

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

May 24, 2022

4:30 PM

Commissioners Present: Andrew Zuerner, Susan Andrews, Rob Grant, Bobby Irions, Becky Langston. Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; Clint Chastain, CFO; Andrea Dzioba, 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 22/23. He asked Randy Dowling, County Manager, to review same.

**Tax Assessor** - Randy Dowling said that their budget is status quo. The flyover will be in next year's budget so that the flyover can be done in January of 2024.

**Tax Commissioner** - Randy Dowling stated that their budget is also status quo and that there are no significant changes.

**Vehicle Maintenance** - Randy Dowling said that there was a capital outlay of \$11,000 for a new tire mount machine and \$48,000 for a replacement service truck that was approved last year but is being carried over to this year. Bobby Ammons, Vehicle Maintenance Director, advised that they will send their old tire mount machine to Solid Waste. The two trucks that were cut this year he will really need next year.

**Volunteer Fire Department** - Mr. Dowling stated that there were some slight changes. He advised that the operation stipend was increased from \$13,894 to \$18,182 for each of the 10 volunteer fire departments and the city of west points paid fire department and increase the operation stipend from \$3,800 to 4,085 for each of the six volunteer substations. The funds for the fire training center addition has not been included in the budget. Commissioner Irions states that he would like a stipend increase from 31% to 50% (\$20,841) since it has been a while since there has been an increase and the departments have given up on asking for a larger increase due to previous push back.

**Outside Agencies** - Mr. Dowling said that there is included a \$36,132 increase for the Library due to increases in material and labor costs.

**Development Authority** - Mr. Dowling advised that the Development Authority would like to include \$125,000 to hire a full-time economic development professional. Commissioner Andrews did not believe that the amount being requested will be enough. The individual would be supervised by the Development Authority. It is believed that they may need to reevaluate it next year and see how it is working.

**CARES/ARP Act Funds**- Mr. Dowling said that there is included \$105,000 to design an elevated water tank to be located near SR 315 and I-185 and that design would be this year and construction next year. He pointed out that there is also included \$2,024,900 to replace the HVAC system at the Courthouse and \$430,000 to provide broadband in accordance with federal ARP Act regulations.

**Confiscated Assets Fund** - Randy Dowling advised that there are no changes from last year.

**County Jail Fund** - Randy Dowling said that this is a pass-through.

**County Law Library Fund** - Randy Dowling stated that it is a small department and the fines and fees go to the Law Library.

**Drug Abuse Treatment & Education Fund** - Mr. Dowling advised that this is another small fund that comes from fines and fees.

**Emergency Telephone System Fund** - Randy Dowling advised that this is a status quo.

**Hotel/Motel Tax Fund** - Randy Dowling said that he is asking through local legislation next year that the percentage be increase from 5% to 8% and it would be effective in July of 2023. No changes in agreement and it can be discussed and decided if the percentage is increased.

**Local Victim Assistance Program Fund** - Randy Dowling advised that this fund pays for victim witness program expenses. This fund is under the direction of the DA's office.

**Public Improvements Authority Fund** - Randy Dowling said that this fund pays debt payments and that the Community Center will be paid off in 2029. This fund is a conduit for debt.

**TSPLOST** - Randy Dowling said that this is up for renewal tonight. He stated that included in the budget is \$50,000 for new rural GDOT 5311 public transportation program through a third-party provider and it should begin in July. He also stated that there is \$200,000 for the required 10% LMIG match for any bid overages, road patching and road striping. Mr. Dowling also pointed out that included is \$1.564 million for Phase V of the Man O'War Railroad Recreation Trail.

**SPLOST 2019** - Randy Dowling advised included is \$64,000 to design a new public works facility and \$265,000 for construction administration for the Courthouse renovation project Phase I. He said that also included in the SPLOST 2019 Fund were capital outlay expenses totaling \$4,375,067 and additional expenses which include allocations to other cities in the total amount of \$550,000.

**Economic Development Project Fund** - Randy Dowling said that included are professional services expenses that include \$20,000 for a grant writer to administer the project and \$1,785,000 to make improvements to the Northwest Harris Business Park.

**Rails to Trails** - Mr. Dowling advised that this is for Phase V for construction administration and capital outlay.

**Airport Fund** - Randy Dowling reviewed the included expenditures in the Airport Fund. Commissioner Andrews stated that she would like to consider adding in design expenses for the 20 T-hangers that have been requested by the Airport Committee.

**Solid Waste** - Randy Dowling said that included are funds in the amount of \$331,000 for an additional wheel loader. Mr. Dowling would like the Board to consider instead that the wheel loader be purchased this fiscal year and that a budget amendment be made to the FY 2022-23 budget. He requested authorization. The old wheel loader would be repaired and kept as a back-up. There was a consensus to authorize the purchase of the new wheel loader this fiscal year and then ratify the budget amendment at the next regular meeting. Randy Dowling advised that the tipping fees may be going up substantially but he will not be certain until the bids come in.

**Water Works Fund** - Randy Dowling reviewed the provided budget highlights including \$242,000 for water tank and financial software maintenance; \$1,560,000 for a replacement administration facility; and the recommendation of a 10% water rate increase beginning July 1, 2022 to fund various improvement projects.

**Long Term Debt** - Randy Dowling reviewed the items included in the Long Term Debt Schedule.

Randy Dowling advised that the budget includes 7 new full-time employees - 1 Animal Control Officer, 4 Sheriff's Office, 1 for Community Center, 1 for Recreation. Mr. Dowling informed the Board that Property Tax Assessment notices went out yesterday. He reviewed the fee schedules and pointed out that the Interim Recreation Director would like to increase the pizza party fees at the Community Center from \$100 to \$125 and the \$150 to \$180 in order to recoup their costs; that they were recommending changes to EMS schedule as discussed previously by the EMS Director; and revised Water Works fee schedule as discussed earlier.

Mr. Stacey Jackson requested to address the Board and advised that he was the new district attorney. He informed the Board of Commissioners that his concern was regarding the salary amount that is being advertised for the open assistant district attorney position. He stated that he would like a range of \$55,000 to \$80,000. He advised the Board that he needs an experienced prosecutor in order to handle the backlog.

Magistrate Judge Jennifer Webb clarified information related to Magistrate and Probate Judges backing each other up for the Board. She stated that even if she wasn't provided anything extra to help Probate that she would help any way.

Commissioner Andrews doesn't have an issue increasing the Coroner's amount but the amount requested is too big of a jump and that it is possible that next year's legislature may take care of that for them. Commissioner Langston agreed.

Commissioner Andrews suggested that they may want to prioritize the discussion points for next time. Randy Dowling stated that he would provide revised discussion point information for them tomorrow morning. Randy Dowling advised that there is a \$5,000 COLA effective in January 2023 for elected officials that has been set by the State. Mr. Dowling advised that anything above the State set amount would be considered a supplement and, if given, would not be able to be changed. Magistrate Judge Webb said that the Clerk of Court isn't asking for both but the higher of the two amounts. Randy Dowling advised that we are paying elected officials as the State dictates.

**NEXT BUDGET WORK SESSION.** The Board would like to have an additional budget work session. Randy Dowling would look at some dates and provide some possible dates for the next budget work session.

**BUDGET PUBLIC HEARINGS.** First Public Hearing will be held during the June 7, 2022 Regular Session, and the second will be held during the June 21, 2022 Regular Session, with adoption by resolution to follow.

**ADJOURNMENT**