

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION**

December 6, 2022

6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Andrew Zuerner, Rob Grant, Becky Langston, Bobby Irions, Susan Andrews. Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; Russell Britt, County Attorney; Community Development Director Brian Williams; E911/EMA Deputy Director Mike Cardwell; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk.

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. **PRESENTATION** Mr. Willie D. Rutledge, founding member and former Fire Chief of the dissolved Flat Shoals Volunteer Fire Department, presented the Board of Commissioners with a donation in the amount of \$10,751.94. He advised that the funds originated from a dormant bank account of the Flat Shoals VFD and he was able to obtain the funds with the assistance of County Manager Randy Dowling. Mr. Rutledge requested that the funds be used for the new EMS/VFD facility currently being constructed in the Northwest Harris Business Park.
4. **APPEARANCE OF CITIZENS**
 - A. **Morgan Marlowe - Community Development Oversight.** Morgan Marlowe appeared before the Board and raised concerns about issues that he has experienced while in the process of renewing a Certificate of Occupancy for Oakhurst - specifically related to the stove located at the business and an inspection that was conducted. Mr. Marlowe provided the Board with a letter which he read from related to the those concerns.
 - B. Ellie Mosby requested to address the Board regarding Morgan Marlowe's request to appear before the Board. Ms. Mosby advised that she is the sister of Morgan Marlowe and is the manager of Oakhurst. She advised that she was contacted by Community Development to have a meeting related to the business license renewal and that she readily agreed to the meeting and had requested that her Commissioner be present at the meeting. Ms. Mosby stated that she had not yet been provided dates and times as to when her Commissioner could be present. Additionally, Ms. Mosby advised that the inspection that was conducted was done without "notice, appointment, invitation, probable cause, or a warrant." She informed the Board of her concerns related to the procedures related to the renewal of a business license. She requested that there be transparency in the Community Development office.
 - C. **Scott Lightsey - Proposed Wording Changes in Retirement Plan.** Commissioner-Elect Scott Lightsey appeared before the Board and asked the Board consider changing some of the language in the retirement plan. He requested that the Board consult with ACCG so that employees have the choice to draw their retirement at their normal retirement age and be allowed to work until terminating their employment with the County by official retirement. He stated that this would allow the employee's spouse or significant other to receive their retirement benefits in the event that they pass away prior to officially retiring. Based upon the conversation, County Manager Randy Dowling suggested that retirement plan options be discussed in more detail at the next Planning Retreat that will be tentatively held in February. Additionally, Mr. Dowling will obtain information from ACCG to be able to provide complete details about the options that are available and any financial impacts that the options may present.
5. **Public Hearings at 7:00 p.m**

The Conflict of Interest forms were completed at the request of Chairman Zuerner. Chairman Zuerner explained the procedures for the Public Hearing.

 - A. **Application of Matthew and Mary Parker, to rezone 4.00 acres of a 10.00-acre parcel, located on Map 058, Parcel 057, Land Lot 220, Land District 21st; Rezoning from A-1 (Agricultural/Forestry) to C-4 (Highway Commercial). Current use is undeveloped/wooded; proposed use is for a lay down yard for a construction business; property located 750' north of address 15123 and on the west side of US Hwy 27, Hamilton, GA.** Chairman Zuerner read the information related to

the Application of Matthew and Mary Parker. Matthew Parker, applicant, was available to respond to questions from the Board.

Chairman Zuerner asked if anyone wished to speak in favor of this application. There being none, Chairman Zuerner asked if anyone wished to speak in opposition to this application.

Alzadie Copeland Grier, 15220 GA Hwy 18, advised that she has concerns about the possibility that the property will be re-zoned later and oil changes/environment; that it is a family-owned community along with the business to the north; that the event center across the street is a disturbance; and that she doesn't want to continue to have commercial businesses in the residential area.

Brenda Copeland, 15001 Hwy 27, stated that she educated herself on drilling rigs; that she is concerned about someone coming back later on; that she is concerned about noise from diesel trucks; and that the applicant didn't say house but said business.

Carolyn Copeland, 723 Valley Mission Road, said that the applicant originally bought the property to build a house but didn't because of Covid; that they built a shelter and had a railcar there today; and that she has a petition and read off the names on the petition. Additionally, Ms. Copeland read a letter from her cousin.

Durant Smith, 1864 Gilbert Street in Thomaston, stated that his father lives there; that there is a lot of traffic; that the County would not let George Copeland open a strip mall; that more commercial businesses will follow; that the applicant build a pole barn and graveled; and that the applicant has "eased in."

LaToya Johnson (speaking on behalf of Willie Smith of 15015 Hwy 27) stated that she does not want a business in a residential area; that she is speaking for those that are here and those that are not; that she is concerned about lights and disposal of chemicals and oils; that she is concerned about accidents, traffic and about what kind of people the business will bring.

Clinton Copeland, 15123 Hwy 27, inquired about whether there would be a lane for trucks; stated that he was concerned about the curve and hill; that he hadn't met the owner yet; and that everyone is on well water and is concerned about chemicals.

Mark Lawrence, 15 Richardson Ct. in Fortson, stated that he knows the family of those speaking from church; that he knows their integrity; and that the family wants to keep what they have.

Thomas Johnson, no address provided, wanted to know why he didn't propose to build on his own land.

Tequiero Copeland, 6391 Stone Ridge Ct. in Riverdale, stated that they haven't had a chance to enjoy what they have and would love to continue to come down here.

Mr. Matthew Parker addressed the Board and advised that he works on the trucks and goes to the jobs; that he has hired an engineer and is designing a commercial driveway; that he has been in Meriwether County for 30 years; that trucks are on a weekly basis; that he can't have the business where they live now; that there are no well companies in Harris County and that he drills for all of the companies in the area; that most of his time is spent on the job site; and that there are no late nights. Discussion of the Board included spot zoning; whether it could be rezoned to agricultural in the future; and what is around the property.

Chairman Zuerner closed the public hearing at 8:08 p.m.

A motion to deny the Application of Matthew and Mary Parker, to rezone 4.00 acres of a 10.00-acre parcel, located on Map 058, Parcel 057, Land Lot 220, Land District 21st; Rezoning from A-1 (Agricultural/Forestry) to C-4 (Highway Commercial). Current use is undeveloped/wooded; proposed use is for a lay down yard for a construction business; property located 750' north of address 15123 and on the west side of US Hwy 27, Hamilton, GA was made by Commissioner Andrews, seconded by Vice Chairman Grant, and passed with three in favor (Andrews, Grant, Irions) and two opposed (Zuerner, Langston).

6. **MINUTES** The motion to approve the minutes of the November 3, 2022 Quarterly Planning Retreat Session and the November 15, 2022 Regular Session was made by Vice Chairman Grant, seconded by Chairman Zuerner, and passed unanimously.

7. **OLD BUSINESS**

- A. **911 Radio System Update and Budget Amendment.** Chairman Zuerner introduced the item for discussion and consideration. E911/EMA Deputy Director Mike Cardwell was present to respond to questions from the Board and provide information. Discussion included that there is a need for a consultant to provide oversight for equipment and functionality; that there are other companies besides Tusa that may be able to provide oversight over the radio system improvements; that a request for proposals can be done to determine what other vendors may be available to provide oversight services; and that minimum requirements should be defined related to the project.

The motion to approve a budget amendment in the amount of \$20,000.00 for a Frequency Search for new UHF trucked public safety licenses by Dean's Commercial Two-Way to be paid from General Fund Reserves and to have a request for proposals advertised for a project oversight consultant was made by Vice Chairman Grant, seconded by Commissioner Langston, and passed unanimously.

8. **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. **Jim Livingston - Executive Director, RVRC.** Mr. Jim Livingston, Executive Director at River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC), provided the Board with a copy of the 2022 Annual Report to the Communities. Mr. Livingston discussed how dues that are paid are used; that they work to make sure that funds are appropriately used; that they encompass 16 counties; that most of their funding is federal; that they have had a greater regional impact in this past year than previously due to funding; that their funded programs include Community & Economic Development, Workforce Development, Planning Initiatives, and Ageing Services; that they encourage everyone that had the capacity to apply for Broadband funding; that the Aging and Disability Resource Connection hotline is (877) 819-6348; that the transit program has been successful in the area; that right now there is no cost but there may be a match requirement gap in the future; and that RVRC does have the ability to talk to and help Harris County with GIS.
 - B. **Intergovernmental Agreement Between Harris County, Georgia, and Hamilton, Georgia for Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Services for City's Motor Vehicles.** Chairman Zuerner introduced the item to the Board. The motion to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement Between Harris County, Georgia, and Hamilton, Georgia for Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Services for City's Motor Vehicles was made by Vice Chairman Grant, seconded by Chairman Zuerner, and passed unanimously.
 - C. **Appointment to the Development Authority.** Commissioner Langston wished to make the appointment sooner rather than later due to the heavy agenda that the Development Authority has next week and she believed that it would be better for Vice Chairman Grant to be able to attend next week's meeting. The motion to appoint Vice Chairman Rob Grant to the Development Authority effective upon approval of the appointment was made by Chairman Zuerner, seconded by Commissioner Langston, and passed unanimously.

9. **COUNTY MANAGER**

- A. **Personnel Policy Handbook.** County Manager Randy Dowling advised that the draft handbook was presented to the Board during the November 3, 2022 Planning Retreat and it was reviewed in detail; that the County Attorney has performed a legal review; and that included in the agenda packet is a redlined version of all of the changes since November 3, 2022. County Attorney Russell Britt stated that the legal review created a good discussion related to functionality and how components can be more flexible for employees that are under the County Manager and under Constitutional Officers. County Manager Randy Dowling stated that he plans on getting it to a nearly finished document and then bring it to the Department Heads. He stated that the new version of the handbook provides structure.

- B. **Budget Amendment: Mountain Hill Road Realignment.** County Manager Randy Dowling stated that a budget amendment is needed to re-align Mountain Hill Road at SR 315. He stated that design fees (surveying, engineering, and construction administration) are \$125,000, the estimated construction cost and utility relocation are \$400,000 for a total project cost of \$525,000, and funds will come from the TSPLOST Funds. The motion to approve the budget amendment to fund the re-alignment of Mountain Hill Road at SR 315 including design fees (\$125,000) and construction and utility relocation (\$400,000) from TSPLOST Fund Reserves was made by Commissioner Langston, seconded by Chairman Zuerner, and passed unanimously.
- C. **Project Updates** Randy Dowling, County Manager, reviewed various projects, as follows:
- (1) New EMS/VFD Facility at NWHBP. Land clearing has begun.
 - (2) New Public Works Facility. A design meeting was held on December 5th and expected completion is November 2023.
 - (3) Ellerslie Park. The pavilion with restrooms is nearly complete.
 - (4) Man O' War Railroad Recreation Trail, Phase V. This project is almost complete and the final crossing have been finished.
 - (5) Man O' War Railroad Recreation Trail, Phase VI. This project is out for bid with the bid opening on January 18, 2023 and is expected to come to the Board on February 7, 2023.
 - (6) New Fire Training Facility. Design is finishing up.
 - (7) Development Authority Economic Development Office. The Development Authority had the Intergovernmental Agreement and we are waiting for them to pull the trigger on it.
 - (8) Design of 20 T-Hangars at Airport. This project is on bid and the bid deadline is December 8th and is expected to come to the Board in January 2023.
 - (9) New Solid Waste Facility. This project is almost complete.
 - (10) New Water Works Administrative Office. The foundation has been poured and it should have a roof within 30 days.
 - (11) Hadley Road Water Line Project. This project was started yesterday.
 - (12) U.S. 27 Water Line. GEFA loan has been acquired and half will be paid by GDOT.
 - (13) Courthouse Renovations, Phase I. Scaffolding will go up this month and project is expected to start in early January 2023. This project should be complete within 6 months.

10. **COUNTY ATTORNEY**

- A. **REQUEST FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION.** County Attorney Russell Britt requested an Executive Session for the purpose of discussion of personnel and litigation.
11. **RECESS FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Vice Chairman Grant made the motion to go into Executive Session for litigation and personnel at 9:19 p.m. The motion was seconded by Chairman Zuerner and passed unanimously.
12. **RESUME REGULAR SESSION.** The motion to go back into Regular Session was made at 10:08 p.m. by Vice Chairman Grant, seconded by Commissioner Langston, and passed unanimously.
13. **ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Langston, seconded by Commissioner Andrews, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:08 p.m.

Andrew Zuerner, Chairman

Attest:

Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk