodfield Drainage Improvement Phase 2 project to Meriwether Site Solutions, Inc. of Greenville, GA, in the amount of \$646,952, to install new storm drainage per the approved plans. ARPA funds will fund this project.

Mr. Talton stated that this has been an ongoing problem and that he was glad to see that this problem will be solved.

Chairman Perdue expressed his agreement with Mr. Talton.

Mr. Talton presented a request to donate a surplus vehicle to the Perry-Houston County Airport Authority.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the donation of one surplus 2011 Toyota Camry Hybrid VIN #4T1BB3EK1BU142203 to the Perry-Houston County Airport Authority. Once the title is transferred, the vehicle will be removed from the County's inventory and insurance.

Chairman Perdue mentioned that this vehicle will be used by those who fly into the Perry Houston County Airport as a courtesy vehicle to travel into Perry or run errands while in Houston County.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, to approve the appointment of Shane Gottwals as the Houston County Board of Commissioners Vice-Chairman for the calendar year of 2024. Upon voting Mr. Talton, Mr. Byrd, and Ms. Robinson voted yes, Mr. Gottwals abstained. Motion carried.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for 2024 VOCA Grant C23-8-101 approval for the Solicitor General's Office.

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Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the acceptance of VOCA Grant C23-8-101 for the Solicitor General's Office in the amount of \$96,505 from the Prosecuting Attorney's Council of Georgia. This grant supports direct services to crime victims. The required matching funds have been waived.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for 2024 VOCA Grant C23-8-101 approval for the District Attorney's Office.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the acceptance of VOCA Grant C23-8-101 for the District Attorney's Office in the amount of \$66,830 from the Prosecuting Attorney's Council of Georgia. This grant supports direct services to crime victims. The required matching funds have been waived.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a services agreement for cleaning services.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of an agreement with P&B Cleaning Services of Georgia, LLC, of Bonaire, GA for cleaning services at various Houston County buildings. This is a twelve-month agreement with monthly payments of \$17,800.

Ms. Robinson presented a request to approve a disbursement to Houston Healthcare for capital expenditures.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals, to approve a disbursement of \$2,000,000 from the county's ARPA funds to Houston Healthcare for capital expenditures. Upon voting, Ms. Robinson, Mr. Gottwals, and Mr. Talton voted yes, and Mr. Byrd abstained. Motion approved.

Chairman Perdue mentioned a recent meeting with Mr. Briscoe and the staff of Houston Healthcare, Chief Stoner of the Houston County Fire Department, and Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar. The meeting covered the EMS service in Houston County and ways to improve and enhance response time for Houston County citizens.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a bid for fuel fees for the calendar year of 2024.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of the bid for the calendar year 2024 to James River Solutions, of Ashland, VA, for the amounts listed below:

Bidder	E10 Uni Plus 89 Octane	Diesel-Ultra Low Sulfur	Average
James River Solutions	-0.1090	-0.0560	-0.08250

Prices are quoted based on a cents-per-gallon markup on the State of Georgia OPIS average daily price quote and include freight charges. Prices do not include GUST and applicable taxes.

Chairman Perdue thanked Director of Purchasing, Vanessa Zimmerman, for preparing the bid package and commented on the winning bid being below the daily OPIS price.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request for approval of a Marketing Management Contract.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve entering into a Marketing Management Contract with M&R Marketing Group of Macon, GA for branding work and to manage the County's social media for twelve months. This contract, in the amount of \$14,190 will be charged to Commissioners Office Professional Fees.

Chairman Perdue commented that the funds would be reimbursed from Host Fees.

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Mr. Gottwals presented a request for approval of mandatory minimum salary adjustments.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the following State of Georgia and local legislation mandated salary adjustments:

Official	Current Salary	Mandated Minimum	Adjustment 1/1/2024	Reason
Commissioner	\$17,000.00	\$19,000.00	\$19,000.00	State COLA
Commissioner	\$20,388.16	\$22,388.16	\$22,388.16	State COLA
Commissioner	\$17,000.00	\$19,000.00	\$19,000.00	State COLA
Commissioner	\$17,000.00	\$19,000.00	\$19,000.00	State COLA
Judge	\$15,704.23	\$16,947.87	\$16,947.87	Mandated
Judge	\$15,249.83	\$16,515.35	\$16,515.35	Mandated

The Coroner, Chief Magistrate Judge, Magistrate Judge, Sheriff, Tax Commissioner, Clerk of Superior Court, and Probate Judge were all reviewed, and the current salary exceeds the mandated minimum with the State Cost of Living and any longevity adjustments.

Chairman Perdue stated that these are mandated changes by State law and are at the minimum levels allowed under this State law.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$12,618,442.22.

Chairman Perdue advised that this number is high due to the contributions made by the County to the employee retirement system.

Mr. Gottwals presented the final budget adjustments that are required after the trial balance for completion of the FY23 Audit

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the Year-End Budget Adjustments:

General Fund (100):

Increase Expenditures:

Accounting	100-1512-51.1100	Regular Employees	\$	6,464.00
District Attorney	100-2200-52.3500	Travel	\$	6,685.00
Domestic Violence	100-2210-53.1100	Regular Employees	\$	971.00
Judge State Court	100-2300-51.1500	Elected/Appointed	\$	15,102.00
Probate Court	100-2450-51.1100	Regular Employees	\$	8,844.00
Sheriff-SRO	100-3320-51.1100	Regular Employees	\$	30,381.00
Jail	100-3326-51.1300	Overtime	\$	265,390.00
			Total	\$ 333,837.00

Decrease

Expenditures:

Highways & Streets County	100-4200-51.1100	Regular Employees	\$	333,837.00
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ARPA Fund (100):

Increase Revenues:

	230-0000-33.2101	Judicial Circuit Rev	\$	43,107.00
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Increase Expenditures:

Transfers (Out)	230-9000-61.1000	Operating Transfers Out	\$	43,107.00
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E911 Fund (215):

Increase

Expenditures:

215-3800-51.1200	Temporary Employees	\$ 754.00
	Repairs and	
215-3800-52.2200	Maintenance	\$ 267,000.00
	Total	\$ 267,754.00

Fire Fund (270):

Increase

Expenditures:

	Repairs and	
270-3500-52.2200	Maintenance	\$ 79,600.00
270-3500-53.1600	Small Equipment	\$ 114,914.00
270-3500-54.1300	Buildings	\$ 117,437.00
	Total	\$ 311,951.00

Special Revenue Funds

Jail Inmate Fund

Increase Revenues:

\$ 89,000.00

Increase

Expenditures:

\$ 89,000.00

District Attorney Drug Fund

Increase Revenues:

\$ 245,000.00

Increase

Expenditures:

\$ 245,000.00

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

Director of Operations Brian Jones thanked the Board for the pay increases, and the new equipment purchased which has helped its employees with their workload.

Chairman Perdue thanked Mr. Jones and the employees of the public works department for the work they do.

Darrell Allen spoke about developments in Perry, developments on the north side of Warner Robins, and his concern for the current state of affairs in our government.

With no further comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Comments portion of the meeting and opened the floor for Commissioner Comments.

Mr. Byrd expressed his congratulations to the Perry High School football team for winning the GHSA State Football 4A championship game earlier this month. He expressed his condolences to the family of Fred Graham, who was an active member of the community, serving with the Sheriff's Department, the Hospital Board and other areas, on his recent passing. He concluded by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas.

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Mr. Talton reflected on a very successful year for Houston County. He commented on the County experiencing changes to personnel and staff. He also spoke about the recent retirement of Houston County Sheriff's Deputy Shay Little and the impact he has had while serving in law enforcement. He concluded his remarks by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for being at the meeting and mentioned the good comments made during both annexation items brought up at the meeting and the positive way in which the meeting was conducted. She wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Mr. Gottwals spoke of a quote by Laura Ingalls Wilder "*we are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a child again at Christmastime*". He spoke of past Christmases and the meaning and memories they hold through the pictures he recently went through of his family and encouraged everyone to remember the reason behind Christmas and why we celebrate it. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Chairman Perdue acknowledged that this was the longest meeting the Board has had all year and expressed to everyone present and to the Board members how much of an honor and privilege it is to serve with them and with the County employees and thanked staff and the Board for their due diligence and work and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

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

Robbie Dunbar
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner