

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**REGULAR SESSION**

January 17, 2023

6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Rob Grant, Scott Lightsey, Greg Gant, Bobby Irions, Susan Andrews. Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; Russell Britt, County Attorney; Brian Williams, Community Development Director; Jeff Culpepper, Water Works Director; Mike Fuson, Assistant Recreation Director; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Chairman Grant called the Regular Session to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. **INVOCATION / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Vice-Chair Andrews gave the invocation. Chairman Grant led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **MINUTES** The motion to approve the minutes of the January 3, 2023 Regular Session was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously.
4. **APPEARANCE OF CITIZENS**
  - A. **Purvis Fenton Chapman - Community Basketball at Recreation Center.** Mr. Purvis Fenton Chapman and Colby Chapman addressed the Board regarding scheduling conflicts for basketball practices at the Community Center between November and March; wanting kids to have their allotted time at the gym; and that the advantage should be given to the kids if possible. Chairman Grant addressed the speakers and advised that the Community Center is not just utilized for sports and that he was certain that something could be worked out to accommodate the growth in basketball participation.
5. **FEE REFUND HEARING**
  - A. **Greystone - Water and Building Permit Fees.** Chairman Grant introduced the refund conference/hearing that was being held at Mr. Austin Gower's request pursuant to O.C.G.A. §48-5-380. Mr. Austin Gower is with the office of Charles A. Gower, P.C. representing Greystone at Mulberry Grove, LLC. Mr. Gower advised that they consider the property to be multi-family residential and is disputing the commercial building permit fees that were assessed and paid. He also has requested an adjustment of water tap fees and monthly water usage be assessed at residential rates rather than commercial rates. Mr. Gower requested that the Board review its own fee schedules. He stated that litigation was not threatened until there wasn't a resolution. County Attorney Russell Britt informed the Board that Water Works has conceded that the water tap fees should be assessed at \$750.00 per unit and not \$1,300.00 per unit.
6. **NEW BUSINESS**
  - A. **Presentation of FYE June 30, 2022 Annual Audit: Robinson Grimes.** Chairman Grant advised that Steve Voynich of Robinson Grimes was in attendance to review and present the Fiscal Year End June 30, 2022 Annual Audit. Mr. Voynich appeared before the Board and said that financial statements present fairly; that there are no findings with the County's compliance with grants; and that the only finding is the same as in previous years related to segregation of duties and oversight and review due to the limited number of staff. In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Voynich advised that the overall position of the pension plan was in good shape and that the debt ratio was in great shape. The motion to approve the Fiscal Year End June 30, 2022 Annual Audit was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.
  - B. **Financial Statement - November 2022.** The motion to approve the Financial Statement for November 2022 was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Chairman Grant, and passed unanimously.
  - C. **First Reading: Alcohol Application of Shashpal Singh/S & K Fortson LLC for 219 Package Store.** Chairman Grant read the specifics of the application and said that the Sheriff's Office recommended approval, the Health Department recommended approval, and Community Development recommended approval pending completion of the Final Remodeling Permit. The applicant was available to respond to any questions. There being no comments

from the Board, Chairman Grant stated that the second reading and action are scheduled to take place during the February 7, 2023 meeting.

- D. **First Reading: Alcohol Application of Karamjit Kaur/BS Chhina LLC for J Food Mart.** Chairman Grant read the specifics of the application and said that the Sheriff's Office recommended approval, the Health Department recommended approval, and Community Development recommended approval. The applicant was available to respond to any questions. There being no comments from the Board, Chairman Grant stated that the second reading and action are scheduled to take place during the February 7, 2023 meeting.
- E. **Presentation - Agricultural Master Plan Committee.** Steve Morgan, Extension Coordinator and member of the Agricultural Master Plan Committee, made a PowerPoint presentation to the Board which included that the goal is to move it forward, that the southern section of the County is growth and the northern portion is agricultural; that 82% is agricultural-based; that an agricultural and expo complex is not a moneymaking venture but is a benefit to the citizens; that there have been cancellations at the current facilities due to what is there now; that the 2019 Comprehensive Plan indicates "limited new development;" that the facility would have year-round rental possibilities; that the Committee visited facilities in Bulloch County, Laurens County; Heard County; and the QC Arena in Gay for ideas; that the Bulloch County facility provided good ideas for what the vision would be for a Harris County facility; that there would be a direct impact in revenue, jobs and taxes and an indirect impact in for restaurants, hotels, gas stations/convenience stores and campgrounds; and that essential community infrastructure is key in rural enjoyment of the basic quality of life and services enjoyed by urban areas. The Committee requested that the Board include \$70,000.00 in the FY 2023/2024 budget in order to have architectural drawings completed. Vice-Chair Andrews, a member on the Committee, stated that she appreciates the work of the individuals on the Agricultural Master Plan Committee.
- F. **Resolution to Accept Boxwood Court, Ironwood Court and Ironwood Way.** Chairman Grant introduced the item related to the acceptance of Boxwood Court, Ironwood Court and Ironwood Way and stated that all required documents to accept the road have been submitted in accordance with County regulations. The motion to approve the Resolution to Accept Boxwood Court, Ironwood Court and Ironwood Way was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously.
- G. **Appointment to the Board of Zoning Adjustments.** Commissioner Lightsey requested that the appointment to the Board of Zoning Adjustments be tabled until the February 7, 2023 meeting.
- H. **Appointment to the Development Authority.** The motion to reappoint Dr. Mark Smith to the Development Authority for the term of 01/01/2023 through 12/31/2026 was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews, and passed unanimously.
- I. **Appointments to the Library Board.** The motion to reappoint Bob Patterson, Jim Trott, and Charlotte Zuerner to the Library Board for the term of 01/01/2023 through 12/31/2025 was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Chairman Grant, and passed unanimously.

## 7. **COUNTY MANAGER**

- A. **Bid Award: Airport T-Hangars.** County Manager Randy Dowling provided an overview of the agenda item related to the bid award for the construction of twenty (20) airport t-hangars. Phil Eberly, Airport Consultant of Lead Edge, and Bryan Huskey, Bond Counsel from Stifel, appeared before the Board to provide information to the Board and respond to any questions. Discussion included base aircraft ranking; that we are working toward being revenue neutral; debt service options and lengths of time for repayment; that extending the debt service to 30 years doesn't save a significant amount in the payment amount to justify the additional interest; that SPLOST could be used for payment of debt; that the bid form is identical for all bidders and each item is unit price; that there is a specific time period for questions and addendums during the bid process; that the mulch item does not affect the low bidder; that the local bidder preference policy is exempted for this particular type of project; that we may not need additional projects at this time; that there is a high demand currently for hangars; and that the costs to construct the hangars will likely continue to rise. Mr. Dowling advised

that the bid is good for 120 days after the bid date. County Attorney Russell Britt advised that they can defer a decision if desired. The Board would like to discuss this item further at the Planning Retreat in February.

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

- (1) EMS/VFD Facility in NWHBP. Construction has begun. Completion is expected during the Summer of 2023.
- (2) Annual LMIG Resurfacing Program. Project is on bid with a bid deadline of February 7<sup>th</sup>, Board consideration on February 21<sup>st</sup> with completion by June 30, 2023.
- (3) New Public Works Facility. There have been issues with the land design and the area needing to be flatter.
- (4) New Playground at Moultrie Park. Still waiting for delivery. Ellerslie Park playground is expected next month.
- (5) Ellerslie Park. South-side park trails are being cut in, the trailhead is being constructed, and design is being finished up on the observation tower.
- (6) 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. Completion expected by late Summer 2023.
- (7) New Fire Training Facility. Design has concluded and will go out for bid this week.
- (8) Design of 20 T-Hangars at Airport. This was considered this evening and will be included on the Retreat agenda.
- (9) New Solid Waste Facility. This project is almost complete and a ribbon cutting will be planned.
- (10) New Water Works Administrative Office. Construction is about half-way completed and includes a drive-up window.
- (11) U.S. 27 Water Line. The bid opening was on January 18, 2023 and will go to the Board for consideration on February 7<sup>th</sup>. Project will take approximately one year to start.
- (12) Courthouse Renovations, Phase I. The project started in early January. This project should be complete by late Summer 2023.
- (13) Hotel/Motel Tax Increase. This item is on the agenda this evening.
- (14) County's Personnel Policies. A draft was provided to the Board and to the County Attorney for review. A draft has also been provided to Staff for their review and comment. This will be included on the agenda for the Retreat.
- (15) Ellerslie Park Observation Tower. This project is in design and is expected to be bid out next month.

8. **COUNTY ATTORNEY**

A. **Resolution: Request Introduction of Local Legislation to Increase Hotel-Motel Tax from 5% to 8%**. County Attorney Russell Britt provided information to the Board related to the Resolution to Request Introduction of Local Legislation to Increase Hotel-Motel Tax from 5% to 8%. He advised that the Board had voted to move forward with requesting that the increase in hotel-motel tax from 5% to 8% on October 18, 2022. The motion to approve the Resolution to Request Introduction of Local Legislation to Increase Hotel-Motel Tax from 5% to 8% was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews, and passed unanimously.

B. **REQUEST FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION**. County Attorney Russell Britt requested an Executive Session for the purpose of discussion of litigation and personnel.

9. **RECESS FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Commissioner Lightsey made the motion to go into Executive Session for personnel at 8:23 p.m. The motion was seconded by Chairman Grant and passed unanimously.
10. **RESUME REGULAR SESSION.** The motion to go back into Regular Session was made at 10:07 p.m. by Commissioner Irions, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.
11. **ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Irions, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:07 p.m.

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Rob Grant, Chairman

Attest:

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Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk