

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
Tuesday, January 7, 2020
Perry, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 7, 2020, at the Houston County Courthouse in Perry, Georgia, with Chairman Stalnaker presiding and Commissioners Walker, Thomson, McMichael, and Robinson present. Also present were Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Barry Holland, Director of Operations Robbie Dunbar, Director of Personnel Ken Carter, Director of Purchasing Mark Baker, Fire / HEMA Chief Chris Stoner, Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews, County Engineer Brian Jones, Landfill Superintendent Terry Dietsch, Solid Waste Collections Manager Janet Marcella, GSP Sgt. Hamilton Halford, GSP Capt. Garrett Fiveash, Flint Energies VP of Cooperative Communications Marian McLemore, Mark Byrd, Walton and Becky Wood and Ansel Peck

Commissioner McMichael led the audience in the Invocation.

Lt. Col. Jarrod Beers, US Air Force led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance and then detailed his 15-year military career. He was raised in northeast Ohio and attended Kent State University where he received his degree and went through the ROTC program. He has spent most of his career with the C-130 and AC-130 program as a navigator and in other roles. He has deployed eight times including Kuwait and Afghanistan and has been stationed at San Antonio, TX; Cannon AFB, NM; Hurlburt Field, FL; and Maxwell AFB, AL where he attended USAF Command and Staff College before coming to Robins AFB in June of 2019. At Robins he is a Branch Military Deputy with the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center. He has found our community to be very supportive of the military.

Chairman Stalnaker recognized Mr. Stewart Bloodworth and Marti his wife of 59-years for their continued support to the Board of Commissioners as an “ambassador” in south Houston County. Mr. Bloodworth, a former County Commissioner and long-time ag business owner, has assisted the County in many ways helping to secure right of way for various road projects. The Chairman and Mr. Dunbar presented Mr. Bloodworth a plaque and other small tokens of appreciation for his partnership, leadership and dedication to furthering the County’s progress.

Motion by Mr. McMichael, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 17, 2019.

Mr. Walker presented a request to fill a vacant Deputy Clerk position in the State Court Clerk’s Office.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the hiring of Faith Peeples for the vacant Deputy Clerk position in the State Court Clerk’s Office at a Grade 12-C effective January 8, 2020.

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Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews presented both Application #2313 and Application #2316 together explaining that #2316 was submitted by Cemex as a supplemental request to #2313 in order to maintain contiguousness to adjacent M-2 zoned property. The existing mining site was zoned R-AG Residential/Agricultural prior to the current land development regulations being adopted in the County. Mr. Andrews distributed the application materials submitted by Cemex supporting their requests to the Board.

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

Mr. Alex Guyse, Cemex Plant Manager and proponent, stated that Cemex was the only cement plant in the state of Georgia and that they employed 130+ at an average salary, to include benefits, of \$79,000 per year. He then introduced Mark Davies of Cemex to brief the application for the Board.

Mr. Mark Davies, Cemex Director of Cement Resources and proponent, stated that the re-zonings would provide the land and resources to feed eight cement plants in the country and would mean 20-years of additional reserves for the company. He spoke briefly of the economic impact of the company which generates an estimated \$163 million of economic output in the state of Georgia with a \$10.5 million local annual payroll to include benefits. He introduced Mr. Bob Norman, partner with Jones Cork LLP, and other staff members of their legal team and also attending Cemex staff.

Chairman Stalnaker asked for clarification on how long Cemex has owned the acreage in question, about the requirements for necessary buffers to adjacent properties, traffic concerns related to the mining operations, and any noise generated by the necessary blasting to separate the limestone from the earth.

Mr. Davies replied that the 290-acre parcel was purchased from Weyerhaeuser Corp. in 2004 and the other parcel containing the 6.5-acres has been held by the company for decades; the subject parcel will have a 50-foot undisturbed buffer zone of standing pine trees and forest growth along the southern and western borders of the parcel; the state of Georgia does not have regulations concerning these buffers; utilization of the existing conveyor system to move raw materials from the quarry area to the plant largely eliminates truck traffic on public roads; the nearest residence is located approximately three-quarters of a mile from the site; on average only one blast per week is necessary to separate the limestone from the earth and the distances from the nearest residences preclude any noise concerns.

Mr. McMichael inquired as to the total acreage owned by Cemex and also about any ongoing issues with the EPA.

Mr. Davies responded that the company owns nearly 3,000 acres and that there are no outstanding issues with the EPA with the site being an ISO-certified site.

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Mr. Thomson inquired if there was a site plan for the 290 acres.

Mr. Davies responded that the County applies the zoning first.

Ms. Robinson asked about any increase in production.

Mr. Davies confirmed that neither the scope of limestone mining activities nor the cement production levels would materially increase when mining this additional acreage in the future. He explained that the mining process occurs in phases and would move in a westerly direction from the existing mining site into the additional acreage at a rate of approximately 15 acres per year.

Ms. Becky Wood, opponent, 426 Sandefur Road, Kathleen spoke of the increased pollution that an increased mining area would cause. She referenced the EPD and the Clean Air Act that imposes limitations on pollutants and stated that Cemex had at some point submitted a request to the EPD to allow for increased pollutant levels. She contended that Cemex was cited in 2011 for releasing more than the allowed pollutants. If allowed to increase the mining area the pollution will increase and also that clear-cutting timber means no trees to help filter the air. She felt that the best and highest use is not mining and that there were wetlands and streams in the area designated for conservation use. She felt that there were properties spot-zoned in 2009 and that the required 200 and 300-foot buffers on other properties were clear-cut.

Mr. Walton Wood, opponent, 426 Sandefur Road, Kathleen stated that the legal ad that was run pursuant to these applications did not even mention Hwy. 224 along which these properties border. He referenced the 200 and 300-foot buffers that Ms. Wood mentioned previously stating that although Cemex no longer owns these properties perhaps the buffer requirements should transfer when property changes hands.

Mr. Davies responded to Ms. Woods' concern about pollution conceding that the plant does generate certain pollutants however it is continuously monitored and reported to the EPD. The plant does burn waste tires and wood debris for a source of alternative or recycled fuels. The 290-acre tract was clear-cut by Weyerhaeuser, the previous owner, but any timber cut and harvested on Cemex property is done responsibly. The referenced 200 and 300-foot buffers were for properties no longer owned by Cemex and the buffers were originally imposed regarding potential mining operations that never came to fruition not for timber management purposes by a new owner.

Mr. Eddie Borders, Environmental Manager at Cemex and proponent, confirmed that the company electronically monitors emissions and reports quarterly to the EPD and semi-annually to the EPA. He also stated that the company is subject to surprise visits by the EPD as well.

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Mr. Bob Norman, partner with Jones Cork LLP representing Cemex, stated that there is no regulatory requirement to be linked directly to the EPD for monitoring. He stated that the plant has been commended this past year by EPA for being such a well-run plant from an environmental standpoint. The sign notice for the re-zoning was posted on Hwy. 224 at the entrance to the mining area by Mr. Andrews. The comprehensive plan narrative and existing future land use map contemplates the continuing use of this facility and other industrial facilities in this part of the County.

Ms. Becky Wood, opponent, clarified that even though the sign was posted at the entrance to the existing mining area the notice in the paper had the address as 341 South and did not mention Hwy. 224. She stated that the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and maps show these properties as designated for suburban residential, urban residential and rural residential.

Mr. Walton Wood, opponent, clarified once again that the legal ad appearing in the legal organ of the County, the Houston Home Journal, did not mention Hwy. 224. If they have continuous monitoring, they should use it. Everything in Clinchfield has a white film on it from plant operations.

As there were no further comments Chairman Stalnaker closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Mr. Walker asked the County Attorney to comment on the published ad.

Mr. Hall clarified that the published ad did not misidentify the property and that all the legal requirements had been met.

Mr. Thomson asked Mr. Andrews for a clarification on properties with a conditional use.

Mr. Andrews stated that according to the County's regulations if the use of the property was in compliance with the regulations prior to a change then that use of the property is continued as a compliant use. There is no requirement for that conditional use property to be rezoned, as in this case, to M-2 just because the regulations changed. The 6.5-acre strip in the supplemental application (#2316) is what makes the 290-acre property contiguous to M-2 zoning. The previous mention of the 200 to 300-foot buffer was a condition of a previous application for rezoning submitted several years ago but was only required for the purposes of the mining operation and was not a condition of the actual rezoning.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. McMichael and carried unanimously by all to approve Re-Zoning Application #2313 submitted by Cemex Southeast, LLC.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Ms. Robinson to approve Re-Zoning application #2316 submitted by Cemex Southeast, LLC. Upon voting motion passed three to one with Mr. Walker, Ms. Robinson and Mr. McMichael voting yes and Mr. Thomson voting no.

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Director of Administration Barry Holland presented the first reading of an Alcohol License Application submitted by Shetalben G. Patel representing Shree Yogiji dba Lake Mart convenience store for the retail sale of beer and wine. A second reading and public hearing will be held at the January 21, 2020 meeting in Warner Robins after which the Board will vote on the issue.

Ms. Robinson presented a request from District Attorney Hartwig to purchase 33 replacement computers for use in his office.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve the purchase of 33 computers from Dell for a total amount of \$50,603.52 for use in the District Attorney's office. DA Hartwig will reimburse the County for 100% of the cost of this equipment purchase from Forfeiture Funds.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Thomson and carried unanimously by all to authorize Chairman Stalnaker signing a letter of commitment concerning financial participation in the Georgia Department of Transportation proposed roundabout for State Route 247 @ State Route 247 Spur in the amount of \$500,000; and to authorize Chairman Stalnaker signing a Memorandum of Agreement memorializing the County's contribution and the terms under which the funds will be forwarded to GDOT. The County's portion of the funding would come from SPLOST.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that the County was happy to partner with the DOT in order to expedite this \$3 million project.

Mr. Thomson presented a request from the Purchasing Department for approval of a bid on one new articulated dump truck for use at the Landfill.

Motion by Mr. Thomson, second by Mr. McMichael and carried unanimously by all to approve the award on one new 2019 CAT-740GC Articulated Dump Truck from Yancey Brothers of Macon for use in the Landfill for \$458,350 plus \$18,055 bedliner option, \$49,250 5-year / 10,000 hour extended warranty, and a trade-in allowance of \$15,000 on a 2003 CAT-740 (M#614) for a total of \$510,655. Solid Waste Capital Funds will fund the purchase of this equipment.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that the trade-in truck was 16-years old and was generally run 6-days per week proving that the County had certainly got its money worth.

Mr. Thomson presented a request from the Purchasing Department for approval of a bid on one new mini excavator for use in the Water Department.

Motion by Mr. Thomson, second by Mr. Walker and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of one new Kubota KX057-4R1A Mini-Excavator for use in the Water Department from Mason Tractor Company of McDonough, Ga in the amount of \$56,250. Water Department Capital Funds will fund the purchase of this equipment.

Mr. McMichael presented three line-items identified by the auditors that need to be adjusted before the audit is finalized.

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Motion by Mr. McMichael, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the following budget adjustments.

General Fund

Increase Expenditures:

Superior Court Clerk	2180-52.3200 Communications	\$ 300
District Attorney	2200.52.3600 Dues and Fees	<u>\$3,300</u>
	Total	\$3,600

Decrease Expenditures:

Other	1599-57.9000 Contingency	<u>\$3600</u>
	Total	\$3,600

Special Revenue fund

Increase Expenditures:

District Attorney	Judicial Expenses	\$8,300
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Increase Revenues:

District Attorney	Fines & Forfeitures	\$8,300
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Motion by Mr. McMichael, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of bills totaling \$3,459,844.61.

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

Georgia State Patrol Sgt. Hamilton Halford, Hangar Commander of the GSP Aviation Unit (Perry), thanked the Board for their continued support of the GSP. He then briefed the Board on the Aviation Unit's statistics and activities during the 2019 calendar year. A total of 1,349 flights were flown statewide. Of that total, 429 flights originated from the Perry hangar with 219 of them actually conducted in Houston County including emergency call-outs for a variety of reasons and aircraft repositioning to the Perry hangar for maintenance at the facility. This was a big increase for the Perry unit from the previous year. The Aviation Unit as a whole purchased 17,200 gallons of jet fuel from the Perry-Houston County Airport at a total cost of \$64,844. Sgt. Halford explained that the unit was still capable of more than 50 different types of missions and that this past year they enhanced their mission capability now able to perform "Long Line – Short Haul" rescues with members of the Perry, Warner Robins and Houston County Fire Departments trained to respond along with the aviation unit. He then introduced newly appointed Troop H Capt. Garrett Fiveash who is the new Perry Post commander.

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Capt. Fiveash stated that he was glad to be back in Houston County since his career with the GSP began in Houston in 1994. He remarked that nowhere else in the state do they work closer with the local government and law enforcement than in Houston.

The Chairman expressed his thanks for the GSP's support and remarked that the County has enjoyed a very good relationship with the Aviation Unit and the Post.

Terry Dietsch, Houston County Landfill Superintendent, and Janet Marcella, Houston County Solid Waste Collections Manager, briefed the Board on the recent improvements to the waste collections system including the change from Automatic Side Loader (ASL) trucks to Rear Loading Trucks, the QAlert web-based work order system and the added grapple truck that Advanced Disposal is now running. All these improvements have reduced the number of complaints received from our customer base by over 80%.

Chairman Stalnaker agreed that the change to Rear Loading Trucks was probably the best improvement overall and that the yard waste was better handled now compared to the past.

The Board collectively thanked Mr. Dietsch and Ms. Marcella for their efforts.

Ansel Peck, Burns Drive, Warner Robins thanked the staff and administration of the County for their diligent efforts during the 2019 calendar year. He also thanked the Board for their service to the community. He commented that the County will be losing two long serving commissioners in the coming year but that two very good candidates have announced their plans to run for the offices.

Becky Wood, 426 Sandefur Road, Kathleen thanked Mr. Dunbar for providing a project update to her and Mr. Wood this past Friday. She thanked Mr. Dietsch and Ms. Marcella for their efforts in bringing improvements to the waste collections system. Lastly, she stated that although she was disappointed that Cemex's applications for re-zoning were approved, she thanked Mr. Thomson for his 'no' vote on Application #2316.

As there were no further comments Chairman Stalnaker closed the Public Comments portion of the meeting.

Chairman Stalnaker opened the meeting for Commissioners Comments.

Mr. Walker agreed with Mr. Peck that the Board is losing two outstanding public servants in the coming year given that Mr. McMichael and Mr. Thomson have announced that they will not be running for re-election. He also thanked the County's outstanding employees for their efforts.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and then announced that she will be running for re-election this coming year saying that it has been her privilege and honor to serve the citizens for the past 21 years.

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Chairman Stalnaker commented that this has been a very productive meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

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