

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**REGULAR SESSION**  
December 17, 2019  
7:00 P.M.

Commissioners Present: Becky Langston, Susan Andrews, Rob Grant, J. Harry Lange, Andrew Zuerner.  
Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; John Taylor, County Attorney; Nancy D. McMichael, County Clerk.

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Langston called the Regular Session to order.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Chairman Langston led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **MINUTES.** The motion to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2019, Regular Session, was made by Commissioner Lange, seconded by Commissioner Zuerner, and passed unanimously.
4. **NEW BUSINESS**
  - A. **Financial Statement: October 2019.** The motion to approve the financial statement for October 2019 was made by Commissioner Lange, seconded by Commissioner Andrews, and passed unanimously.
  - B. **Community Center Fee Schedule.** Chairman Langston said the Community Center's fee schedule was last revised in 2018 on July 3 with an effective date of August 1; that the consensus of the Board is to move away from a membership fee and allow county residents to use the facility for a nominal charge and non-residents for some type of charge; that the staff has drafted a proposed fee schedule for consideration by the Board; and that if approved, the effective date could be July 1, 2020. Commissioner Grant said that he was pleased to see the two-page fee schedule has been reduced to one page; that he is in favor of a nominal charge for citizens; that he would like to see County employees who live outside the County afforded the same nominal fee as citizens. Discussion included the listing for "organized group fee", which currently reads "more than 10", should regardless of the number; that the "4 hours maximum" for the conference room/class room should be deleted; that there are very few rentals to out-of-county residents; that changing to a nominal fee will result in a loss in revenue of approximately \$77,000; that it will take a lot of room rentals to make up the revenue; that perhaps the nominal fee needs to increase from \$5/application and \$5/card to \$10/application and \$10/card; that having the nominal may increase usage of the facility; that the Silver Sneakers program may be affected with the change; and that more thought is needed regarding the fee changes. Chairman Langston tabled action to the January 7, 2020 meeting.
  - C. **Rezoning & SUP Schedule for 2020.** There being no changes to the scheduled, the motion to approve was made by Chairman Langston, seconded by Commissioner Andrews, and passed unanimously.
  - D. **First Reading: Broadband Ready Ordinance.** Chairman Langston said this is the First Reading to amend Appendix A - Zoning, to provide an ordinance, based on the model provided by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, in order to be eligible for the Broadband Ready Community Certification by DCA; that if adopted, it will indicate the County's willingness to work with broadband companies and put the County in line for state broadband funds. She asked if there were any questions or comments from the Board. There being none, she asked if there were any comments from those in attendance. There being none, she said that the Second Reading and action are scheduled for the January 7, 2020, meeting.
  - E. **Railbed Driveway Crossing Request: Chance Carlisle.** Chairman Langston said that a request has been made by Chance Carlisle for four (4) driveways/crossovers on the railroad railbed for property inside the city limits of Hamilton; that the property is located on Hamilton Pleasant Grove Road; and is proposed for eight (8) lots; that the written request was submitted with a drawing entitled "subdivision project"; that on November 5, 2019, the Board amended the Railroad Recreation Ordinance regarding driveways/crossovers that included nine (9) inclusions; that Mr. Carlisle indicated that while the drawing does not show grade, drainage, utilities and public rights of way, he is prepared to submit same if the driveways/crossovers are approved. Commissioner Zuerner made the motion to approve the request to allow the driveways/crossovers. He said that the property is

in Hamilton; that the homes will be on the Rails to Trails project; and that the rail is above the road elevation, which will cause any traffic on same to slow down when crossing the railbed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Grant. Commissioner Andrews said that the recently amended ordinance requires (1) a survey with proposed grade, drainage, utilities and public rights of way shall be prepared at the cost of the applicant and submitted with the written request, (2) no new driveways or crossings shall be authorized or approved if the property for which a driveway or crossing is sought fronts on or has access to a public road, private road, or access easement, and (3) multiple side-by-side new driveways or crossings shall not be permitted; new driveways or crossings from a land area must be limited to one; that this is the first request to come before the Board and it doesn't meet the ordinance requirements. John Taylor, County Attorney, said that the motion should be for preliminary approval pending the proper drawing being submitted, which would still have to be submitted to comply with the ordinance. Commissioner Zuerner amended his motion for preliminary approval pending the proper drawing being submitted, and Commissioner Grant amended his second. The motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Andrews commented that the ordinance needs to be reviewed and possibly changed so that the Board is not going against it.

5. **COUNTY MANAGER**

- A. **RFQ Consideration: Planning Services for Land Use & Development Codes Update.** Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that \$125,000 had been included in the approved FY 19-20 budget to hire a professional consultant to update and modernize the County's land use and development codes; that a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was prepared and advertised during September 2019; that three responses were received from (1) Wood PLC of Kennesaw, GA, (2) CPL of Suwanee, GA, and (3) Town Planning & Design of Atlanta, GA; that the responses were reviewed by the evaluation committee, which consisted of the County Manager, the County Clerk, the Community Development Director, two members of the Planning Commission and one member of the Development Authority, and presentation interviews with each of the three companies occurred on November 7 before the evaluation committee; that following the presentations, interviews, reference checks, the committee selected Wood PLC to continue the RFQ process based on their qualifications; that Wood PLC has prepared a scope of work for the update of the land use and development codes in the amount of \$119,500, a scope of work to provide a professional part time on-site and on-call planner to assist the Community Development Department at a cost of \$42,000 for 12 hours/week, 48 hours/month, or 576 hours/year, and a scope of work to assess the County's GIS needs and offer recommendation at a cost of \$10,000; and that it is recommended the steering committee for this year-long process be the same as the evaluation committee.

Lee Walton, with Wood PLC, appeared before the Board to respond to questions and discuss the proposal. Mr. Walton said, in response to questions, that the approach will be to listen to comments and concerns of staff, the commissioners, and citizens through various means and venues, and to engage with stakeholder groups to identify issues; that his firm has worked in various counties and municipalities that are similar and yet different; that care will be taken to listen regarding the rural quality of life and ability to maintain same; and that they have worked in the Columbus area as well as the Athens/Clark County area. Comments included that there are places in the County suitable for more dense development and other areas that should be less dense; that the pros and cons of such developments should be reviewed. Chairman Langston said she read the proposal and likes what she read particularly the fact that Wood PLC will be working with the steering committee, keeping the Board informed, and having listening sessions. In response to a question from Chairman Langston, Mr. Walton said that the Project Manager would be the County Manager, Randy Dowling. Chairman Langston said that the evaluation committee did a good job and she is pleased to see that that committee will be the steering committee for the project. In response to more questions, Mr. Walton said that it is important to track what has changed and the reason for the change; that a new Table of Contents will show the outline of processes and be user friendly. Regarding the part time Planner, Mr. Walton said that person is originally from Columbus and very familiar with Harris County but would not be on-site every day but available via email and phone and would provide technical support; that the \$42,000 includes travel expenses; that documents produced by the planner will be reviewed and confirmed before being disbursed to the County; and that if approved, the project would begin in January. Additional comments included that the outcome of the project should not be pre-determined, that it should not follow the latest trend,

and that one should not assume that one size fits all.

In response to a question, John Britt, Chairman of the Planning Commission who served on the evaluation committee and will serve on the steering committee, said that having been involved with the interviews with the three companies (that submitted RFQ responses) the best company was chosen, and based on what he has heard tonight, it only reaffirms that the recommendation of the committee was correct.

Chairman Langston said that the costs for the part time planner and GIS assessment are appropriate. Commissioner Lange said the GIS assessment will go a long way in helping the County, and Mr. Walton said that the actual GIS program never stops; that his firm will provide an assessment to determine viable options for the County to efficiently and effectively develop a functional GIS program.

There being no further questions or comments, the motion to approve the master agreement, the three scopes of work (update, planner, and GIS), and to authorize the County Manager and County Clerk to execute the necessary documents was made by Commissioner Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Lange, and passed unanimously. (Master Agreement document can be found in "Contracts & Agreements" file as C&A #19-44.)

- B. **RTP Grant Mitigation.** Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that as a grant requirement of the Recreational Trail Program (RTP) grant to pave Phase III of the Rails to Trail project, the County must create and install two (2) interpretive panels highlighting the Southern Central of Georgia Railroad to Chipley, Georgia, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to which the Board and State agreed to in a Memorandum of Understanding approved July 8, 2019; that one of the panels will focus on the arrival of the railroad in 1882 and the development of Chipley, now known as Pine Mountain, and the other panel will focus on the importance of the railroad to the community's growth and development into the 20<sup>th</sup> century; that the panels will be 23" x 40" and will be installed near Phase III and on the trailhead of Phase I; that the panels will cost about \$11,000, which has been budgeted in the Rails to Trails project fund; and that Suzanne Newberry, with Southern Research Historic Preservation Consultants, is in attendance to respond to questions of the Board. Discussion included that the trailhead of Phase I is considered to be at the location of the ribbon cutting held in November and at both locations, there will be a map on one side and the panels on the other. Mrs. Newberry said that panels were a joint effort by many people and that at the bottom of each would be various logos to include that of the County, the engineer, and others that should be recognized. Following discussion, the motion to approve the panels was made by Commissioner Lange, seconded by Commissioner Grant, and passed unanimously.
- C. **Renaming of the Rails to Trails.** Commissioner Grant made a motion to rename the Rails to Trails to something like the Man O'War Iron Horse of the South. Discussion included that more thought should be given to the name change and included that there are historic markers referencing the Man O'War in Pine Mountain; that maybe it should be Man O'War: Iron Horse of Harris County, Georgia; and that Iron Horse is another name for a locomotive. Although the motion was not seconded, action was tabled to the January 7, 2020, meeting.
- D. **Project Updates.** Randy Dowling, County Manager, reviewed various projects, as follows:
- (1) County-wide Email System. On track and should be in place by the end of the month.
  - (2) Heavy Equipment for Public Works - Six Pieces. Five pieces have been received, with Public Works personnel receiving training on same, and the sixth piece will be delivered next month.
  - (3) Fuel Card Readers & WEX Program. Consideration before the Board on January 7, 2020. WEX cards should be distributed this week.
  - (4) Community Center Pool Equipment. Work has begun and should be finished within three or four days.
  - (5) Ellerslie Park Lodge Repair. Project is underway and should be completed by the end of the month.

- (6) Ellerslie Park Chipping & Grinding. Project is about 71% complete.
- (7) Rails to Trails. Phase I has been completed; Phases II and III are underway and should be completed mid January 2020, and should receive word in February or March 2020 about the grant for Phase IV.
- (8) Water Line Upgrade on SR 315. Pre-construction meeting is scheduled for mid January and project should be completed in 45 days from Notice to Proceed or during late February 2020.
- (9) Land Use & Development Codes Update. Board approved the Master Agreement and three Scopes of Work during tonight's meeting.
- (10) Melody Lakes Dam. The State has approved the County's proposal; bid and construction documents are being prepared to send to EPD by March 5 for approval.
- (11) Annual Legislative Dinner. The event occurred last night (December 16).

6. **COUNTY ATTORNEY**

- A. **Quit Claim Deed: Mt. Airy Road (0.2732 ac)**. John Taylor, County Attorney, said that the Board, in 2002, abandoned a section of Mt. Airy Road, as a result of realignment, containing two tracts of 0.2451 acres and 0.0281 acres, for a total of 0.2732 acres, but took no action to Quit Claim the property until a request was made; that a request has been made from the current adjacent property owner regarding the property; that a Quit Claim has been prepared to deed the 0.2732 acres to Osarumwense T. and Mojisola O. Evuomwan; and that the deed also reserves a utility easement on the 0.2732 acres for the County should the need ever arise for utility installation on same. He recommended approval of the Quit Claim deed. The motion to approve the Quit Claim to deed 0.2732 acres was made by Chairman Langston, seconded by Commissioner Zuerner, and passed unanimously. (Document can be found in "Miscellaneous Documents" as MD# 19-11.)

7. **ADJOURNMENT**. There being no further business, the motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Lange, seconded by Commissioner Grant, and passed unanimously.

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Becky Langston, Chairman

Attest:

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Nancy D. McMichael, County Clerk