

Houston County Commissioners Meeting
December 17, 2024
Warner Robins, Georgia

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 5:00 pm on Tuesday, December 17, 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 and Director of Operations Brian Jones were also present.

Commissioner Byrd led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

County Attorney Tom Hall gave the Invocation.

Chairman Perdue and the Commissioners recognized Fire Chief/HEMA Director Chris Stoner for supporting disaster relief in Wheeler County following Hurricane Helene, which impacted Southeast Georgia earlier this year. Chairman Perdue read portions of a letter from GEMA Director James Stallings recognizing Chief Stoner for his leadership, direction, and work in helping the county's residents recover.

Chairman Perdue and each Commissioner thanked Chief Stoner for his dedication, work, leadership, and help he provided to the residents of Wheeler County and for his service to the residents of Houston County.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the December 3, 2024, meeting.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the reappointment of the following to the Tax Assessors Board for a term of January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2027:

Mr. Stephen Thublin
Ms. Joyce Herndon

and, to acknowledge the appointment of Ms. Susan Lemme to the Board of Elections by the Democratic Party of Houston County for a four-year term from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2028.

Chairman Perdue explained that the Commissioners voted on the reappointing of Mr. Thublin and Ms. Herndon but only acknowledged the appointment of Ms. Lemme to the Board of Elections as this seat on the Board of Elections was appointed by the Democratic Party of Houston County.

Mr. Talton presented a request for bid approval on the Wilson Drive/Elberta Road Widening project.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve acceptance of the low bid of \$4,534,588.90 from McLeRoy, Inc. of Zebulon, Georgia for the Wilson Drive/Elberta Road Widening Phase 1 project. The City of Centerville will pay for the relocation of the water main directly in the amount of \$455,420.50. This project is funded by 2018 SPLOST.

Mr. Byrd commented that four bids had been received and that county staff performed excellent work on this process.

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Mr. Talton presented a request for bid approval on two new rescue trucks for the Fire Department.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the bid from NAFECO of Decatur, AL, at a bid price of \$1,008,032.00 for both units and the purchase of additional equipment totaling \$112,829.04 needed to complete the trucks. The estimated delivery date is February 2026. The total cost of \$1,120,861.04 will be paid for by ARPA and SPLOST 2018 funding.

Chairman Perdue stated that this was the last item to be funded by the Standard Allowance portion of the ARPA grant.

Mr. Talton presented a request for approval of low bids on four vehicle purchases.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of the bids on the following vehicles:

Vehicle	Seller	Amount	Funding Source
1 New ½ Ton Crew Cab Truck	Phil Brannen Ford of Perry	\$41,808	Water Capital Funds
1 New ½ Ton Extended Cab	Phil Brannen Ford of Perry	\$39,042	Water Capital Funds
2 In-stock 2025 Ford Police Interceptors	Phil Brannen Ford of Perry	\$46,289 Each	2018 SPLOST

Mr. Talton presented a request to award the fuel contract for January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of the fuel contract to Petroleum Traders Corp. of Ft Wayne, Indiana, for the following prices:

E10 Unl Plus 89 Octane: -\$0.1141
 Diesel – Ultra Low Sulfur: -\$0.0449
 Average: -\$0.07950

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of the final adjusting change order for Phase 6, Stages 1C and 2A Cell Construction Project.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve Change Order #1 from CBP Environmental, Inc. of Statham, Georgia, for Phase 6, Stages 1C and 2A Cell Construction, totaling \$238.62, bringing the contract total to \$6,210,836.10.

Chairman Perdue stated that this change order was necessary because unexpected work was performed outside the scope of the original contract.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of four change orders for the Catalis (Benchmark) Court System.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve the following Catalis (Benchmark) Professional Services Change Orders:

- Catalis will add a software fix to not create duplicate parties on a case – No Charge

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- Catalis will add a software fix to merge duplicate Officer parties – No Charge
- Catalis will add software that will allow attorneys to view dockets that are hidden from the web if they are a party on the case - \$14,000 Charge
- Catalis will add software that removes items from the E-Filing proposed order screen that are not needed for the Houston E-Filing project. This will streamline the E-Filing of proposed orders for attorneys. - \$10,500 Charge

Chairman Perdue commented that the Court Management System project has been underway for over five years and is nearing completion.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a grant that supports direct victim services to crime victims.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve acceptance of the 2025 VOCA Grant C23-8-249 for \$66,830 for the District Attorney's Office from the Prosecuting Attorney's Council of Georgia. The required matching funds for this grant have been waived.

Ms. Robinson presented a request for approval of a quote to add access controls to the Juvenile Justice Complex.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the \$70,514.88 quote from BTV Systems of Macon, Georgia. This will place the Juvenile Complex on the same system as the other county's facilities with access control. This project will be funded by 2018 SPLOST.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for the abandonment of an easement for property located at 120 Sparrow Street.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of the Resolution Abandoning County Interest in Drainage Easement, approving the application submitted by Leigh Kersey, doing business as Kersey Home Builders LLC, for the abandonment of any and all interest Houston County may have in a portion of a 20' drainage easement that traverses the property located at 120 Sparrow Street, Perry, Georgia 31069. The approval and signing of said Resolution will further authorize Chairman Perdue to sign a quit claim deed conveying any and all interest Houston County may have in a portion of the existing drainage easement to the property owner. The approval of this application will be pending the recording of the plat of survey that designates the portion to be abandoned and the relocation of the drainage easement.

This abandonment is made pursuant to the understanding that the drainage easement was rerouted, designed, and installed by a private engineer group and any future issues that may arise from the rerouting of the drainage easement will not be remedied by the County and the County will not be held liable for such issues.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of a memorandum of understanding between the Board of Commissioners and the Houston County Storm Drainage Department.

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Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of a memorandum of understanding obligating \$150,350.36 of ARPA funds to the Houston County Storm Drainage Department for the repair or replacement of damaged stormwater pipes ensuring proper water flow and helping to mitigate flooding within Houston County’s stormwater infrastructure system.

Chairman Perdue explained that all ARPA funds had to be obligated by the end of the 2024 calendar year. He further explained that under ARPA rules, obligating funds to projects such as this through an MOU is allowable.

Mr. Byrd presented a request to delegate authority to approve the final audit budget adjustments for FY24.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve temporarily delegating authority to approve the final audit budget adjustment for FY24 to Chairman Perdue, Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar, and Director of Finance Danyelle George, to be ratified by the Commissioners at the first meeting in January 2025.

Chairman Perdue stated that in the past, a called meeting of the Board was needed to make year-end interdepartmental budget adjustments. Allowing these individuals to make budget adjustments, which will be reviewed and approved by the full Board at the first meeting in January, will streamline the process.

Mr. Byrd thanked Chairman Perdue for allowing this action to take place, stating he appreciated the efficiency that it would bring.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the following adjustments to the ARPA Budget:

Standard Allowance	Health Dept Addition	6,195,341.68
	Airport T-Hangars	1,000,000.00
	Public Safety (LPR) Cameras	945,200.00
	State Court Addition (FFE)	315,651.80
	State Court Parking Lot Addition	344,437.55
	911 Water Damage Remediation/Remodel	361,157.07
	Non-Profit Org Revenue Support	105,000.00
	Fire Department Rescue Trucks	733,211.90
		Subtotal
State Fiscal Recovery Projects	Ph II Gilbert Rd W/L Ext	916,768.40
	Ph III Sewell Rd W/L Ext	1,071,760.40
	Hwy 341 & Graham Rd W/L Ext	1,533,326.00
	Scott Rd & Scott Rd Ext W/L Ext	576,585.80
	W/S Impr to Serve Cemex	2,076,756.89
	Subtotal	6,175,197.49
Major Category	Bear Branch Remote Well	2,208,027.50
	Bear Branch Remote Well Piping	267,914.00
	Dunbar Rd Well Site/Facilities	2,437,578.71
	Middle Flint Mental Health	200,000.00
	Bonaire Elevated Tank	6,721,293.42
	Houston Healthcare - EMS	2,000,000.00
	Woodfield Drainage Improv PH2	646,952.00
	Davidson Road Paving	1,093,245.31
	LMIG Resurfacing Project- Houston Lake	937,549.31
	ARPA Paving	1,378,698.90
	Stormwater Projects	150,350.36
	Subtotal	18,041,609.51
	Total	34,216,807.00

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This request is the final adjustment and reflects contract amounts, accepted bids, or obligated amounts.

Chairman Perdue expressed his pleasure to report that, with these ARPA budget adjustments, the purchase of the fire department trucks, the CEMEX water line project, and the paving, resurfacing, and stormwater projects, Houston County has fully obligated all the ARPA funds it was awarded before the December 31st deadline this year.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for an amendment to the Water Purchase Agreement with the City of Warner Robins.

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

Residence Inn – 450 Houston Lake Road – 6-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.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of a change order for the Superior Courthouse Modifications Project.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Gottwals, and carried unanimously by all to approve signing Change Order #1 for the Houston County Superior Courthouse Modifications Project for \$425,279, bringing the total contract amount to \$937,530. This change order is for an increase in the scope of work, including new flooring and painting of Courtrooms, District Attorney's Office, and Judges' Chambers. Law Library funds will fund this change order in the amount of \$250,000 and reserve funds in the amount of \$175,279.

Chairman Perdue stated that this change order was expected and that, given the work already being done in Superior Court, it was cost-efficient to have these added modifications and renovations completed simultaneously.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to establish the salaries and supplements of newly elected officials and adjust the wages of current elected officials as mandated by the State.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd, and carried unanimously by all to approve establishing and adjusting the following elected officials' salaries according to state mandate effective January 1, 2025:

Official	Recommended	Current	Mandated	Adjustment	Reason
Judge Sammons		\$134,667.69	\$128,567.99	\$137,667.69	State COLA
Judge Turner		\$16,947.87	\$18,075.60	\$18,075.60	Mandate
Judge Campbell		\$16,515.35	\$17,625.78	\$17,625.78	Mandate
Mark Kushinka		\$147,556.92	\$133,982.52	\$152,556.92	State COLA

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Commissioner Robinson		\$22,388.16		\$22,943.69	Longevity & State COLA
Commissioner Byrd		\$20,200.00		\$21,290.00	Longevity & State COLA
Commissioner Talton		\$19,000.00		\$19,760.00	State COLA
Commissioner Gottwals		\$19,000.00		\$19,760.00	State COLA
Sheriff	\$144,643.20				Newly Elected
Superior Court Clerk	\$109,907.20				Newly Elected
District Attorney	\$15,000.00				Newly Elected
Solicitor	\$133,702.40				Appointment
Superior Court Judge	\$50,000.00				Newly Elected

Chairman Perdue stated that the raises and increases resulted from state mandates, longevity increases, or COLA, based on the County's existing merit increase chart.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to hire three new employees at salary steps higher than an A step.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve hiring the following individuals at the grade, step, and position indicated based on experience:

Name	Grade Step	Position	Department	Effective Date
Keith Rutland	15D	IT Specialist	MIS	December 18, 2024
Alasen Schell	30C	Assistant Solicitor	Solicitor	December 18, 2024
Maggie Hernandez	14B	Deputy Clerk	State Court Clerk	December 23, 2024

Chairman Perdue explained that no action would be taken on Agenda Item 18 as the applicant had withdrawn their application.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton, and carried unanimously by all to approve the appointment of Gail Robinson as the Houston County Board of Commissioners Vice Chairman for the calendar year of 2025.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson, and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$2,964,791.47.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for Public Comments.

Ms. Meg Mehserle spoke about her views on election integrity and an article in the newspaper.

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With no more public comments, Chairman Perdue opened the floor for Commissioner Comments.

Ms. Robinson acknowledged the presence of former Solicitor and newly appointed Superior Court Judge Amy Smith and State Court Clerk Teresa Hathaway. She thanked the elected officials, department heads, and county employees for their hard work. Ms. Robinson wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Mr. Byrd complimented Chairman Perdue and the Accounting, Commissioners Office, and Public Works staff for their excellent work obligating all ARPA funds for projects in Houston County. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and mentioned that this was a difficult time of year for some, so it was essential to be understanding with one another. He concluded his comments by congratulating the Robins AFB color guard who participated in the SEC Championship game by presenting the flag during the game.

Mr. Talton recognized Sheriff-Elect Matt Moulton for graduating from a school for newly elected sheriffs. He spoke about how, showing his leadership skills, Mr. Moulton was nominated as president of his class of new Georgia Sheriffs. He stated it was an honor to serve with the other Commissioners and that he looked forward to the future and all they would accomplish. He recognized and thanked all County employees for their work each day and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Chairman Perdue wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He expressed how proud he was of Director of Operations Brian Jones, all the Public Works staff, administration, and finance staff for their work on the ARPA budget. He concluded that all the hard work resulted in no money needing to be returned to the Federal Treasury.

Mr. Gottwals commented on three Christmas movies he recommended that everyone see this season: *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *A Christmas Story*. He commented that this meeting ends his 24 months on the Board and looks forward to serving more. He closed by encouraging everyone to reflect on the meaning of Christmas, the birth of Christ.

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

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