

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
July 9, 2024
Perry, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in a regular session at 9:00 am on Tuesday, July 9, 2024, at the Houston County Courthouse in Perry, Georgia, with Chairman Perdue presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Gottwals, Robinson, and Talton present. County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar, and Director of Operations Brian Jones were also present.

Commissioner Talton gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Gottwals led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Col. Jake Elsass, Director of Air Force Sustainment Center Engineering Robins Operating Location, spoke about his job and time at Robins Air Force Base. He mentioned that this is his second time stationed at Robins Air Force Base, and he plans to settle in the area. He spoke about the duties he and his department carry out, saying that STEM outreach into the area's regional colleges and universities is a big part of his job. He also recruits engineers to work at Robins. He went on to mention that one of his goals is to incorporate robotics to help do some of the dangerous, dirty, and boring jobs. He concluded by expressing his appreciation for the community's support for those stationed at Robins and mentioned that those active-duty personnel at Robins fully feel this support.

The Board expressed their appreciation for his service and commitment to keeping our nation on the cutting edge of capabilities and advancing technology at Robins AFB. They thanked him for his work in expanding the message of STEM into the schools and for his kind words about Houston County and the community.

Chairman Perdue read a proclamation supporting Abi Bragg being named Distinguished Young Woman of Houston County. He mentioned her many school accomplishments and theater accomplishments to date.

Chairman Perdue recognized the 30th Anniversary of the 1994 flood. A video with testimonies from individuals who were there and who helped with the reconstruction was shown. Chairman Perdue then presented plaques to current and recently retired employees who had worked during that time to get Houston County back up and running following Tropical Storm Alberto.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2024 meeting.

Building Inspections/Planning & Zoning Administrative Assistant, Rebecca Kidd, presented Special Exception Applications #2780 through #2785.

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

Applicant #2780 was present with nothing further to add, there was no opposition.

Applicant #2781 was present with nothing further to add, there was no opposition.

Applicant #2782 was not present, there was no opposition.

Applicant #2783 was present with nothing further to add, there was no opposition.

Applicant #2784 was present with nothing further to add, there was no opposition.

Applicant #2785 was not present as the application was withdrawn.

Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the following Special Exception Applications to include any and all stipulations as noted on the Zoning & Appeals recommendation and Section 95 Requirements staff report:

Applicant #2780	Rolie O'Donnell	Pressure Washing
Applicant #2781	Nautiya Smith	Property Restoration & Management
Applicant #2783	Wesley Walker	Bookkeeping
Applicant #2784	John & Lora Ennis	Baking and Preserves

and to table the following Special Exception Application:

Applicant #2782	Paul Smith	Landscaping & Property Management
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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 businesses. These restrictive covenants are not superseded by any action the Board of Commissioners takes. The actions taken by the Board will not change any provision within the covenant that prohibits any commercial or business activity.

Ms. Kidd instructed those applicants whose applications were approved on the next step in getting their business license: go to the Commissioner's Office and apply for the license.

Mr. Talton presented a request from the City of Warner Robins to annex property located on Moody Road.

Chairman Perdue explained that the County could not hold a Public Hearing on Annexations but that he would open the floor for comments.

As there were no comments, the meeting continued.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to concur with the annexation to the City of Warner Robins of property located on Moody Road, also known as Tax Parcel 001020 014000, containing 2.84 acres. The current zoning of the property is County C-2. The proposed zoning is City of Warner Robins C-2.

Mr. Talton presented a request from the City of Warner Robins to annex the property located at 113 N. Amanda Place.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for public comments about this annexation.

As there were no comments, the meeting continued.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to concur with the annexation to the City of Warner Robins of property located at 113 N. Amanda Place, also known as Tax Parcel 00074E 079000, containing 1.07 acres, with the stipulation that all County utilities remain with the County. The current zoning of the property is County R-1. The proposed zoning is City of Warner Robins R-1.

Chairman Perdue added that North Amanda Place is a county residential road. He further explained that if a curb cut is needed for commercial development, a request for a waiver of the county ordinances would need to come before the Commissioners.

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Mr. Gottwals presented a request from the City of Warner Robins to annex the property located at 2717 HWY 127.

Chairman Perdue explained before discussing and voting on this item and agenda item #5 that the Commissioners would consider each of these annexation requests separately as they are separate properties. He stated that he would hear comments from three people in support of the annexation and three in opposition of the annexation.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for public comments on this annexation.

Teresa Bennet spoke in favor of the annexation and gave a history of the parcel that belongs to her mother. She explained that her mother wishes to sell the property to a willing local purchaser.

Teri DelGiorno spoke in opposition to the annexation and gave spot zoning, incompatible land use, increased traffic, and an increase in the chance of wrecks as her reasoning.

Keith Newton spoke in favor of the annexation, describing potential plans for the property and his history as a local developer looking to improve Houston County.

Kathy Talton spoke in opposition to the annexation and cited safety concerns she has for the increased traffic and accident potential, especially living across from the property to be annexed and rezoned.

Chad Bryant spoke in favor of the annexation and gave examples of commercial development already in the area. He stated that there were adequate utilities and infrastructure already in place to support the development.

Heather Talton spoke in opposition to the annexation, citing concerns about traffic and increased accident potential. She also mentioned that no changes were made to the original annexation request brought previously on the same property.

Chairman Perdue closed the public comment period and resumed the regular meeting.

Before making his motion, on agenda item #4, Mr. Gottwals spoke about the approval given by the Warner Robins Planning and Zoning Board ahead of the Commissioners voting and that legal propriety has been established and is present for this parcel, in his opinion, to warrant a concurrence on annexation and rezoning.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to concur with the annexation to the City of Warner Robins of property located at 2717 HWY 127, also known as Tax Parcel 001050 085000, containing 2 acres, with the stipulation that all County utilities remain with the County. The current zoning of the property is County R-AG. The proposed zoning is City of Warner Robins R-1.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request from the City of Warner Robins to annex the property located at 727 Old Perry Road.

Before making his motion on agenda item #5, Mr. Gottwals spoke about the prior approval given for this annexation and rezoning by Warner Robins Planning & Zoning and gave further reasons for a concur or non-concur vote by the Commissioners. Ultimately, however, Mr. Gottwals felt that this parcel was an example of spot zoning and would thus make his motion to non-concur.

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Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to non-concur with the annexation to the City of Warner Robins of property located at 727 Old Perry Road, also known as Tax Parcel 001050 038000, containing 11.53 acres, with the stipulation that all County utilities remain with the County. The current zoning of the property is County R-AG. The proposed zoning is City of Warner Robins C-2.

Mr. Byrd thanked Mr. Gottwals for his thoughts, reasoning and assessment behind his motion for each parcel considered for annexation and rezoning by the City of Warner Robins.

Chairman Perdue thanked everyone for their time and consideration of these annexations. He then agreed with everything Mr. Gottwals had stated about both annexations and the conclusions he had reached.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of a bid on two (2) 145 HP Tractors for use by the Roads & Bridges Department.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the bid on 2 new in-stock 2023 John Deere 6145M Cab Tractors from Lasseter Tractor Company of Unadilla, Georgia for \$143,709.72 each with the option of a 60 month/5,000 hour extended warranty for an additional cost of \$6,242 per tractor. The total cost for this purchase will be \$299,903.44. This purchase will be paid from 2018 SPLOST.

Mr. Byrd stated that by using the bidding process, Houston County realized 36% in savings.

Mr. Byrd presented a request to approve the FY25 Work Detail Agreement between the Georgia Department of Corrections and Houston County Board of Commissioners.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the Work Detail Agreement between the Georgia Department of Corrections and the Houston County Board of Commissioners. This agreement for FY2025 will contain 5 work details with a cost that will be at most \$246,590. The Water Fund will provide funding for 2 crews, and Solid Waste Fund for 3 crews.

Chairman Perdue stated that progress is being made to have fully staffed work crews from the McEver Probation Facility working on the rights-of-way in the County

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval to enter into a Professional Services Agreement for the trimming of tree limbs overhanging the rights-of-way on county roads. Public Works staff solicited bids from 3 contractors and recommended accepting bidder Ben's Tree Service.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve entering into a Professional Services Agreement with Ben's Tree Service of Gordon, Georgia for an amount of \$175 per hour. Insurance Premium Tax revenue will fund this expenditure.

Chairman Perdue explained that the County often tries to handle work in-house to keep costs down. He further explained that because of the specialized equipment needed and personnel costs to handle limb trimming along the county's rights-of-way, it would be more economical to bid the work out.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a professional services contract between Christopher Gray and Houston County. The current contract expired on June 30, 2024. The Accountability Court and Christopher Gray reviewed and approved this contract, and the county attorney's office also reviewed it.

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Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of a professional services contract with Christopher Gray. This contract for surveillance services will start July 1, 2024 and expire June 30, 2026.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$5,151,010.91.

Chairman Perdue stated that the layout and format of the bills are different this meeting due to a new accounting software system. He recognized Danyelle George, Will Davis, Phyllis Duncan, and Brenda Adkins of the Accounting Department for bringing this new software to the county. He stated that he knows it will make work easier, more streamlined and potentially use less paper.

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

Meg Mehserle spoke about election integrity issues and having been let go from being a poll watcher at the Board of Elections. She requested action be taken regarding her complaints.

John Trussell, Vice Chair of the Zoning Appeals Board, referenced several articles in the latest At Home in Houston County publication highlighting various historical places, events, and occurrences in the past in Houston County. He requested Commission support for a restroom facility at Oaky Woods so that campers and hunters would have a place to use the restroom. He stated that he had spoken to Safe Site Services, a local porta-potty company, and had been quoted a service contract rate of \$125.00 monthly.

Chairman Perdue asked Mr. Trussell if he thought a vault toilet would work.

Mr. Trussell agreed that it may. He concluded his remarks by advising that as a member of the Sons of American Revolution, he was working with County staff to have a liberty tree planted along with a plaque to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States. Also, that in March of next year, his group would be celebrating French General Lafayette's returning to America in support of the American Revolution.

As there were no further comments, Chairman Perdue closed Public Comments.

Chairman Perdue opened Commissioner's Comments.

Mr. Byrd spoke about the Flood of 1994 video and about how well done it was. He spoke about his memories of that time and the fact that Houston County did indeed react, repair and restore its damaged infrastructure without waiting for state or federal assistance to arrive.

Mr. Talton thanked everyone for attending the meeting and congratulated Abi Bragg for her excellent accomplishments and her bright future.

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for the productive and professional meeting. She stated that comments on both sides of a controversial agenda issue had been given in a positive way. She spoke of the recent 4th of July holiday and the upcoming 250th anniversary of our nation to be celebrated in 2026 and the fact that she was glad to live in America, in Georgia and in Houston County.

Mr. Gottwals commented on the fact that 30 years ago there was too much rain and 30 years later, more rain is needed and expressed how proud he was to represent the people of Houston County.

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Chairman Perdue spoke about the role of government and read a quote by Edmund Burke regarding representative government and the role of the representative. He then thanked the Board for their service and expressed how much of a privilege it was to serve with each of them. He spoke about the recent passing of G.L. Crocker, his prior service on the County's Board of Adjustments and Appeals, the business owner and community pillar he was, and how he will be missed.

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

Robbie Dunbar
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner