

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
BUDGET WORK SESSION I**

May 4, 2021  
4:30 PM

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

**CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Zuerner called the meeting to order and said the purpose was for the discussion of the proposed budget for FY 21/22. He asked Randy Dowling, County Manager, to review same.

**Overview.** Mr. Dowling said he is presenting the proposed recommended budget for FY 21/22; that it is on the County's website; that overall, it's \$46.3 million, which is an increase over FY 20/21; that the General Fund is \$26,928,475, which is an increase of \$1,161,651 (4.5%) from FY 20/21, and includes a 2% cost of living increase and 1% longevity effective July 1 and the 25% insurance premium increase (to be borne by the County with no changes in cost to employees); that he has made \$1.4 million in recommended cuts from the budgets requested by Department Heads/Constitutional Officers; that the General Fund does not contain a tax increase and assumes the millage rate will not be rolled back; that Special Revenue Funds increased by \$2,949,662 (130%) from FY 20/21, and includes the CARES/ARP Grant Fund (new this year), Confiscated Assets, Jail Fund, Law Library Funds, Drug Abuse Treatment & Education Fund, Emergency 9-1-1 Fund, and Hotel/Motel Tax Fund; that Capital Project Funds decreased \$720,330 (-8.7%) from FY 19/20, and includes the Public Improvements Authority Fund, TSPLOST 2013, SPLOST 2019, and Rails to Trails Project Fund; and that the Debt Service remains the same as FY 20/21; that the Enterprise Funds increased by \$992,693 (11%) from FY 20/21 and includes the Airport Fund, Solid Waste Fund, and Water Works Fund (Water Department and Waste Water Department).

He said that several department heads are present and may wish to make comments regarding their proposed budgets.

**Sheriff's Office (Dept. 10) and Jail (Dept. 11).** Mike Jolley, Sheriff, appeared before the Board, had no comments regarding his office budget, and said that regarding the Jail, he would like to convert the four visitation areas into cells that would have a total of 8 beds in order to handle the increase in mental, detox, and female inmates; that visitation is now handle via webcam; that the conversion would cost approximately \$38,000, or about \$9,650/bed; and that Facilities Maintenance can do the conversion.

**Tax Commissioner (Dept. 03).** Vickie Jamerson, Tax Commissioner, said she had no comments regarding her budget.

**Tax Assessor (Dept. 05).** Wayne Morris, Tax Assessor, appeared before the Board and regarding the proposed budget cuts, said that he would like to Board to reconsider putting the full time Administrative Assistant position back into his budget; that such a person is needed to handle phone calls, copies, permits, etc.; that currently one of his Appraiser II employees is doing the majority of the clerical work; and that the salary and benefits for the position would be around \$46,477.

**Extension Service (Dept. 04).** Steve Morgan, Extension Agent, said he had no comments regarding his budget.

**E911/EMA (Dept. 13).** Monty Davis, E911/EMA Director, appeared before the Board and regarding the proposed budget cuts, said that he is requesting, for the third time, a back-up 911 Center that mirrors the current location so that when/if a disaster occurs at the current location, there will not be a significant delay in services; and that he needs a generator; that the normal life of a generator is about 10 years and the current one is pushing 22 years; that a grant was applied for last year (from GEMA), but no decisions have been made regarding awards. In response to questions, Mr. Davis said that a low guestimate regarding a back-up 911 Center is around \$500,000; and that he has not approached the School Board about possible space but will try to meet with Dr. (Justin) Finney soon. Randy Dowling, County Manger, is to contact GEMA about the generator grant award.

**Community Development (Dept. 29).** Brian Williams, Community Development Director, appeared before the Board and regarding the proposed budget cuts, said that he is requesting a part-time Administrative Assistant, at approximately \$17,630, to assist the office staff with phone calls, scheduling inspections, etc., especially single building permits are on the upswing; that regarding changing the building permits fee schedule, for manufactured housing units change to \$300 flat fee regardless of model, for accessory buildings change to \$.10/square foot if greater than 400 square feet, for ag use structures change to \$.10/square foot if greater than 800 square feet, for commercial plan review to 15% of the building permit fee, for demolition & removal of buildings/structures to flat fee of \$50, for plan

modifications/contractor changes to \$100, or building permit reactivation (new) at \$50, for plumbing change minimum to \$50, for electrical delete 60-100 and 101-200 and replace with 0-200 at \$50, and for mechanical change from BTUs to flat fee of \$50/unit residential and \$100/unit commercial; that regarding changing the planning & zoning fee schedule, for land disturbance increase application fee to \$200, for rezoning increase application fee to \$400, for special use permit application fee increase to \$400. In response to questions, Mr. Williams said that the increase in rezoning and special use applications would not be deter applications, but is to cover the cost of what is paid to the Planning Commission members, in addition to the advertisement and notification letters. He also said that several engineers have indicated the County needs to increase its construction plan review fees; that such plan reviews cost the County at least \$800 per review; that the last time fees were changed was in 2018; and that plan reviews could be based on acreage, rather than lot, but that he will bring more info back to the Board regarding such.

**EMS (Dept. 08).** Bucky Searcy, EMS Chief, appeared before the Board and said that his budget includes replacing six automated CPR devices at \$20,500/year for four years at 0% interest rate.

**Coroner (Dept. 14).** Joe Weldon, Coroner, appeared before the Board and said that there was a 20% increase in mortality in 2020 over 2019 mainly due to COVID-19; that regarding the proposed budget cuts, a morgue facility is needed, with an estimated cost of \$100,000; that currently the local funeral home allows the use of its facility, but that could change; and that there is a movement in the state for coroners, which is an elected position, to be like a constitutional officer with salaries based on population.

**Community Center (Dept. 28) and Recreation (Dept. 32).** Stephen Waskey, Recreation Director, appeared before the Board and said, regarding the proposed budget cuts for the Community Center, he needs a full-time Program Coordinator to handle activities, donations for special events and that a playground for the Community Center will cost about \$40,000; that regarding the proposed budget cuts for Recreation, he needs the security cameras regarding recent break-ins at Pate Park concession stand; that footprints are constantly on various doors where people have tried to kick down the doors; and that an ATV is needed at the soccer and rodeo arena areas. In response to questions about Ellerslie Park, in addition to getting the park open, an entrance gate will be installed, a vehicle and ATV will be needed, and that someone would be on site Monday-Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM. There was a brief discussion about disc golf, and Mr. Waskey said that could be possible at the park and is estimated to cost around \$9,000 to \$10,000.

**Airport (Dept. 37).** Ronnie Pendergrass, Airport Manager, appeared before the Board said, in regard to proposed cuts, that another full time employee is needed; that it is difficult to cover the hours the Airport is open, which is 9 AM to 5 PM daily, but he would like to change to 8 AM to 6 PM daily; that regarding the fee schedule he would like to increase hangar and ramp fees. Discussion included that the increase would be to \$190 for the small 10 hangars, \$270 for the large 19 hangars, as well as to charge a ramp fee of \$50/day for small jets and \$100/day for large jets, but each waived if fuel is purchased; that the runway extension justification study is the required first step in the process to extend the runway; that there is a waiting list for hangars, but little to no requests for hangars for helicopters, and that only planes are in the hangars.

**NEXT BUDGET WORK SESSIONS.** Scheduled for 4:30 PM on Tuesday, May 18 and Tuesday, May 25.

**BUDGET PUBLIC HEARINGS.** First Public Hearing will be held during the June 1 Regular Session, and the second will be held during the June 15 Regular Session, with adoption by resolution to follow.

**ADJOURNMENT**