

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION**

June 18, 2024
6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Rob Grant, Susan Andrews, Greg Gantt, Scott Lightsey, Bobby Irions. Staff Present: Russell Britt, County Attorney; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk; Elizabeth Barfield, Chief Financial Officer.

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 28, 2024 Budget Work Session IV and the June 4, 2024 Regular Session was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.

4. **APPEARANCE OF CITIZENS**

A. **Connie Guy - Board Not Listening to Citizens**. Connie Guy, citizen who lives on Bugg Road, addressed the Board and advised that well run meetings are the result of proper planning; that the information needs to be available to the public; that all items that are expected to be considered should be advertised; that an amended agenda posted on the afternoon of the Planning Session and added two items; that although an update on the audit was planned, an update on the financials were not included; that passing a budget for the upcoming fiscal year without financials for the current year is ill-advised; that she wants the Board to listen to the people who show up for items including the Agricultural Complex; that she does not want the AG Center even if in phases; that the Commissioners should consider outside, professional assistance to the Tax Assessor's office and not a former employee; and that she would like the Board to provide Mr. Furin a response related to water bill late fees.

B. **Jim Furin - U.S. Postal Service and Water Bill Late Fees**. Jim Furin, citizen who lives on West Dogwood Lane, addressed the Board and stated that the citizens are the Board's neighbors; that this is a problem with the U.S. Postal Service; that he has also had problems with other bills that have been mailed but those companies waived the late fee; that when he asks "neighbors" to waive the late fees that they don't receive an answer; that they can waive the late fees; and that he would like the Board to consider suspending late fees for the months of March, April, and perhaps May and June for those citizens that have paid their bill on time since the beginning of January of 2024 and maybe those that have had a problem financially as well.

5. **OLD BUSINESS**

A. **Application of Trademark Quality Homes, to rezone 160.66 acres, located on Map 055, Parcel 011B, Land Lot 37, Land District 3rd; Rezoning from A-1 (Agricultural/Forestry) to R-R (Rural Residential); Current use is vacant farmland; proposed use is for a 5+ acre lot subdivision; property located on GA Hwy 18 (1200' west of the split of GA Hwy 18 and Hopewell Church Road) Pine Mountain, GA.** Chairman Grant introduced the item, provided information related to options available because the previous motion to approve with conditions did not pass, and stated that two individuals had signed up to speak. County Attorney Russell Britt advised that per the Local Rules of Order that the Public Hearing had already been held and closed and that there isn't an opportunity for public comment.

A motion to deny the Application of Trademark Quality Homes, to rezone 160.66 acres, located on Map 055, Parcel 011B, Land Lot 37, Land District 3rd; Rezoning from A-1 (Agricultural/Forestry) to R-R (Rural Residential); property located on GA Hwy 18 (1200' west of the split of GA Hwy 18 and Hopewell Church Road) Pine Mountain, GA was made by Vice Chair Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Irions, and failed with two in favor (Andrews, Irions), and three opposed (Grant, Gantt, Lightsey).

A motion to approve the Application of Trademark Quality Homes, to rezone 160.66 acres, located on Map 055, Parcel 011B, Land Lot 37, Land District 3rd; Rezoning from A-1 (Agricultural/Forestry) to R-R (Rural Residential); property located on GA Hwy 18 (1200' west of the split of GA Hwy 18 and Hopewell Church Road) Pine Mountain, GA with the staff recommendations that the property be used for large lot residential development and recommended 75' vegetative buffer along property excluding highway frontage and with the recommendation of the Planning Commission that there be no lighting by the developer/builder was made by Commissioner Gantt and was seconded by Chairman Grant. Chairman Grant stated that the developer still plans to put in a turning lane; that they will abide by what the conditions are; and that this may be the best use of this property being rural residential. The motion passed with three in favor (Grant, Gantt, Lightsey), and two opposed (Andrews, Irions).

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. **Amendment to the Hotel/Motel Agreement between Harris County, GA and the Harris County Chamber of Commerce.** A motion to approve the Amendment to the Hotel/Motel Agreement between Harris County, GA and the Harris County Chamber of Commerce was made by Commissioner Lightsey, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews, and passed unanimously.
- B. **Memorandums of Agreement between the Harris County Department of Public Health and Harris County Board of Commissioners.** A motion to approve the Memorandums of Agreement between the Harris County Department of Public Health and Harris County Board of Commissioners was made by Commissioner Gantt, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.
7. **COUNTY ATTORNEY.** County Attorney Russell Britt stated that he does not have the need to executive session. He did advised that a proposed contract has been received and asks that the Board consider authorizing the Chairman to execute the contract. A motion to authorize the Chairman to execute the Memorandum of Agreement with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government for the County Manager Executive Search was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously.
8. **COUNTY MANAGER.** County Clerk Andrea Dzioba advised that a preliminary report was expected from Carl Vinson related to the salary study but that they advised that only received six responses out of the fifteen that they requested from other municipalities. She said that they wanted through the end of July to provide the preliminary report and that she would be following up with them on Thursday. Additionally, Ms. Dzioba informed the Board that meetings are still being held regularly related to the Public Works building project; that the next meeting was next Tuesday on site; and that the project seems to be moving along for completion in the Fall.

Chairman Grant called a brief recess at 6:55 p.m. until the Public Hearing at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Grant called the meeting back into order at 7:00 p.m.

9. **PUBLIC HEARING AT 7:00 p.m.**

- A. **FY 2024-2025 Budget Public Hearing II.** Chairman Grant advised that the Board conducted four budget work sessions to review and discuss the proposed budget with management and staff; that the first Budget Public Hearing was held on June 4, 2024; and that the second Budget Public Hearing will be held this evening. Chairman Grant provided clarification related to the \$153,000 for pothole patching and stated that those funds were moved to go towards a dump truck for the following year and to lease paving and grading equipment and to buy a tack wagon. Chairman Grant called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked if there was anyone that would like to speak.

Connie Guy, citizen who lives on Bugg Road, addressed the Board and stated that “unforced errors by the Board continue to cost the taxpayers;” that professional legal fees in the upcoming budget is for \$150,000 but is that unrealistic based upon recent expenditures; that the Harris County Chamber of Commerce made a presentation to the Board of Commissioners and that the funds now being provided to the Harris County Chamber of Commerce reduces revenues; that the severance being paid to the former County Manager and the funds budgeted for the new County Manager are a “tax increase;” that funds could have been used to

pay for other things that would have lasted for years; that the Board needs to be serious about economizing; and that the Board doesn't need to be "all things to all people."

Brian McKeen, citizen who lives on O'Neal Road, addressed the Board and stated that the Board acts like they are spending someone else's money; that he would like them to spend money like it is their own money; that parks are a sign of a healthy county; that the County is rural but don't need to spend \$6 million towards an Agricultural Complex; that citizens want the Board to spend "like it is coming out of your own pocket;" that the Board should be good stewards of the money; that they should seek the most economical way to spend County funds; and that the Board needs to focus on needs not wants.

Chairman Grant closed the public hearing at 7:13 p.m.

- B. **FY 2024-2025 Budget Adoption.** A motion to approve the FY 2024-2025 budget as presented with the noted changes as discussed and to adopt the Adoption Resolution regarding same was made by Commissioner Gantt and seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews.

Chairman Grant stated that he does not think that the Board needs to include \$12,000.00 for a consultant and, if it is included, then it should be removed. He further stated that he understands why the budget is so large but disagrees with paying for a consultant. Additionally, Chairman Grant does not think that they should raise the water rates.

Commissioner Irions stated that he also has an issue with the water rates and that we may need to look into them further. Commissioner Irions stated that we need to be able to make the rollback calculations without utilizing a consultant.

Vice-Chair Andrews said that the water rates were determined by the rate study and that is the reasoning behind it, and that Water Works makes money so that they can make repairs and improvements and that the rate increases are for a long-term solution. Vice-Chair Andrews said that the County cannot avoid increasing the water rates over the next five years or the County will be unable to make needed repairs and improvements.

A motion to amend his motion to remove the \$12,000 for a consultant and to change the water rate fee schedules to change the following line items under the proposed "Monthly Water Usage Rates" as noted below with all other items in the proposed fee schedule remaining the same:

Residential - Minimum: \$14.96 for 0-1,000 gallons
Tier 2: \$7.60/1,000 gallons for 10,000+ gallons

Commercial and Multi-Family- Minimum: \$35.77 for 0-1,000 gallons
Tier 2: \$8.31/1,000 gallons for 10,000+gallons

Industrial - Tier 1: \$5.08/1,000 gallons

was made by Commissioner Gantt, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.

The amended motion to approve the FY 2024-2025 budget as amended and to adopt the Adoption Resolution regarding same 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 7:43 p.m.

Rob Grant, Chairman

Attest:

Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk