

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PLANNING SESSION**

April 27, 2021

4:30 PM

Conference Room, Harris County Commissioners' Office

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

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

Hotel/Motel Agreement with Chamber of Commerce. Kim Tharp, President & CEO of the Harris County Chamber of Commerce (COC); Charles Sweat, past COC Board Chairman; and Dr. Kimberly McElveen, current COC Board Chairman, were also present. Ms. Tharp distributed a PowerPoint presentation and then reviewed same via her laptop, to include showing two short videos, playing two radio promos of the Man O'War Railroad Recreation Trail and FD Roosevelt State Park, and showed advertising in an upcoming edition of Explore Georgia (official state travel guide); announced that on Thursday, April 29, at 7 PM on PBS, there will be "A Fork in the Road" program featuring Turn Time Farms and Simply Dutch Farms; and said plans are in the works for a "farm to table" event. Mr. Sweat distributed four graphs (impact of tourism marketing, LOST, SPLOST and T-SPLOST) and reviewed each. He also suggested that the County consider going from 5% Hotel/Motel Tax to 8%, like Pine Mountain. Discussion included that billboards cost about \$25,000 each per year; that currently there are two billboards in place with plans to install a third. Consensus (taken at the end of the meeting) was to allow the agreement to renew with no changes.

Review of Courthouse Assessment Report. Alex Griggs, with 2WR, reviewed the preliminary Courthouse assessment report outlining the repair/renovation priorities to include the assessment tour was made on April 7, 2021; that the Priority 1 recommendation is the roof replacement on both the 1908 (old) and 1998 (new) structures and exterior structural work on the old section (est. \$1,264,062.15); Priority 2 is a full life safety review for both the old and new sections of the courthouse (est. \$450,977.99); Priority 3 is replacement of all major systems (HVAC, plumbing, electrical) in the new section (est. \$3,004,254.20); Priority 4 is refurbish/replace all interior finishes in the old and new sections (est. \$1,508,135.00); and Priority 5 is reorganization of the functions and flow of the new section (\$1,859,905.58); and that the total estimate is \$8,074,605, which includes architect fees, permit fees, construction, contingency, GC overhead. Discussion included that the roof replacement work would take 30 days; that at least Priority #1 and #2 should be done as soon as possible with the other three priorities at a later date; that for each year a priority is delayed, add at least 8% per year. Mr. Griggs concluded by saying that the Board would get the full assessment report within a week or two.

Broadband. Following the assurance of Russell Britt, County Attorney, that listening to a presentation from WOW, who employs Commissioner Irions, in response to a question from Commissioner Langston, Commissioner Irions said he had several individuals from WOW (Arlene Morgan, Director or Regulatory Finance; Kirk Zerkle, VP Corporate Operations; Keith Kirby, VP Construction-System Expansion; and Greg Argetsinger, VP Field Operations) via Zoom available to discuss how to partner with an MSO in the County and how to determine costs associated with providing broadband in several areas of the County to include Plantation Creek, Coca Lake and Rocky Ridge subdivisions, and on East Bon Acre and West Bon Acre; that an example, to provide broadband in an area of 448 houses would result in a cost of \$639,000 or \$1,426/house for a 1,000 foot project. Discussion included that while the County will receive about \$7 million from the American Rescue Plan Act but there has been no guidance; that there while there are public/private partnerships, there is nothing about providing funding to a company who would then make a profit; that while the County has been designated as "broadband ready", there needs to be a plan; that the Board should consider a broadband summit, perhaps at Callaway Gardens, where broadband providers are invited for discussion as to what they can offer and what incentives the County can offer, if any; and that the County is a long way from having a plan.

UDC Timeline. After a brief review of the UDC timeline by Randy Dowling, County Manager, discussion followed with consensus being to cancel the July 6 Commission meeting, due to the July 4 holiday, so that more citizens can attend the public hearing before the Board, which will take place on August 3. Mr. Dowling is to revise the timeline and send out to the BOC, the Planning Commission, the Steering Committee, and the consultant.

Deeding Roads in Northwest Harris Business Park. Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that the Northwest Harris Business Park is in the city limits of West Point; that in order for the roads, signs, and right of way to be maintained, the City has requested that the roads be deeded to West Point; and that because County personnel does not have the time to maintain the roads, signs and right of way, he would like to consider the City's request. Russell Britt, County Attorney, said the roads can't be deeded without going through the abandonment process, and that he will determine the proper process.

Employee Bonus. Commissioner Langston said that a Department Head has requested that with the County receiving additional funding (American Rescue Plan Act), it should consider giving employees a \$1,000 bonus. Following discussion, consensus was to not give employees such a bonus, particularly in light of the recent compensation adjustment.

Sheriff's Hiring Proposal. Chairman Zuerner said that the Sheriff would like to know how the Board feels about his proposal to hire his son. Discussion included that it's nepotism; that while the Sheriff acknowledges his employees fall under the County's personnel plan, it is his view that the plan does not apply to him, thus him hiring his son doesn't constitute nepotism. Consensus was to uphold the personnel plan regarding nepotism.

Recess for Dinner. Chairman Zuerner recessed the Retreat in order to have dinner with the local legislative delegation (Richard Smith, Vance Smith, Debbie Buckner). Various discussions took place during dinner to include that the Board was disappointed that the delegation did not move forward with the amendment to the Public Improvements Authority, which was needed to provide the Board with flexibility in funding capital projects; that better planning is needed before the delegation can move forward with requests to include the request resolution must be unanimous and the delegation vote must be unanimous; that the delegates are willing to meet with the Commissioners on a regular basis to discuss issues and plan for same and would like to do so in August. The Board requested that the delegation move forward with an amendment to the Impact Fee Act to add "broadband", which would benefit all counties.

Ellerslie Park Tentative Time. Discussion included that March 2022 is too far out for the opening of Ellerslie Park; and that even though there is a lot of work to be done, preference is to have a "soft" opening in the fall, around Halloween.

Soccer Field Lighting: Current Project. Commissioner Langston said that the Soccer Association has funds they want to contribute to the County for lighting of soccer fields; that she would like Randy Dowling, County Manager, and perhaps Russell Britt, County Attorney, to meet with the Association to determine exactly what the Association proposes to contribute toward the lighting and prepare the appropriate document. Chairman Zuerner said he agrees with Commissioner Langston in that the County shouldn't turn down the offer of funding.

Radar List 2021. Nancy McMichael, County Clerk, said that the Radar List is due to be updated; that the list was sent to the Sheriff's office to review; that the Sheriff's office made recommendations to reduce the speed limit on eight (8) roads (Deer Run Drive from 35 to 25, Edgewater Drive from 35 to 25, Moon Road from 40 to 30/35, Terry Lane from 40 to 30/35, Dennis Smith Road from 55 to 45, Hadley Road from 55 to 45, Harmon Road from 55 to 45/35, Warm Springs Road from 55 to 45) and to add two (2) roads (Hoody Hudson Road at 45 and Hart Road at 35); that the list of recommendations was sent to GDOT to review; that GDOT has indicated the County needs to have letters signed by an engineer to justify the speed reduction on four (4) roads, to have a speed study done to reduce the speed on four (4) roads, and the description and classification of the two roads to be added; and that cost for the engineer letter is between \$1,000 to \$1,900/road segment and the speed study is between \$1,750 to \$1,900/road segment. Following discussion, consensus was to move forward with GDOT's requirements regarding the 10 roads and for funding to come from T-SPLOST. Commissioner Andrews requested that Allen Lake Road be added to reduce the speed limit from 40 to 35; there were no objections.

Water Works Administration Building. Discussion took place regarding the drawing for the new Water Works administration building with consensus being that the Board was not pleased with the look, and that Board members will provide examples of what they would prefer to see to Randy Dowling, County Manager.

ADJOURNMENT