

**JOINT MEETING OF THE HARRIS COUNTY BOARD
OF COMMISSIONERS AND THE HARRIS COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Harris County School District, Professional Learning Lab
757 Carver Circle, Hamilton, GA 31811
Wednesday, September 25, 2025
5:00 p.m.

In attendance from the Board of Education: Justin Finney, Superintendent; Bridgett Oliver, District 2 Board Member; Garnett Ray III, District 3 Chair; Scott Greene, District 4 Board Member; Harry Proctor, District 5 Board Member; Steve Goodnoe, District 6 Super District Vice-Chair; Monica Sparks, District 7 Super District Board Member.

In attendance from Harris County Board of Commissioners: Rob Grant, District 2 Chair; Susan Andrews, District 5 Vice-Chair; Greg Gantt, District 3; Scott Lightsey, District 1; Bobby Irions, District 4. Staff Present: Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk; Elizabeth Barfield, Chief Financial Officer; Shalee Mallory, Chief Appraiser; Greg Panzer, Economic Development Director.

CALL TO ORDER. Garnett Ray, III, Chair called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

AGENDA APPROVAL. Garnett Ray, III, Chair recommended that the Harris County Board of Education review and approve the September 25, 2024 Joint Meeting agenda as presented. A motion to approve the September 25, 2024 Joint Meeting agenda was made by Mr. Greene - District 4, seconded by Mrs. Oliver - District 2, and passed unanimously.

Dr. Justin Finney welcomed everyone to the joint meeting and introduced the first item of discussion and stated that Shalee Mallory, Chief Appraiser, will provide an overview of House Bill 581 and how it affects both Boards.

HOUSE BILL 581. Shalee Mallory, Chief Appraiser, provided an overview of House Bill 581 and stated that it would create a floating exemption; that their office would still have to maintain a fair market value of each property; that House Bill 581 would only pertain to properties with a homestead exemption; and that a little under 50% of properties in Harris County are homesteaded. Discussion included that they would no longer take advantage of market values; that they would either have to use reserves or change the millage rate or reduce spending; that this House Bill is in effect a tax freeze; that the Board of Education and Board of Commissioners can opt out but that the Legislators can opt the Board of Commissioners back in; that there is an unknown long-term effect on budgets; that the Board of Commissioners could consider bringing an additional 0.5 to 1% sales tax to the voters; that Harris County was the only county in a 16-county region that voted “no” on the TSPLOST but that Harris County still has the benefit based upon the positive vote of the region; that the governing bodies only get one opportunity to opt in or opt out; that there is no way to predict what market values will be in the future; that House Bill will be on the ballot in November and will go into effect on January 1st; and that if it passes that timelines to determine millage rates would need to be calculated much earlier than currently.

HARRIS COUNTY E911 RADIO SYSTEM. Chairman Rob Grant stated that the County’s radio system is antiquated; that we are the only county using the Tetra system; that the County can’t currently communicate outside agencies; that the County is working with bond counsel to determine the best way to finance the new system; that the school system eventually would like to utilize the County system; that the County will need to build two new tower sites and place a taller pole in Pine Mountain; that the biggest fear is that without an updated system that if there is a large incident that there could be chaos; that there was a recent chase in which local and state agencies could not communicate directly via radios; and that the County wanted to make sure that the Board of Education had the information related to the proposed project. Dr. Finney stated that they would like to consider using the system in the future and that they would like to have the opportunity to work together; that they will have time to plan budgetarily; and that it is appealing to have one system that would allow all parties to communicate.

HARRIS COUNTY GROWTH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. Chairman Rob Grant introduced Greg Panzer, Economic Development Director. Chairman Grant stated that Mr. Panzer, Commissioner Gantt and himself went to the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) meeting that morning and to let him know if anyone from the school system would like to be a part of the RVRC economic development strategy committee. Chairman Grant will provide the email containing information about the committee to Dr. Finney. Chairman Grant discussed the current growth and future possible growth in the Northwest Harris Business Park and that some of the tax abatements will be expiring. Discussion included that it is expected that commercial growth would be likely along I-185 at the County's four exits; that there isn't any water or sewer along that stretch except for at Exit 19; that there has been previous discussion about construction of a wastewater treatment plant and the cost thereof; that there is already water and sewer in the Northwest Harris Business Park; and that the County is currently constructing a water tower in the Exit 19 area. Mr. Panzer advised that he started on July 8th and that he has been meeting with County departments, businesses and partners to obtain information and feedback from them about what their vision and expectation for economic development is. He further stated that he has made about fifty-five contacts and that economic development is not just industrial development - that he will promote not only the business parks but also working with partners like the Chamber and school system to encourage a pro-business atmosphere. Additionally, he said that he will also help support existing businesses and industry and help them to grow and be successful. Mr. Ray advised that it would help them if the school district was more involved in new zoning cases in the beginning of the process so that they can plan accordingly. Chairman Grant said that Community Development could send information to the school district when a rezoning is being considered.

HARRIS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (HARRIS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD). Chairman Grant advised that the Development Authority does not deal with rezonings. He has inquired of the County Attorney how an individual from the school district could be added as a member of the Authority even if only as a non-voting member.

AMENDMENT TO INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROPERTY USE AGREEMENT. Dr. Finney stated that the Board of Commissioners would like to utilize additional space for storage at the same location as their Elections and other storage is currently. Chairman Grant stated that any rooms that they could provide for storage would be greatly appreciated.

A brief project update was provided by Chairman Grant and Chair Ray. The brief discussion involved continued joint communications during inclement weather; the new Public Works facility in the Hamilton Business Park; the Courthouse renovation; the Science and Technology Center (STC) building expansion; the transportation to that location via Tiger Transit; that they have about 800 kids a days going through the STC; that they have a new health occupation pathway in place; that they have heavy equipment operator courses provided there also; and that the school district is getting a lot of use out of their inside sports facility.

ADJOURNMENT. A motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Oliver - District 2, seconded by Mr. Goodnoe - District 6, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:36 p.m.