

HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Commission Chamber, Room 215, Harris County Courthouse
REGULAR SESSION
December 2, 2025
6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Rob Grant, Susan Andrews, Greg Gantt, Scott Lightsey, Bobby Irions. Staff Present: Clark Harrell, County Manager; Russell Britt, County Attorney; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk; Brian Williams, Community Development Director.

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 November 4, 2025 Regular Session was made by Commissioner Lightsey, seconded by Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously.
4. **NEW BUSINESS**
 - A. **Harris County Airport Land Lease Process.** Chairman Grant stated that the Airport Committee is recommending that the Board consider approving the Harris County Airport Land Lease Process so that consistent procedures are established for any future proposals. A motion to approve the Harris County Airport Land Lease Process was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews, and passed unanimously.
5. **COUNTY MANAGER.**
 - A. **County Manager Correspondence.** County Manager Clark Harrell advised that he is continuing to work with GDOT and TIA on the Mountain Hill Road realignment, has received positive feedback, and hopes that they will help with funding. Additionally, he stated that we are still working on the changeover to ADP.

In response to questions, Mr. Harrell stated that the next phase of the Man O'War Trail is on track; that \$5 million is allocated; that we will have to make the payments in phases and then get reimbursed; and that the engineer is working towards a notice to proceed; and that he believes that the audit for FY 2025 will be on time.

6. **COUNTY ATTORNEY.**

County Attorney Russell Britt stated that he did not have any business to come before the Board this evening.

Chairman Grant recessed the meeting at 6:35 p.m. until the 7:00 p.m. public hearing.

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

7. **PUBLIC HEARINGS AT 7:00 P.M.**

- A. **Application of Will White, to rezone 134.93 acres of a 135.08-acre parcel, located on Map 047, Parcel 031, Land Lot 80, Land District 18th; Rezoning from R-1 (Low Density Residential) to R-2 (Medium Density Residential); Current use is wooded property; proposed use is for a residential subdivision; property located near the intersection of Veterans Parkway and Grey Rock Road, Midland, GA.**

Chairman Grant called the Public hearing to order at 7:00 p.m. and introduced the proposed application. Anthony Slaughter, P.E. with Moon Meeks & Associates, Inc. appeared before the Commission as a representative for the Applicant to provide information and respond to questions. Mr. Slaughter stated that they are the engineering firm hired by the owner; that a couple of Board of Commissioners members have posted on social media about this application; that there is no commercial development and no duplexes; that all lots would be single family; that they want the same opportunity as residents and subdivisions in the area that are less than 2 acres; that they could have 67 lots under R-1 and wants 86 lots under R-2; that they are not asking for a 30% increase; that with sanitary sewer that they don't have to worry about soils; that they would not have

to worry about septic failures; that they plan to gravity flow sewer with no lift stations; that no treatment plant is needed; that they could charge whatever County would like for sewer; that zero money will come from the County; that they have not had any issues with breakage or with sanitary sewer maintenance; that they have discussed traffic and believe that there will be approximately two cars per home; that after construction is completed that there will be additional lanes so that the intersection will be greatly improved; that none of the arterial roads are anywhere close to capacity; that they hope that they have been transparent and that they conform with other subdivisions in the area; that sanitary sewer is a profitable opportunity; that the Planning Commission voted 6-1 in favor of the rezoning; that they want well planned growth in Harris County; and that he would love for the Board to tell him what they want if they vote no.

Discussion of the Board included that it is believed that Columbus won't take any more sewer from Harris County because of Exit 19; and that traffic is a concern.

In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Slaughter advised that the sewer would gravity flow to the manhole and that he has talked to Jeremy Cummings from Columbus Water Works; that traffic is heavy in the morning and in the afternoon; that GDOT has experience to help with traffic; that they have not had a gravity flow system fail; that if they can't get the number of requested lots that the timeline might be that they begin the first phase in the summer of next year and then start construction in May or June; that they could still build houses without the sewer but that would be up to the property owner; the request for R-2 is so they will be able to get more lots - smaller lots - but most will be larger than one acre; that they want to use the good land but still be able to develop the "bad" land; that they will need a GDOT permit to bore under 27; and that the homes are expected to be approximately 3,000 square foot homes and cost between \$300,000 and \$500,000.

Commissioner Irions stated that he was on the Planning Commission when the PRD was requested last time; that they are trying to get better with discussing topics with the School Board once or twice a year; that elementary and middle school student numbers are decreasing; that these homes will likely have older kids; that they aren't starter homes; that these kids will go to the high school and be driving age; that the lots are now more than the 76 lots recommended by the Planning Commission; that he drives that area every day; and that he believes that there will be more cars than estimated.

Vice-Chair Andrews stated that it is a false statement that Harris County does not like commercial; that they want the right commercial businesses; that the Georgia Tech housing study stated that Harris County needs affordable housing; and that she isn't against \$300,000 houses.

Chairman Grant asked if there was anyone that would like to speak in favor of this application. There being none, Chairman Grant asked if there was anyone that would like to speak in opposition to the application.

Myra McMillan, citizen who lives on Grey Rock Road, stated she is a long-time resident; that she has expressed long and heartfelt opposition; that the traffic on Grey Rock is increasingly dangerous; that it is nearly impossible to turn on to Veterans Parkway safely; that many drivers exceed speed; that the roadway cannot safely or effectively handle traffic; that public safety is already stretched to meet demands; that most will shop in Columbus and Harris County will not get sales tax; that home values will be impacted; and that she requests that the rezoning not be approved.

Bobby Watson, citizen who lives on Old Gate Road, advised that he is a retired civil engineer from GDOT; that he is amazed at the change from the Planning Commission to now; that he is familiar with traffic; that the problem is at the intersection of Veterans and Grey Rock; that adding lanes will cause more traffic issues; that he doesn't believe that the proposed plans are an improvement; that it is not an inconvenience issue but a safety issue; that TIA has lost Federal funds; that they cut out the roundabouts; that Columbus would have to evaluate their current system because they will need to upgrade their systems.

Sam Schuler, citizen who lives on Wildwood Plantation Lane, stated that he thought about moving his mother down; that they might put the development off; that maybe five years from now that it will be 140 homes instead of 87; that they are going to develop what the owner wants; and that they put their faith in the Board to look toward the future.

Mary Elliott, citizen who lives on Grey Rock Drive, advised that she sent an email today; that she is a licensed real estate agent in Virginia; that when they moved to Harris County, they read the Comprehensive Plan and chose an area based upon what she saw; that she doesn't want them to relax the standards; that if standards are lowered, that they will be hard pressed to stop it; and that strangers will move in ready to gobble up the land.

John Mitchell, citizen who lives on Gray Fox Court, stated that they have to balance the concerns of current homeowners as well as developers; that there are effects on nearby residents; that there will be more traffic; that there are considerable safety risks as well as increased demands on first responders; that there are too many questions remaining; that support services have to be able to handle the increase; that what cost will there be in tax increases to current households; that they need to consider the well-being of those already living here; that he suggests that it be disapproved and let them develop with current zoning; and that if approved to make sure that minimum square footage with a cost point of \$500,000, 76 dwellings, turns lanes, gravity flow sewer, and promise to build single family.

Bill Simpson, citizen who lives on Grey Rock Ct, advised that he believes that some in attendance were here before; that he felt like threats were made during the Planning Commission meeting; that it was a bad idea in 2019 and that it is a bad idea now; that it is across the street from the quarry; and that they should pretend that this was being built close to their houses.

Meghan Guenther, citizen who lives on Barnes Mill Road in Hamilton, advised that she spoke at the Planning Commission meeting; that she wanted to reiterate more information before approving developments; that there is "barely any staff;" that expansion of the sewer benefits the developer; that it will spread more down 27; that Harris County residents would be asked to subsidize growth; that it is risky and premature; that they don't know if the system will work; that it was said that if the project was not approved that it would be a project that they don't want; that the previous development had commercial in Muscogee; that a rezoning from R-2 to increase the number of homes doesn't benefit anyone except the developer; that she urges them to pause and review agreements; and that they evaluate feasibility.

Brad Clements, citizen who lives on Grey Rock Drive, wanted to know that if approved with 76 lots whether a later Board of Commissioners can change that at a later date and increase the number.

Chuck Hunsaker, citizen who lives on Red Fox Court, stated that he lives about one mile from the quarry; that tile floors have been damaged by blasting at the quarry; that damage to homes will happen again if quarry starts blasting again; that it is not operation now but developer will not have any liability for future damages; that if you wouldn't buy one of these homes, why would you approve; that he wanted to know why the developer hasn't built in the past 6 years; that no homes should be built on this property and that it should be condemned; that Coca Lakes' 1-acre lots were platted before the 2-acre lot rule; and that lots of residents want homes on 2-acre lots.

Sam Buracker, citizen who lives on Grey Rock Road, stated that he is biased and sentimental; that Grey Rock is a beautiful road and that he would like it to stay that way; that it doesn't make sense to have 1-acre lots right down the road from a place like his; and that he wants to keep it rural and beautiful.

Amberly Bryan, citizen who lives on Grey Rock Road, stated that the property has 5+ acres of surface rock and that she doesn't believe that septic could be put in due to all of the rock; that they moved to Harris County to get away from Columbus; and that most citizens in Harris County are against this.

Doug Pullen, citizen who lives on Grey Rock Road, stated that he does appreciate that there are no threats tonight; that no reputable builder will build in this development; that they will sell to the highest bidder; that he is curious how gravity has changed; that it is a nightmare to cross over so many lanes; and that he doesn't see this as a County's responsibility.

Ben Russell, citizen who lives on Newberry Lane, wanted to know if there will be more developments, more apartments, etc; that he is not anti-growth but wants it to be well planned; and that he is concerned about traffic and more vehicle accidents.

George Kis, citizen who lives on Grey Rock Drive, stated that there needs to be value and quality; that when you have houses that are subject to quarry blasting and deterioration that there is a drop in value and then a drop in quality of life; that there would be an increased burden on the rest of them; and that it would make it more difficult for a future Board to make tough decisions.

Jim Wooldridge, citizen who lives on Pierce Chapel Road, stated that he has lived there for 75 years and that if new houses are built that they will be affected by the quarry.

Mike Wooldridge, citizen who lives on Pierce Chapel Road, stated that Mr. Erickson is still part of this project and a majority owner; that he strongly suggests that they vote against the rezoning; that he doesn't understand how they needed a lift station years ago but don't now; that they can't change anything with the intersection as it is in Muscogee County; and that there is just a stop sign at the end of Grey Rock.

Anthony Slaughter, P.E. with Moon Meeks & Associates, Inc. stated that he doesn't know of any threat that he made; that he commented back to Mr. Weldon; that he is a man of integrity and it is a good firm; that he does not like people threatening his integrity; that GDOT is responsible to design the intersection; that sanitary sewer could go south or west to Ivy Park; that lot conditions would have to be abided by; that he did not have a chance to rebut the 76 lots recommended by the Planning Commission; that he is here to represent the owner in getting rezoning approved; and that he appreciates everyone's time and effort.

Chairman Grant closed the public hearing at 8:17 p.m.

A motion to deny the Application of Will White, to rezone 134.93 acres of a 135.08-acre parcel, located on Map 047, Parcel 031, Land Lot 80, Land District 18th; Rezoning from R-1 (Low Density Residential) to R-2 (Medium Density Residential); Current use is wooded property; proposed use is for a residential subdivision; property located near the intersection of Veterans Parkway and Grey Rock Road, Midland, GA. was made by Commissioner Irions and seconded by Commissioner Lightsey.

Commissioner Gantt stated that they have a fiscal responsibility; that use of reserves is not sustainable; that workforce housing is needed to attract businesses; that he thanks the Planning Commission; that each entity put conditions on it that they may or may not chose to accept; that this development introduces curb and gutter streets which are rare improvements in our county; that \$500,000 homes are above median and mean; that they need high quality growth for the long term; that R-2 zoning does not erase rural; that there are families out there that would like a home but not on two acres; that 83% supported two acre lots; that they need to adapt to a changing financial environment while honoring their traditions; that they will work with schools; that school growth is slow and sustainable; that they are at a crossroads and that they are funding the budget at the costs of the homeowners; that they have to do something to change that mix; and that this is a step in the right direction.

The motion to deny passed with three in favor (Andrews, Irions, Lightsey) and two opposed (Grant, Gantt).

8. **ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Rob Grant, Chairman

Attest:

Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk