

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
CALLED SESSION**

March 13, 2019

5:00 PM

Commissioners Present: Becky Langston, Susan Andrews, Rob Grant, J. Harry Lange, Andrew Zuerner. Staff Present: Randy Dowling; Nancy D. McMichael, County Clerk. Also in attendance: Monty Davis, 911 & EMA Director; Mike Brown, Public Works Director; Brian Williams, Community Development Director; and Jeff Culpepper, Water Works Director.

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Langston called the Called Session to order and explained that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the March 3 tornado and the aftermath of same.

2. **TORNADO AFTERMATH**
 - A. **Randy Dowling, County Manager.** Mr. Dowling gave a detailed report on action taken by County personnel since the tornado touched down in Ellerslie and Pine Mountain on March 3, 2019, to include that assistance came not only from the County departments of EMA, Community Development, Public Works, Sheriff's Office, and Tax Assessor, but also from Ellerslie Volunteer Fire Department, Troup County (EMA, Public Works & Tax Assessor), Upson County Public Works, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Georgia Department of Corrections (GDOC), the City of West Point and the City of LaGrange, and other County volunteer fire departments, with all taking action Sunday evening and Monday, March 4. He said that a meeting was held on Tuesday, the 5th, with representatives from GEMA and the Board of Education and EMA, Solid Waste, Community Development, Public Works and Community Center to review actions taken since the tornado and what action to take.

 - B. **Monty Davis, EMA/911 Director.** Mr. Davis appeared before the Board and said that the tornado was a learning experience for many; that once the county was under a declaration by the state, assistance was then available from GDOT and GDOC, but that assistance would be for two weeks with an extension; that because there wasn't over \$14.3 million in uninsured damages, the County did not qualify for FEMA assistance. He said that in future such events, better communication is needed throughout the various departments and entities that assist.

 - C. **Mike Brown, Public Works Director.** Mr. Brown appeared before the Board and said that the County does not have the resources and equipment to handle such an event, which is why the assistance from other entities and Alexander Contracting, who loaned the County an excavator, was most appreciated; that it is going to take some time for County personnel to pick up the storm debris that has been deposited on the rights of way; that unfortunately, citizens are also including construction materials in the debris; and that taking care of the storm debris being deposited at Ellerslie Park is going to be a monumental task. He suggested that for future similar events, the County obtain land for the purpose of depositing storm debris rather than using places like Ellerslie Park for such. Commissioner Andrews said she will be attending the HOA meeting of Ellerslie Place and will advise that only storm debris is to be deposited on the right of way or at Ellerslie Park. Comments from Commissioners included that the County does not have the man power to pick up all the storm debris in a specific time frame; and that items on the right of way that are not storm debris will not be picked up. Mr. Brown continued by saying that the County might want to consider purchasing a grapple loader and the Board indicated it would be considered with funding from SPLOST. Mr. Dowling pointed out that Public Works has a normal crew of eight (8) to maintain the County's 400 miles of roads.

 - D. **Brian Williams, Community Development Director.** Mr. Williams appeared before the Board and said that Ellerslie Park sustained significant damage; that it is going to be a while before the debris can be burned or disposed of by other means; that the tree limb through the roof of the Lodge has been removed and the hole covered by a tarp; that about 230 homes were damaged in Ellerslie Place; that Ellerslie Volunteer Fire Department was of tremendous assistance as a distribution point for water and tarps; and that permits for repairs to homes as a result of the storm are a flat \$100, but for new construction the usual fees will apply.

 - E. **Jeff Culpepper, Water Works Director.** Mr. Culpepper appeared before the Board and said that there was damage to several water meters as a result of people piling storm debris on the roadside; and that the Ellerslie water tank sustained minor damage.

- F. **Thank You Letters.** Chairman Langston said that she would like “thank you” letters sent out to those entities that provided assistance to the County, and perhaps an announcement in the paper to thank employees and citizens. Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that the letters and announcement will be prepared.
- G. **Tornado Information to Disburse.** Following discussion, the Board reached the following consensus on information to disburse to the public as well as the need to reassess the situation at a later date.
- ▶ State Declaration of Emergency will end on Friday, March 15, 2019
 - ▶ Residents should not bring any additional storm debris to the road side effective midnight on Sunday, March 17
 - ▶ Public Works will pick up the remaining wood storm debris along the roadways in the impacted areas as time permits for the next several months. County will not pick up debris on private roads.
 - ▶ County will not pick up any construction material along the roadway.
 - ▶ Ellerslie Park will remain open to accept wood storm debris only (no metal objects or construction material) until further notice. The park will eventually be closed at a date to be determined.
 - ▶ The Transfer Station will remain open on Saturday, March 16, until 6:00 PM to accept storm debris and other materials that are normally accepted. After March 16, the Transfer Station will operate during normal hours.
 - ▶ Do not take wood storm debris to any of the convenience center sites.
 - ▶ Individual citizens can apply for a burn permit to burn wood debris on-site if desired, but they are to contact the Georgia Forestry Commission to obtain a burn permit.
- H. **Siren in Hamilton.** Chairman Langston said that she was contacted by the City of Hamilton about assisting in the cost to repair the City’s emergency siren. Consensus was to decide once the cost of repair has been determine.
3. **ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business, the motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Lange, and passed unanimously.

Becky Langston, Chairman

Attest:

Nancy D. McMichael, County Clerk