

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION**

August 2, 2022
6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Andrew Zuerner, Susan Andrews, Rob Grant, Bobby Irions, Becky Langston.
Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk; Brian Williams, Community Development Director; Lee Walton, Consultant.

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Zuerner called the Regular Session to order.
2. **INVOCATION / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Commissioner Andrews gave the invocation. Chairman Zuerner led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **MINUTES.** The motion to approve the minutes of the July 11, 2022 Called Work Session, July 14, 2022 Special Called Meeting and July 19, 2022 Regular Session was made by Vice Chairman Grant, seconded by Commissioner Langston and Commissioner Andrews and passed unanimously.
4. **SECOND PUBLIC HEARING AS REQUIRED BY THE STATE ON THE COUNTY'S 2022 MILLAGE LEVY - To hold a Public Hearing as required by State Law on the County's intent to levy a millage rate that differs from the calculated "rollback" millage rate for ad valorem tax purposes.** Chairman Zuerner called the Public Hearing to order and said that the purpose of this meeting is regarding the notice of intent to increase the property tax and that this is the second of three hearings the County is required to hold regarding same; and that there will be two more Public Hearings before the millage rate is set. Chairman Zuerner said that the County has tentatively adopted a 2022 millage rate which will require an increase in property taxes by 2.93 percent County Wide less West Point and by 2.35 percent in the West Point area; that this tentative increase will result in a millage of 9.13 mills. Chairman Zuerner advised that the third public hearing will be held during the August 16, 2022 Regular Commissioners meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Chairman Zuerner asked if anyone wished to comment on the millage rate. There were no comments from the public.

5. **OLD BUSINESS**
 - A. **PUBLIC HEARING AT 7:00 p.m.: Application of Harris County Board of Commissioners to Amend the Harris County Code of Ordinances, Appendix A (Zoning Ordinance), Articles I-X; Appendix B (Subdivisions), Articles I-XX; Chapter 4 (Planning and Development), Articles I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, IX; Chapter 5 (Public Safety, Health & Sanitation), Article IV; Chapter 7 (Water, Sewage & Utilities), Article I; and other associated sections of the Code of Ordinances intended to be incorporated into the Unified Development Code (UDC) of Harris County.** Chairman Zuerner called the Public Hearing to order, read the specifics of the application and said that the recommendations of the Planning Commission and the Staff were for approval with the minor Staff-Recommended UDC Revisions to Articles 2, 3, 5, and 11. Lee Walton, Consultant, advised the Board that the recommendation by the Planning Commission was to approve the ordinance with the minor Staff-Recommended UDC Revisions to Articles 2, 3, 5 and 11 and provided the Board with a summary of those minor revisions and responded to inquiries from the Board related to heir property, major and minor subdivisions, and expanded definitions of immediate family.

There being no further comments or questions from the Board, Chairman Zuerner asked if anyone wished to speak in favor of the application. There being no commends in favor, Chairman Zuerner asked if anyone wished to speak in opposition to the application.

A citizen, who did not identify herself or her address, appeared before the Commissioners and asked if properties would be grandfathered in.

Carol Dozer, a citizen who lives on Mountain Creek Drive, gave an example of smaller lot size to heirs and wanted to know what might be possible.

Jesse Richards, a citizen who lives on Harrington Drive, discussed a 5-acre property that he owns that contains an easement to the property.

Mark Lawrence, a citizen who lives on Richardson Court, appeared before the Commissioners and stated that he said that he would bring more people; that they haven't had an opportunity through the years to get answers; that they are doing things quickly; and that he is a voice for those who can't be a voice for themselves.

Alzadie Grier, a citizen who lives on GA Highway 18, stated that she was disappointed at the Planning Commission meeting; that people are against the UDC; that she keeps hearing that they have been working on it for two years; that people aren't concerned with the time but are concerned about property that families have owned, farmed, and supported their families with; that she doesn't feel like people on the Board are here representing them; that she appreciates the Board hearing them; and that she hopes they will wait and reconsider.

David Adams, a citizen who lives on US Highway 27, stated that 80% of property is A-1 zoning and largely investment or heir property; that when people want to sell that property will be at a decreased amount; and that changes allow a few to henpeck what they want to do with property.

Ben Simpson, a citizen who lives on Pond Street, stated that no one has spoken in favor and that with rising material costs that companies could be put out of business.

Trent Griffin, a citizen who lives on Old Shiloh Road, stated that they are answering questions on the night when it is to be voted on; that he was happy about the dialogue at the Planning Commission meeting; that with declining economy that permits will go down in number; that this is uncompensated theft by taking; that it will cut down on inherent value of property; that a new comprehensive plan is needed; and that spot zoning could be a problem.

Tyler Findley, a representative from Hughston Homes, stated that this is the third time that the Board have heard from citizens opposed to the text amendments; that they should honor County and constituents; that only one person has spoken for the UDC; that they have an opportunity to make a difference; that this is a step backwards and asked the Board to deny the UDC; asked what they value; that they can start tonight by making reasonable decisions; and that they should revamp their comprehensive plan.

John Browning, a citizen who lives on Winding Lake Drive, stated that he pays \$6700 a year in property taxes and can't live in his camper on his land.

Dexter Williams, a citizen who lives on Lake Harding Drive, stated that this is one of the first meetings that he has come to; that two years isn't a long time; that we need to make clear who benefits from this; that there should be complete transparency; that they want to keep property in the family and create wealth; and that this is confusing and that it should be simple and clear.

Rhona Bray, a citizen who lives on Mountain Creek Drive, stated that the Planning Commission said that information was posted on the website; that people may not have internet access; that if they think the document is complex then how do they think they feel; that they need to be fair for everyone; and that they need to wait and educate citizens.

Stringer Bryan, a citizen who lives on Waterford Drive, wanted to know who decided on this; that the decision was made; and that people should have been involved.

Maria Copeland; a citizen who lives on Deerfield Drive, stated that meetings haven't been so public; that "Unified" is part of the title but there isn't unification; that she loves the County; that her people and community are not being represented; that everyone has a right to be here as part of the community; and that she doesn't understand the purpose.

Larry Hardaway, a citizen who lives on GA Highway 315, stated that he doesn't see how this is helping him; that they should help and not hurt him; and that this only helps few.

Taylor Griffin, a citizen who lives on Wood Avenue, stated that there have been several public hearings; that minor tweaks have been made but not big issues; that access to land and driveways is freedom; and that there should be correction in some land areas and the zoning map.

Lee Hardaway, a citizen who lives on Cannon Road; stated that individuals with their property are concerned that they can't build; provided examples regarding the rezoning process; that there should be a feasibility study and comprehensive plan; and that they should consider pausing.

Charles Copeland, a citizen who lives on Pine Lake Road, wanted to know why there was a 10-acre minimum for a modular home; and stated that people may not be able to buy a house since they will require 10 acres.

Linda Dawson, a citizen who lives on Oak Street, stated that there is not a lot of public water in the County; that we are a "County of 'No'"; that if recommended changes are made that special events facilities would need to be on public water; and that public event facilities need to be able to use wells since that is the only thing available.

Carolyn Richards, a citizen who lives on Harrington Drive, stated that she hears that they are being told what they can and can't do with their property.

Kimberly Whitaker, a citizen who lives on GA Highway 315, asked permission to divide property in 2018; and that she doesn't want to ask permission to do stuff with their property.

George Clark, a citizen who lives on GA Highway 103, stated that he didn't know about this process for the last two years; and that people have started to come to meetings.

Martha Fanning, a citizen, wanted to know who benefits from this.

Addis Bugg, a citizen who lives on Bugg Road, asked if he could purchase four acres and would he be allowed to do that and would that change if the UDC goes through.

Chairman Zuerner closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Langston stated that she agrees with Commissioner Grant and Community Development Director Brian Williams; that she doesn't feel that the 10-acre minimum is beneficial; that she is not in favor of 10-acres for a mobile home; that no costs have been mentioned at Planning Commission meetings related to rezoning; that perception at Planning Commission meeting is that rezoning isn't a big deal; that the cost for the application is \$400.00 plus surveying; and that she is against the 10-acre minimum; and that this would be taking away an inherent right.

Commissioner Andrews stated that she appreciated those who have come to speak; that they have been working on this a long time and they have had public meetings over that time; that there has been zoning in Harris County for decades; that prior meetings that people complained about density and wanted to maintain a rural environment; that the Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2019 and the updated UDC was to go with that plan; that the area is rapidly changing to a bedroom community of Columbus; that she didn't hear preferences from people tonight and not just what they don't like; that there is zoning right now; and that the UDC can be amended when needed.

Vice Chairman Grant stated that he has been against 10-acres due to heirs; that he has been told that it was personal - "it is personal"; that he tried 8-acres instead of 10-acres as a compromise; that everyone has an opinion; that he appreciates everyone here; that he wasn't here during the Comprehensive Plan; that some to the document is needed; and that he won't vote "yes" because of 10-acres.

Commissioner Irions stated that internet is needed in rural areas; that his family has been here for generations; that he wants to make the County better; that the process is 365 days a year and ongoing; that he wants to preserve Harris County and likes less government; that they have had multiple sessions to bring people in and for them to show up at meetings; and that people need to be involved every day and not just now.

Commissioner Andrews stated that all citizens who want to maintain a rural environment are the ones who benefit; that we are going to grow; that it can be quickly or at a pace that we can keep up with; and that too much growth can be difficult to keep up with.

Commissioner Irions stated that he tries to promote facts and won't just say what they want to hear.

Chairman Zuerner stated that he would like people to continue to show up; and that enough contact and exchange of information helps in the future.

The motion to approve the Ordinance to Amend the Harris County Code of Ordinances, Appendix A (Zoning Ordinance), Articles I-X; Appendix B (Subdivisions), Articles I-XX; Chapter 4 (Planning and Development), Articles I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, IX; Chapter 5 (Public Safety, Health & Sanitation), Article IV; Chapter 7 (Water, Sewage & Utilities), Article I; and other associated sections of the Code of Ordinances intended to be incorporated into the Unified Development Code (UDC) of Harris County to include the staff recommended minor revisions excluding those to Article 3 and remove "foster family members" from Article 5 language and to be effective on January 1, 2023 was made by Commissioner Andrews, seconded by Chairman Zuerner and failed with two in favor (Andrews, Zuerner) and three opposed (Grant, Langston, Irions).

B. Ordinance to Amend the Alcohol Ordinance for Brewery, Brewpub, Distillery and Micro-Brewery. A brief discussion was held by the Board and it was determined that this ordinance would need to be approved in conjunction with the UDC since the language needs to be consistent. The motion to deny the Ordinance to Amend the Alcohol Ordinance for Brewery, Brewpub, Distillery and Micro-Brewery and start the process with text amendments to the Zoning Ordinance was made by Vice Chairman Grant, seconded by Commissioner Langston and passed unanimously.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. Agreements with Georgia Probation Services, Inc. for Magistrate Court, Probate Court and Superior Court to provide probation supervision services. The motion to approve the Agreements with Georgia Probation Services, Inc. for Magistrate Court, Probate Court and Superior Court to provide probation supervision services was made by Vice Chairman Grant, seconded by Chairman Zuerner and passed unanimously.

7. **COUNTY MANAGER**

A. **Project Updates.** Randy Dowling, County Manager, reviewed various projects, as follows:

- (1) **UDC/Land Use Codes.** Planning Commission recommended approval on July 20th and the Public Hearing is this evening.
- (2) **New EMS/VFD Facility at NWHBP.** This project is on bid and the deadline is August 4th and will be considered by the Board on August 16th.
- (3) **New Public Works Facility.** Project is progressing and funds are from SPLOST 2019.
- (4) **New Playgrounds for Moultrie Park and Community Center.** RFP has been advertised and bids are due August 30th and will be considered by the Board in early September.
- (5) **Replace Aged Dehumidification System at Community Center.** This project will go out for bid soon.
- (6) **Man O'War Railroad Recreation Trail, Phase V (aka Rails to Trails).** Phase V will be completed very soon and should be open by the first weekend in September. A ribbon cutting is being planned. Phase VI is currently being designed and should be complete by Fall of next year.
- (7) **New Fire Training Facility.** Design meetings have occurred and the project is ongoing.
- (8) **Improvements to Northwest Harris Business Park.** Bid deadline is August 4th and will be considered by the Board shortly thereafter.

- (9) Rejuvenate the Airport's Apron/Taxiways. The project will be beginning soon.
- (10) New Solid Waste Facility. The project has begun and is expected to be completed in early 2023.
- (11) New Water Works Administrative Office. This project is starting soon and will include a drive-thru area.
- (12) Hadley Road Water Line Project Phase II. This project should be finished by the end of the year.
- (13) Upgrade the U.S. 27 Water Line. This project is in conjunction with the GDOT US 27 widening project which includes a roundabout at 315 and should go out for bid in December.
- (14) Courthouse Renovations, Phase I. This project is expected to start soon.
- (15) LOST Negotiations. Several meetings have taken place. 60-day deadline is August 16th.

Randy Dowling, County Manager, responded to questions from the Board about when it is expected that the report will be received about the radio system and a status on the prison roof. Mr. Dowling advised that the report regarding the radio system is due on August 8th and the prison roof is about 99% complete.

- 8. **ADJOURNMENT**. There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Langston, seconded by Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously.

Andrew Zuerner, Chairman

Attest:

Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk