

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PLANNING SESSION**

August 5, 2019

5:00 PM

Conference Room, Commissioners' Office

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

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Langston called the meeting to order.

Fireworks on County Property. John Taylor, County Attorney, said that while the State statute prohibits fireworks within any park, historic site, recreational area, or other property owned by or operated by, for, or under the custody and control of a County, such can occur upon the issuance of a special use permit pursuant to the law of the governing authority. Mr. Taylor said he will look at the process for such issuance and will draw up the proper document for consideration by the Board. Consensus was that there should be a \$100 permit application fee as well as the requirement for liability insurance from the applicant.

Hemp. John Taylor, County Attorney, said that he had reviewed State laws regarding hemp and found that while there is nothing to prohibit the sale of hemp oil (CBD oil) there are State laws allowing the growing of hemp, which requires approval from the Georgia Department of Agriculture, and the prohibition of selling hemp plants. Mr. Taylor will draw up the proper document for consideration by the Board.

Pitts Drive Paving. John Taylor, County Attorney, said that the result of a title search regarding the right of way on Pitts Drive revealed that the County does not have all the necessary right of way; that there are three sections for which additional right of way is needed, that one of the properties has about 12 owners, but the representative of that tract has indicated they will not give the right of way; and that the Board has three choices (1) find all the property owners; (2) remove the road from the paving list; or (3) go through the imminent domain process. Chairman Langston said that she is definitely against the imminent domain process and said that she will contact one of the other property owners to see if they would approach the representative of the large tract of property. In the meantime, Mr. Taylor is to continue checking the right of way on Kingsboro Road, which is the next road on the paving list.

Employee Recognition Program. Randy Dowling, County Manager, review four proposed options (1) employees' names are put into a container equal to the number of years of service (15 years = 15 slips of paper) with one drawn at the first commission meeting of each month to receive a \$50 gift card to Dollar General, and will cost \$600 a year; (2) divide employees into two categories - general (inside employees) and public safety/public works (outside employees), two employees from each category selected, photos and info published on the website or provided to employees with a county website, each receives a \$25 gift card to Dollar General, and cost \$1,200 a year; (3) monetary award for years of service - 5 years = \$500, 10 years = \$1,000; 15 years = \$1,500, 20 years = \$2,000, etc., and cost \$56,000 a year; and (4) on-the-spot award to any deserving employee who has gone above and beyond the call of duty of a \$25 gift card to Dollar General with department heads, county manager and elected officials limited up to 3 spot awards per year, and cost \$2,025 a year. Discussion included combing the best attributes of the four options such as service recognition of 5, 10, 15, etc., years, put names in a container for each year category, issue certificates and take photos, put photos in website/newspaper, and choose one employee from each category for a \$50 gift card. Mr. Dowling is to draft final version and email to Board for review.

Community Center Membership Fee Schedule. Discussion included no charge for county residents (for use of pool, fitness room, and gym), a fee for out of county visitors, rental fees (for certain areas of the facility) applicable to all, start July 2020, class costs still apply, registration/application fee of \$20 per family and \$3 per card (one for each in household), application to include evidence of county residence, IT to build in reminder renewal notices, the ability to pay on-line, and a daily and weekly fee for visitors. Randy Dowling, County Manager, is to draft revision to fee schedule for consideration by the Board.

Defined Benefit Plan. Discussion included that currently, retired employees receiving their retirement benefits are prohibited from being re-employed by the County unless they cease receiving their benefits in accordance with the retirement program regulations; that the Chief Magistrate Judge would like to hire a retired employee individual as a Magistrate to help with various hearings; and that perhaps retired employees could be considered contract employees. Consensus was that John Taylor, County Attorney, will review State law regarding Chief Magistrate and Magistrate salaries and the appointment of the Magistrate.

County Development. Chairman Langston said that she is concerned about the growth and development of the south portion of the County, especially in District 3, during the next five years, and the support and personnel that will be necessary to provide services, and wanted to make the Board aware of same.

Hotel/Motel Tax & Chamber of Commerce. Commissioner Grant said he knows that while the Chamber of Commerce is up to date on the hotel/motel tax reports, the reports were late; that he thinks there are things for which the tax dollars should not be used, but are; that he wants to make sure that what happened in Troup County with hotel/motel tax dollars does not occur here; that the County needs to retain a percentage of the tax dollars, which can be discussed at a later date; and that everyone needs to be held accountable. Discussion included that perhaps on an annual or semi-annual basis the Chamber president should be at a Commission meeting to give a status report.

Upcoming Grant Applications for Rails to Trails. Randy Dowling, County Manager, requested permission to apply for two upcoming grants for the Rails to Trails project - another Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grant and a Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP) Grant. He explained the details for each grant; that the RTP is a 80/20 grant with a max grant of \$200,000; that the GOSP is a 75/25 grant with a max grant of \$500,000; and that if awarded funds for both grants would be available in the Fall of 2020. There were no objections to moving forward with the applications.

School Bus Parking in Northwest Harris Business Park. Randy Dowling, County Manager, reported that the Transportation Department of the Board of Education has informally inquired about the possibility of parking school buses in the Northwest Harris Business Park. Discussion included that an MOU would be necessary, that a gravel pad may be needed, that insurance may be needed, and that more info, to include the number of buses and how long such parking would be needed is necessary. Mr. Dowling said that he would notify the School Board of the need for a formal letter of request.

Fortson Road Bridge. Chairman Langston reported that there is no definite start date regarding the Fortson Road Bridge, but that same may be forthcoming after the pre-con meeting that is scheduled for next week.

ADJOURNMENT