

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PLANNING SESSION**

October 11, 2021

5:00 PM

Ellerslie Park Lodge, 3280 GA Hwy 85, Ellerslie

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

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Zuerner called the meeting to order.

Employee Retirement System. Via Zoom, Paul Bates, ACCG Retirement Services representative, reviewed a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Defined Benefit (DB) & Defined Contribution 457b/401(a) (DC) plans, to include that the DB provides for a guaranteed lifetime monthly benefit that is based on a formula and paid from an ACCG pension trust; that there are retirement qualifications (vesting, retirement age); that the DC are individual investment savings accounts, with an employer base contribution and matching contributions, and employee voluntary contributions, and is overseen by a DC board of oversight. Following discussion, consensus was for the County to look at increasing its contribution to the DB (or DC or BOTH) plan.

EMS Proposal - Northwest Harris/Flat Shoals Solution. Bucky Searcy, EMS Director, explained his proposal, which has been reviewed and agreed to by NW Harris Volunteer Fire Chief Curt Pechloff and former Chief Byron Hawkins, to include adding another EMS station (#5) in the Northwest Harris Business Park would allow approximately 4,000 citizens to receive EMS care within an acceptable time frame, would cover the section of I-185 and the Welcome Center located in Harris County, could lease a bay to NW Harris VFD to improve fire protection and ISO ratings to homes in the area, to alleviate the call volume and extensive coverage from current EMS stations, to provide storage facilities for equipment necessary to maintain the business park, and would provide a needed resource to a large part of the County that is experiencing growth. He said that the approximate initial outlay would be around \$2.3 million, but could be reduced by about \$215,000 by purchasing another used ambulance for \$25,000. Discussion included that General Fund reserves is between \$15 and \$18 million. There were no objections to the proposal, and consensus was to move forward with building design, as well as providing more specific cost estimates, using General Fund reserves. Chief Pechloff said that with the Board appearing to be in agreement with constructing an EMS station and to provide a bay for a fire truck, the NW Harris VFD is more than willing to continue serving the Flat Shoals area as needed, and that upon completion of the station and the location of a fire truck in the bay, there should be no problems in people becoming volunteer firefighters.

Ambulance Purchase (Budget Amendment #2 FY 21/22). Discussion included an opportunity to purchase another used ambulance to (for \$33,000) to supplement the current ambulance fleet and for future use at the proposed EMS facility (see above), and that funds from General Fund Reserves could be used. There were no objections to moving forward with the purchase.

Water Works Building Project. Randy Dowling, County Manager, discussed the Water Works administrative building. Following discussion, consensus was to move forward with the building design preferred by Jeff Culpepper, Water Works Director.

Solid Waste Building Project. Randy Dowling, County Manager, discussed the Solid Waste building to be constructed to replace the small building next to the Transfer Station. Following discussion, consensus was to move forward with the building design.

Personnel Policy Status. Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that he, Kris Summerall (HR/Payroll), and Nancy McMichael (County Clerk) are in the process of reviewing various personnel policies of other counties and cities and should be able to present a final document to the Board, after review by Department Heads, during the first quarter of 2022.

Employee Travel Out of State & Conference Attendance Confirmation. There was discussion about allowing, or not allowing, employees to travel out of state, depending on the justification/need for such; that the County Manager should make the determination of the need; and that employees should be able to share what they have learned at conferences/classes with their peers upon their return from such events.

Large Item Pickup. There was discussion regarding the County continuing to offer once a year large item pickup to the municipalities upon request, and consensus was to continue with this practice.

Sheriff's Deputy Issues. Commissioner Langston said that she was asked by a Sheriff's Deputy to let the Board know there are concerns regarding the possibility of shift differential, the promotion process, monetary incentives, vacation, longevity, and training. There was little discussion and no consensus regarding moving forward with any of the concerns.

Noise Ordinance. Commissioner Grant said that he has been contacted several times by an individual regarding the need for a noise ordinance, but that the noise to which the citizen is complaining about is emanating from Meriwether County where there is no jurisdiction. No consensus.

Status of Recreation Facilities. There was discussion regarding various complaints from citizens and concerns of the Board regarding the appearance of the recreation parks. Consensus was that the Recreation Director is responsible for the condition of the parks and he/his staff should maintain them accordingly, and that the County Manager is responsible for the Recreation Director.

County Clerk Retirement. Nancy McMichael provided the Board with a letter regarding her retirement from the County, effective February 4, 2022, as her last day in the office, and June 11, 2022, as her last date of employment with the County.

ADJOURNMENT.