

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
April 19, 2022
Warner Robins, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday April 19, 2022, at the Houston County Annex in Warner Robins, Georgia, with Chairman Stalnaker presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Robinson, and Walker present. Also present were County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Barry Holland, Director of Personnel Ken Carter, Director of Purchasing Mark Baker, Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews, Fire/HEMA Chief Chris Stoner, Dan Perdue, Steve Williams, Jacqueline Rozier and Flint Energies VP of Member Solutions Rogie Roberson.

Commissioner Byrd led the audience in the Invocation and then the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the April 5, 2022 meeting.

Mr. Byrd presented a request from the City of Warner Robins for annexation of property totaling 25.636-acres located at 1128 Highway 96, Kathleen. Mr. Byrd then paused to receive public comments.

Chairman Stalnaker first described the property in question in relation to the adjacent commercial development behind the Lowe's on Hwy. 96. He then commented that the developer would be providing access to the multi-story apartment complex from both Lake Joy Road and Hwy. 96.

There were no comments from the public.

Chairman Stalnaker also commented that there has been no request to the County for consideration of water services to this property.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Walker to concur with a City of Warner Robins annexation request for property totaling 25.636-acres (a portion of Tax Parcel 000520 007000) located at 1128 Highway 96 Kathleen.

Chairman Stalnaker asked Mr. Holland to address the water availability question in the letter to the City of Warner Robins relative to the concurrence of the Board on this request. He then commented that the City of Warner Robins will need to be careful when dealing with the traffic that will come out onto Lake Joy Road and Hwy. 96. There is no median break at Hwy. 96 so GDOT will likely require a right-in and right-out design there. Houston County does not control access onto the state highway.

Motion carried unanimously to concur with the City of Warner Robins annexation request.

Mr. Byrd presented a request to raise the fees paid to court-appointed attorneys.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve raising the fees paid to court-appointed attorneys from \$60 per hour for in-court services to \$75 per hour and from \$45 per hour for out-of-court services to \$60 per hour effective May 1, 2022.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of a bid on the South Houston Lake Road and Feagin Mill Road Intersection Improvements project.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of the South Houston Lake Road and Feagin Mill Road Intersection Improvements project to C.W. Matthews Contracting Company of Marietta, GA in the amount of \$2,538,147. This is a SPLOST 2018 funded project.

Mr. Walker presented a request for approval of independent contractor agreements with four local attorneys to provide defense of indigent persons in cases where there has been a declared conflict of interest.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing independent contractor agreements for the purposes of providing defense of indigent persons in cases where there has been a declared conflict of interest with David G. Daniell, Jonathan Perry Waters, Jeffrey L. Grube, and Carl Veline, Jr. effective May 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that he has been in numerous conversations with Judge Lukemire regarding the modification of these indigent defense attorney agreements as well as the court appointed attorney fee structure from agenda item two. It has been difficult to obtain the services of attorneys for these conflict cases and the rate of pay has been one reason and the sheer volume of the workload has been another. These two measures will help the court system with these issues.

Mr. Walker presented a Policy for Professional Services Amendment.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve omitting the Independent Contract Attorneys contracted for indigent defense services with Juvenile Court and Superior Court from the current policy that has been in effect since August 1, 2012, requiring a coverage amount of \$1,000,000 and adopting a new policy that requires the Independent Contract Attorneys contracted for indigent defense services in Juvenile Court and Superior Court to maintain errors and omissions (professional liability) insurance coverage in the minimum amount of \$300,000.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that this action reducing the liability insurance amount will enhance the courts' ability to retain attorneys to cover the conflict cases.

Mr. Walker presented a request to fill the vacant Equipment Operator/Compliance Officer position at the Landfill.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve hiring Ronnie Beard to fill the vacant Equipment Operator/Compliance Officer position at the Landfill at a Grade 10-E effective May 2, 2022.

Ms. Robinson presented a request to hire poll workers for the May 24th General Primary/Special Election.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve the hiring of poll workers for the upcoming May 24, 2022 General Primary/Special Election as noted in a memorandum dated April 1, 2022 from Elections Supervisor Debra Presswood.

Chairman Stalnaker pointed out that this represents an estimate of what will be required to run this election. The actual amount could be a little more or a little less.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of an emergency purchase of one new 2022 Chevrolet Tahoe PPV.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of one new 2022 Chevrolet Tahoe PPV from Brannen Motor Company of Perry for use in the District Attorney's office in the amount of \$38,000. The District Attorney will reimburse the County for the cost of this vehicle from Forfeiture Funds.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a bid on one new high-track bulldozer for use at the Landfill.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd to approve the award of one new 2022 Caterpillar D7 Bulldozer from Yancey Brothers Co. of Macon for use at the Landfill for \$713,120 plus a 60-month Premier Equipment Protection Plan Extended Warranty for an additional \$48,420 to total \$761,540. This equipment is funded by Solid Waste Capital Funds.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that it is fortunate that the Landfill is in the fiscal condition that it is with no debt and can make this kind of expenditure from available funds.

Motion carried unanimously to approve the bid on one new high-track bulldozer.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$2,812,348.83.

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

Chief Stoner gave a brief update of the storm damage from the tornado that touched down in Houston County recently. He was proud of the response in this community from the Fire Department, the Sheriff's Department, the Public Works Department, and the local community to this natural disaster. Roughly thirty properties sustained damages with preliminary estimates of \$2 million in residential damages which is probably a very low estimate with the actual insured damages potentially reaching \$4 million. There were 26 calls for service between 4:00 pm and 9:00 pm that day to the Fire Department through the E911. During that time all thirty damaged properties were physically searched to verify occupants' safety. Only three or four residents required assistance to get out of their homes. The damage assessment was completed that evening utilizing the recently purchased county-wide Crisis Track software program. This program sped up that assessment process to hours versus days compared to past events. The National Weather Service officially classified the event as an EF-3 with winds estimated at 160 mph. This is just short of making an EF-4 classification which begins at wind speeds of 166 mph. The tornado was 820 yards wide, which is nearly ½-mile, and fortunately only a small portion of the width hit residential with the bulk passing through unimproved properties or cow pastures. If it had shifted slightly in its track it would have been a completely different outcome. Roughly 30 fire personnel worked the scene that night which was a combination of

paid firefighters and volunteer firefighters. The Sheriff's Department also had a ton of resources on scene. Chief Stoner publicly thanked the Landings Golf Club for allowing the department to set up a command post inside their clubhouse facility which helped to coordinate the activities.

Chairman Stalnaker thanked Chief Stoner for his leadership and all other personnel involved including the power companies. He expressed a desire to have some type of celebration where all could be invited and recognized for their actions, teamwork, and cooperation.

Chief Stoner specifically thanked the County Roads and Bridges department for their efforts helping fire personnel clear Fairways Drive within one hour.

Each of the Board members expressed their appreciation of those involved for their team effort and the willingness to help those in need.

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

Chairman Stalnaker closed the regular portion of the meeting and opened Commissioners Comments.

Mr. Walker thanked everyone for coming and remarked that it was great to live in Houston County with people that care about each other and about Houston County.

Ms. Robinson also thanked everyone for coming and for participating in the meeting. She expressed appreciation for everyone working together as a team and making Houston County a great place to live.

Chairman Stalnaker commented on the recent audit exit interviews that the Board members conducted with the County's auditors remarking that it was a very clean audit of which he and the other board and staff members take a great deal of pride in. There was a good measure of reserve funds that were carried over from FY21 and the Board has already taken measures recently to allocate those funds for other purposes. There are only two months left in this current FY22 fiscal year and he was very hopeful that it will end up as a good year as well.

Mr. Byrd remarked that this was another point of pride for Houston County and another reason to celebrate fiscal responsibility and true diligent oversight of public funds. He credited Chairman Stalnaker and also the efforts of Mr. Holland and our comptroller along with employees, department heads and employees for efficient operations of the county government. He also wished his mother, Betty Byrd, a happy birthday on this coming Thursday.

Chairman Stalnaker reminded everyone that the next Commissioner's meeting would be on May 3rd at 9:00 a.m. in Perry at the courthouse. Due to the renovations occurring at the Probate Court, the Boardroom may or may not be available on that day. If not, the meeting will be held upstairs in the Jury Assembly Room.

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Chairman Stalnaker then recognized Director of Purchasing Mark Baker and asked him for an update on the State Court Expansion project which he felt was progressing nicely at this point and time. Provided that the contractor could continue to get materials and supplies in a timely fashion he thought it might be finished much sooner than the end of the year.

Mr. Baker shared his thoughts on an early completion but reminded everyone that the contract does call for completion at the end of December. They are making great progress every day with sheetrock and windows having been installed and even some of the large air handler units placed on top of the building. A lot of electrical work is being accomplished including setting the main transformer for the building. Other construction projects are progressing as well including the new Bonaire fire station RFP which are due back on April 28th. He hoped to have a recommendation from the building committee for the second Board meeting in May. The Health Department construction progress is on schedule working toward a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP).

Chairman Stalnaker reminded everyone that dirt should be moving on that site by the end of June.

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

Barry Holland
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner