

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION**

January 18, 2022
6:30 P.M.

Commissioners Present: Andrew Zuerner, Susan Andrews, Rob Grant, Bobby Irions, Becky Langston.
Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; Russell Britt, County Attorney; Nancy D. McMichael,
County Clerk.

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Zuerner called the Regular Session to order.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Chairman Zuerner led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **MINUTES.** The motion to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2022 Regular Session, the January 4, 2022 Work Session, and the January 5, 2022 Called Session was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously.
4. **OLD BUSINESS**

A. **Easement Across Landfill Property: Greeneberry Farms.** Russell Britt, County Attorney, said that he has spoken with Buddy Burns, representative for Michael Harris, the owner of the property east of the landfill, regarding the .24 acres of property and the lease or purchase thereof; that the owner discovered an old road bed in the corner of the landfill property that he would like to use as access to the other section of his property due to the difficult terrain of his remaining property and for use by personal or timber harvesting vehicles; that Mr. Burns has indicated the owner is interested in purchasing that narrow strip (old road bed); and that if the Board is willing to discuss the sale of the property, it should take place during Executive Session for disposition of property. There were no objections to discussing the disposition of the property in Executive Session.

B. **Retirement Plans Proposal: Paul Bates.** Paul Bates, with GebCorp, appeared before the Board to provide additional information regarding the retirement proposals that he presented during the January 4 Work Session. Mr. Bates reviewed the comparison of Harris County to counties of similar size and population as well as a demographic of County employees regarding years of service and age. Commissioner Langston said that Harris County has great employees who are dedicated; that the Board has done a great job during COVID in taking care of employees; that while many people were forced to take early retirement, cuts in salary, or were furloughed or laid off, such did not occur in Harris County; that the County actually updated the salary pay scale and health care plan and was able to help employees with extra funds to get through COVID; that inflation is rising and so are the County's expenses; that 20% of the citizens are senior citizens who are on fixed income; that the County currently has five major projects (Ellerslie Park, Courthouse repairs, new Water Works building, new EMS building, and Walking Trail), all of which she is in favor of and all of which have long-term financial obligations; that the review of the pension plans is being done because it hasn't been reviewed in 20-30 years; that the Board has to think about who pays the bills (taxpayers); that she is not ready to vote on the retirement proposals; and that she would prefer to discuss this issue further during the next Planning Retreat scheduled for February 24. There were no objections.

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Setting Qualifying Fees.** Chairman Zuerner said that State law requires the Commissioners to set the qualifying fees for elected officials and to publish same no later than February 1 of any year in which a general primary, nonpartisan primary or general election is to be held, at least 35 days prior to such election; that the offices are Commissioner and School Board; and that the qualifying fees are:

Commissioners (districts 1, 2 & 3): \$315
School Board (districts 2, 5 & 7): \$144

The motion to set the qualifying fees as shown above was made by Commissioner Langston, seconded by Commissioner Andrews, and passed unanimously.

B. **Audit Renewal Agreement: Robinson Grimes & Company.** Chairman Zuerner said that Robinson Grimes, auditors, had submitted a renewal agreement letter to provide audit services for FYE 2022, 2023, and 2024 at a cost of \$59,000,

\$59,000 and \$60,000 respectively. Following discussion, the motion to approve the renewal for three years was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Chairman Zuerner, and passed unanimously. (Document can be found in “Contracts & Agreements” file as C&A #22-03.)

6. **COUNTY MANAGER**

A. **Project Updates**. Randy Dowling, County Manager, reviewed various projects, as follows:

- (1) UDC/Land Use Codes. Revised document will be posted on County’s website for public review; first reading before Planning Commission on March 16; second reading before Board on April 5; if approved will be effective April 19.
- (2) EMS/VFD Facility in NWHBP. Architect approved during January 4 meeting; kick-off meeting to begin design will be later this month.
- (3) LMIG Resurfacing 2022. Pre-bid meeting held today; bids due February 28; Board consideration on February 1, and completion by June 30, 2022.
- (4) Ellerslie Park. Opening is Saturday, January 22, at 11 AM, rain or shine. Commissioner Andrews requested that signs be posted regarding same.
- (5) Man O’War Railroad Recreation Trail, Phase V (aka Rails to Trails). Design underway, should go out on bid in March with completion by late 2022.
- (6) Airport Apron Rejuvenation. Pre-construction meeting held January 13; project to be completed by June 2022.
- (7) Water Meter Project. Project completed; closing out temporary loan into permanent loan.
- (8) Water Lines on Green Drive. Bids opened today with four responses; Board consideration on February 1.
- (9) Courthouse Renovations, Phase I. Design underway; Construction Manager will be hired for the project; should begin in March; should be completed later this year; and consists of roof, HVAC, windows, exterior balcony, and painting.
- (10) Renovation of Old Library - Roof & HVAC System. Almost completed; ribbon cutting planned for late February; patients to be seen in March.
- (11) Impact Fee Study. CIE Public Hearing held during the January 4 meeting; CIE has been transmittal to the RVRC for review; ordinance and fee schedule to be discussed during the February 24 Planning Retreat.
- (12) Assist RVRC with T-SPLOST Referendum. Everything approved and ongoing for the referendum, which will be on May 24, to continue the 1% T-SPLOST.
- (13) Redistricting of Commission Districts. New map approved January 5 and submitted to State for approval by the General Assembly.
- (14) Underground Diesel Fuel Tank Removal. Tank has been removed; state has reviewed the project documents; and County has received a “no further action” letter.
- (15) ARP Projects. Listing shows the status of the projects; should be hearing from the State regarding the grant for the elevated water tank at SR 315 near I-185 and for the Diverse Power EMC/County broadband within the next two weeks.
- (16) Speed Control Device on Old West Point Road. Commissioner Grant asked if enough data has been obtained in order to segregate to determine various factors regarding speeding, and Alex Santiago, IT Director, asked that Mr. Grant let him know exactly what he is looking for and he will provide same.

7. **APPEARANCE OF CITIZENS**. Nancy McMichael, County Clerk, said that Bo Barber had requested to be on this agenda; that she failed to actually place him on the agenda; and that Mr. Barber is in attendance. Chairman Zuerner recognized Mr. Barber and asked for his comments.

- A. **Bo Barber: Old West Point Road & SR 103 Safety & Traffic Issues.** Bo Barber, citizen who lives on Old West Point Road, appeared before the Board and said that he is one of many on the north end of the County; that public safety issues exist due to increased use of the roads in the area; that there are many generational families who are not against progress, but are against the deterioration of the quality of life; that when you can't walk safely to your mailbox, that is a problem; that there are various problems in the area (provided photos), one of which is the damaged speed sign, which has been relocated to an obscure part of the road; that due to Old West Point Road being used as an alternate route, the road safety deflectors are being dislodged and striping on the roads is bad, especially on dark, rainy nights; that major construction is occurring on SR 18, which is causing more traffic; that there is illicit activity taking place and evidence can be found along roads, to include drug paraphernalia and garbage; that the City of West Point will not acknowledge the need for safety and will only do as much as the County pressures it to do; that some of the properties were annexed into the City, but they are still having problems with 911 calls to West Point; that long term residents have a vested interest in the County; that there is going to be a huge truck stop on SR 103 and SR 18 and there are already three liquor stores and a cannabis oil store there, all of which create an environment that will cause more problems for residents and elected officials. He asked that the County look into the traffic speed issue. (Submitted photos can be found in "Miscellaneous Documents" as MD# 22-03.)
- B. **Jeanette Johnson: Water Issue.** Jeanette Johnson, citizen who lives on SR 103, appeared before the Board and said that her grandmother moved from Troup to Harris County 47 years ago; that she now lives in her grandmother's home, which is located on the same side of SR 103 as the industrial park, which is on both sides of her home; that her issue is with the City of West Point water system; that the industrial park has City water on each side of her home and behind her, but she and others have not been offered the opportunity to connect to City water; that well water use is different than it used to be and is very expensive to maintain; that it is not fair that long-time residents do not have City water while the industrial park does; that while she has talked to Ed Moon (West Point) she would like to know to whom she can speak about getting City water; and that she wants to be treated fair.

8. **COUNTY ATTORNEY**

- A. **Redistricting Update.** Russell Britt, County Attorney, said that the required redistricting public notice was published in the legal organ last week and that Representative Vance Smith is in the process of taking the redistricting map Local Legislation before the General Assembly for approval.
- B. **Lower Chattahoochee Transportation Authority (5311 Program) Update.** Russell Britt, County Attorney, said that he is working with the LCTA attorney to get the Local Legislation request advertised and before the General Assembly.
- C. **Request for Executive Session.** Russell Britt, County Attorney, requested an Executive Session for the purpose of discussing real estate, personnel and litigation.
9. **RECESS FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Commissioner Grant made the motion to go into Executive Session for the discussion of real estate, personnel and litigation at 7:23 PM. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Langston and passed unanimously.
10. **RESUME REGULAR SESSION.** The motion to go back into Regular Session was made at 9:20 PM by Commissioner Langston, seconded by Chairman Zuerner, and passed unanimously.
11. **ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Irions, seconded by Commissioner Grant, and passed unanimously.

Andrew Zuerner, Chairman

Attest:

Nancy D. McMichael, County Clerk