

Houston County Commissioners Meeting March 21, 2023 Warner Robins, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday March 21, 2023, at the Houston County Annex Building in Warner Robins, Georgia, with Chairman Perdue presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Gottwals, Robinson, and Talton present. Also present were County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar, Director of Operations Brian Jones, Director of Personnel Ken Carter, Community Planner Jake Cox, Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews, Coroner Jimmy Williams, Chief Christopher Stoner and Utility Director Terry Dietsch.

Dr. Levi Rozier, Senior Pastor of Harvest Builders Worship Center, gave the invocation and gave background information about himself and his church. Dr. Rozier has eight siblings, is a retired chief of police and a US Navy veteran. He spoke about how his church's focus is to help others in the community with a focus on the idea of "seeing others." He gave instances of those less fortunate or who had minimal employment opportunities and the fact that he and his church "sees them" and wants to help those who find themselves in that position. Pastor Rozier thanked the Commissioners and Chairman for the invite to give the invocation and to participate in the meeting.

Chairman Perdue and each of the Commissioners thanked Dr. Rozier for being in attendance, giving the invocation, serving the community through his church and his service in the US Navy.

Commissioner Byrd led those in attendance in The Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Perdue read a proclamation recognizing April as Safe Digging Month in Houston County.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the meeting of March 7, 2023.

Ms. Robinson presented a personnel request by the Public Works Department to fill the vacant Equipment Operator position at the Landfill.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve the hiring of Melvin Freeman at a Grade 10 (C) step for the vacant Equipment Operator Position at the Landfill effective March 21, 2023.

Ms. Robinson presented a request to approve a proposal from ICB Construction Group for remediation work at the 911 Center.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of a proposal from ICB Construction Group for \$246,016.00 for remediation work at the 911 Center. This project will be funded by E911 Reserve Funds.

Mr. Gottwals expressed his appreciation to ICB for their quick response in handling the issue.

Mr. Perdue mentioned that the dirt originally placed on the side of the building was there to "harden" the building and protect it from tornados. With subsequent additions to the building being designed and built without hardening, the need for earth backfill has been negated. Therefore, to reduce the possibility of future leaking, the building will be repaired without earth backfill and with a traditional brick veneer siding.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request by the Accounting Department to fill the vacant Senior Accountant position in the Accounting Department.

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Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously to approve hiring Will Davis for the vacant Senior Accountant Position in the Accounting Department at a Grade 28 (B) with approval to increase one step upon the completion of the Level 1 *Governmental Finance Officer Certification* and another step upon completing the Level 2 *Governmental Finance Officer Certification* offered by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. This position was initially budgeted to hire at a Grade 28 (D).

Mr. Perdue advised that Mr. Davis currently works in the MIS Department but has worked closely with the Accounting Department in the past and when he receives his certifications, his pay will increase to the Grade 28 (D) level as it was budgeted for.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request from the Purchasing Department for approval of a bid on the purchase of one new RTV vehicle for the Landfill.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the purchase of an in-stock Kubota RTV-X900WL-A from Mason Tractor Company of Perry at a cost of \$20,673.92 to be used by the Landfill. The cost of the RTV will be charged to account 540-11.7500 (Solid Waste Capital Fund) and will replace a 2006 RTV currently in inventory (#622).

Mr. Perdue said that in the case of this and most any other vehicle, when you have a need for one, you find it and buy it due to availability or long manufacturing time delays.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request by the Public Works Department to approve a bid for landscape maintenance at multiple sites for County owned or maintained property by Dixie Lawn and Landscaping, Inc. in the total amount of \$234,272.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve of a landscape grounds maintenance agreement with Dixie Lawn & Landscaping, Inc. in the total amount of \$234,272. County Public Buildings sites were bid in the amount of \$162,072, Water Department Facilities were bid in the amount of \$54,900 and Storm Water Maintenance Facilities were bid in the amount of \$17,300 for a 12-month mowing season with an option for two additional growing season extensions. Funds to cover the Public Buildings landscape grounds maintenance of 10 sites will be funded from Dept. #1565, Government Buildings, account number 100-1565-52.2200. Funds to cover the Water Department Facilities lawn maintenance of 24 sites will be funded from Dept. #4400, Water Fund, account number 505-4400-52.2200. Funds to cover the Storm Water Management Facilities lawn maintenance, currently 3 sites will be funded from Dept. #4320, Storm Water Management, account number 505-4320-52.2200.

Mr. Perdue advised that unfilled positions in the Public Works Department covered the cost of this agreement but that next year a budget adjustment would be needed to fund it. He also mentioned that he was very pleased with the work done by Dixie Lawn and Landscaping.

Mr. Byrd mentioned that privatizing services like this may be the way to go with the savings and high level of service being realized by the County.

Mr. Talton presented an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Perry.

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Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of an Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Perry, Houston County and the Houston County Board of Elections requesting the Board of Elections conduct any and all municipal elections held for, or in, the City of Perry. This Intergovernmental Agreement will cover the 2023 election year only expiring on December 31, 2023.

Mr. Perdue advised this agreement would help voters by only having one voting location to report to for both City of Perry and County elections rather than traveling to two locations to vote.

Mr. Talton presented a request by the Public Works Department for approval of an Amendment to the *2019 Solid Waste Collection Service Agreement* with Georgia Waste Systems, LLC for an increase in curbside collection fees.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for public comments on the increase in curbside collection fees.

Walton Wood spoke in favor of the fee increase and stated he understood the reason why this action was needed. He also said that with this increase in fees that the level of service also needed to improve, otherwise, the Board would be hearing from him again.

Mr. Perdue thanked Mr. Wood for his comments.

Mr. Perdue advised that ongoing talks had occurred with Waste Management, the contractor for the County, about the current contract and level of service. He also advised that this route was the least expensive route to take – by staying with the current contractor – because going with a different company would most likely have caused an even greater increase in garbage fees for residents. Mr. Perdue also advised that the more than \$4.00 per customer subsidy that the County paid to defer the cost of the customer's garbage bills would now be rerouted to help fund additional firefighter positions and improve public safety for County residents.

Mr. Byrd advised that this rate increase was another example of inflation affecting the cost of local government services.

Mr. Talton mentioned that this fee increase made the County no additional money because the rate was a direct pass through from the County to the customer at that same rate.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously to approve the signing of the Amendment to the *Solid Waste Collection Service Agreement* between Houston County and Georgia Waste Systems, LLC to amend certain terms of the 2019 agreement to include a monthly increase for customers from \$13.00 to \$21.95 per month with an annual cost adjustment. According to the agreement, there will be no reduction of services and an effective date on the first billing cycle on April 5, 2023.

Mr. Byrd presented a request on behalf of Public Works staff for changes to the landfill tipping fees to reflect increases of \$2 per ton for municipal solid waste, a \$3 per ton increase for construction and demolition debris, a \$2 per ton in host fees for out-of-county waste, and the addition of a \$5 scale fee for cash/check customers.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for public comments on the increase in landfill tipping fees. No comments were made.

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Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to approve the increase in landfill charges as stated with an effective date being the first billing cycle after July 1, 2023. An annual cost adjustment based on the consumer price index for all *urban consumers, US city average for water, sewer, and trash not seasonally adjusted* would also be levied.

Mr. Byrd presented an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Warner Robins.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of an Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Warner Robins, Houston County and the Houston County Board of Elections requesting the Board of Elections conduct any and all municipal elections held for, or in, the City of Warner Robins. This Intergovernmental Agreement will cover the 2023 election year only expiring on December 31, 2023.

Mr. Byrd observed that this is the 3rd of 3 intergovernmental agreements approved by the Board with all the cities to assist in their election efforts.

Mr. Perdue commented that this is another example of cooperation between the Cities and the County.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$4,083,403.66.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for public comments.

Julian Santos, Reverend Amanda Schuber, Caly Hess, Kristen Kiefer, Phyllis Whymark, Lisa Rivero, and Sharaley Clark all spoke in support of Sgt. Anna Lange with the Houston County Sheriff's Department and their desire for the Houston County to drop its legal defense in the ongoing litigation regarding the County's health coverage.

Jacqueline Rozier and Darrell Allen spoke in support of the Commission continuing its legal defense in the ongoing litigation regarding its health coverage.

Chairman Perdue thanked all those who spoke on both sides of the issue and reiterated that the Board, on advice of Counsel, would not be able to comment.

With no further public comments, Mr. Perdue thanked everyone for attending and thanked Mr. Santos for organizing the group coming to the Commissioners meeting this evening in support of Sgt. Anna Lange. Chairman Perdue then asked the other Commissioners for any comments they would like to add.

Mr. Gottwals thanked everyone for attending and the exchange of ideas that occurred.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for attending and discussing the differences of opinion in an open and respectful way, which is a large part of what makes our country great.

Mr. Talton thanked everyone for attending and remarked that he and the Board are here to serve and work for the citizens of Houston County.

Mr. Byrd said he echoed the other Commissioners' comments and thanked those who were present at the meeting this evening and those who watched online and further stated that it was an honor to serve the citizens of Houston County.

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Chairman Perdue called for a motion to move into executive session.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to move into an Executive Session for Attorney-Client per O.C.G.A. § 50-14-2(1).

Upon reentering, County Attorney Tom Hall advised that the subject of the Executive Session was regarding Houston County's participation in a national opioid litigation and that any money received from this action would be spent in accordance with guidelines set forth in the settlements.

The Chairman called for a motion. Motion by Ms. Robinson and second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously to Authorize the signing of the Resolution to Participate in the TEVA, Allergan, CVS, Walgreens and Walmart Settlements.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all, meeting adjourned.

Robbie Dunbar
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

EXECUTIVE SESSION AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF HOUSTON

AFFIDAVIT OF PRESIDING OFFICER

Dan Perdue, Chairman of the Houston County Board of Commissioners, being duly sworn, states under oath that the following is true and accurate to the best of his knowledge and belief:

1. The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in a duly advertised meeting on March 21, 2023.

2. During such meeting, the Board voted to go into executive session.

3. The executive session was called to order at 6:15 p.m.

4. The subject matter of the closed portion of the meeting was devoted to the following matter(s) within the exceptions provided in the open meeting law:

 X Consultation with the county attorney or other legal counsel to discuss pending or potential litigation, settlement, claims, administrative proceedings, or other judicial actions brought or to be brought by or against the county or any officers or employee or in which the county or any officer or employee may be directly involved as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-2(1);

 Discussion of tax matters made confidential by state law as provided by O.C.G.A. § 50-14-2(2) and (insert the citation to the legal authority making the tax matter confidential) _____;

 Discussion or voting on:

 Authorizing a settlement as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(1)(A);

 Authorizing negotiations to purchase, dispose of, or lease property as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(1)(B);

 Authorizing an appraisal as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(1)(C);

 Entering a contract for the purchase, disposal of, or lease of property as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(1)(D);

 Entering into an option to purchase, dispose of, or lease property as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(1)(E);

 Discussion or deliberation on the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary action or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of a county officer or employee as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(2);

 Interviewing candidates for executive positions as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(2);

 Other (describe the exemption to the open meetings law): _____ as

provided in (insert the citation to the legal authority exempting the topic) _____

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5. _____ During the course of the closed session devoted to exempt topics, an incidental remark regarding a non-exempt topic or an attempt to discuss a non-exempt topic was made.

_____ The attempt was immediately ruled out of order and attempts to discuss same ceased immediately.

_____ The attempt was immediately ruled out of order. However, the comments did not cease, so the closed/executive session was immediately adjourned without discussion or action being taken regarding any non-exempt topic.

6. Minutes were taken of this meeting and will be filed and held for in camera inspection only.

This _____ day of March 2023.

Dan Perdue, Chairman
Houston County Board of Commissioners

Sworn to and subscribed
before me this ____ day of
March 2023.

Notary Public

My commission expires:
