

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
December 1, 2020
Perry, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday December 1, 2020, at the Houston County Courthouse in Perry, Georgia, with Chairman Stalnaker presiding and Commissioners Walker, Thomson, McMichael, and Robinson 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, Fire/HEMA Chief Chris Stoner, Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews, Commissioner-elect Dan Perdue, Houston County Development Authority Chairman Ben Hulbert, Development Authority Executive Director Angie Gheesling, MGRC Senior Government Services Specialist Susan Landfried, 21st Century Partnership COO Dan Rhoades, Attorney Larry Walker, Advanced Disposal Operations Manager Jeanne Moyer, and Walton Wood.

Commissioner Robinson gave the Invocation.

Brig. Gen. Jennifer Hammerstedt, USAF led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance and then detailed her 24-year military career. She was raised in a small town in rural Cumberland County, New Jersey the youngest of five children. At seventeen years old, she attended the New Mexico Military Institute and received her commission from the Air Force Academy in 1996. Currently serving as the Commander of the Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex, this is her second assignment at Robins AFB and her fourteenth overall. She has also had several remotes and multiple deployments including South Korea, Afghanistan, and Qatar. She and her husband, a retired Air Force officer and airline pilot, have a Great Dane but no children. In speaking of the aircraft serviced at Robins, she said the C-5, C-17, C-130 and the F-15 are the bread-and-butter of Robins mission. The Global Hawk, J-STARS and helicopters round out the aircraft supported at Robins. Gen. Hammerstedt commented that this community is like no other with their overwhelming support of Robins AFB, its airmen, and the military mission.

Motion by Mr. McMichael, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the meeting of November 17, 2020.

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 occupation businesses. These restrictive covenants are superior to any action taken by the Board of Commissioners. The actions taken by the Board will not change any provision within the covenant that prohibits any commercial or business activity.

Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews presented Special Exception Applications #2408 and #2415.

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

Special Exception #2408 applicant was not present, there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2415 applicant was not present, there was no opposition.

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

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the following applications to include any and all stipulations as noted on the Zoning & Appeals recommendations and Section 95 Requirements staff report:

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Special Exception #2408 | Mitchell Hambrick | Infection Control Business |
| Special Exception #2415 | Boyd Hall | Handyman Business |

Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews presented Special Exception Applications #2417 thru #2421, #2423 thru #2427, #2431 thru #2433 and #2435.

Mr. McMichael asked Mr. Andrews if the mobile home hardship approval was contingent upon the current circumstances that prompted the application.

Mr. Andrew confirmed that the mobile home would have to be removed from the property if the hardship was no longer necessary.

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

Special Exception #2417 applicant was not present, there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2418 applicant was not present, there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2419 applicant was not present, there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2420 applicant was not present, there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2421 applicant was not present, there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2423 applicant was not present, there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2424 applicant was not present as application is recommended to be tabled.
Special Exception #2425 applicant was not present as application is recommended to be tabled.
Special Exception #2426 applicant was not present as application is recommended to be tabled.
Special Exception #2427 applicant was not present, there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2431 applicant was not present, there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2432 applicant was not present, there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2433 applicant was not present as application is recommended to be tabled.
Special Exception #2435 attorney Larry Walker was present representing applicant Silicon Ranch, there was no opposition.

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

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to table special exception applications #2424, #2425, #2426 and #2433 and send back to Zoning & Appeals for reconsideration.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. McMichael and carried unanimously by all to approve special exception applications #2417 thru #2421, #2423, #2427, #2431, #2432 and #2435 to include any and all stipulations as noted on the Zoning & Appeals recommendation and Section 95 Requirements staff report.

Mr. Andrews gave the applicants approved for a home occupation instruction on the next step of the process which is obtaining their occupational business license from the Commissioner's office.

Chairman Stalnaker remarked that the Silicon Ranch Corp. is constructing a solar farm that will be an asset to Houston County. It will be located on Firetower Road east of I-75 and will be a good source of energy for the EMCs. He recognized Mr. Larry Walker, Houston County Development Authority Chairman Ben Hulbert, and Executive Director Angie Gheesling.

Ms. Gheesling thanked the Commissioners and School Superintendent Dr. Mark Scott for support of this project and remarked that it brings a \$55 million investment that will generate the type of green power renewable energy that prospective companies look for in a community. Silicon Ranch brings a different approach from most solar companies in that they will own this property rather than lease it. Flint EMC will be a partner in this project. She thanked General Hammerstedt for her comments relative to our community.

Chairman Hulbert characterized Silicon Ranch as a first-class company and expressed his appreciation for the support this project received from the Board of Commissioners and others involved. He also thanked Mr. Thomson and Mr. McMichael for their service to our community.

Mr. Larry Walker reiterated that this project was a private investment not a state-funded project. He commented that he is proud of Silicon Ranch's commitment and that we are fortunate Houston County was chosen for this project site.

Mr. Thomson presented Re-Zoning Application #2422, submitted by Kanu Dodia, on property located at 1052A Hwy 247 changing it from R-AG to C-2.

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

Rezoning Application #2422 applicant not present.

John Schwendler, 1052 GA Hwy. 247 South, commented that he was in favor of the application but that he did have a few concerns. He stated that he lives directly behind the property in question and had concerns mainly about traffic and noise. He wondered if the rezoning was necessary and is unaware of the intended hours of operation at the store and hoped that it would not be open after 9:00 p.m.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that Mr. Dodia owns multiple commercial properties in the County and that he has always been very responsible in their management.

Mr. Andrews stated that the application for rezoning became necessary after a business license application was filed for a bodega-style grocery store.

There was no opposition.

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

Motion by Mr. Thomson, second by Mr. McMichael and carried unanimously by all to approve Re-Zoning Application #2422 submitted by Kanu Dodia.

Mr. Thomson presented Re-Zoning Application #2430, submitted by Bonaire Land Company LLC, on property located on Old Hwy. 96 changing it from R-1 to C-2.

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

Re-Zoning Application #2430 applicant not present, there was no opposition

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

Mr. Andrews stated that this property was adjacent to the existing convenience store.

Motion by Mr. Thomson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve Re-Zoning Application #2340 submitted by Bonaire Land Company LLC.

County Attorney Tom Hall presented the first reading of an amendment of the Houston County Code of Ordinances concerning changes to Article X-Timber Operations; Sec. 30-192-Permit and Sec. 30-193-Violations; penalties.

A second reading and public hearing will be held at the December 15, 2020 Houston County Board of Commissioners meeting to be held at 5:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room located at the Houston County Annex, 200 Carl Vinson Parkway, Warner Robins, Georgia after which action may be taken.

Chairman Stalnaker remarked that even with the increased penalty the threshold was still very low when considering potential road damage that may occur during timber operations.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for acceptance of supplemental Enhancement and Innovations grant funding for the Accountability Court.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing all documents necessary to accept supplemental Enhancement and Innovation grant funding (Grant #J21-8-072) of \$9,000 with a required \$1,000 match through the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council for use in the Houston County Accountability Court.

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Ms. Robinson presented an update to the Houston County Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Thomson and carried unanimously by all to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing a resolution authorizing the adoption of the Houston County Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan 2020 Update as prepared by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission.

Chief Stoner commented that the Middle Georgia Regional Commission has done an outstanding job helping the County and all three cities prepare this plan update. There was some great cooperation between the County and Warner Robins, Perry, and Centerville assembling this comprehensive plan outlining our goals and strategies mitigating potential disasters.

Chairman Stalnaker thanked Susan Landfried and the Regional Commission for their efforts on this plan update.

Motion by Mr. McMichael, second by Mr. Thomson and carried unanimously by all to authorize the Board of Commissioners meeting schedule for the 2021 calendar year.

Chairman Stalnaker remarked that we have begun the process of advertising the necessary amendment to the ordinances to accommodate the change of the evening meetings from 6:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and should have the first reading of it at the next Board meeting December 15th.

Motion by Mr. McMichael, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$9,895,686.95.

Mr. McMichael remarked that the largest expense in the bill cycle was the nearly \$7 million County contribution to the employee's retirement plan.

Mr. Thomson commented that he is thankful that the County can maintain the retirement fund for the employees.

Chairman Stalnaker clarified that this is the County's annual retirement contribution which is made on the calendar year basis.

Chairman Stalnaker reminded everyone of the established County holidays which are Christmas Eve Thursday December 24th, Christmas Day Friday December 25th, and New Year's Day Friday January 1st. He asked the Board to consider giving New Year's Eve Thursday December 31st as an additional paid day off.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to add December 31, 2020 as an additional paid day off.

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

Director of Operations Robbie Dunbar thanked the Board on behalf of the County employees for the additional paid day off. He also thanked them for fully funding the employee pension fund.

Cesar Gorman commented that as a senior citizen he resented paying a convenience fee when using a credit card to pay his property taxes. He asked that the Board consider waiving those fees.

Chairman Stalnaker stated that in this case the Tax Commissioner established that policy setting the transaction fees.

Dan Rhoades, 21st Century Partnership Chief Operating Officer, briefed the Board on the status of the defense budget stating that although the House and Senate are in conference no final bill has been presented to the President. This impacts the Air Force's ability on many fronts. He also thanked Mr. Thomson and Mr. McMichael for their many years of combined service to the community.

Chairman Stalnaker thanked Dan and the 21st Century Partnership for their efforts.

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

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

Mr. McMichael thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Mr. Thomson thanked Robbie Dunbar and his staff for their recent event honoring him and Mr. McMichael.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for coming, remarked that she was proud of the fully funded pension and wished everyone a happy holiday season.

Mr. Walker thanked everyone for coming and commended Mr. McMichael and Mr. Thomson for their many contributions to the County. He commented that we have an A+ retirement plan and the best employees.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that the County's United Way campaign met the \$25,000 goal and has raised \$32,158 which is an increase over last year of \$1,617. He commended Community Planner Jake Cox for a great job managing the campaign and remarked that the success of the campaign is attributable to very generous County employees and elected officials.

He reminded everyone that early voting begins on December 14th and will be at all three locations this time. Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday except that the County and polls will be closed on December 24th, December 25th and January 1st. The last day to early vote will be December 31st and there will be no Saturday voting as it is not required for a run-off election. Election day is Tuesday, January 5th and the polls are open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

He also reminded everyone of the Groundbreaking ceremonies set for December 17th at 1:00 p.m. for the State Court expansion project at the courthouse followed at 2:30 p.m. for the new Houston County Government Building on Kings Chapel Road next to the Purchasing Warehouse.

The next Board meeting is Tuesday, December 15th at 5:00 p.m. at the Warner Robins Annex. There is a possibility that the Board will have a special called meeting the last week of December to approve Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMPs) for both the State Court expansion and the Government Building.

Lastly, he urged everyone to stay safe and observe all appropriate COVID precautions.

Motion by Mr. McMichael, second by Mr. Thomson and carried unanimously by all to enter into Executive Session for Attorney/Client matters per O.C.G.A. § 50-14-2(1).

Chairman Stalnaker explained that no action would be taken as a result of the Executive Session and then asked Commissioner-elect Dan Perdue to join the session.

Chairman Stalnaker reconvened the meeting, confirmed that no action will be taken as a result of the Executive Session, and asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion to Adjourn by Mr. Thomson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all, meeting adjourned.

Barry Holland
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

EXECUTIVE SESSION AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF HOUSTON

AFFIDAVIT OF PRESIDING OFFICER

Tommy Stalnaker, 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 December 1, 2020.

2.

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

3.

The executive session was called to order at 10:47 a.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) _____.

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 December, 2020.

Tommy Stalnaker, Chairman
Houston County Board of Commissioners

Sworn to and subscribed
before me this _____ day of
December, 2020.

Notary Public

My commission expires:
