

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
QUARTERLY PLANNING RETREAT SESSION**

February 16, 2023

5:00 p.m.

Conference Room, 104 N College Street, Hamilton, GA 31811

Commissioners Present: Rob Grant, Scott Lightsey, Greg Gantt, Bobby Irions. Absent: Susan Andrews. Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; Russell Britt, County Attorney; Ronnie Pendergrass, Airport Director; Steve Morgan, County Extension Coordinator; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk. Also Present: Paul Bates, ACCG Regional Client Manager; Lee Walton, Consultant; Phil Eberly, Lead Edge; Christopher Gilliam, Headley Construction.

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Grant called the meeting to order. Chairman Grant was provided with the opinions of Vice-Chair Andrews related to the items being discussed.

Presentation - Bo Barber - Broadband. Bo Barber, Pastor at Prospect AME Church, Fortson, and Alex Kelley, Head of Broadband Deployment at Center on Rural Innovation in Vermont, made a presentation to the Board about their desire to make broadband available in rural areas. They advised that they would like people to understand that slow technology is an impediment; that accessibility needs to be expanded; that when people have access that “the world is their oyster;” that they would like Board support to help make connections; that partnerships are valuable; and that there is more control and freedom working locally. Discussion included assisting with getting people to talk to; that work should begin within a year but may take that long for fact finding; that they would like to provide virtual health care; that kids will be able to utilize as a virtual library; that they want to be an ISP but may end up as an ISP partner; and that due to overhead they may end up an access point.

Introduction. County Manager Randy Dowling introduced the new HR Generalist Angel Long to the Board and welcomed her to the County.

Defined Retirement Plan Amendments.

Chairman Grant introduced the item related to Defined Retirement Plan Amendments. Paul Bates, ACCG Regional Client Manager, was available to respond to questions and provide information.

- a. Section 10.07, Reemployment of Retired Participant - Discussion included that there would need to be a bonafide retirement and that some things can be local policy. Mr. Bates advised that the financial impact would be the same as hiring any other employee. The consensus of the Board of Commissioners was that they would like to consider this amendment and include local policy that the individual would need to be retired for at least six (6) months and could then be rehired into a different department and at the entry level rate of pay for the position. The Board requested information as to whether the amendment could be retroactive. Mr. Bates advised that he would obtain the answer and let them know.
- b. Section 10.05, Continued Employment After Normal Retirement Age - The consensus of the Board of Commissioners was to not consider this amendment.
- c. Removal of Death Benefit Cap of \$50,000 - After discussion, the consensus of the Board was to consider an amendment to increase the cap to \$85,000 or \$100,000 and be provided actual costs.

Impact Fees Reconsideration for Park & Recreation, Sheriff's Office and Jail, Fire Protection, EMS, and E-911.

Commissioner Lightsey informed the Board that he had requested that this item be included for discussion. Lee Walton, Consultant, was available to respond to questions from the Board. Chairman Grant stated that impact fees should be considered along with an updated Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Irions advised that he would like to have impact fees as an inactive tool and was not for activating the fees but for adopting a fee schedule of \$0.00. Discussion included residential vs. commercial; that impact fees could affect commercial growth; that the County Attorney Russell Britt doesn't believe that there is a risk of litigation; that County Attorney Russell Britt does recommend having two public hearings again; and that discussion would need to occur for an acceptable fee schedule to be decided. The consensus of the Board of Commissioners was to continue the discussion and vote to proceed with the process at a future meeting.

Bid Award for Airport T-Hangars. Chairman Grant introduced the item related to bid award for the Airport T-Hangars. Phil Eberly, Lead Edge, and Christopher Gilliam, Headley Construction, were available to respond to any questions. Discussion included that the economic climate is bad right now; that we need to concentrate on completed the projects that are already budgeted and in process; that it would be desirable for the project to “breakeven;” and that maybe a public-private partnership would be a possibility. Mr. Eberly advised that there are strings attached to FAA funding and that the funding does allow ground leases but requires a reversion clause be included in the agreement. He explained that the idea is to be close to budget neutral while paying back the debt and that once the project is paid off that it would be cash flow. The consensus of the Board of Commissioners was that they are in favor of the project but would like to revisit this project in the upcoming budget cycle and reject the bids at the next meeting.

Agricultural Master Plan Committee - Harris County Agricultural Complex. Steve Morgan, County Extension Coordinator and member of the Agricultural Master Plan Committee, was available to respond to questions from the Board. Discussion included traffic concerns of current location; that although we have outgrown what we have but expansion is possible at current location; that the facility could be run with two positions - one to market the facility and one to keep the books; the possible uses of the facility; and the teaching and education benefits; and that the current location might not be the best location for this type of complex. The consensus of the Board of Commissioners was to revisit this project during the next budget cycle and include funds (approximately \$70,000) for the conceptual design plan in the upcoming budget cycle.

Mulberry Grove Water and Wastewater Agreements. Commissioner Lightsey requested that this item be included on the agenda for discussion. This agreement is not related to Greystone and no discussion is needed.

New Horizons Building/AG Building. Discussion included whether the building currently occupied by New Horizons could be used as a Fire Training Center in the future. No consensus to consider further as there isn't anywhere to consider moving New Horizons. Discussion also included whether the AG Building might be able to be retrofitted to be utilized as a Fire Training Facility.

FY 2023-2024 Budget Priorities. County Manager Randy Dowling introduced the information related to possible budget priorities for FY 2023-2024. The consensus of the Board of Commissioners was to consider the following items in the upcoming budget: Courthouse Renovation Phase II, Comprehensive Plan Update, Update Zoning Map, Tax Assessor Aerials, UDC Codification, six full-time EMS for new building for 6 months of the fiscal year, Water and Sewer Rate Study, GIS, iPads, and Radio System Consultant (RFP).

Personnel Policy Handbook. County Manager Randy Dowling advised that it is currently being reviewed. No discussion at this time.

New Football Field. Chairman Grant advised that the current football field will probably only be available for one more year and the Board may need to consider an alternative for the Recreation Department. Discussion included possible locations for a new football field.

Tax Assessor. The feedback provided to the Board of Commissioners was that the Board of Tax Assessors was not interested in advertising the position.

Technology Fee - Local Legislation Update. County Attorney Russell Britt informed the Board that Judge Thomas Lakes, Probate Judge, has requested Local Legislation to request a technology fee be added to citations.

Cataula VFD - Tires. Chairman Grant informed the Board of Commissioners that the Cataula Volunteer Fire Department has a large amount of tires that they need to remove from the newly acquired property. County Manager Randy Dowling advised that he will look into coordinating tire amnesty days that will benefit the general public.

ADJOURNMENT. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.