

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
PLANNING SESSION**

February 11, 2020

4:30 PM

Conference Room, Commissioners' Office

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

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

**New Voting Machines.** Sherrail Jarrett, Elections Supervisor, was in attendance to discuss needs related to the new voting machines, which will be used during the upcoming Presidential Preference Election in March, to include storage space is limited in the elections area in the Courthouse; that about 75 privacy screens, which are ADA compliant, need to be purchased to provide privacy while voting, at a cost of \$27,066; that the State has a \$10,000 grant available for such a purchase, which would leave \$17,066 for the County to pay, which she believes she can find within her current budget, if necessary; that a covered trailer, about 16 or 18 feet long, is needed in order to transport the election equipment (printers, tablets, scanners) to the precincts, may cost approximately \$6,000 to \$7,000, and that it might be possible to split the cost with Facilities Maintenance; that if additional storage space is found it must be climate controlled; that while the state has provided the initial new equipment, if more is needed, then the County must purchase; that the ratio is one machine for every 250 voters; that there will be IT support from Dominion during elections; that once the ballot is scanned, it can't be changed; that the new voting equipment pulls more electrical amperage; and that extra poll workers will probably be needed because someone has to stand at the scanner to make sure people insert their ballot. Due to costs associated with the privacy booths, printer ink, etc., action on a budget amendment will take place February 18.

**Fire Districts: Richard McKinney, Antioch VFD.** Richard McKinney, Chief of Antioch VFD, was in attendance to discuss a territory boundary dispute between Antioch VFD and Cataula VFD that has been on-going for several years. He reviewed the information he provided, which included documents and maps, regarding the issue, and said that a lot of the problems stem from Cataula VFD building a fire station just outside its boundary and is now trying to intrude into Antioch's; that map changes are made when Chiefs contact ISO and they change the map; and that he wants to make sure the right VFD is getting paged out and requested that the Board make a decision regarding the boundary. Monty Davis, 911 Director, was also in attendance and said that 911 pages out the closest VFD to the accident/fire/incident as they are only concerned with getting someone to the accident/fire/incident; that Cataula VFD has a letter from the 1980s signed by the then Chairman of the Board of Commissioners regarding Cataula's boundary goes all the way to the interstate; that part of the current issue is that with the development of Mulberry Grove, there will be more houses, which, in turn, means more revenue for the VFDs; that two VFD trucks are always sent to fires; that the property in question is from Mountain Hill Road at SR 315 to the interstate; and that 911 will go by whatever the Board determines. Consensus was that the closest VFD to the accident/fire/incident should be paged, but before a final decision is made, the Board wants to hear from Cataula VFD at the next Planning Session, which should be in May.

**Upcoming Budget Concerns.** Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that the budget for the next fiscal year is being prepared and asked if there were any particular items the Board wanted included. Suggestions included the soccer field lighting, longevity issue, storage issues, and vehicle insurance. Mr. Dowling said that he would include those items, and that his list includes a permanent Airport sign, water and sewer rate study, full time employee and associated equipment for Ellerslie Park, road striping, back-up 911 center, full time procurement officer, and in SPLOST 2019 two ambulances, jaws of life tools, five vehicles for the Sheriff's Office, VFD equipment, broadband technology, and generators. Mr. Dowling asked to the Board to let him know if there are any other items they wish to have included in the budget.

**Soccer Field Lighting.** Discussion included that lighting the field with old light fixtures may be an issue; that previously the Board indicated funds from the increase in Cable TV franchises would be used toward the lighting project; that before a commitment is made, more info is needed as to a comparison of using the old lights versus new LED fixtures, maintenance costs, usage, etc.; and that such should be included in the upcoming budget.

**Vehicle Comprehensive & Collision Insurance.** Discussion included that current policy (based on a decision by the Board of Commissioners in 2002) is to not carry comprehensive and collision (C&C) insurance on vehicles that are five years old and older; that this does not apply to fire trucks, ambulances and heavy equipment; and that the cost to provide such coverage for the 66 vehicles without it would be approximately \$35,000. Following discussion, consensus was to not provide such coverage on vehicles that are ten (10) years old and older and to include the cost for adding C&C coverage back on some vehicles in the upcoming budget. (Note: Approximately 24 vehicles will have C&C coverage added with next renewal.)

**Ellerslie Park Surplus Property Disposal: 3.29 acres.** Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that regarding the 3.29 acres, which the Board approved the sale of with a minimum bid of \$250,000, GDOT will not provide access; that the County would have to build a road from SR315; and that the minimum bid should probably be reduced to attract adjacent property owners. Consensus was in agreement to reduce the minimum bid, and action will be taken during the February 18 meeting.

**Employee Appreciation.** Commissioner Grant said he would like to see certificates of appreciation and/or pins given to employees in recognition of their employment with the County. Discussion included the certificates should be for five, ten, fifteen, etc., years as of December 31 of each year; that if an employee's five years is on January 1, then their certificate would be provided the next year; that such should be distributed during the first Board meeting of each year; and that consideration should be given to pins commemorating "5", "10", "15", etc., on the face of each. Consensus was to issue such certificates for five year increments during the first meeting of each year and to look at the cost of pins. Nancy McMichael, County Clerk, is to find out about pins and the cost for same.

**Employees Attending Conferences.** Commissioner Grant suggested that employees returning from conferences/classes provide the County with evidence that they attended such conferences/classes. Discussion included that some conferences don't have classes, don't issue evidence of attendance in classes or at conferences; and that it is a matter of trust. Nancy McMichael, County Clerk, will contact other counties to find out if they require evidence and if so, in what manner.

**Covered Arena at Agri-Center.** Commissioner Andrews said that the Cattleman's Association would like to see progress regarding the covered arena that is planned for the Agri-Center; that perhaps the cost could be included in the next SPLOST; that research should be conducted regarding feasibility, costs, maintenance, staffing, programs, shows, etc.; and suggested that an informal study committee be formed regarding same, with the committee consisting of two Cattleman's Association members, two Commissioners, and perhaps staff. Consensus was in agreement for an informal committee and that the committee consist of Steve Morgan, a member of the Cattleman's Association and the County Extension Agent; Adrienne Cox, who attends the Cattleman's Association meetings and is a 4-H program assistance; and Commissioner Zuerner.

**Melody Lakes HOA Taxes Owed.** Discussion included that some citizens in Melody Lakes are interested in forming a new HOA, but would like the delinquent taxes, penalties and interest owed by the previous HOA forgiven; that the taxes owed are on the lakes in the subdivision and one parcel of land; that if forgiven the County could be receiving about \$1,600 a year as opposed to zero; that it might be worth forgiving the taxes; that other citizens are not happy that the County is spending funds on repairing the dam in Melody Lakes and would certainly not be pleased if the County forgave the delinquent taxes; that forgiving the taxes could be a problem; and that perhaps the property should be offered for sale on the Courthouse steps. Consensus was to ask Vickie Jamerson, Tax Commissioner, why the property has not been offered for sale on the Courthouse steps before now.

**Firefly Garden Update.** Chairman Langston said that Kelly Reynolds is still interested in moving forward with the firefly garden at Eilerslie Park and will soon be coming back to the Board regarding same.

**Airport Operations.** Chairman Langston said that she has been asked if the Board would consider leasing the Airport. Discussion included that such would be a Fixed Base Operator (FBO); that the interested party does have experience in managing an airport; that having an FBO might be the feasible way to go; and consensus was interested in considering such. Chairman Langston is to let the interested party know that the Board is interested.

**Medical Clinic.** Chairman Langston said there is a committee regarding the proposal medical facility (in the old Library building) that meets every other Monday and that they hope to submit a proposal to the Board for consideration within three months.

**Short-Term Vacation Rental.** Nancy McMichael, County Clerk, said that during the last Planning Session the Board was provided with two versions of draft ordinances regarding Short Term Vacation Rentals (STVR) and was asked to let her know which version was preferable, but that only one had responded; and that in order to move forward, she would like a consensus. The consensus was to move forward with the shorter draft but to research current issues regarding STVRs.

## **ADJOURNMENT**