

HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION

September 17, 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; Melissa Price, E911/EMA Director. Consultants: Dominick Acuri from Televate; Roger Murray, Bond Counsel from Murray Barnes Finister LLP; and Bryan Huskey, Managing Director from Stifel.

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. Commissioner Lightsey asked that everyone keep in prayer the family of Chris Chalmers, an employee who passed away.
3. **MINUTES** The motion to approve the minutes of the September 3, 2024 Regular Session was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Commissioners Irions and Lightsey, and passed unanimously.
4. **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. **Appointment to the Planning Commission.** Chairman Grant advised the Board that Addis Bugg has resigned from his position on the Planning Commissioner due to a new work situation and that his recommendation for this position is Ellie Marlowe Mosby.

A motion to approve the appointment of Ellie Marlowe Mosby to the Planning Commission to complete the unexpired term that ends December 31, 2027 was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Commissioner Gantt, and passed unanimously.

- B. **GDOT Functional Classification Status of a Section of SR 85/US 27AL.** Chairman Grant advised that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) intends to request approval from the Deferral Highway Administration (FHWA) to revise the Functional Classification status of an approximately 3.5-mile section of SR 85/US 27AL in Muscogee and Harris Counties and that the Functional Classification status should not affect the speed limit.

A motion to accept the recommended Functional Class revision was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously.

- C. **Bid Award: 911 Radio System.** Chairman Grant introduced the item related to the proposed bid award for a P25 standard 911 radio system. He advised that four proposals were received, and all four respondents were sent clarifying questions and asked to provide an in-person presentation to the radio end users. Chairman Grant stated that in-person presentations were conducted on May 20, and May 21, 2024 and that following a detailed evaluation of the proposed solutions, responses, and presentation, that the group of end users unanimously selected Williams Communications as the preferred supplier.

Melissa Price, E911/EMA Director, addressed the Board and stated that Televate compiled the request for proposals with input from the end users related to their wants and needs; that all end users were invited to evaluate the information and options; that Williams Communications has partnered with Dean's Two-Way to provide a local presence; that there are areas in the County that they have absolutely no coverage; that there are areas that are difficult for communication, like the area that recently had a car chase by law enforcement that ended at Kings Gap and the area along SR 103; and that there is nothing worse than there being a situation in which there is a first responder that they can't talk to. She believes that they have "come up" with the best option for the County.

Chairman Grant informed the Board that his son was the Georgia State Patrolman involved with the car chase and that if there is a significant event that law enforcement entities will have difficulty talking to each other.

Dominick Acuri with Televate provided the Board with a summary of the process and their findings. He said that they were engaged to create an RFP for a Project 25 radio system which is a standard for public safety communications. Mr. Acuri explained how specific requirements were identified related to mobile coverage, portable coverage, coverage outside and inside of structures and extra signal needed for those that go inside of buildings. He discussed radio signal coverage and that there are eight (8) tower sites within the County; that they were able to identify four additional tower sites (two towers are co-located and two towers would be new builds at the Antioch Fire Station and the water tank on 315) that would provide additional coverage in areas where there are currently no signals; that new towers can be a revenue opportunity; that a new tower would be built at the Pine Mountain site to add to the height of the current pole plus there would be the two new towers; that some towers currently used are owned by Dean's Two-Way and some are owned by a utility; that they are committed to a level of coverage; that they evaluated in detail all of the proposals provided; that they have a detailed coverage test procedure to ensure a guaranteed level of coverage; that the current system is a public utility system not Project 5; and that the current system has limited operability.

Dean Ginn, Dean's Two-Way, advised that Diverse has a location in West Point and that they would be interested in the County's Pine Mountain site which will save the County rent at West Point; that the standard term is five years with multiple renewal options; that the County would enter into a contract with Diverse and that they are willing to work with the County; that the other sites are Crown Castle, SBA, and American Tower; that their business is to lease tower space for vertical assets; and that he will assist in any negotiations that need to be made related to contracts, if not already completed.

Discussion included that coverage under the new system would be 95% and 97% at some levels; that Televate has a tool that can predict what type of coverage can be expected based upon design; that the vendor is committed to the level of coverage in their proposal; that only one county out of 159 in Georgia use our current Tetra system and that is Harris County; that the County has long term contracts for the towers used now; that if the County moves forward with the proposal that additional negotiations will be held with Williams Communications; that JCV Kenwood's maintenance assistance would be approximately two hours away; that Williams has negotiated with L3 Harris for radios; that the County will be getting products and radios that are the recommended standard for public safety and it is expected that P25 will be around for a long time and that the radios will support LTE as well; that cellular communications are driven by commercial needs and they move quicker than public safety updates to technology; that new features like standard for location (GPS) for the radios are slowly being standardized within Project 25; that the 10-year "maintenance" schedule is based on normal costs for preventative maintenance and correct any system issues; and that the Board has been discussing and needing a new radio system since 2001 during which time there have been four County Managers, two attorneys, and approximately fifteen Commissioners; that in 2017 that a standalone system would have been about \$9.9 million.

Bill Czukur, citizen who lives at 402 Preston Ct and an end user group representative of the volunteer fire departments, addressed the Board and said that he wanted to thank the Commissioners, the group of end users, E911/EMA Director Melissa Price for leading them and being the point of contact, the vendors, the consultants, Chief Chris Walden of the Harris County Sheriff's Office, EMS Director Bucky Searcy and EMS Supervisor Dallas, Hamilton Police Chief Weiss, Waverly Hall Police Chief Durham, Information Technology Director Alex Santiago, and Dominick Acuri from Televate. Mr. Czukur stated that Dominick Acuri kept them all on the proper path and made sure they received a proposed radio system that would cover the needs of the County. Mr. Czukur said that he realizes that this radio system is an enormous expenditure but that it is greatly needed for public safety first responders and the citizens; that it would be nice to find a way to save money but this integral part of the infrastructure is not a "place to cut corners;" that if the system were phased in, that it would not provide the coverage that they need; that the Board this evening will make

the decision; that he requests that the Board vote on the issue in its entirety; and that the group of end users has done their due diligence.

Chairman Grant stated that this is the first time all five cities and all entities agree that this is something that we all need to do together to do this for the 36,000 citizens in Harris County.

Vice-Chair Andrews discussed that the Board has been provided with the amortization schedules for several different options for financing the project; that any debt incurred for the radio system would need to be budgeted each year in the budget; that reserves may not continue to grow but they can use some of the reserve since right now it is healthy; and that the Board needs to consider the possibility of HB 581 passing in the fall which may limit revenues.

Roger Murray, Bond Counsel from Murray Barnes Finister LLP, and Bryan Huskey, Managing Director from Stifel, appeared before the Board to provide information related to possible financing. Mr. Huskey advised that he ran several schedules to help determine the repayment stream with what the Board wants to accomplish. Mr. Huskey reviewed the different schedules and down payment options; that they propose a publically issued bond and in November real numbers can be provided; that the County will need a new bond rating; that they assume it will be Aa2 rating and that the rating may be better but that they wanted to be conservative with their estimates; that there would be a 10-year call provision; that the debt could be paid off or refinanced for a lower rate at that time; that there are ways to utilize current or future SPLOST funds to repay debt; and that if they were authorized to proceed they would complete needed paperwork and would be able to provide direction in approximately mid-October.

Chief Finance Director Elizabeth Barfield, in response to questions from the Board, advised that there should not be any issues with providing a down payment on the project and that she is comfortable with the scenarios being discussed.

Continued discussion included that the Board does not want to extend debt past the expected life of the assets; that a 30-year term is too long and a 10-year term is too short; that a 15-year term seems to be the correct amount of time; that the Community Center will be paid off in 2029; and that the structure of financing the debt does not have to be decided this evening.

A motion to award the bid to Williams Communications and authorize the Chairman and/or County Clerk to execute the needed documents to begin the project was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.

5. **COUNTY MANAGER.** County Clerk Andrea Dzioba provided an update related to the updated document provided to the Board that included current SPLOST collections, an increase in Water Works customers, and Georgia Fund One interest. Ms. Dzioba further provided the following project updates:

The Public Works Facility is still progressing, sheet rock is up, HVAC has been delivered, ceilings are being worked on, and the building is still on track to be completed in November.

The new mowers for Public Works have been purchased and received; that the County is now split into two sections for mowing; that the paving equipment has been ordered and delivery is expected in December; that the new Tack Wagon has been purchased and received and already put into use; and that Public Works has their new vehicle, a pick up truck, that can haul equipment.

Animal Control has received their new pick up also - a Ford F-150.

The sign has been ordered for the EMS/Antioch VFD location and it will be approximately 6-7 weeks before production.

E911 has received their new vehicle - a 2024 Chevy Silverado - and it came in at \$43,950 which is under the budgeted amount of \$50,000.

The Courthouse renovations are continuing in the Clerk of Court offices and sheetrock has been completed, ceiling grids are going in, flooring is beginning, an inspection

should be occurring this week, and that their offices should be complete by October 11th and then renovations will begin on the 3rd floor.

A structural engineer came out to inspect the Transfer Station due to the fire and a report should be provided in 7-10 days related to the structure's steel beams.

Water Works has received three new vehicles - two Ford F-150s and one Ford Explorer.

The Community Center is working on a concept plan to be developed for the property adjacent to the Center which will include pickleball courts, a multi-purpose field, and playground and is expected to be complete in about 60 days.

The new playground for the Pine Mountain Valley Park has been ordered and should be installed in December.

Moultrie Park Field #7 improvements are moving forward, the goal posts that have been ordered, and football field will be prepped after girls' flag football has concluded.

A new replacement tractor for Moultrie Park has been received. Additionally, three ATVs and a new vehicle have been ordered.

The disc golf course at Ellerslie Park is complete including all signage except for the map of the course that will be installed at a kiosk. A date and time for a ribbon cutting will be determined.

CVIOG is still reviewing the information that was sent to them on August 21st and they advised that they will reach out once their review is complete.

A committee at Carl Vinson is reviewing applications for the County Manager position and they should be providing information with applicants broken into three tiers to the Board by the end of the month.

Chairman Grant discussed the upcoming joint meeting with the Harris County Board of Education and next month's Planning Session and Legislative Dinner.

6. **COUNTY ATTORNEY.** Russell Britt, County Attorney, stated that he did not have any additional business to come before the Board this evening.
7. **ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Lightsey, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews and Commissioner Gantt, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Rob Grant, Chairman

Attest:

Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk