

Houston County Commissioners Meeting

April 9, 2024

Perry, Georgia

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

Chairman Perdue gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Talton led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2nd Lt. Paul Wagner, Program Lead in the 407th Supply Chain Management Squadron at RAFB spoke about his military career, beginning at age 28 when he was commissioned into the US Air Force as an officer through the ROTC program at Valdosta State University. Lt. Wagner spoke about his current job which consists of 800 personnel with 8 being active-duty military. He said the principal duty of his squadron is to ensure parts and supplies are always available for mechanics to replace parts on aircraft as needed and when needed. He closed by saying he is glad to be stationed at Robins Air Force Base with Georgia being his home state.

Each Commissioner and Chairman Perdue thanked Lt. Wagner for his service, commitment to our freedom and sharing his story and information with those in attendance.

Chairman Perdue read a proclamation declaring April as Safe Digging Month in Houston County. He spoke about safe digging practices, how to keep from damaging infrastructure, and stressing the need to call 811 before digging so lines in the ground could be located. Chairman Perdue also thanked staff of Public Works for their work in ensuring safe work areas when building or repairing.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the March 19, 2024 meeting.

Building Inspections Administrative Secretary, Rebecca Kidd, presented Special Exception Applications #2750, #2751, #2753 - #2758, and #2760.

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 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 These restrictive covenants are not superseded by any action the Board of Commissioners takes.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.

Applicant #2750 was present, there was no opposition.

Applicant #2751 was present, there was no opposition.

Applicant #2753 was present, there was no opposition.

Applicant #2754 was present, there was no opposition.

Applicant #2755 was present, Victor Wade, president of the Overlook Subdivision Homeowners Association presented information on behalf of the neighborhood as to why the neighborhood was in opposition to his application. Mr. Striggles then spoke in support of his application and answered some of the points Mr. Wade presented.

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Applicant #2756 was present, there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2757 was not present as this application was tabled at the Zoning and Appeals meeting.
 Applicant #2758 was present, there was no opposition.
 Applicant #2760 was present, there was no opposition.

Chairman Perdue asked the Commissioners if they had any questions.

Mr. Byrd commented on the civility of their conversation. He also asked a question about the number of employees Mr. Striggles said he had coming to his house to meet before going to a job site.

Mr. Striggles replied he had one employee that came to the house.

Mr. Gottwals also had questions regarding employee traffic and vehicles coming to Mr. Striggles' house to meet before going to a job site based on comments Mr. Striggles had made about having only one employee coming to his residence.

Mr. Striggles again replied that there was primarily one person, sometimes two that came to his home.

Mr. Gottwals then asked County Attorney Tom Hall if it would be possible to table this application and send it back to the Zoning and Appeals Board so additional information could be gathered.

Mr. Hall advised that would be the best course of action to take in his opinion.

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

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, 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:

#2750	Keshier and Mandisa Randolph	Vegan Deserts (Internet)
#2751	Stacy Yearby	DIY Parties Business
#2753	Brittany Newkirk	Short-term Rentals Business
#2754	Gail McLoon	Accounting Business
#2756	Daniel and Brittany Tate	Jewelry Business (Internet)
#2758	Marcus and Sabrina Pinkney	Home Healthcare Business
#2760	David and Mary Hankinson	Tile and Remodeling Business

and to table the following Special Exception Applications:

#2755	Alvin Striggles	Framing Contractor Business
#2757	Antti Palomaki	Painting and Art Sales

Ms. Kidd advised the applicants that were approved on the next step in the process, which would be obtaining their business license through the Commissioner's office.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for acceptance of a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to update the County's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan.

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Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the acceptance of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to update the County's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan in the amount of \$24,444.00 with a federal share of \$21,999.60, a state share of \$977.76, a local share of \$1,466.64, and Subrecipient Management cost of \$1,635.60. The County's portion will be "in-kind" funding as labor cost.

Chairman Perdue thanked Fire Chief Chris Stoner for finding and writing these grants in support of the County.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a ground lease between the Board of Commissioners of Houston County and the Central Georgia Soccer Association.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of a lease between the Board of Commissioners of Houston County and Central Georgia Soccer Association for a term of 10 years on property located at the corner of Perry Parkway and Kings Chapel Road.

Chairman Perdue advised this would be similar to the lease for the County property on Cohen Walker Road. He also stated that this action would allow for an expansion of the Central Georgia Soccer Association and provide them with more practice space. He also advised that the Central Georgia Soccer Association would have to comply with all City of Perry requirements and regulations. He also commented that an additional benefit would be that the County would no longer be responsible for mowing that land.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for the purchase of 1.18 acres of property which will provide access to the Henderson Water Tower Site from Hwy 41.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the purchase of property totaling 1.18 acres, located on South Hwy 41, from David G. Puryear in the amount of \$13,000 to provide access to the Henderson Water Tower Site. This purchase is being paid from Water Capital funds.

Chairman Perdue advised this action would make it easier to access the water tower site as the location is landlocked.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for budget adjustments to the ARPA Fiscal Recovery Fund.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve the following adjustments to the ARPA Fiscal Recovery Fund budget:

Revenue Loss Projects		
1	<i>Health Department Addition</i>	\$6,195,342
2	Airport T-Hangers	\$1,000,000
3	Public Safety (LPR) Cameras	\$1,000,000
4	<i>State Court Addition (FFE)</i>	\$ 315,652
5	<i>State Court Parking Lot Addition</i>	\$ 344,438
6	<i>911 Water Damage Remediation/Renovation</i>	\$ 361,157
7	Non-Profit Org. Revenue Support	\$ 105,000

Major Category Projects

1	<i>Phase II Gilbert Road W/L Ext</i>	\$ 916,768
2	<i>Phase III Sewell Road W/L Ext</i>	\$1,544,400
3	<i>Hwy 341 & Graham Rd W/L Ext</i>	\$1,082,400
4	<i>Scott Road & Scott Road Ext W/L Ext</i>	\$ 887,040

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5	Hwy 341/Kings Crest Sub W/L Ext	\$2,669,700
6	<i>Bear Branch Remote Well</i>	\$2,208,028
7	<i>Bear Branch Remote Well Piping</i>	\$ 267,914
8	Dunbar Road Well Site/Facilities	\$3,000,000
9	Middle Flint Behavioral Health Care Crisis Stabilization Unit Repairs & Modifications	\$ 200,000
10	Bonaire Elevated Tank	\$7,000,000
11	Houston Healthcare- EMS	\$2,000,000
12	<i>Woodfield Drainage Improvements Phase II</i>	\$ 700,000

Chairman Perdue stated that all of the ARPA projects have had their budgets reduced down to current costs except for the Health Department which had an increase due to architectural cost increases. He also stated that drainage improvements for the Woodfield Subdivision had also been added as an ARPA project. He mentioned that all ARPA funds must be obligated by the end of the calendar year. Also, that resurfacing of Houston Lake Road and smaller road resurfacing projects would also be covered by ARPA dollars. He stated that a goal would be to not send any ARPA dollars back and that the County may have to spend some of its money completing some projects to ensure they get done.

Mr. Byrd commented that he was happy to see these infrastructure projects being completed for the benefit of Houston County residents.

Mr. Byrd presented a request to apply for additional LMIG funds from the Georgia Department of Transportation to be used for pedestrian improvements at the intersection of SR11 Connector (Perry Parkway) and SR11 (US 341).

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to approve submitting an application for additional LMIG funds to be used for pedestrian improvements at the intersection of SR11 Connector (Perry Parkway) and SR11 (US 341).

Chairman Perdue advised this location was for the new Jack's Links location and that the State offered these additional LMIG funds to cover the pedestrian improvements instead of Jack's Links covering the costs.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to apply for the 2024 Local Road Assistance Administration Grant (LRA).

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve submitting the LRA application for \$1,195,568.94 to resurface Houston Lake Road, beginning at SR127 and ending at Hunt Road, for a length of 2.0 miles.

Chairman Perdue stated that these were additional funds, approved by State Legislators this session that require no match. Chairman Perdue thanked Public Works staff present at the meeting for their work on this application.

Mr. Gottwals presented a memorandum of understanding between the Houston County Board of Commissioners, the Georgia 4-H Foundation, and Parrish Construction Group, Inc., that had been changed since its approval at the February 20, 2024 meeting.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the ratification of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Houston County Board of Commissioners, the Georgia 4-H Foundation, and Parrish Construction Group, Inc.

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Mr. Gottwals presented a request to fill the vacant Assistant Public Defender's position.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the hiring of Kyle Holloman to fill the vacant Assistant Public Defender's position at Grade 30 step C effective April 15, 2024. Staff have reviewed his qualifications, and he does exceed the requirements for the C step.

Mr. Talton presented a request to start the bidding process for clearcutting 36.7 acres and the clearing of 20 acres of timber for future expansion at the Landfill.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve Public Works and American Forest Management starting the bidding process for clearcutting 36.7 acres and the clearing of 20 acres of timber for future expansion at the Landfill.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the selection of Nichols, Cauley & Associates, LLC as the new firm for auditing purposes for Houston County.

Mr. Talton thanked Commissioners Robinson and Gottwals for their work in selecting this firm. He also thanked Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar and Chief Financial Officer Danylle George for their assistance and recommendation as well.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$5,745,965.18.

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

Ms. Meg Mehserle spoke about election integrity.

There being no further comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Comments portion of the meeting.

Chairman Perdue then opened the floor for Commissioner's Comments.

Mr. Byrd recognized Robins Financial Credit Union on the occasion of their 70th anniversary of operations in the Houston County community. He also thanked Christina O'Brien and the Credit Union's Board of Directors for all that they do. He also mentioned all the political signs posted in the Right-of-Way and requested that all candidates work to adhere to the law of no signs posted in the Right-of-Way.

Mr. Talton commented on the professionalism of the Board and the citizens of the community when they came to express their concerns. He also recognized Board of Elections Supervisor, Debra Presswood, and her staff for receiving the Eagle Award in recognition of the high level of proficiency, professionalism and secured elections her office has run.

Commissioner Robinson thanked everyone for being in attendance and said she was proud to represent the citizens of Houston County.

Commissioner Gottwals recognized the fact that it was Commissioner Talton's birthday and encouraged everyone to wish him a happy birthday.

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Chairman Perdue mentioned that Ms. Robinson also recently celebrated a birthday, that Mr. Talton's was today, and the Mr. Gottwals would be celebrating his birthday on Thursday. He wished all a very happy birthday. He also expressed his appreciation to the Public Works Roads and Bridges crew who were working in Crisp County assisting the residents down in Cordele who were affected by the recent tornado. He thanked the citizens of Houston County for providing the equipment needed to handle situations like this and was happy we could assist our neighboring counties in need.

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

Robbie Dunbar
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner