

**Houston County Commissioners Meeting  
April 18, 2023  
Warner Robins, Georgia**

The Houston County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday April 18, 2023, at the Houston County Annex in Warner Robins, Georgia, with Chairman Perdue presiding and Commissioners Byrd, Gottwals, Robinson, and Talton present. Also present were County Attorney Tom Hall, Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar, Director of Operations Brian Jones, Director of Personnel Ken Carter, Community Planner Jake Cox, Chief Building Inspector Tim Andrews, Fire/HEMA Chief Christopher Stoner and Utility Director Terry Dietsch.

Commissioner Robinson led those in attendance in The Pledge of Allegiance.

Pastor Joel Davis, of *Growing Together Ministries*, gave the Invocation. Pastor Joel Davis then spoke about his church, *Growing Together Ministries*, and also about an initiative he is helping to spearhead, the Warner Robins 100 Men Interest Group.

Chairman Perdue thanked Pastor Davis for attending, for his service in the military and spearheading the efforts of the Warner Robins 100 Men Interest Group. Chairman Perdue also recognized members of the 100 Men of Warner Robins Interest Group who accompanied Pastor Davis to the Commissioners meeting as well.

Commissioners Byrd, Gottwals, Robinson and Talton all expressed their appreciation to Pastor Davis for his service to our nation in the military, to those in our community and for his work and focus to help others.

Sergeant Bennett Lashley, with the Houston County Sheriff's Department Juvenile Division, brought in his electronics-detection K9, Jobi, and spoke about his capabilities and the work Jobi is trained to do. Jobi is trained to assist law enforcement find electronics such as cell phones, thumb drives and memory cards. Sgt. Lashley further explained that Jobi was the first K9 in Georgia with his capabilities and that there are only 100 in the entire world trained to sniff out electronics. Sgt. Lashley and Jobi work with the GBI and other law enforcement agencies in Georgia when called on.

In addition to recognizing Sgt. Lashley and Jobi, the Commissioners also recognized Sgt. Lashley's wife Pam. Mrs. Lashley, who joined Sgt. Lashley at the Commissioners meeting, was recognized earlier in the day as the Teacher of the Year at Eagle Springs Elementary School.

Commissioners Byrd, Gottwals, Robinson, and Talton all expressed their appreciation to both Sgt. Lashley and to Jobi for the work and service they both do to protect and serve the community. Mr. Gottwals also reminded those present that April was Child Abuse Protection Month and having Jobi recognized at this meeting was right in line with the observance of this initiative during the month.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the minutes from the meeting of April 4, 2023.

Mr. Talton presented an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Perry covering the cost sharing of the County waterline to a wastewater treatment facility from the location at the terminus of Phase 1 Waterline Improvement A.E. Harris Road.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Perry for bringing the County waterline to a wastewater treatment facility from the location at the terminus of Phase 1 Waterline Improvement A.E. Harris Road. The total cost of \$564,082, to be shared equally, shall include the construction costs to the contractor and the design and construction oversight costs to the consulting engineer.

Chairman Perdue mentioned that the intergovernmental agreement with Perry for the construction of this waterline is important to help with growth and fire safety on the east side

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of Perry and further mentioned this was another example of intergovernmental cooperation between the County and Perry participating together on a project.

Mr. Talton presented a request for approval of a bid on the *Water System Improvements to Serve A.E. Harris Road Phase II* project.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the award of a bid to SCI Construction, Inc. of Statesboro, Georgia in the amount of \$564,082 on the *Water System Improvements to Serve A.E. Harris Road Phase II* project. Funds for this project will be paid from Water Capital Funds.

Chairman Perdue said he was pleased to see that this bid came in lower than most recent estimates would have predicted.

Mr. Talton presented a request for approval to enter contracts for installation of a second scale transaction drawer at the Landfill.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the contracts with International City Builders Construction Group of Macon Georgia in the amount of \$38,845, and the contract with Scales, Systems and Automation of Sylvester Georgia in the amount of \$19,865, and the purchase of computer equipment in the amount of \$1,412.95, for a total cost of \$60,122.95 for the Second Scale Transaction Drawer at the Landfill. Funds for this project will be paid from 540-4530-52.2200.

Mr. Byrd mentioned that this action will enhance and improve the customer service level at the landfill.

Chairman Perdue agreed and said this action to install a second scale at the landfill serve both inbound and outbound customers at the same time and help with traffic.

Mr. Talton presented a request to make a position change to the FY23 Houston County Position Control.

Motion by Mr. Talton, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve a position change to the FY23 Houston County Position Control. This change would add 6 new firefighter positions at grade 16 and 3 lieutenant positions at grade 18 effective April 19, 2023. The funds to cover these positions will come from Insurance Premium Tax.

Also, to authorize the Chief Financial Officer to make the necessary budget adjustments.

Chairman Perdue mentioned this action is in line with the County's focus of making more of the fire stations in the County staffed by full time firefighters.

Mr. Talton followed up by saying that the caliber of the applicants for these firefighter positions were high and many already had experience in the field.

Director of Administration Robbie Dunbar performed the second reading of the alcohol license application for a package retail store to be located at 518 Hwy 247 in Bonaire.

Chairman Perdue closed meeting and opened a Public Hearing.

Chairman Perdue recognized Mr. Ujjawal Patel, the applicant and thanked him for attending the meeting.

As there were no comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.



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Mr. Byrd asked Mr. Dunbar if Mr. Patel satisfies all requirements for approval.

Mr. Dunbar advised that he does, and that Mr. Patel will meet with Mr. Andrews with the Planning and Zoning Office and the Sheriff's Department before he gets final approval on the license.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the alcohol license for sale of beer and wine off premises and liquor package retail store at 518 Hwy 247 Bonaire.

Ms. Robinson presented a request to fill the vacant Senior Assistant Solicitor position in the Solicitor General's Office.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to approve the hiring of Erikka Williams to fill the vacant Senior Assistant Solicitor position at a Grade 34 Step F effective April 19, 2023.

Ms. Robinson presented a Memorandum of Agreement with the Health Department to cover a deficit on a change order received from International City Builders.

Motion by Ms. Robinson, second by Mr. Gottwals and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement with the Health Department to cover a deficit of \$114,737 on a change order from International City Builders, Inc of Macon, Georgia, for renovations and expansion of the Health Department.

Chairman Perdue advised that this action is a change of scope in the renovation of the Health Department to provide additional renovations to the existing building with the County agreeing to help with some of these renovations.

Mr. Byrd mentioned that this is another example of great cooperation between governments for the benefit of the citizens of Houston County.

Mr. Byrd presented a change order from International City Builders, Inc for an increase in the contract for renovations and expansion of the Health Department.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of the change order from International City Builders, Inc., of Macon, Georgia for the renovations and expansion of the Health Department at 98 Cohen Walker Drive in the amount of \$433,962. This will bring the total amount of the contract to \$6,171,645.55.

Chairman Perdue advised that the County's portion of this contract change will come from the County's ARPA funds and will not exceed spending anything over the budgeted amount of \$6 million dollars on this project.

Mr. Byrd presented a request for approval of a bid on one New Bulldozer for use at the Landfill.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the purchase of one new bulldozer from Yancey Brothers of Macon, Georgia for \$866,908, with a 60-month Premier Equipment Protection Plan Extended Warranty for an additional \$53,800, for a total cost of \$920,708. The lead time on this purchase is 10 months.

For the benefit of those present, Chairman Perdue explained in detail what the difference is in a high track/elevated sprocket bulldozer compared to a regular tracked bulldozer.

Mr. Byrd presented a request from the City of Warner Robins for property located at 100 – 104 S Amanda Place. This annexation request was tabled at the April 4, 2023 meeting.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for any public comments.

Voicing their concerns about the annexation and potential for traffic issues and heavy construction traffic coming into their neighborhood were Kimberly Pritchett, David Johnson and Milo Renge.

Chairman Perdue advised that he had sent a letter to Mr. Darin Curtis with the City of Warner Robins which laid out four stipulations that the County expected in order to concur with this annexation, and he advised that the City and counsel for the developers all agreed to these stipulations with the most important being the installation of a traffic light at the intersection of Houston Lake Road and Smithville Church Road to help with traffic at this intersection and the proposed development. He also mentioned that closing temporarily or permanently South Amanda Place at Houston Lake Road was always an option that the County could move on should traffic from construction or the development become an issue.

With no further public comments, Chairman Perdue continued the Commissioners meeting.

The Commissioners all agreed that Chairman Perdue had done a great job in working on a solution for the residents of the area, the developer, the County and the City of Warner Robins. It was also pointed out that work on the traffic light and plan approval would be happening simultaneously to hopefully occur at about the same time and that another great result of this cooperation and work coming together is that a traffic signal will be installed at this very busy intersection.

Motion by Mr. Byrd, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to concur with the City of Warner Robins annexation request for property located at 100 – 104 S. Amanda Place, containing 3.891 acres and also known as Tax Parcels # 00074E 099000 (3.508 acres) and #00074E 172000 (0.383 acres) with the stipulations that any access should be on and off Houston Lake Road, that a buffer between the commercial and residential area be provided, and that any County utilities remain with the County. The property is currently zoned County R-1 and proposed zoning is City C-2. In addition, permanent access shall be at a single point on the adjacent property to the South across from Smithville Church Road with inter parcel connectivity. The County will pay for a traffic signal and for removing an existing utility pole, and there will be no construction access from South Amanda Drive.

Mr. Gottwals presented an annexation request from the City of Perry for property located at 2011 Elko Road.

Chairman Perdue opened the floor for public comments.

As there were no public comments Chairman Perdue continued the meeting.

Mr. Byrd advised that he spoke to City of Perry staff member Bryan Wood about the R-3 designation of this property once annexed into the City of Perry inquiring if it would be for apartments. Mr. Wood assured him this zoning would be for a single family home and not for apartments.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to concur with the City of Perry annexation request for property located at 2011 Elko Road, containing 1.50 acres, and also known as a portion of Tax Parcel 000640 059000. The property is currently zoned County R-AG, and the proposed zoning will be City R-3.

Mr. Gottwals presented a request to renew contracts with the UGA Extension Service Employees.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Byrd and carried unanimously by all to approve the signing of the updated FY23 contract with the UGA Extension Office and also signing the FY24 contract with the UGA Extension Office to pay the extension service employees by quarterly invoice.



Mr. Gottwals presented a request for abandonment of rights-of-way submitted by Marion E. Waugh.

Chairman Perdue closed the meeting and opened a Public Hearing.

As there were no comments, Chairman Perdue closed the Public Hearing and reopened the regular portion of the meeting.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Mr. Talton and carried unanimously by all to approve The Board of Commissioners signing the Resolution and the Deeds of Abandonment abandoning portions of First Avenue, Second Avenue and all of Sixth Avenue, the rights-of-way to be abandoned are more particularly described as follows:

All that tract or parcel of land situate, lying and being in Land Lot 12 of the Eleventh (11th) Land District of Houston County, Georgia, being known as Sixth Street according to a Plat of Survey prepared by Waddle Surveying Company, Inc., Dated April 17, 1963, and recorded in Plat Book 35, Page 128, Clerk's Office, Houston Superior Court.

All that tract or parcel of land situate, lying and being in Land Lot 12 of the Eleventh (11th) Land District of Houston County, Georgia, being known as the portion of First Avenue adjacent to lots 219, 218 and 215, and the portion of Second Avenue adjacent to lots 127, 126, 121, 220, 217, and 216 according to a Plat of Survey prepared by Waddle Surveying Company, Inc., Dated April 17, 1963, and recorded in Plat Book 35, Page 128, Clerk's Office, Houston Superior Court.

This conveyance is subject to a prescriptive utility easement for a 12" water main located in the right-of-way designated as First Avenue located on the western boundary line of said property described.

ALSO, both conveyances are subject to any easements for drainage or utilities presently existing within the above-described property.

Chairman Perdue said that there were no plans to make these rights-of-way into roads and that roads do not currently exist in that area and that this abandonment will allow the property owner to utilize this property where the rights-of-way are currently delineated.

Motion by Mr. Gottwals, second by Ms. Robinson and carried unanimously by all to approve the payment of the bills totaling \$2,938,589.19.

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

Houston County Fire Chief Chris Stoner addressed the Board and thanked them for their support of the Fire Department through the approval of these new fire fighter positions for the soon opening Station #2. He then gave a history of how far the Fire Department has come in terms of going from an all-volunteer fire department to where now 5 out of the 8 County fire stations will have full time 24/7 fire staffing.

Chairman Perdue advised he was excited about the staffing for Station 2 and thanked Chief Stoner for his great work at the fire department.

With no further public comments, Chairman Perdue closed public comments portion of the meeting and reopened the meeting.

Chairman Perdue opened the meeting for Commissioner's comments.

Ms. Robinson stated that she came on the Commission in 1998 and there were no full-time firefighters, and she was proud to now be able to say there are currently 30 full-time firefighters with the Houston County Fire Department and thanked Chief Stoner for his leadership. She also thanked Chairman Perdue for his leadership and work on the Warner

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Robins annexation and making sure that all parties involved were given the best results possible for their position on the annexation.

Mr. Talton thanked everyone for being present at the meeting and thanked Pastor Davis for his prayer and service to the community and nation during his time in the military. He stated he is very excited about the progress of the new Bonaire fire station.

Mr. Byrd thanked Chairman Perdue for going above and beyond in his efforts regarding the Warner Robins annexation and for his work as Chairman and remarked about all the work that was accomplished during the Commissioners meeting. He further expressed his appreciation to the County staff who work to bring the agenda together for each meeting and highlighted the fact that Houston County was listed as the 8th best county in Georgia in which to live.

Mr. Gottwals mentioned that April was *National Child Abuse Prevention* month and referred to the pinwheel on his coat jacket as a symbol and reminder of the need to always protect children from abusive situations and individuals and thanked Sgt. Lashley, Pam and Jobi for attending the commissioners meeting.

Chairman Perdue thanked everyone for attending and expressed his appreciation for all the good work that was accomplished. He then addressed an issue in the community where a former coach was filmed making racist comments and with great emotion expressed his sadness and anger with this behavior and words used and made it clear that type of behavior and speech exhibited on the video has no place in Houston County and is not at all what Houston County is about nor a reflection on the community.

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

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Robbie Dunbar  
Director of Administration

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Chairman

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Commissioner

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