

HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION

June 6, 2023

6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Rob Grant, Susan Andrews, Greg Gantt, Scott Lightsey, Bobby Irions. Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; Russell Britt, County Attorney; Brian Williams, Community Development Director; Lee Walton, Consultant, Consultants; 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 May 16, 2023 Budget Work Session II and Regular Session was made by Commissioner Irions, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews, and passed unanimously.
4. **APPEARANCE OF CITIZENS**
 - A. **L. Renee Richardson - Wealth and Riches Today Inc.'s Entrepreneurial Programs for Women.** L. Renee Richardson, Founder and CEO of Wealth and Riches Today, Inc, informed the Board that her corporation specializes in empowering women and entrepreneurs. Her company has applied for a \$3,000,000.00 grant to be used to empower women and women of color and to help teach them how to own their own business. She would like to empower women and are proud to be here in Harris County.
 - B. **Fred Jarrett - Driveway over Man O'War Trail.** Fred Jarrett and Joan Kurtz appeared before the Board and informed the Board when the Rails-to-Trails was paved over his driveway that it was left too high and the trailers and heavy-loaded vehicles scrape. He advised that engineers have come out and looked at it as well as people from the County. Mr. Jarrett stated that he had an encroachment permit. County Manager Randy Dowling advised that there were pre-existing problems and that there were photographs taken of the pavement prior to any work being done.
 - C. **Dr. Chris Nelson - Capital Improvements Element (CIE).** Dr. Chris Nelson addressed the Board and stated that he is an expert in impact fees. He stated that his concern with the CIE is that the projections of population in the CIE are much greater than the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB). He stated that he thinks that Harris County should have impact fees but that they should be tied to realistic population projections. He said that the OPB projections are based on a number of models and that the OPB projections are those used by the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC). In response to a question from the Board about why the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) would have approved the CIE using non-OPB projections, Dr. Nelson advised that DCA is "overworked, understaffed, and they are going to miss some things." He further advised that the ultimate responsibility is on the local government. Dr. Nelson stated that CIE numbers don't go into fertility, mortality rates or migration rates. He stated that he trusts the OPB and Woods & Poole numbers.
 - D. **Simon Bloom - Capital Improvements Element (CIE).** Simon Bloom stated that he is an attorney who represents Stone Martin Builders. He stated that when you get the population projections growth wrong that everything that follows is wrong. He advised that the entire construct built out in the CIE is all based upon population growth. He believes that the County will spend any monies received as impact fees improperly and will have to pay refunds for fees wrongly collected. Mr. Bloom said that it is a risk that is unnecessary since the County has no intention of imposing impact fees any time soon. Mr. Bloom stated implicitly that the projections and assumptions are inaccurate.

5. **PUBLIC HEARINGS at 7:00 p.m.**

The Conflict of Interest forms were completed at the request of Chairman Grant. Chairman Grant explained the procedures involved in the Public Hearing.

A. **Application of Jon Haralson, to rezone a 2.73-acre parcel, located on Map 606, Parcel 042, Land Lot 62, Land District 21st; Rezoning from A-1 (Agricultural/Forestry) to C-4 (Highway Commercial); Current Use is vacant property; proposed use is for a wildlife rehabilitation business; property located at 303 Hudson Mill Road, Hamilton, GA.**

Chairman Grant called the Public Hearing to order, read the specifics of the application and said that the recommendations of the Planning Commission and Staff were for approval with conditions. Jon Haralson and Laura Daggerheart with Savage Heart Rescue were in attendance to provide information and to respond to questions from the Board.

Mr. Haralson, Applicant, advised that Savage Heart is a great business to work with and provides a great service to the County. Mr. Haralson advised that Savage Heart is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Ms. Daggerheart advised that they accept possums, squirrels, skunks, bats, and foxes for example. She further states that they accept native wildlife within the regulations with the Department of Natural Resources. Commissioner Gantt wanted to know if there was a plan to replace the fence. Mr. Haralson stated that they were not planning on replacing the fence at this time.

Chairman Grant asked if anyone wished to speak in favor of this application.

Dr. Lauren Johnson, citizen who lives on Lane Circle in LaGrange and works at the Oxbow Meadows Environmental Learning Center, advised that because they are an environmental center that they get frequent phone calls and it has been a great resource to be able to refer people to Savage Heart.

Chairman Grant asked if anyone wished to speak in opposition to this application. There being none, Chairman Grant closed the public hearing at 7:10 p.m. A motion to approve the Application of Jon Haralson, to rezone a 2.73-acre parcel located at 303 Hudson Mill Road, Hamilton, GA from A-1 (Agricultural/Forestry) to C-4 (Highway Commercial); with conditions as recommended by the Planning Commission and Staff as follows: that the property be used for wildlife rehabilitation and conservation efforts as stated on the application; and that the property maintain a visual vegetative buffer along the property line adjacent to all neighboring properties to the extent possible as well as construct or install any privacy fencing around the proposed kennels and existing shed as provided in the submitted plan was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Chairman Grant, and passed unanimously.

B. **FY 2023-2024 Budget Public Hearing I.** Chairman Grant announced that this is the first of two public hearings to receive and consider citizen comments regarding the proposed budget. He further advised that the second public hearing is scheduled to be heard on June 20, 2023, after which the Board will consider adopting the budget during that meeting and, if approved, the budget will go into effect on July 1, 2023.

County Manager Randy Dowling provided a brief overview of the additions and deletions that were made to the proposed budget based upon the budget work sessions that had been conducted.

Chairman Grant opened the public hearing at 7:13 p.m. and asked if there were any comments from those in attendance.

Joe Weldon, County Coroner, addressed the Board and advised that he had requested \$150,000 in the budget for a building and that he now has hard numbers that come in below the \$150,000, that he has a prospective property that could be used for a secure morgue facility, and that he would like the Board to consider putting it back into the budget. Chairman Grant advised that there was mention of adding this item to the upcoming SPLOST.

Curt Pechloff, Fire Chief for Northwest Harris VFD, and stated that there was no truck for the new station that is being built. He advised that starting price for a truck is \$660,000 and additional equipment is \$40,000 and that delivery is two to three years out and that they may need to look at demo trucks. Chief Pechloff advised that the Northwest Harris VFD cannot afford to put a truck up there and

that there are no spare trucks to place up there. Chairman Grant advised that he and Vice-Chair Andrews discussed putting 10 trucks in the upcoming SPLOST.

Richard Hood, citizen who lives on C Street in Pine Mountain Valley, appeared before the Board and stated that the park in Pine Mountain Valley has not been maintained per the agreement and that there is only a single rocking horse. He would like the missing equipment to be replaced and that the park be brought back up to standards and maintained. He would like to see improvements to restroom facilities and landscaping improvements.

Vicki Bridges, citizen who lives on A Street in Pine Mountain Valley, advised that she took a look at the numbers and that Ellerslie Park received so many upgrades and then looked at Pine Mountain Valley Park which is personal to her. She advised that people come to the park throughout the day. She advised that there is nothing there for the kids. Ms. Bridges asked if they could reallocate the approximately \$171,000 funds for pickle ball to go to the Pine Mountain Valley Park for equipment or swingsets.

Matthew Jennings, citizen who lives on Sam Jones Road in Pine Mountain Valley, stated that he has lived all of his 17 years in Pine Mountain Valley. He would like to see a walking trail that might be able to be coated to be safer for wheels - like bikes, roller skating, in-line skating, etc. added to the Pine Mountain Valley Park.

Ronnie Baxley, citizen who lives on C Street in Pine Mountain Valley, stated that the Pine Mountain Valley Park has been neglected. He feels that it is being overlooked.

Neil Locke, citizen who lives on Cottage Drive in Fortson, stated that there is insufficiency of the support for the volunteer fire departments and the significant service of the departments is so minimally supported. He said that they are an essential element and provide vital services to the County. He would like to see additional support provided to them.

Sherrail Jarrett, Chief Registrar, thanked the Board for moving her part time employee to full time. She advised that she would like to get her pollworker, Richard, who is also her son, an increase in his hourly rate from \$10.00 to \$15.00. He provides technical support which saves the County a tremendous amount of money. Richard also has gone to all of the State training and has worked elections since 2003 because she has never had the State. She advised that the Elections Board agrees with the increase and would like the Board to reconsider that request.

Nancy McMichael, citizen who lives on Sam Jones Road in Pine Mountain Valley, stated that she has seen Richard in Election in action and knows that he can do the job and is an asset. She stated that she was around when the Pine Mountain Valley Park when the lease went into effect. She said that it would be nice to have something out there for the kids and is in favor of that. She further stated that Steve Morgan plans to speak about the Agricultural Center and she is supportive of his views on it also.

Ashley Marston, Recreation Director, requested that the Board add \$3,500.00 in additional overtime for staff to be able to set up for the Lodge at Ellerslie when rented. She also said that she supports the Pine Mountain Valley Park and it does need funding if possible.

Steve Morgan, Extension Service, advised that he is in favor of the Agricultural Complex and is the fifth generation to work his farm. He further stated that in reaction to homes being built and people moving in that venues need to be built to accommodate those people and it serves growth and supports those who do AG.

Colby Morneault, citizen who lives on Pierce Road, stated that he would like to see an indoor arena for Cowpunchers. He stated that without an indoor arena muddy conditions can cause injuries to riders and horses. He would also like there to be a place close to home as it costs more to go to other places.

Miranda Neville, citizen who lives on Old River Road in Fortson, stated that she was in favor of an Agricultural Center. She said that they have been to six rodeos this year but that the AG Center could be more than just rodeos and can help support other events to keep them out of the weather.

John Lane, citizen who lives on Hopewell Church Road in Pine Mountain, stated that people come from all over to ride. He supports an indoor arena and that an arena can make money even with no events going on because they can charge an hourly rate for people to utilize the arena to ride.

Richard McKinney, Antioch Fire Chief, appeared before the Board and advised that he was representing the Council of Fire Chiefs. He stated that they requested a 9% increase in stipend, approximately \$39,000, because the cost of doing business has increased so much. He would like the Board to reconsider the requested 9% increase. Additionally, they would like funds allocated for truck replacements. They would like trucks to be replaced at 20 years of service and would like \$250,000 per year to be allocated so that a truck could be obtained every two years. County Manager Randy Dowling advised that an invoice for a ladder truck was received and that the pulleys had to be replaced and the service for the truck was alone \$30,000 of the \$32,000 that has been budgeted. He advised that an increase will need to be made to that line item.

Juliet May, citizen who lives on Hopewell Church Road in Pine Mountain, stated that not everyone can afford to travel to ride and supports the Agricultural Center. She said that they would need to advertise but that it should bring in money.

Nick Lisle, citizen who lives on Hwy 116 in Pine Mountain Valley, stated that he supports an arena and that if they are pushing the criteria in schools that something should be available in the County to back it up.

Chairman Grant closed the public hearing at 8:15 p.m.

Vice-Chair Andrews asked if the Pine Mountain Valley Chamber of Commerce was a viable organization. Jack McClung, citizen who lives on Palmetto Creek Crossing in Hamilton, advised that the organization was still viable and that he would ask the Chamber if they might be willing to give the park to the County.

- C. **Second Reading: Adoption of Proposed Development Impact Fee Ordinance of Harris County, GA.** Chairman Grant announced that this is the second of two public hearings to receive and consider comments for the implementation of an impact fee ordinance. He further stated that this is also the second of two readings for the proposed Development Impact Fee Ordinance of Harris County, Georgia.

Lee Walton, Consultant, provided a brief introduction to the proposed Development Impact Fee Ordinance and that this is the second reading of the ordinance and that prior to the adoption of the ordinance that the Board will need to adopt the Capital Improvements Element (CIE) and provided background information related to the process.

Discussion included that the U.S. Census provides that basis and that the projection included in the CIE assumed that the County will continue to grow based on Census figures; that the DCA approved the CIE; that the CIE is a plan and that expenditure of funds is restricted to be consistent with the CIE; that the CIE reflects the actual trends in growth in Harris County; and that the accounting is strict.

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

Dr. Chris Nelson, who lives on N. St. Andrews Drive in Tucson, AZ, stated that projections are based on a straight line and the time frame was from 2010 through 2019. He advised that the 2020 census was lower than 2019 and people were moving from large urban centers to the suburban fringe. He stated that the time frame of the CIE should coincide with the Comprehensive Plan and that the County could do a CIE in 2024 and it would then go through 2044 and be linked with the Comprehensive Plan and that the CIE be aligned with the goals and aspirations. He recommended that the CIE be linked with the Comprehensive Plan update. He suggested a redo of the impact fee analysis and take a fresh look at the population numbers.

Simon Bloom appeared before the Board and stated that Henry County did not follow the process and that they are a larger County than Harris County. Mr. Bloom stated that his client is willing to pay impact fees if they are done correctly. He requested that the Board compare Mr. Ross's population numbers for other

counties and see if they were accurate.

Charles Ray Sheffield, Mulberry Grove, stated that he is concerned about projections and that no developer wants to pay impact fees but will. He advised if this is in the County's best interest to do it but why not wait until the Comprehensive Plan update and that right now the CIE and Comprehensive Plan do not match.

Chairman Grant closed the public hearing at 9:42 p.m. and advised that they would go to New Business related to the Capital Improvements Element (CIE).

Chairman Grant called the remaining names of individuals who requested to speak and either they had already addressed the Board or no longer wanted to speak.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. **Adoption of the Capital Improvements Element (CIE) as an Amendment to the Harris County Comprehensive Plan.** Chairman Grant introduced the item related to the Adoption of the Capital Improvements Element (CIE). Vice-Chair Susan Andrews requested that this item be tabled to the next meeting on June 20, 2023. County Attorney Russell Britt advised that Item 12 Adoption of the Proposed Development Impact Fee Ordinance would by implication be tabled as well and that Vice-Chair Andrews was invoking her right under the Rules.

7. **COUNTY MANAGER**

- A. **Budget Amendment: Garbage Truck.** Randy Dowling, County Manager, advised that this item is the budget amendment that was discussed during the May 23, 2023 Budget Work Session III and that this item is to ratify the consensus during that work session. The motion to approve Budget Amendment No. 7 in the amount of \$140,000 for the purchase of a new garbage truck to replace the one that was totaled was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews, and passed unanimously.
- B. **Project Updates.** Randy Dowling, County Manager, advised that the Man O'War Trail should be complete in 2-3 weeks and that there will be a ribbon cutting planned.

8. **COUNTY ATTORNEY.**

- A. **Hotel/Motel Agreement between Harris County, GA and the Harris County Chamber of Commerce.** County Attorney Russell Britt advised that the agreement being considered includes the revisions discussed during the May 18, 2023 Planning Retreat. The motion to approve the Hotel/Motel Agreement between Harris County, GA and the Harris County Chamber of Commerce was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously.
- B. **Revert Old Mountain Hill School back to Harris County Board of Education.** County Attorney Russell Britt advised that the attached Quitclaim will revert ownership of the Old Mountain Hill School back to the Harris County Board of Education. The motion to approve the Quitclaim Deed and revert ownership of the Old Mountain Hill School back to the Harris County Board of Education was made by Commissioner Irions, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.
- C. **Distribution Tree Trim / Clearing Easement with Georgia Power Company.** The motion to approve the Distribution Tree Trim / Clearing Easement with Georgia Power was made by Commissioner Irions, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews, and passed unanimously.

Russell Britt, County Attorney, said that he had no further business to bring before the Board this evening.

9. **OTHER**

A. **Consideration of canceling the July 5, 2023 Regular Meeting.** The motion to cancel the July 5, 2023 Regular Meeting was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously.

10. **ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:57 p.m.

Rob Grant, Chairman

Attest:

Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk