

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

May 18, 2023

5:30 p.m.

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

Commissioners Present: Rob Grant, Susan Andrews, Scott Lightsey, Greg Gantt, Bobby Irions. Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; Monty Davis, E911/EMA Director; Melissa Price, E911/EMA Deputy Director; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk. Also Present: Vance Smith, Harris County Chamber of Commerce President & CEO; Gloria Boyer, Harris County Chamber of Commerce Tourism & Event Manager; and Conner Olds, Harris County Chamber of Commerce Operations Coordinator.

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Grant called the meeting to order.

Hotel/Motel Tax Agreement Discussion/Renegotiation.

Gloria Boyer, Tourism & Event Manager from the Harris County Chamber of Commerce, made a presentation to the Board about the ExploreHCGA.com website and future plans; that the funds are reinvested into advertising of Harris County; that video views and engagement on social media have increased; that branded merchandise that is available for sale in person and on the website; discussed wayfinding signage; trail artwork; advertising plans; the difference between TCT (Tourism, Conventions, and Trade Shows) and TPD (Tourism Product Development); that the TPD is now in effect since the County is now at 8%; creating a visual display in the Visitors Center; and a trail head pavilion. The Harris County Chamber of Commerce is proposing that 6.5% of the Hotel/Motel tax go to the Harris County Chamber of Commerce and that Harris County retains 1.5%. Discussion included that the Harris County Chamber of Commerce proposal in a good one; that thoughts would be different if the County had an economic issue; that tourism is the primary local industry; that the purpose of the tax funds should be for tourism; that all funds generated by FDR Park is spent on FDR Park; and that people come to Harris County to visit, spend money, and return to their homes. County Manager Randy Dowling advised that an amended agreement will be brought to the Board for their consideration and approval. The consensus of the Board of Commissioners was that the Harris County Chamber of Commerce receives 6.5% of the Hotel/Motel tax and Harris County receives 1.5% of the Hotel/Motel tax effective on July 1, 2023.

911 Radio System Improvements.

Chairman Rob Grant provided background information on the 911 Radio System Improvements item to be discussed. Monty Davis, E911/EMA Director, and Melissa Price, E911/EMA Deputy Director, were in attendance in order to answer any questions and provide information to the Board. Mr. Davis informed the Board that he had talked with Dean Ginn, Dean's Two-Way, and was advised that with the Tetra system that we could only gain another 2% in coverage, that we could have either a combined system or switch to an 800 MHz system, and that either type of system will be costly. Mr. Davis stated that it was wiser to go with the 800 MHz option, that the 800 MHz system should provide 95% coverage, and that we will need to have additional towers regardless of which system is chosen. Commissioner Lightsey said that Dean Ginn has been test-driving the 800 MHz LTE radios. Commissioner Irions said that he has talked to a number of people; that we have to consider our topography, believes that the 800MHz with LTE capabilities would be what to look at, that end users were provided some radios to test out, that the radios that were tested had coverage in areas that we don't have coverage in right now, that coverage would be layered due to the dual LTE, that they would work better even without towers, and that inside radio coverage could be increased with WIFI. Discussion included that we are at best at 82% coverage but not in all areas; that we would like to be at 96-98%; that there are possible grants for the P25 standard; that a consultant is needed to advise what the options are; that after responses were received that they would be evaluated, negotiated, and the consultant would supervise construction; and that the end game would be to own our own system. The consensus of the Board was to go with a P25 standard radio system. County Manager Randy Dowling advised that someone needs to design the system, bid it out, receive the responses, evaluate the responses, negotiate a contract, and supervise the construction of the network. The consensus of the Board of Commissioners was to complete an RFP to hire a consultant to assist with the design and construction of a P25 standard radio system network. The Board advised that the radio system is a priority over the park and road/bridge projects that need to be bid out.

Use of the Old Mountain Hill School Building.

Chairman Rob Grant introduced the item for discussion related to the Old Mountain Hill School Building. Discussion included the repairs that need to be made to the air conditioning units and the roof. Chairman Grant has talked with Superintendent Couch about the building. The school is only being used by the County as a polling location. The building is used by the school district occasionally for award ceremonies. Vice-Chair Andrews provided some history related to the old building and when the new school was built. The consensus of the Board of Commissioners

was to implement Paragraph E to revert the Old Mountain Hill School Building back to the Board of Education.

ADJOURNMENT. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.