

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
October 15, 2024
Warner Robins, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 5:00 pm on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, at the Houston County Annex in Warner Robins, 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 Byrd led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Pastor Stephen Byrd of Central Baptist Church gave the Invocation. He spoke briefly about the church's 70-year history in Houston County and its mission and then concluded by inviting those present to attend.

Chairman Perdue and the Commissioners thanked Pastor Byrd for his prayer and the church's service to the community. Mr. Byrd commented that he had been married at Central Baptist Church, and Mr. Talton also said he had married his wife there.

Chairman Perdue recognized Mr. Dante Handel, Associate Director of Government Affairs for ACCG, who presented Georgia State Representative Shaw Blackmon with ACCG's Legislative Service Award. Mr. Handel stated that Representative Blackmon received the award for his work on, support of, and assistance getting HB 581 passed this most recent session of the Georgia General Assembly.

Accepting the award, Representative Blackmon commented that it was a privilege to work with local elected officials, despite the challenges faced, in doing what was best for the citizens of Houston County and the State. He thanked Pastor Byrd for his leadership and recognized his wife, two sons, his parents, Zell Blackmon, Jr. and Ruth Blackmon, and his in-laws, Judge Ed Lukemire and his wife Trell, for their attendance.

Chairman Perdue thanked Representative Blackmon for his work on HB 581 and his leadership and further commended his efforts to serve the interests of Georgians.

Chairman Perdue recognized the Webelos of Cub Scout Pack 127, speaking of their attendance at the Commission meeting as part of their Citizenship Adventure badge. Chairman Perdue briefly discussed the Commission's roles, duties, and responsibilities and allowed each scout to ask the Commissioners questions.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the October 1, 2024 meeting.

Ms. Robinson presented a request to update the cameras and microphones in courtrooms A and B at Juvenile Court.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the proposal from BIS Digital of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, for \$12,100. This project, scheduled for November, will be funded by 2018 SPLOST.

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Chairman Perdue commented that Judge Wilburn would be thankful to get the upgrades in place.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a bid on one new Chevrolet Tahoe SUV.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the bid for one new in-stock 2024 Chevy Tahoe SUV for use as an administrative vehicle in the Sheriff's Office from Brannen Motor Company of Unadilla, Georgia, for \$58,990. The Sheriff's Drug Fund will reimburse the General Fund for this vehicle purchase.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of an engineering services agreement.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve entering into an agreement with Saunders Engineering Consultants, Inc., of Centerville, Georgia, for engineering services on the South Pleasant Hill Road project, including adding a sidewalk and required drainage to the east side of the road. This agreement, for \$76,000, will be funded by 2018 SPLOST.

Chairman Perdue commented that this was a named 2018 SPLOST project but had to be scaled down due to utility relocation and construction costs.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of an intergovernmental agreement.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve signing an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Warner Robins to relocate their underground utilities in conjunction with the South Pleasant Hill Road Project. Per the agreement, approved at the October 7, 2024, Warner Robins Council meeting, the contractor will bill the City of Warner Robins separately to relocate their utilities.

Chairman Perdue stated that this agreement allows the contract to include utility relocation, reducing conflicts that could lengthen the project timeline.

Mr. Talton presented a request for approval of a change order.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the \$638,466 change order to the contract with Pyles Plumbing & Utility Contractors, Inc. of Macon, GA, for the HWY 341 & Graham Road Water Project, bringing the contract amount to \$1,533,326 and allowing accounting to make any necessary budget adjustments. ARPA will fund this change order.

Chairman Perdue advised that this was a change in scope, not a typical change order. He stated that this change order was immediately adjacent to and attached to the HWY 341 and Graham Road Water project and would help ensure all the County's ARPA funds were obligated on time.

Mr. Talton presented a request to declare a dump truck, that was replaced due to age and electrical issues, surplus and auction it.

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Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve declaring a 2003 International 7600 Tandem Dump Truck as surplus and placing it on GovDeals for an online auction.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to fill the vacant Deputy Clerk position at Juvenile Court.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the hiring of Shanavia Rogers to fill the vacant Deputy Clerk position in Juvenile Court at grade 14 step B, effective October 16, 2024. The Personnel Department has reviewed her qualifications, and she meets the B-step requirements.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission to review and update the current Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan. To stay in compliance, this plan must be updated every five years.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission to review and update the Houston County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan. The agreement will not exceed \$22,000 and will be reimbursed by Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$2,251,771.14.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for Public Comments.

Mr. Lawrence Wright spoke about his concerns about speeding on Pheasant Ridge Dr., property taxes, and the number of apartment buildings being built.

Mr. Thomas Reynolds spoke about his desire to hear back on his tax appeal and for seniors and those with no children in school to be exempt from school taxes.

Ms. Terrie Kubasiak spoke about her concerns with voting and the election process.

Ms. Meg Mehserle spoke about her concerns with voting and the election process.

HEMA/Fire Chief Chris Stoner spoke about Hurricane Helene's impact in Georgia and the enormous outpouring of support from local businesses, churches, elected officials, and public safety agencies.

Mr. Daryl Allen spoke about his support for Ms. Mehserle, his concern about the building industry, and other issues.

Without further comments, the Chairman closed Public Comments and opened Commissioner Comments.

Mr. Gottwals thanked everyone for attending and commented that both sides need to talk and listen through disagreements.

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Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for attending and the Scouts for staying for the whole meeting. She concluded by saying that it is okay to disagree and have different opinions on the same subject.

Mr. Talton thanked the Scouts for attending. He commented that through their experiences in Scouting and participating in the Commissioners' meeting, they are beginning their involvement in leadership. He also thanked the moms and dads for their support of the Scouts. He mentioned that early voting had started and that the Georgia National Fair had its second highest attendance. He wished his grandfather, Sheriff Talton, an early 92nd birthday.

Mr. Byrd thanked the Scouts for their attendance and spoke of their learning to live a life of service through their scouting experience. He finished by saying that it was an honor and a privilege to serve the citizens of Houston County with an attentive ear and that each commissioner cares deeply about the County.

Chairman Perdue congratulated Commissioner Byrd for completing the necessary training to become a Certified County Commissioner. He mentioned that the County would soon unveil a new County seal and slogan. He recognized Annie White, who attended the meeting as a requirement for Youth Leadership Perry. He concluded his comments and the meeting by reading both the Scout Law and the Scout Oath.

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

Robbie Dunbar
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner