

Houston County Commissioners Meeting

May 16, 2023

Warner Robins, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 5:00 pm. on Tuesday May 16, 2023, at the Houston County Annex 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, Fire/HEMA Chief Christopher Stoner, Environmental Health County Manager Christine Buffington, Development Authority Chairman, Ben Hulbert and Development Authority of Houston County Executive Director Angie Gheesling.

Commissioner Talton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Dr. Rev. Kevin Clotfelter, Associate Pastor at Centerville United Methodist Church, led the invocation. Rev. Clotfelter spoke about his church and about his military career with the United States Air Force where he was commander of the 116th Air Control Wing and Colonel before retiring. Rev. Clotfelter then spoke about a ministry he is co-founder of called Living Water Ministries and gave information about the focus of the ministry.

Representatives of the United Way of Central Georgia accepted an honorary check from Chairman Perdue and the Commissioners showing the amount raised in County's 2022 United Way campaign in the amount of \$41,172.

Chairman Perdue advised support for United Way reflects the generosity of the County employees, the support of the Commissioners through the time off certificate incentive idea, and the work of campaign coordinator Jake Cox.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the meeting of May 2, 2023.

Mr. Talton presented a request from Flint Energies for an Underground Easement.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of the Underground Easement at Cohen Walker and Snellgrove Drive for the Health Department project.

Mr. Talton presented Change Order #1 on the Elberta Road Phase 1 Improvements Project.

Chairman Perdue remarked that there would be a need to close this part of Elberta Road to remove and then install a large pipe under the road.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of Change Order #1 on the Elberta Road Phase 1 Improvements Project with C.W. Matthews Contracting Company of Marietta Georgia in the amount of \$191,659.84 bringing the total cost to \$7,903,839.84 with no additional contract time. This part of the project will be paid for with 2012 SPLOST funds.

Mr. Gottwals presented Change Order #1 on the 911 Center Emergency Remediation Project.

Chairman Perdue said that this would probably not be the last change order for work on the 911 center due to the damage caused by the water leakage into the building. He stated that with completion of the repairs to the outside of the building, repair work will begin on the inside, and that water damage is still being discovered, but that the goal is to totally fix the 911 center building from the water damage that had occurred over time.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of Change Order #1 on the 911 Center Emergency Remediation Project with ICB Construction Group of Macon, Georgia in the amount of \$19,712 bringing the total cost to \$265,728 with no additional contract time. This part of the project will be paid for with E-911 Communication Reserve Funds.

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Mr. Gottwals presented a request to distribute \$1M of the General Fund Balance and \$560,540.17 of Project SOAP proceeds to the Development Authority of Houston County. These funds will be used to reduce their debt and to help with large maintenance projects at their Park Place Properties.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the distribution of \$1,000,000 from General Fund Balance and \$560,540.17 of Project SOAP proceeds to the Development Authority of Houston County.

Mr. Byrd thanked Angie Gheesling and members of the Development Authority Board who were present at the meeting for all the work they do to bring jobs, economic development and growth to Houston County. He mentioned the success of Project Synergy, work force development and continued cooperation and partnership with Robins Air Force Base that is a benefit for all Houston County residents.

Chairman Perdue also thanked Ms. Gheesling and the Board members for being present and said that it was a very wise move to pay down the debt on the Authority's Park Place property.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request from the Engineering Department to enter into an agreement with R. K. Shah & Associates, Inc. of Suwanee, Georgia, to complete a construction plan for the intersection improvement project at the intersection of South Houston Lake Road and Smithville Church Road.

Chairman Perdue advised this work at the intersection of South Houston Lake Road and Smithville Church Road intersection will be an improvement for traffic in that area and that design work has made it possible for utility poles to be able to remain in place and not have to be moved. He also anticipated the work to be less than the stated 6-9 months.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of the agreement with R. K. Shah & Associates, Inc. of Suwanee, Georgia, in the amount of \$82,000 with a time of 6 – 9 months from the Notice to Proceed. Funds for this portion of the project will be paid from 2018 SPLOST.

Chairman Perdue explained that due to the signed agreements not being received by the Commissioners from CASA and Piedmont Counseling Services, agenda item #6 needed to be tabled until those completed agreements are received. Chairman Perdue mentioned that these two organizations are requesting to have access to the Juvenile Court Building for afterhours work.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to table the signing of agreements with CASA and Piedmont Counseling Services for the use of the Juvenile Justice Building after normal business hours for the purpose of counseling.

Ms. Robinson presented a request to continue our partnership with the Georgia Department of Corrections for five McEver Inmate Work Details.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of the McEver Inmate Work Detail Agreement with a term starting July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024. The cost for the five details will not exceed \$246,590.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the following reappointments to the Region 5 EMS Council for a term to start July 1, 2023 and end June 30, 2026:

Brenda Kosar
Dave Borghelli

Chairman Perdue mentioned that after checking with Fire Chief Chris Stoner and Houston Medical Center President and CEO Charles Briscoe, that both individuals being reappointed to the Region 5 EMS Council are valuable assets and do a good job on the Council.

Mr. Byrd presented a request from the City of Warner Robins to add the commercial development located on Highway 96 just west of 810 Hwy 96 to the Water Use Agreement.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve the addition of the commercial development located on Highway 96 just west of 810 Hwy 96 also known as Tax Parcel #000780 336000 be added to the Water Use Agreement. This addition is contingent upon the developer posting a bond covering more than 125% of the construction cost for the work performed on the Houston County Water System.

Chairman Perdue mentioned that these infrastructure agreements between the County and the City of Warner Robins are positive for both governments. He also stated that additional agreements on water master meters are in the works and thanked Mayor Patrick for her help with these agreements through conversations they both have had.

Mr. Byrd thanked Chairman Perdue and Mayor Patrick for their continued efforts to work together on these water service agreements.

Mr. Byrd presented a request from the City of Warner Robins to annex property located at 110 Timberlane Ave.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for public comments on the annexation.

Gary Gwaltney asked the Commissioners if this action was approved, did that mean sewer would be coming to the neighborhood.

Chairman Perdue advised this would not be determined by the Commissioners as it would be a City of Warner Robins utility and up to private landowners.

Christine Buffington, Environmental Health Director, spoke about the history of the septic system permit, which was applied for in November of 2022, for the address in question and advised that her department shows no action has been taken to remedy the situation with work on a new septic system or drain field. She stated that staff determined that tree roots had impacted the system's operational ability, and advised the soils were adequate for system operation.

Brian Trent, property owner at 110 Timberlane Ave., spoke about the cost estimates he received for repair work on his septic system. He advised that repair costs would be \$16,000 and that most of the trees on his property would also have to be removed. He stated that the neighbors behind him have agreed to the idea of tying his property into the sewer line on their property at a cost of around \$7,000.

Chairman Perdue advised that there are concerns with staff that should this action take place, it would be an issue for public safety regarding fire, EMS and law enforcement response. He further said that County and City staff will work together to come up with the best solution possible, but also will not stand in his way if the only solution available to the problem is to move forward with the annexation and sewer tie-in.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to non-concur with the City of Warner Robins annexation request for property located at 110 Timberlane Ave. also known as Tax Parcel # 00076D 062000.

Motion by Ms. Byrd, second by Mr. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$3,900,135.61.

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

Daryl Allen spoke at length in opposition to the Boards decision to non-concur with Agenda Item #10 and spoke about his dissatisfaction with the Board of Tax Assessors' decision to increase property values through the recent assessment notices mailed out to all property owners.

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Angie Gheesling, Executive Director of the Houston County Development Authority, thanked the Board for the approval to distribute funds to help reduce debt and complete maintenance projects at the Authority's Park Place property. She also thanked the Commissioners for their work to enact the SPLOST in Houston County and said that everywhere she goes and speaks that she always promotes the SPLOST.

Ben Hulbert, Chairman of the Houston County Development Authority, also thanked the Board for their assistance and support in further helping the Authority to retire its debt.

As there were no more comments, Chairman Perdue closed Public Comments and opened Commissioner Comments.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for attending the meeting and remarked that the County does a great job of keeping its fiscal responsibilities at a high level and is proud to serve on the Board.

Mr. Byrd spoke about the 30th Anniversary of the 21st Century Partnership and recognized that organization for all the work it does for Houston County and Robins Air Force Base. He also noted that construction work at the widening of Houston Lake Road in Perry and the intersection of Houston Lake Road and Feagin Mill Road were coming along towards completion or already complete and said this will improve traffic and safety in these high traffic areas. He also wished all the best to the Houston County Bears baseball team as they play later this week in the state championship baseball game.

Mr. Talton thanked everyone for attending, and said it was a privilege to serve the residents of Houston County. He also stated that he was glad to live in such a great county as Houston and very excited about the future of Houston County.

Mr. Gottwals remarked on the recent Mother's Day holiday and wished his mom again a happy Mother's Day.

Chairman Perdue extended his congratulations to the 21st Century Partnership for 30 excellent years supporting RAFB and the community by working to protect and grow and strengthen the Base. He read a portion of a proclamation the Commissioners signed that was presented to the Board of the 21st Century Partnership at their recent 30th Anniversary celebration event. Mr. Perdue also recognized Chief Stoner and members of the Houston County Fire Department dive team for their work to rescue teenagers floating on the Ocmulgee River who found themselves in distress and needed assistance.

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

Robbie Dunbar
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner