

HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION

June 15, 2021
6:30 P.M.

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

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 June 1, 2021 Regular Session, the May 27, 2021 Joint UDC Meeting, the June 3, 2021 Joint UDC Meeting, and the June 8, 2021 Joint UDC Meeting was made by Commissioner Langston, seconded by Commissioner Andrews, and passed unanimously.
4. **OLD BUSINESS**

- A. **Action/Decision: Application of Josh Carter/CBF Holding for a Special Use Permit for Climate Controlled Storage Units on 1.97 acres located on Map 045, Parcel 189, Land Lot 48, Land District 19, at Lot 101 Mill Glen Subdivision, on northeast corner of intersection of GA Highway 315 and Mill Glen Way, Fortson, and zoned C-3 (Neighborhood Commercial).**
Chairman Zuerner said that the Public Hearing for this Special Use Application had been held and closed during the June 1 meeting of the Commissioners; therefore no further comments can be received regarding this application; and that action regarding the application was tabled on June 1 upon a motion by Commissioner Irions, second by Commissioner Andrews, pending a response from GDOT regarding a way to reduce the speed limit in order to allow driveway access from GA Highway 315. He asked if there were any comments from the Board. Commissioner Langston said that she studied the list of businesses that can locate on this property without getting approval from the Board, and that this business is the least disruptive to the community. She then made the motion to approve the application. Chairman Zuerner seconded the motion and said he has been in the neighborhood several times and does not see site distance concerns, and that the applicant has indicated there will be a gate further into the property to allow cars to pull off the main road. There was discussion among the Board regarding GDOT's response about the speed limit and driveway access. Discussion also included that Commissioner Andrews has concerns about safety on this particular road; that Commissioner Irions has the same concerns; and that Commissioner Grant has concerns but the decision has to be made based on the information available to the Board, that he has been in the subdivision five or six times and with the removal of trees by the applicant, the site distance should improve and help eliminate blind spots, and that the applicant as well as the citizens have been held off long enough regarding a decision. Commissioner Andrews said that if approved, she would like to see a restriction on the hours with closing at 11 PM.

Following discussion, Commissioner Langston said she is not in favor of restricting the hours of the business but amended her motion to approve with four conditions (1) expand the proposed 5' planting buffer to 10' wide and ensure that it consists of vegetation that will reach at least 8' in height and the proposed privacy fence be 6' in height; (2) exterior lighting to be directed away from all adjoining residential property and public roads and shall not illuminate a public road, directly or indirectly, with a level of intensity that is deemed to be potentially hazardous to vehicular traffic by GDOT or Harris County; (3) cut-off fixtures with shielding shall be used along all perimeters adjacent to or adjoining a residential zoning district or development to minimize spillover of lighting, glare, light pollution and light trespass; and (4) lighted parking areas shall use cut-off fixtures with shielding to minimize spillover of lighting, glare, light pollution and light trespass, and shall provide reasonably uniform lighting across parking areas to minimize light/dark contrast. Chairman Zuerner seconded the amended motion. The motion passed with three in favor (Langston, Zuerner, Grant) and two opposed (Andrews, Irions).

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. **FY 21/22 Budget Public Hearing II.** Chairman Zuerner called the Public Hearing to order and said that this is the second of two public hearings regarding the proposed budget and asked if there were any comments from the Board.

Commissioner Langston said that she understands that the Volunteer Fire Departments' training line was reduced by \$5,000 and the equipment line increased by \$5,000; and that she would like the \$5,000 to be moved from the equipment line back to the training line. Commissioner Grant agreed and said that such a change would not cause an increase in the budget. There were no objections from the other Commissioners. When asked about the projects for the CARES/ARP funds, Randy Dowling, County Manger, said the funds are included in the budget, but the specific projects are not and can be discussed tonight or another time since there is no hurry in specifying the projects. Commissioner Andrews said that despite the social media claims of an inflated budget, the County is in good shape and she reviewed the difference between the proposed budget and the current budget. In response to a question from Commissioner Grant, Clint Chastain, CFO, said that the County is in very good shape and there should be no reason for a millage rate increase for several years if everything remains as status quo. Commissioner Langston said that she has made her opinions known about the budget and that the County could face some repercussions down the road, but there are more positives than negatives with the budget and will be voting in favor of it. Upon being asked to expound upon those repercussions, Commissioner Langston said that she would not discuss them. Commissioner Irions said that if everything stays on course, there will be with growth in the next three to five years for which more services will be needed; and that the Board must prepare and plan for growth. Commissioner Andrews again pointed out that the County is in good financial shape, that it has a healthy reserve and should be able to meet any challenges to come. Commissioner Grant said that the County is looking ahead, which is the reason for the Impact Fee study as well as the Unified Development Code. There being no further comments, Chairman Zuerner has if there were any comments from those in attendance.

Jack McClung, Chief of the Council of Fire Chiefs, said that the Volunteer Fire Departments appreciated the Board working with them; that the VFDs have received just about everything they've ever asked for to include trucks, equipment, and money, and there are no complaints; and that the training budget was not used this year to save the funds to purchase equipment for the fire building addition.

Jennifer Riley, citizen, said that she would like to know more about Commissioner Langston's concerns regarding the budget, to which Commissioner Langston replied she would be happy to speak with Ms. Riley after the meeting.

There being no further comments, Chairman Zuerner closed the Public Hearing.

[The budget, as it relates to employees, includes a 2% COLA for employees, a 1% longevity increase on hire date anniversary, a full time building inspector for Community Development with hiring to take place at the proper time, a full time administrative assistant for Tax Assessor's office, a full time construction inspector for Public Works, a full time parks maintenance tech for Recreation, a full time facilities maintenance tech for Facilities Maintenance, and moving the directors of Facilities Maintenance, Airport, Solid Waste, and Vehicle Maintenance from Grade 21 to Grade 23. It also includes rate/fee increases for Community Development and the Airport (which can be found in "Miscellaneous Documents" file as MD#21-10.)]

- B. **Budget FY 2021-22 Adoption and Resolution.** The motion to approve the FY 2021-22 budget as discussed and amended during previous work sessions and the previous and preceding Public Hearings and to adopt the Adoption Resolution regarding same was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Commissioner Andrews, and passed unanimously. (Note: Included, as part of the budget process, is the proposal from Carter & Sloope for engineering services (design, permit, bidding, and construction administration) for Phase V of the Man O'War Railroad Recreation Trail. Document can be found in "Contracts & Agreements" file as C&A #21-07.)
- C. **Agreement: GDOC Care & Custody of 156 Prison Inmates.** Chairman Zuerner said this is the usual annual agreement with the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDOC) regarding the care, custody and capacity of 156 State inmates at the County Prison, for which the State remits \$22/day/inmate to the County. The motion to approve the agreement was made by Commissioner Lange, seconded by

Commissioner Grant, and passed unanimously. (Document can be found in “Contracts & Agreements” file as C&A #21-08.)

D. **Requests for Tax Refund.** Chairman Zuerner said that two requests for tax refund had been received, as follows:

- (1) Dally Creek Tree Farm. Refund of \$43.12 (ad valorem tax) due to having sold vehicle after paying taxes, which were not due until February 28; and that the Tax Commissioner and the Board of Tax Assessors agree with the request.
- (2) Taylor, Jawan. Refund of \$235.19 due to having paid the taxes on his boat in 2020 after having sold the boat in 2019; and that the Tax Commissioner and the Board of Tax Assessors agree with the request.

The motion to approve the requests was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Commissioner Langston, and passed unanimously.

E. **First Reading: Application of Ashwani Kumar for Beer & Wine Off Premises license at A&A C Store, 1560 US Highway 27, Cataula.** Chairman Zuerner read the specifics of the application, said this was the first reading, that the applicant meets the qualifications, and that the application has been recommended for approval from the Sheriff and Community Development. The applicant was present and said that he is wanted to reopen the store, which has been closed for a few years. Chairman Zuerner asked if anyone wished to speak in favor of or in opposition to the application. There being none, he said that the Second Reading of the application will take place on July 20. (Note: There is no meeting on July 6.)

F. **Reappointment: Region 7 EMS Council.** Chairman Zuerner said that the term of Quincy “Bucky” Searcy on the Region 7 EMS Council expires June 30; that the Council has requested that he be reappointed to a three-year term ending June 30, 2024; and that Mr. Searcy has consented to the reappointment. The motion to reappoint Mr. Searcy to the Region 7 EMS Council was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Chairman Zuerner, and passed unanimously.

6. **COUNTY MANAGER**

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

- (1) Replacement 911 Consoles & Server. Equipment being installed this week and should be completed by June 30, 2021.
- (2) Road Shoulder Spreader. Equipment has been ordered and delivery should be by June 30, 2021.
- (3) Restriping of County Roads. Project is ongoing and should be completed by June 30, 2021.
- (4) Repair of Five Bridges. Project is underway and should be completed by June 30, 2021.
- (5) Melody Lakes Dam. Project punch list is completed and should be completed by June 30, 2021.
- (6) Ellerslie Park. Project is ongoing and development will continue into next year’s budget.
- (7) Rails to Trails Project. Phase IV, from the behind Mountain Creek Inn to the Callaway Country Store, is underway and should be completed in December 2021, with Phase V, from the Callaway Country Store to the Harris County Carver Middle School (on US 27), in next year’s budget, and taking 18-20 months to complete.
- (8) Soccer Field Lights. Project is ongoing and is to be completed by June 30, 2021.
- (9) Hadley Road Water Lines. Project is ongoing and will continue into next year’s budget.
- (10) Water Meter Replacement. Project is ongoing and will continue into next year’s budget.

- (11) Water Works Administration Building. Project is ongoing and will continue into next year's budget.
- (12) Renovation of Old Library. Ongoing and should be completed in late December 2021.
- (13) Land Use and Development Codes Update. Project is ongoing and will continue into next year's budget.
- (14) Impact Fee Study. Project is on going and will continue into next year's budget.
- (15) SPLOST. Collection higher than last month and the same time last year.
- (16) LOST. Collection higher than last month and the same time last year.
- (17) T-SPLOST. Collection lower than last month but higher than same time last year.
- (18) Single Family Home Permits. Issuance of permits has slowed down but should soon be increasing.
- (19) Airport Open House. In response to a question from Commissioner Grant, Mr. Dowling said that the planning for this year's Open House/Fly In at the Airport is underway and is scheduled for Saturday, October 9,

7. **COUNTY ATTORNEY.**

- A. **Amendment #1: IGA with Center for Rural Prosperity & Innovation.** Russell Britt, County Attorney, said that the Board approved an IGA with the Center for Rural Prosperity & Innovation on March 2, 2021, regarding the donation of \$39,000 to fund the architect's fees to renovate the old library into a community medical center; that those funds have been received and are being used to fund the architect's fees; that due to the higher costs related to construction and materials, the Center is willing to donate an additional \$40,000 to the County to go toward the construction costs of the clinic; and he recommended approval of same. The motion to approve this Amendment was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Commissioner Langston, and passed unanimously. (Document can be found in "Contract & Agreements" file as C&A #21-09.)

8. **ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business, the motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Langston, seconded by Chairman Zuerner, and passed unanimously.

Andrew Zuerner, Chairman

Attest:

Nancy D. McMichael, County Clerk