

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PLANNING SESSION**

January 26, 2021

4:00 PM

Meeting Room, Harris County Community Center
(Limited Seating & Teleconference)

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

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

Unified Development Code (UDC) Status & Schedule: Lee Walton, Wood PLC. Lee Walton, consultant, reviewed the status of the UDC to include that Articles 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 & 13 are out for review by the steering committee, the BOC, and the Planning Commission; that Articles 3, 5 & 14 should be out this week; that Article 3 deals with space requirements and Article 5 with subdivision regulations; that Article 8 & 9 will deal with design standards and infrastructure; that Articles 10, 11 & 12 will deal with environmental, procedures, and administration; that he's trying to accommodate those with questions and is reviewing the Zoning ordinance procedure regarding amendments and alterations; and that it may be May 4, rather than April 6, before the Board approves the document. There was discussion regarding the current procedural requirements after which Commissioner Andrews commented that she was okay with the delay so that the process is not rushed. Discussion also included that the document will be properly worded for legal validity but easily read by the general public, even though it's more for developers and planners; and that handouts can be made available for the general public for specific topics. Although there were no objections to the schedule, Mr. Walton is to provide a new schedule that has been adjusted for May 4 adoption.

Impact Fees: Lee Walton, Wood PLC. Lee Walton, consultant, at the request of Randy Dowling, County Manager, reminded the Board, as a continuation of the July 30, 2020, discussion, that impact fees (IF) are limited to roads, water, sewer, stormwater, parks, fire, police/sheriff and library. Discussion included that in Georgia, IF cannot be used for schools; that IF are not restricted to new development but is broader geographical in nature; that a study would have to be performed by a consulting firm and would probably cost \$100,000+/- depending on the area of study; that IF are not associated with zoning but with building permits. Following discussion, consensus was to have a study conducted regarding public safety (fire, sheriff, jail, EMS) and parks to determine whether or not to implement IF. In response to a question, Mr. Walton said that his firm could conduct an IF study. Mr. Walton is to submit to Mr. Dowling a proposal to include scope of work, cost, and time frame regarding public safety and park & recreation for his firm to conduct the IF study.

Broadband. Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that state funds are ready to be distributed in the next few months regarding broadband, but the County needs a specific game plan for broadband. He said that with the "broadband ready" designation, the County goes to the front of the line, but it will be difficult to apply for funding without a plan. Commissioner Irions said that the County will need to partner with a multi-system operator (MSO) to access locations; that the implementation process could take 5-10 years to reach areas that do not have broadband; that while broadband needs to be tackled from a fiber optic standpoint, it cannot be done county wide so partnering with wireless providers makes sense. Discussion included that tower access will be needed in addition to fiber optics, that a consultant will be needed for the plan/study; that ACCG may be able to provide contacts; that an MSO and a wireless provider will be necessary; and that the upcoming budget should include funding for broadband.

Proposed T-SPLOST Projects. Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that the current T-SPLOST for the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) will expire December 31, 2022; that T-SPLOST funds can be used for road improvements, transit projects, transit operations and maintenance, road safety measures, traffic operations and high-tech traffic solutions, non-motorized projects, freight and logistics, aviation, and roadway and bridge maintenance; that 75% of the T-SPLOST funds are managed by GDOT for them to perform approved projects for RVRC counties; that the County receives 25% of the regionally generated funds for local projects, which is about \$90,000/month or \$1,080,000/year and budgeted in the County's budget; that the TIA Round Table has called for a referendum to continue the T-SPLOST for the RVRC region during March 2022, for another 10 years; and that the County needs to submit projects to be considered by the TIA Round Table (to be included in the 75% share) by June 2021. There was discussion regarding projects with consensus, in priority order, (1) SR 315 widening and turn lanes from I-185 to the hard turn on Fortson Road, to include roundabouts at Exit 19, (2) Roundabout at intersection of SR 315/SR 219/Goat Rock Road, (3) Extension of Airport runway, if approved by GDOT, (4) continuation of the Man O'War Railroad Recreation Trail to end of line, (5) SR 315/US 27 intersection improvements (note: this is in another project), and (6) SR 315/Denny Road intersection improvements. The required descriptions, project length, benefits/justification, estimated cost to include engineering, right of way acquisition, construction, utility relations, etc., will be obtained in order to submit the list by June 2021.

Purchasing Policy. Randy Dowling, County Manager, reminded the Board that it had reached a consensus during the October 22, 2020, retreat to increase the purchasing limits; that to do such a new purchasing policy has been drafted and includes increasing purchasing limits for no quotes from \$1,000 to \$5,000, for oral quotes from between \$1,000 and \$5,000 to between \$5,000 and \$25,000, for written quotes from between \$5,000 and \$15,000 to between \$25,000 and \$50,000, for sealed bids from \$15,000

to \$50,000, and for emergency purchases from up to \$25,000 to up to \$50,000; that the draft policy was reviewed by a committee of 9 staff members and provided to Department Heads on January 8; and that if consensus is to move forward with the policy it will be on the next agenda for consideration and would go into effect March 1 following staff training. Following discussion, consensus was to move forward.

Accelerating County Projects. Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that with low-interest rates and the need for additional and renovated public facilities, it is being suggested that the Board consider issuing long-term debt to acquire funds to construct or renovate several county facilities; and that the funds can be acquired through the Public Improvements Authority (PIA) but that due to the enabling legislation for the PIA being narrowly written, such legislation needs to be amended to allow debt to construct general purpose government buildings. Following discussion, consensus was to pursue amending the PIA enabling legislation for (in priority order) courthouse renovations, new county administration building, airport hangars, fire stations in various locations, and jail expansion. A resolution regarding changing the PIA enabling legislation will be on the February 2 agenda for action. (Note: resolution was approved February 16, 2021.)

Budget Calendar FY 21-22. Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that the budget process for FY 21-22 will begin in March and conclude on June 15 with adoption of the budget, which will be effective July 1. Following discussion, there were no objections to the proposed budget calendar.

School Zone Speed Detection Device Proposal. Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that the Georgia General Assembly approved a state law during 2018 regulating drivers and their speed in school zones using cameras and speed detection devices; that the law was codified in OCGA 40-14-18; that the City of Hamilton engaged RedSpeed USA to permit, design, install, maintain, own and operate cameras and speed detection devised for the three school zones located in the city limits of Hamilton; that Hamilton Police Department approves the actual citations and shares the traffic fines with RedSpeed (67%-33%); that in addition to the traffic fine, violators also pay RedSpeed a \$25 processing fee per violation; that there are three school zones in the unincorporated area of the County (Mulberry Creek Elementary/Creekside, New Mountain Hill Elementary, and Pine Ridge Elementary); that the Sheriff has agreed to assist in this program, if approved, by reviewing and approving citations; that the School Board would also have to sign off on the permits; and that the program could be operational in 90 days. Following discussion, consensus was to pursue this program.

Legislative Outreach. Commissioner Andrews said that she asked this topic to be on the agenda only to request that a meeting with the County's legislative delegates be arranged as soon as possible to take advantage of the current legislative session. Randy Dowling, County Manager, will work on scheduling such a meeting in April or May.

Mulberry Falls Status. Chairman Zuerner said although he asked that this issue be on the agenda, he is going to hold off on this until a later time.

Meeting Time Change. Commissioner Grant said that he asked this topic to be on the agenda to request consideration to move the 7:00 PM start time of both monthly regular meetings to 6:30 PM. Following discussion, consensus was to move forward with changing the time of the regular meetings to 6:30 PM with any necessary zoning public hearings starting at 7:00 PM. The County Attorney will be contacted to determine as to whether or not a resolution is necessary to make such a change.

Whitesville Street Property. Randy Dowling, County Manager, reported that no bids were received for the 10+/- acre parcel on Whitesville Street. Consensus was to do nothing further regarding the property at this time.

Airport Crash Truck. Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that a decision needs to be made regarding the Airport's crash truck as to whether to keep the fire truck and properly house it or dispose of the fire truck. Andy Kober, reporter and member of the Pine Mountain Fire Department, said that the Council of Fire Chiefs will be discussing this vehicle at its next meeting and making a recommendation to the Board regarding the vehicle. Mr. Dowling said that the Airport Committee can also discuss whether the vehicle should be kept or not.

ADJOURNMENT