

**Houston County Commissioners Meeting
November 5, 2024
Perry, Georgia**

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 9:00 am on Tuesday, November 5, 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 in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Col. Josh De Paul spoke of his 21-year military career following his graduation from the Citadel. Currently stationed at Robins Air Force Base with the 402nd Maintenance Group, he and his unit repair and restore over 120 aircraft annually. In closing, he remarked that in the 5 months he has been at Robins Air Force Base, he and his family have genuinely appreciated the support and welcome from the Houston County community.

Chairman Perdue and each of the commissioners expressed their appreciation for Col. De Paul's service and his critical work in supporting the United States.

Chairman Perdue recognized Landfill Superintendent Jeffrey Smith, who presented an award that the Houston County Landfill received from the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA).

Mr. Smith commented that the award was for recognition of the Landfill's Waste to Energy green energy program, which converts methane gas produced by the landfill to electricity. He concluded by recognizing several members of the landfill staff who attended the meeting.

Chairman Perdue commented on the great job being done at the landfill.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the October 15, 2024, meeting.

Chairman Perdue changed the agenda's order to allow City of Warner Robins staff to participate in Agenda Item #10.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, to approve the distribution of the remaining ARPA funds designated for non-profit organizations as follows:

- Houston County Family Connection - \$10,000
- Humane Society of Houston County - \$10,000
- Haven Hope House - \$15,000

Chairman Perdue paused the vote to recognize the community partners in attendance for this item.

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Mayor Patrick thanked the Chairman and Commissioners for the \$15,000 donation of ARPA funds to support the Haven Hope House, which will assist homeless individuals in Houston County. Mayor Patrick spoke about Haven Hope House and said it will be open and running in the next few months.

Chairman Perdue thanked Mayor Patrick for her leadership in supporting and assisting the homeless in Houston County through the Haven Hope House.

Mr. Brian Wise, Haven Hope House Director, gave his thanks for this help and expressed his appreciation to Chairman Perdue and the Commissioners for their support of this effort in Houston County.

Valkyrie Anderson, Executive Director of the Houston County Family Connection, expressed her appreciation for the \$10,000 donation and stated that the funds would be used at the July 2025 Back to School Bash event. She then spoke about the organization's work and introduced Stephanie Robinson, Collaborative Chair. Ms. Robinson expressed her appreciation for the funds, which will help support next year's Back to School Bash event.

After the comments, Chairman Perdue restated the motion and the second. Upon voting, the motion passed unanimously.

Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews presented Special Exception Applications #2806 through #2808 and #2811.

County Attorney Tom Hall made a blanket statement for the benefit of all applicants for Special Exceptions for home occupations: 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.

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

Applicant #2806 was present. Mr. Tyler Cox, representing the Baker Donelson Law Firm, spoke about the cell phone tower; there was no opposition.

Applicant #2807 was present with nothing further to add; there was no opposition.

Applicant #2808 was present with nothing further to add; there was no opposition.

Applicant #2811 was present with nothing further to add; there was no opposition.

With no further comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, 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:

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#2806 Baker Donelson Law Firm for Verizon Wireless Telecommunications Tower
 #2807 Jennifer Bell Bookkeeping Business
 #2808 Robert and Charlotte McGee Agricultural Education (Academics)
 #2811 Brandon Miller DBA Velocity Baseball & Softball Athletics Facility

Mr. Andrews instructed the approved applicants that the next step in getting their business license was to go to the Commissioner's Office and apply for it.

Mr. Andrews presented Rezoning Applications #2809 and #2810.

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

Applicant #2809 was present with nothing further to add; there was no opposition.

Applicant #2810 was present with nothing further to add; there was no opposition.

Chairman Perdue explained to Mr. Maarouf, applicant #2810, that there would be no driveway access to the new parcel but that he could use the driveway access found at the adjacent property, which the applicant also owns.

Mr. Maarouf stated that he understood the stipulation.

There were no further comments, so 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 Rezoning Applications as recommended by the Houston County Planning Commission:

#2809	Scott Free	Property located at 370 Arena Road	R-AG to R-1
#2810	Nader Maarouf	Property located at 115 Napier Ave	R-1 to C-2

Mr. Talton presented a request to approve an agreement between Houston County and Bureau Veritas North America, Inc. to perform building inspection services.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve a professional services agreement between Houston County and Bureau Veritas North America, Inc.

Chairman Perdue explained that the County's building inspectors both took medical leave. He stated that Bureau Veritas North America, Inc. received good reviews from other counties it works with in Central Georgia, so the County would temporarily use them to fulfill building inspection needs.

Mr. Andrews stated that working with the company had been smooth and that they were helpful.

Commissioner Byrd thanked Mr. Andrews for devising the plan to work with Bureau Veritas and hoped this agreement would continue.

Mr. Talton presented a request to declare one Magnum Generator used for parts and one 1998 Ford Backhoe 4WD with mechanical issues as surplus.

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Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve declaring one Magnum Generator and one 1998 Ford Backhoe 4WD as surplus. Also, to authorize auctioning them on GovDeals.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to fill the vacant IT Specialist II position in the MIS Department.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve hiring Ryan Shelley to fill the vacant IT Specialist II position in MIS at grade 18 step C, effective November 6, 2024. The Personnel Department has reviewed his qualifications, and he meets the C-step requirements.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to amend the Independent Contractor Agreement with Ms. April Kelly Neal, dated July 1, 2024.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the amendment of the Independent Contractor Agreement with Ms. April Kelly Neal to provide legal services in Juvenile court from full-time to part-time with the following pay schedule:

\$11,805.14 during the eight (8) month term of this amendment at a monthly rate of \$2,083.29 for the month of November 2024, \$1,388.83 for the months of December 2024 through to and including May 2025 (six (6)) months and \$1,388.87 for the month of June 2025. Monthly payments will be made on the first of each month for services rendered the preceding month. The first payment due herein shall be December 1, 2024.

All other terms and conditions shall remain unchanged.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to enter into an agreement with the Georgia Agricultural Exposition Authority to use Murphy Hall in the Miller-Murphy-Howard Building for the staff Christmas party.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of an Interim Event License Agreement between the Houston County Board of Commissioners and the Georgia Agricultural Exposition Authority of Perry, Georgia, for the use of Murphy Hall on December 5, 2024.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request for approval of a bid for one new pothole patcher truck for the Roads & Bridges Department.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, to approve the bid on one new International 2025 truck equipped with one Pro-Patch Asphalt Pothole Patcher from H.D. Industries Inc., of Jacksonville, Texas, for \$233,104.22, with an estimated delivery of 5 months. The 2018 SPLOST will fund this purchase.

Mr. Byrd noted the high mileage and extended use of the truck by the Public Works Department.

Mr. Chris Sonnier, with Falcon Asphalt Repair Equipment, asked if he could comment on the current agenda item.

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Chairman Perdue agreed and asked him to step to the podium.

Mr. Sonnier advised that while his bid did not include an auger as specified in the bid package, the H.D. Industries bid did not include a crew cab truck. He then explained his truck was gravity-fed rather than running off an auger delivery system.

Mr. Talton asked about the auger, which Mr. Sonnier explained was a delivery system for getting the materials out of the hopper. He further explained that his trucks were gravity-fed to reduce the costly repairs and maintenance associated with an auger delivery system.

When asked, Director of Operations Brian Jones stated that the County's current pothole patch truck was still operating.

Purchasing Director Vanessa Zimmerman was asked about the bid on the pothole patch truck. She explained that the bid specifications were a joint effort between the Roads and Bridges Department, which currently uses an auger delivery system, and the Purchasing Department.

Chairman Perdue asked Commissioner Gottwals if he wanted to amend his motion, to which he agreed.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to table the purchase of the pothole patch truck until Public Works staff could examine the specifications of the Falcon truck without the auger to see if it could just as well meet the needs of staff.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to enter a contract with BTV Systems to replace some of the indoor and outdoor camera systems at the Perry Courthouse.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve entering a purchase contract with BTV Systems of Macon, Georgia, to replace some of the camera systems at the courthouse for a \$129,564.08. The 2018 SPLOST will fund this purchase.

Mr. Byrd presented a request from the City of Warner Robins to add two developments to the Water Purchase Agreement between Houston County and the City of Warner Robins.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the amendment to the Water Purchase Agreement between Houston County and the City of Warner Robins to add the following:

1. Red Owl Coffee at 1272 South Houston Lake Road and Wrasling Way, using one 6-inch and one 2-inch master meter.
2. Culvers Bonaire at 780 HWY 96 (S. Houston Lake Road) using one 2-inch master meter.

This addition is contingent upon the following:

- That the developer posts a bond covering 125% of the construction cost for work performed on the Houston Water System.
- Adherence to the rate structure approved by the Houston County Board of Commissioners on November 19, 2019.
- The issuance of a utility permit to the City of Warner Robins based on all conditions being met according to "Houston County Utility Accommodations."

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Mr. Byrd presented a request to approve a bid for the remodel of the Dunbar Water Treatment Facility.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the bid from Plumblin Construction LLC, of Warner Robins, Georgia, for \$49,737.30. Water Capital Funds will fund this project.

Mr. Byrd presented a request to approve a bid on the Water System Improvements to Serve Cemex project.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the low bid from John R. Walker Inc., of Macon, Georgia, for \$2,076,756.89. ARPA will fund this project.

Ms. Robinson presented a request to approve a bid on the new Bonaire Elevated Water Tank.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the best value bid from Landmark Structures of Fort Worth, Texas, in the amount of \$6,470,000 for the construction of a 1.5-million-gallon composite tank. ARPA and Capital Funds will fund this project.

Chairman Perdue expressed his excitement at being able to afford a larger tank than initially thought possible with ARPA funds previously designated for this project. He further commented that the County switched from a pedestal tank to a composite tank, which resulted in cost savings. He also explained that specialized construction was needed to build composite tanks, which is why a company had to travel so far out of the area to complete the work.

Ms. Robinson presented a request to approve a change order for the Waterline Extension to Serve Scott Road & Scott Road Extension project.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve signing change order number 1 for the Waterline Extension to serve Scott Road & Scott Road Extension project. This change order deducts \$18,840.25 to reflect actual quantities installed, decreasing the total contract amount from \$595,426.05 to \$576,585.80.

Ms. Robinson presented a request to accept the Juvenile Justice Incentive grant, which will fund local evidence-based programs serving youth in the community at moderate to high risk for reoffending or who would otherwise be committed to Georgia's Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ).

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve the acceptance of the \$300,000 Juvenile Justice Incentive Grant, subgrant number Y25-8-017.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$4,628,615.97.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for Public Comments.

Mr. Bob Floyd had questions about the location of the approved new water tower.

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Chairman Perdue responded that it would be located across from Bonaire Baptist Church.

Mr. Floyd then commented on the Lashley Subdivision area, the conditions of the roads, and the many blighted and abandoned properties in that area.

Chairman Perdue explained that solving the property issues was no short-term process. He then asked County Attorney Tom Hall to comment on the issue.

County Attorney Hall agreed with Chairman Perdue that the legal process of remediating a blighted property took time.

Mr. Logan Cowperthwaite spoke about issues that his neighborhood in Centerville was having with homeless people and indiscriminate target shooting in the area during quiet hours.

Ms. Meg Mehserle spoke about her views on election integrity and being released from a poll watcher position. She presented a news article and asked Chairman Perdue about its contents.

Mr. Byrd asked Chairman Perdue if he had written the article in question.

Chairman Perdue replied that he had not.

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

Ms. Robinson thanked everyone for attending and commented on the many and various community-related items accomplished during the meeting. She also thanked Mr. Floyd for attending and bringing his concerns about the Lashley Subdivision to the Board. She concluded her comments by reminding everyone to vote, saying it was election day.

Mr. Gottwals read a few lines from *Every Moment Holy* and commented that we should all respect each other on this election day, no matter the election results.

Mr. Byrd mentioned that today was the last day to vote and encouraged everyone to do so. He commented on the various community-oriented agenda items and the parts of the community present, including the participation of the City of Warner Robins Mayor Patrick and other staff members. He recognized Mr. Talton and the invocation given at the beginning of the meeting. He mentioned Sheriff Talton's recent passing and spoke of what a great man, public servant, and Sheriff he was to Houston County. He concluded by saying that we should also remember Sheriff Billy Rape serving now in that role.

Mr. Talton commented on the great meeting and the substantial way that the Board gives back to the community through its support of the homeless and youth of Houston County.

Chairman Perdue commented that there was a recent community meeting focusing on hearing from the residents of the Lashley Subdivision. He stated that formulating a plan to improve the area would take time. He commented on the blighted properties, saying that with the rights of private property owners, remediating the blighted vacant properties in the Lashley Subdivision would be a lengthy process. He next spoke about Sheriff Talton and said that the County was in good hands with Sheriff Billy Rape. Chairman Perdue concluded his comments by reading Philippians 4:8.

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

Robbie Dunbar
Director of Administration

Chairman

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner

Commissioner