

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
July 6, 2021
Perry, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday July 6, 2021, at the Houston County Courthouse in Perry, Georgia, with Chairman Stalnaker presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Perdue, and Walker present. Also present were County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Barry Holland, Director of Operations Robbie Dunbar, Director of Personnel Ken Carter, Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews, Fire/HEMA Chief Chris Stoner, Senator Larry Walker, III, Representative Shaw Blackmon, Chief Tax Appraiser James Moore, Assistant Chief Tax Appraiser Amanda Clark, Elections Supervisor Debra Presswood, Board of Elections member Dr. Henry Childs, Board of Elections member Kathy Shelton, former Board of Elections member Barbara Waddle, Houston County Development Authority Executive Director Angie Gheesling, ACCG Executive Director Dave Wills, ACCG Deputy Legislative Director Todd Edwards, Mr. Larry Walker, JMA Architecture Managing Officer Jim Mehserle, ICB Construction Group President Kenna Scragg, Walton and Becky Wood.

Chairman Stalnaker announced that Commissioner Robinson would be absent from the meeting for personal reasons.

Commissioner Perdue gave the invocation.

Col. Brian Clough, USAF led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance and then detailed his 37-year military career. He began by thanking the Board for what they do and for their friendship and partnership with Robins AFB. He currently serves as the Deputy Director for Engineering and Technical Services and has been at Robins since October of 2020. After graduating from high school in his native state of Vermont he began his career as an enlisted computer programmer which he spent around thirteen years doing. After receiving his engineering degree from West Virginia University in 1999 he was commissioned as a second lieutenant and has held over fifteen assignments since including as an F-22 Avionics Engineer at Wright Patterson AFB, OH; Executive Officer and Aircraft Maintenance Officer at Maxwell AFB, AL; Senior Engineer in Washington D.C.; Commander of the 333rd Recruiting Squadron at Patrick AFB, FL; and just prior to coming to Robins AFB he was the Deputy Chief of Propulsion Sustainment at Tinker AFB, OK. He commented that this would probably be his last duty assignment before he retires. He praised the Project Synergy partnership between the County and the Air Force that allows Houston County students to come and learn side-by-side with tech workers in the engineering field.

Development Authority Executive Director Angie Gheesling thanked Col. Clough and detailed a little bit of what those students experience at the Synergy Building. She then presented each of the Commissioners with a picture album assembled to commemorate the County's initial 200th Anniversary celebration event. She commented that the Development Authority, the County, the three cities and other have come together to help recognize this historic anniversary. Among others contributions, the Miner Agency created the logo free of charge and Flint Energies has donated funds for the shirts which will be available for sale to the public as well. She thanked former Reagent Larry Walker for his assistance pulling that initial event together.

Chairman Stalnaker acknowledged former Reagent Larry Walker, Senator Larry Walker, Representative Shaw Blackmon, ACCG Executive Director Dave Wills and ACCG Deputy Legislative Director Todd Edwards.

On behalf of the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) Mr. Edwards presented Elections Supervisor Debra Presswood with the first ever Policy Appreciation Award for her commitment to Georgia's elections, Houston County, and the voters. There were over 90 complex election bills introduced during this last legislative session that the ACCG had to review, and Ms. Presswood assisted them throughout the process of understanding the import of these bills. He also thanked Chairman Stalnaker for helping lead the elections committee and thank the Houston County legislators for taking into consideration some of the input that was provided.

Mr. Dave Wills expressed his appreciation for both the Chairman's and Ms. Presswood's help.

Ms. Presswood thanked the ACCG for the recognition and she thanked the Commissioners for their help and support during this trying year. She also thanked the Board of Election members for their continued support.

Both Senator Walker and Representative Blackmon thanked everyone for their efforts and time working through this election process.

Board of Elections members Dr. Henry Childs and Kathy Shelton each expressed their appreciation for Ms. Presswood and her staff.

Former Board of Elections member Barbara Waddle also expressed her appreciation for Ms. Presswood.

Mr. Edwards then presented Ms. Waddle with a plaque from the ACCG commemorating her long service on the Houston County Board of Elections. Chairman Stalnaker then presented her with a gift basket for her retirement from the Board.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Byrd to approve the minutes from the meetings of June 15, 2021, June 22, 2021, and June 28, 2021. Upon voting, Mr. Perdue, Mr. Byrd and Mr. Walker voted yes. Motion carried.

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 #2499, #2500, #2502, #2503, #2504, #2506, #2508 and #2510.

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

Special Exception #2499 Applicant was present there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2500 Applicant was not present there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2502 Applicant was present there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2503 Applicant was present there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2504 Applicant was present there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2506 Applicant was not present there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2508 Applicant was present there was no opposition.
Special Exception #2510 Applicant was present there was no opposition.

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

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Walker to approve the following applications to include any and all stipulations as noted on the Zoning & Appeals recommendation and Section 95 Requirements staff report: #2499 Gilbane, #2500 Jones, #2502 Edwards, #2503 Edwards, #2504 Arnold, #2506 Drexler, #2508 Mabry, and #2510 Grove. Upon voting, Mr. Perdue, Mr. Walker and Mr. Byrd voted yes. Motion carried.

Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews presented Application #2505 submitted by Michael and Mary Spano for a mobile home hardship providing assistance and care to a family member. Approval of the hardship is based upon the continuation of the hardship circumstances. If the hardship conditions no longer exist, then the approval is relinquished.

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

Special Exception #2505 Applicants were present there was no opposition.

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

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Byrd to approve Application #2505 Spano for a mobile home hardship. Upon voting, Mr. Perdue, Mr. Byrd and Mr. Walker voted yes. Motion carried.

Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews presented Application #2501 submitted by Greg Spence for a special use permit for a 199-foot tall monopole telecommunications tower to be located on Pitts Road. The Zoning & Appeals recommendation for approval is subject to submittal of the necessary documentation from the FAA.

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

Special Exception #2501 Applicant was present there was no opposition.

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

Chairman Stalnaker noted that this proposed tower appears to be a good distance from the roadway and from nearby residences.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Byrd to approve Application #2501 Spence for a special use permit for a telecommunications tower on Pitts Road. Upon voting, Mr. Perdue, Mr. Byrd and Mr. Walker voted yes. Motion carried.

Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews presented Application #2507 submitted by Baker Donelson, representing Tillman Infrastructure LLC, for a special use permit for a 265-foot tall self-supporting lattice telecommunications tower to be located on Hill Road. The Zoning & Appeals recommendation for approval is subject to submittal of a fall-zone letter.

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

Mr. Andy Rotenstreich of Baker Donelson, representing Tillman Infrastructure LLC, explained that this tower will be for AT&T and will be 250-feet with a six-foot lightning rod on top. He presented the fall zone letter which is signed and stamped by an engineer that details a built-in flex point towards the top of the tower that will cause the tower to fall within the footprint of the compound itself. He stated that the tower would be over 256 feet from the nearest residence and about 186 feet from the public right of way. The tower will have the First Net carrier system capability that serves first responders in the event of an emergency giving them priority during those times on AT&T's network.

Chairman Stalnaker inquired as to the width of the Hill Road right of way.

Mr. Rotenstreich stated that the right of way looks to be about fifty feet.

Chairman Stalnaker asked Mr. Dunbar to continue researching the Hill Road right of way and commented that there was some level of concern about possible encroachment on the right of way with the construction of this tower.

Dr. Stuart Slappey, 210 Hill Road, Perry commented that he was not necessarily in opposition to the application but had concerns beginning with the power line that runs through the property and the potential of the tower falling on that line. The tower could also possibly fall across Hill Road itself if it falls. Safety for his family and nearby residents of two different neighborhoods is his major concern along with the possibility of harmful emissions. A portion of Hill Road is a one-lane gravel road that cannot support construction and maintenance trucks required for this tower. There are two nearby structures that could serve the same purpose of a new tower. One is the Tucker Road water tower and another large tower near Gurr Road.

Steve Carter, 2018 Tucker Road, Perry just off Hill Road stated that he is totally opposed to the tower. He commented he has both personal and safety concerns and that the neighborhood is a tranquil community which makes the placement of this tower out of place. If the tower falls it would fall into the right of way of Hill Road where a lot of people walk. During construction of the tower and after for the maintenance of the tower there will be a lot of traffic on this one lane road.

Kelly Hillis, 216 Chinaberry Lane, Perry commented on the lack of appropriateness of the proposed tower location. He questioned if the engineer is so convinced that the tower would collapse upon itself then why worry about the distances to residences or the roadway. There is no guarantee that the tower would not cause great harm and damage if it fell. If it was a thousand feet away, then it would likely not be objectionable.

Steve Carter added that he believes there would be many other suitable sites in south Houston County that could accommodate this tower.

Kathy Shelton commented that she lives in the same community, Devonwood Subdivision, and questioned why the tower needs to be in this particular area as opposed to another area. What services would the residents receive that they are not already getting.

Dr. Slappey added that he accepts that it is legal and plausible, but he does not want to see another cell tower outside his front door.

Mr. Rotenstreich passed out to the Board some handouts with maps addressing some of these questions and concerns. An aerial map of the area in question outlined the suitable property within the zone that would work for AT&T to improve their coverage and only one property owner within that zone, Mr. Black, was interested. Most of the zone is comprised of residences that are not suitable. Another handout of the site plan provided the distances to the nearest residence, the overhead powerline, and the right of way of Hill Road. He presented the certification letter from a registered engineer discussing the fall zone as within a fall radius of less than or equal to fifty feet. A series of colored coverage maps showed the existing AT&T coverage deficiencies in this area, the improved coverage area from the proposed tower, and the coverage area that could be obtained from either of the existing two structures in proximity of this area. Neither of these structures provides the necessary improvement for AT&T's services. The construction of the tower will only take two to three weeks to build. The only traffic to the tower on a regular basis will be a small service truck once every four to six weeks. The tower does not emit noise, odors or fumes and will have FAA-required dual lighting which is red at night and white during the day.

Chairman Stalnaker asked what type of structure would be built for the equipment on the ground.

Mr. Rotenstreich said that the lease is for a 100-foot by 100-foot piece of property from the landowner. Within that fenced piece of property will be the base of the tower and the equipment that AT&T needs to operate the antennas at the top of the tower. There will be space for others to rent for their antennas and equipment as well. On the ground, AT&T typically does a prefab concrete shelter about 6 feet by 10 feet, fully enclosed and locked, with AC for the equipment. The tower will have 4G but with the capability to be upgraded to 5G. This is accomplished with a change in the antennas only.

Chairman Stalnaker asked about the studies that have claimed harmful emissions can come from 5G service.

Mr. Rotenstreich responded that the only emissions is the radio signal no different than what your cell phone emits now. 5G is simply another generation of new technology. The main issues or concerns that you may hear about 5G is about the small-cell aspect which entail antennas placed on thirty- or forty-foot poles in the right of way. This is a 250-foot tower. Federal regulations require that antennas be at least ten meters, or approximately thirty feet, away from constant human exposure.

Mr. Byrd asked what the general price difference might be collocating on an existing tower versus building a new tower.

Mr. Rotenstreich estimated that on this size tower probably \$100,000 to \$150,000 difference.

Mr. Byrd asked if it were possible to achieve the same result by collocating on both existing towers in the area.

Mr. Rotenstreich answered that it is possible to collocate on both existing towers, but it still does not provide the improvement in coverage that AT&T is trying to achieve. This whole process took over a year to study and choose this location which is the only one available in the target area.

Mr. Perdue stated that his main concern with this application is the appropriateness of the location, and although it does appear that Mr. Rotenstreich and his firm have tried to locate a better location he thought that they should give that another shot.

Mr. Byrd stated that the Board has a great duty of care to the applicant and the property owner and to the surrounding property owners in these situations.

Motion by Mr. Perdue second by Mr. Walker to table Application #2507 Donelson for a special use permit for a telecommunications tower on Hill Road. Upon voting, Mr. Perdue, Mr. Walker, and Mr. Byrd voted yes. Motion carried.

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 then recognized Mr. Larry Walker who briefed the Board on Silicon Ranch and their desire to erect a billboard on their property which will be visible from I-75. It will be a two-sided digital LED display with a height of 60-feet and a width of 48-feet. It will identify the solar farm which generates clean, renewable energy for 11,000 Georgia households distributed by Green Power EMC. The billboard will include the phrase 'Proud to call Houston County Home'. Some of the messaging will be changed from time to time to help promote Houston County and will be coordinated with the Houston County Development Authority. It will be constructed in the Fall of 2021. There will be no commercial advertising done with the billboard. The placement of the billboard has already been approved by the Zoning & Appeals Board through a variance. The project has generated around 300 construction jobs in Perry.

Mr. Perdue presented a request for abandonment of right of way from Charles Harold Talton.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Byrd to approve the Board of Commissioners signing the Resolution and deed of Abandonment abandoning the portion of Old Hawkinsville Road and the portion of Ammons Road that were left unusable after the relocation of a section of Old Hawkinsville Road and that are located on Mr. Talton's property in Bonaire, Georgia in the unincorporated area of Houston County. Upon Voting Mr. Perdue, Mr. Byrd and Mr. Walker voted yes. Motion Carried.

Mr. Perdue presented a request for approval of a grant with the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency.

Motion by Mr. Perdue, second by Mr. Walker to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing an agreement with the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency accepting Grant #66 in the amount of \$36,392 to be utilized for HazMat truck equipment sustainment. Upon voting Mr. Perdue, Mr. Walker and Mr. Byrd voted yes. Motion carried.

Mr. Walker presented a request for an extension of an unpaid leave of absence for Water department Clerk Gamble Greathouse.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Perdue to approve the extension of an unpaid leave of absence for Water Department Clerk Gamble Greathouse until July 15, 2021. Ms. Greathouse will continue to be responsible for her insurance cost under COBRA under this extension. Upon voting Mr. Walker, Mr. Perdue and Mr. Byrd voted yes. Motion carried.

Mr. Walker presented a request to fill the open Building Inspector position in the Building Inspection department.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Byrd to approve hiring Vanessa Phillips for the Building Inspector position in the Building Inspection department at a Grade 17-C effective July 7, 2021. Upon voting Mr. Walker, Mr. Byrd and Mr. Perdue voted yes. Motion carried.

Mr. Walker presented a request to enter into a contract for services for HR/Payroll software and support.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Perdue to approve entering into a contract for services for HR/Payroll software and support with Unicorn HRO of Florham Park, NJ in the amount of \$81,400 plus a flat rate of \$25 per month for additional file storage if necessary. Upon voting Mr. Walker, Mr. Perdue and Mr. Byrd voted yes. Motion carried.

Mr. Perdue asked Director of Personnel Ken Carter if we were paying anything for these services currently that would be replaced by this new software.

Mr. Carter replied that we had already paid for the annual service but would receive a credit for the final six months when the new software went live on January 1st.

Mr. Byrd thought that there would be some savings after transitioning to the new software.

Mr. Holland confirmed that it would be a \$20,000 to \$25,000 savings compared to the current cost.

Mr. Walker presented a request from the Superior Court to continue the contract with Christopher Gray to serve as surveillance officer for the Superior Court Accountability Court.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Byrd to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing a contract for services with Christopher Gray as Accountability Court surveillance officer effective July 1, 2021 and expiring on June 30, 2022. The Mental Health Accountability Court grant will fund the services of this officer. Upon voting Mr. Walker, Mr. Perdue and Mr. Byrd voted yes. Motion carried.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of an agreement with the City of Perry for stormwater facility maintenance.

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Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Perdue to approve Chairman Stalnaker signing a City of Perry Stormwater Best Management Practices Operations and Maintenance Agreement concerning the State Court Expansion Project. Upon voting Mr. Byrd, Mr. Perdue and Mr. Walker voted yes. Motion Carried.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of a bid on the SR127 / Houston Lake Road Widening project.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Walker to approve the award of the SR127-Houston Lake Road Widening project to Robinson Paving Company of Columbus, GA in the total amount of \$4,349,369.24. Houston County will be responsible for \$3,304,047.09 of this total amount. The City of Perry will be responsible for the cost of utilities relocation in the amount of \$1,045,322.15. This is a 2018 SPLOST funded project. Upon voting Mr. Byrd, Mr. Walker and Mr. Perdue voted yes. Motion carried.

Chairman Stalnaker pointed out that this road improvement would be between the Publix and Kings Chapel Road stating that it has been a chokepoint for traffic. He thanked our local legislative delegation for taking the time over a year ago visiting the Georgia Department of Transportation with County representatives asking for their assistance on this project. The County had funds programmed into the 2018 SPLOST for this project and the GDOT Commissioner was very receptive to the proposal, and they have stepped up as a partner in this project. He praised it also as another sign of cooperation between the County and the three cities as well as thanking the voters in the County for approving the 2018 SPLOST which is providing most of the funds necessary.

Mr. Byrd concurred that this is a very important project that will relieve traffic issues on this area of Houston Lake Road.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that we have had good experience with Robinson Paving as they are working on the widening of Lake Joy Road currently.

Mr. Byrd presented a request from Public Works to modify a contract with Dixie Lawn & Landscaping, Inc.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Perdue to approve a modification for the roads right of way mowing contract with Dixie Lawn & Landscaping, Inc. of Cochran, GA continuing the 41.43 mile of mowing for an additional 90 days through September. The total contract increase of \$21,634.50 will be charged to the Roads Department (100-4200-52-1200). Upon voting Mr. Byrd, Mr. Perdue and Mr. Walker voted yes Motion carried.

Mr. Perdue asked Mr. Dunbar if the contractor had caught up and were able to keep the schedule that we were hoping they could perform.

Mr. Dunbar answered that they are working hard toward that goal but are still running behind by at least one cycle.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Perdue to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$4,018,023.47. After voting Mr. Byrd, Mr. Perdue and Mr. Walker voted yes. Motion Carried.

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

Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews expressed his appreciation for Ms. Barbara Waddle and her company Waddle & Company who have served the community for many years and has helped his department with zoning maps. He also expressed appreciation for Ms. Debra Presswood, who he was classmates with years ago, and congratulated her on her achievement.

Chief Stoner thanked the Board for the approval of the HazMat grant which helps the Department sustain equipment vital to the community.

Chairman Stalnaker recognized JMA Architecture Managing Officer Jim Mehserle and ICB Construction Group President Kenna Scragg each of whom gave the Board an update on State Court Expansion project. The completion of the project is slated for December 31, 2022.

Former Elections Board member Barbara Waddle thanked the Board for their support over the years.

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

Mr. Walker thanked everyone for coming and remarked that it was a red-letter day acknowledging a lot of different people today.

Mr. Perdue also thanked everyone for coming and reminded everyone of the importance of citizenship such as with the recognition of Ms. Waddle and Ms. Presswood who have given of their time and their efforts to make democracy flourish in Houston County.

Mr. Byrd thought it noteworthy Col. Clough's comments about the impression this community has made on him and his family. This Board and the entire community work hard to do exactly that and its nice to get that positive feedback. He also thought that it was a great way to recognize the work the Board of Elections does by recognizing both Ms. Waddle and Ms. Presswood for their achievements. Lastly, he commended the City of Warner Robins on their excellent July 4th celebration despite a bit of inclement weather.

Chairman Stalnaker commented that the City of Perry and the City of Centerville likewise held very nice events over the July 4th holiday. He complimented Ms. Presswood referencing her testimony in front of the House subcommittee concerning the election laws. He also complimented Representative Barry Fleming, who chaired that committee, for the outstanding job he did during that process. Todd Edwards of ACCG was also integral in that process doing a fantastic job staying as non-partisan on the issues possible. He commended Dave Wills as the best executive director of ACCG looking after the interests of all Georgia counties. Lastly, he reminded everyone of the

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next Board meeting at 5:00 p.m. on July 20th to be held at the Warner Robins Annex building.

Motion by Mr. Walker, second by Mr. Byrd to adjourn the meeting. Upon voting Mr. Walker, Mr. Byrd and Mr. Perdue voted yes. Motion carried.

Barry Holland
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner