

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
March 16, 2021
Warner Robins, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday March 16, 2021, at the Houston County Annex in Warner Robins, Georgia, with Chairman Stalnaker presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Perdue, Robinson, and Walker present. Also present were County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Barry Holland, Director of Operations Robbie Dunbar, Director of Purchasing Mark Baker, Director of Personnel Ken Carter, Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews, Fire/HEMA Chief Chris Stoner, Chief Magistrate Bob Turner, Jim Mehserle of JMA Architecture, and Ronnie Blalock and Kenna Scragg of ICB Construction.

Commissioner Walker gave the Invocation and then led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the meeting of March 2, 2021.

Mr. Walker presented a request to hire Claudia Landeros to fill the vacant Deputy Clerk position at the Magistrate Court.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the hiring of Claudia Landeros for the vacant Deputy Clerk position in the Magistrate Court at a Grade 12-C effective March 17, 2021.

Mr. Walker presented a request for approval of an additional services agreement with Owen Lewis Consulting.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Byrd to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing a professional services agreement with Owen Lewis Consulting of Saline, MI for additional services required for project management and implementation on the Court Case Management and Jail Management systems through June 30, 2021 at a total cost of \$63,320.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that he had hoped that it would not be necessary to extend this agreement but that it has become apparent it will be necessary. He stated that he did not fault County staff for the delay in this project, but rather various other agencies involved as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. This extension through June 30th will not be extended further however so it is imperative that it be brought to a close.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of an amendment to a contract with ICB Construction Group of Macon.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Walker to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing an amendment to the contract with ICB Construction Group of Macon on the new State Court Expansion project accepting the guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) of \$18,300,000.

Mr. Byrd commented that this is an exciting project as it will benefit the citizens of Houston County by providing improved State Court services and also create much needed space for the Annex building as the old State Court space is repurposed. He thanked the Chairman, County staff, ICB Construction Group, and JMA Architecture for their combined efforts bringing the project to this point.

Mr. Walker thanked ICB and JMA for the outstanding job they are doing on this project as well as many other past projects.

Chairman Stalnaker thanked the voters most of all for approving the 2018 SPLOST by which this project is being funded. He said that this exciting project will serve the County for many years to come and that we do desperately need the space here at this facility once the State Court functions are moved to Perry. ICB and JMA are two critical components in this project and the Board as well as the citizens of the County have high expectations of them. He thanked Mark Baker, Barry Holland, Robbie Dunbar, the other Board members, past and present for their efforts on this project.

Jim Mehserle, President of JMA Architecture of Perry, commented that the process of design has been going on a while and that JMA has thoroughly enjoyed the participation of the elected officials, department heads and employees of the State Court. He commended Mr. Holland for helping to focus staff efforts during this process. He added that he certainly appreciated the voters as well but also the Board members for placing their trust in JMA and that JMA enjoys a great working relationship with ICB having designed and built many buildings together in the past.

Kenna Scragg, President of ICB Construction Group of Macon, remarked that the ICB team was also excited about the project and thanked the Board, the voters, and the JMA team.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval on a change order for the Elko Road Waterline Extension.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Perdue and carried unanimously by all to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing Change Order #2 (Final) with Low Tide Piping, LLC of Wrightsville, GA decreasing the contract amount of \$567,885.39 by \$23,648.77 for a new contract total of \$544,236.62. There is no increase in contract time.

Mr. Perdue presented a request for approval of a bid on the 2021 Joint LMIG.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve a bid award for the Joint 2021 LMIG road resurfacing and repair projects to Reeves Construction Company of Macon in the total amount of \$2,553,996.10 of which Houston County's portion is \$1,042,129.40. The cities of Warner Robins, Centerville, Perry, and Byron will be responsible for the balance of \$1,511,866.70.

Mr. Perdue remarked that this was yet another example of good local cooperation achieving lower pricing for each entity.

Mr. Perdue presented a request for approval of a roadside maintenance contract with Dixie Lawn & Landscaping, Inc.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the acceptance of the Landscape (Roadside) Maintenance proposal from Dixie Lawn & Landscaping, Inc. of Cochran to include the revised scope of services dated March 8, 2021. Scope of work includes a guaranteed seven visits at \$23,359 per occurrence on 41.43 miles of County roads and rights-of-way beginning March 17, 2021 through June 30, 2021: and sixteen visits at \$17,934.25 per occurrence on 31.19 miles of County roads and rights-of-ways from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. Additional options available are slopes at \$11,520 per occurrence and additional mowing at \$575 per mile. Roads Department (4200) professional services will be charged for these expenses.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that this was by no means a contract to cover all County roads and that County crews would still be mowing with tractors. This contract will cover the most travelled roads. The reason why we are having to contract these services goes back to the fact that the County has not been able to utilize inmate crews for over a year now and do not anticipate them coming out anytime this calendar year. If and when they are able to come back out the County can then re-evaluate this contract. This is a good price for the services and the contractor is more than capable of handling the scope of work. He asked Mr. Hall to verify that the County had all the appropriate liability coverages from the contractor before they began work.

Mr. Byrd commended Mr. Dunbar and his staff for their efforts.

Mr. Perdue presented a request for abandonment of easement on property located at 303 Taylor Street in Warner Robins.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve the Resolution Abandoning a Houston County Drainage Easement approving Wellston Associates Land Surveyor, LLC's application on behalf of Roger C. Greer and Carol A. Greer for abandonment of an existing 10' Drainage Easement that runs the length of the rear or westerly property line within the boundaries of Parcel 00073F 046000 located at 303 Taylor Street, Warner Robins, GA 31093 and by approving the Resolution, also authorizing Chairman Stalnaker to sign the quit-claim deed conveying the easement rights.

Chairman Stalnaker inquired as to whether Roads Superintendent Travis McLendon had signed off on this abandonment.

Mr. Dunbar answered that Mr. McLendon had been out with a medical issue but that County Engineer Ronnie Heald had visited the site and confirmed that it was not needed.

Mr. Perdue presented a revision of the Houston Lake Draw Down Policy.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Ms. Robinson to approve the withdrawal of the Houston Lake Draw Down Policy adopted by the Board on December 15, 1998 and the adoption of the new policy proposed by the Public Works Department that would change the frequency of the draw down from three (3) to five (5) years and extend the draw down period from two to three weeks (2-3) to three to four (3-4) weeks. This policy is to be attached hereto and become a permanent part of these meeting minutes. After voting Mr. Perdue, Ms. Robinson, and Mr. Walker voted yes, Mr. Byrd abstained. Motion approved.

Chairman Stalnaker thanked Mr. Perdue and Ms. Robinson for studying the issue and speaking to the lake owner, property owners, and Public Works staff.

Mr. Perdue clarified that anytime there was an emergency consideration for an unscheduled draw-down could be given.

County Attorney Tom Hall conducted the second reading of amendments to Chapter 2-Administration; Article III- Board, Commissions, Authorities, and Other Agencies; Division 2- Hospital Authority of the Code of Ordinances, Houston County Georgia.

Chairman Stalnaker closed the regular portion and opened a Public Hearing.

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

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve an amendment to Chapter 2-Administration; Article III- Board, Commissions, Authorities, and Other Agencies; Division 2- Hospital Authority of the Code of Ordinances, Houston County Georgia by amending the following sections: Section 2-82(a); the number of members will be amended from nine members to seven members; Section 2-82 (c); designation of who serves on the hospital authority will be amended; and 2-83; will be removed from the Code of Ordinances and shall read as follows:

Sec.2.82.-Membership; appointment of members; term of office:

(a) The hospital authority shall consist of a board of seven members representing all areas of the county at the discretion of the board of commissioners.

(c) The hospital authority board shall consist of the following members: three Houston County Commissioners; the mayors of each of the three cities in Houston County (City of Warner Robins, City of Perry, and City of Centerville); and one member from the Board of Trustees of either Houston Hospitals, Inc. or Houston Healthcare Systems, Inc. The terms of all elected officials appointed to the hospital authority shall be the same as their respective elected terms of political office.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that this should have been corrected years ago to bring the Authority into compliance with the way it actually functions and thanked Mr. Hall for his efforts.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a bid on a tractor for use in the Roads Department.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Perdue and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of one new Kubota M5-111HDC-12 tractor for use in the Roads Department to Walker-Rhodes Tractor Co. of Perry in the amount of \$52,505. SPLOST 2012 will fund the purchase of this equipment.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$1,764,071.14.

Chairman Stalnaker pointed out that the County was paying one bill to the Georgia Secretary of State in the amount of \$10,208.80 for the absentee ballot processing by the State. He explained that when the absentee ballots were sent out by the Secretary of the State's office voters had an option to check a box guaranteeing them a mailed absentee ballot for the remainder of the election cycle. The Secretary of the State said that they would mail these ballots out for each County if the County opted in. It appears that every county in the state chose to participate and then found out that the State was going to bill the County for those ballots. This was an unbudgeted expense for each County. The State of Georgia passed these costs down to the local level. He commented that the Board of Elections staff has done an excellent job during this long election cycle, but their budget was almost double because of the 2020 elections.

Mr. Byrd remarked that there is frustration from local governments throughout the state on this issue.

Ms. Robinson commented on another bill that was being paid in the amount of \$6,103.75 to Tattall Ballot Solutions for the printing of ballots. The County used to be able to print them but with the new voting machines we cannot so this is another additional cost to the County.

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

Fire/HEMA Chief Stoner briefed the Board on the very active weather pattern coming over the next few days with several different rounds of storms moving through area. Predominantly our threats are going to be rain up to 2", high winds, and potential tornado development. The National Weather Service is not 100% certain of the time yet but information for citizens is available on the EMA Facebook page. Code Red notifications are also a good way to receive alerts. This threat will be with us through Thursday. He asked that people secure any items in their yards that may become projectiles with the high winds.

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

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

Mr. Walker thanked everyone for coming commenting that it is great to live in a community like Houston County. He expressed his appreciation for the outstanding job that every County employee does each and every day.

Ms. Robinson also thanked everyone for coming and for viewing on the internet. She thanked all the voters again for the current SPLOST and commented that she hoped there were many more voters going out today to vote for the E-SPLOST.

Mr. Perdue encouraged everyone to vote before the polls closed tonight at 7:00 p.m. He commented that he had the opportunity today to tour the County with the Perry Chamber Youth Leadership group on County government day. He extended a special thank you to Community Planner Jake Cox who leads that group tour every year and

does a great job. He also thanked Landfill Superintendent Terry Dietsch for his part in today's program teaching the youth about the Landfill's operations; Sgt. Fussell and Sgt. Spivey for the firing range demonstration and tour, as well as the E-911 operators for their participation.

Mr. Byrd likewise encouraged everyone to vote before the polls closed. He also commented on the County's bid process which we had two items on the agenda today, the LMIG projects and a new tractor, with multiple bids from reputable companies. He appreciated that effort which yielded great results on both.

Chairman Stalnaker announced that there would be a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Monday, March 22nd at 1:00 p.m. at the Synergy building that was started last year with Robins AFB and the Houston County Development Authority. He has had an opportunity to tour that building and it is truly amazing. There will be roughly 150 IT professionals working in the building. General Kirkland will be here for the ceremony.

He then spoke about a meeting he recently had with Chairman Bill Fowler of the Tax Assessors concerning the growth in Houston County. In 2021, there have been 917 parcels added to the digest with 65,519 total parcels. In 2017, there were 62,374 parcels.

Chairman Stalnaker then spoke about the upcoming 200th anniversary of Houston County as it was created through a treaty with the Creek Indians on May 15, 1821. He gave a brief history of the County and the three incorporated cities and Robins AFB. There will be some type of events planned over the next few months in commemoration of this anniversary.

Lastly, he reminded everyone that the next Commissioner's meeting would be on April 6th at 9:00 a.m. in Perry at the courthouse.

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

Barry Holland
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner