

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

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

June 11, 2024

5:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Rob Grant, Susan Andrews (arrived at 5:02 p.m.), Scott Lightsey, Greg Gantt, Bobby Irions. Staff Present: Russell Britt, County Attorney (arrived 5:52 p.m.); Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk; Kris Summerall, Payroll and Benefits Specialist. Also Present: Vance Smith, Gloria Boyer and Conner Olds of the Harris County Chamber of Commerce.

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Grant called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Hotel/Motel Tax Agreement Discussion.

Vance Smith, President & CEO; Gloria Boyer, Tourism & Event Manager; and Conner Olds, Operations from the Harris County Chamber of Commerce, made a presentation to the Board about the ExploreHCGA.com website, what they have been working on, and future plans; that they would like to add Google Business ads; that they are obtaining new photographs; that they will be adding postcards to merchandise that is being sold at their office and online; that there is a focus on Man O'War Trail branding; that they would like to add helicopters at next year's Airport Open House; that next year there will be a focus on artwork on the Trail and Trailhead improvements; that they would like to expand office hours to weekends as well; and that they will have a monthly "Chamber Today" on WRBL. Discussion included that the word has gotten around and the Man O'War Trail logo is being recognized and that the Harris County Chamber of Commerce is the best place for the hotel/motel tax funds. The consensus of the Board of Commissioners was that the Harris County Chamber of Commerce receives 8% of the Hotel/Motel tax effective in the FY 2025; that the contract amendment will be considered at the next regular meeting; and that the Harris County Chamber of Commerce will send a copy of the full presentation.

Update on Health Care Upon Early Retirement and Retirement Plan Inquiries.

Chairman Grant introduced the item and stated that he requested that this item be included on the agenda so that the Board could receive some updates. Kris Summerall, Payroll and Benefits Specialist informed the Board that she has compiled information related to a lot of the questions that have been asked about the retirement plan and that she has provided same in the handout. Discussion included that an employee cannot retire and start drawing their retirement while continuing to work; that some employees that are eligible to retire are concerned that their beneficiary and retirement payout choices can't be made while employed; that four employees have taken the retirement with the health insurance bridge; and that the \$100,000 death benefit is a formula and is capped at a maximum of \$100,000. Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk, and Kris Summerall, Payroll and Benefits Specialist, explained some of the differences between the plans and that any retirement has to be at the normal retirement age.

Consultant Contract - Digest Preparation and Millage Rate/Rollback Calculations.

Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk, advised that the Tax Assessor's office and Tax Commissioner's office is supposed to assist in providing the Tax Digest and calculating the millage rate information; that some other counties have their finance departments assist with reviewing the information; that there have been discussions with the Chief Appraiser and Tax Commissioner about possibly utilizing the former Chief Appraiser as a consultant to assist with the Digest and millage/rollback rate; that the desire is to work with him as a consultant so that in the future it would be unnecessary; that he would have to be under a different department and at a lesser hourly rate than when he left; and that the goal is to be able to transition to again handling the calculations independently. Andrea Dzioba stated that the amount that Mr. Morris asked for was \$75.00 per hour which is less than what his hourly rate was when he left. Further discussion included that more than one person would need to be involved in learning the process; that the digest and tax rate calculation is not a full time job for the entire year; and that it would be beneficial for multiple people to be part of the process. The consensus of the Board was to consider the inclusion of funds in the budget and to provide a draft contract at the meeting on July 16th for a consultant for this year.

FY 2023 Audit Update. Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk, advised that the County is on track to file the audit on time within the extension deadline which is June 30th; that the financial statement will be provided to the Board at that time; and that the formal presentation of the audit will be at the meeting on July 16th.

Five-Year Road and Bridge Master Plan.

Chairman Rob Grant advised that the Board had decided through the budget process to not outsource the Five-Year Road and Bridge Master Plan but to rely on the Public Works Director Brian Griffith to handle that process.

Agricultural Complex.

Chairman Grant introduced the item related to the Agricultural Complex and planned to revisit placing a cover over the existing arena for \$2.5 million. Vice-Chair Andrews said that when the time comes that she would hate for the County to spend the money without looking at items that would be necessary such as ventilation under the roof, a sound system, and bleachers since those items would cost more to retrofit after the fact; that there would be a lot of water around the building during rainy times without there being any drainage; that retrofitting these items would cost more later than putting them in initially; that they would then need to add on later; that they will have to see how the SPLOST 2025 funds come in before any hard and fast decisions are made; that the arena in the site plan was \$5.9 million which is a projected future cost; and that restrooms, sound system, bleachers, ventilation, and arena dirt was all included in the \$5.9 million figure.

911 Radio System.

Chairman Rob Grant stated that the Committee had not yet picked a vendor yet. Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk, stated that tomorrow is the “best and final;” and that users have been using the “Pinpoint” app to test signals in areas around the County. Ms. Dzioba asked the Board what they would like to see related to the radio system and stated that they will receive a recommendation, a summary of responses, a Powerpoint, and an evaluation of the pros and cons. Discussion included whether the proposals could include phases or an overlap; that the proposals do utilize the sites that the County already uses; and that the proposals are very detailed.

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

RECESS FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION. Chairman Grant made the motion to go into Executive Session for personnel and litigation at 6:29 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lightsey and Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously.

RESUME PLANNING SESSION. Commissioner Irions made the motion to resume the Planning Session at 7:48 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gantt, and passed unanimously

ADJOURNMENT. The Planning Session adjourned at 7:49 p.m.