

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

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

February 27, 2025

5:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Rob Grant, Susan Andrews, Bobby Irions (arrived at 7:00 p.m.), Greg Gantt, Scott Lightsey. Staff Present: Russell Britt, County Attorney; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk; Kris Summerall, Payroll and Benefit Technician; Brian Williams, Community Development Director; Melissa Price, EMA/E911 Director; Shalee Mallory, Chief Appraiser; Theresa Haralson, Animal Control Facility Operations Specialist. Also in attendance: Dominick Acuri, Partner at Televate (via teleconference); Ken Steere, Director of Programs, Williams Communications, Inc.; Dean Ginn and John Wade Ginn, Dean's Two-Way.

**CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Grant called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**GMASS Rural Land Update.** Vice-Chair Andrews stated that she requested this item be placed on the agenda so that the Board could receive an update, to include where GMASS was in the process, when it would be completed and affect the digest. Shalee Mallory, Chief Appraiser stated that the goal is for it to be effective for the 2026 digest; that GMASS expects to complete the update by mid-May; that they are almost finished with land usage and soil delineations; that they are getting ready to complete timber; that notices will go out a little later this year; and that they are waiting for values from GMASS. Vice-Chair Andrews mention that there was a bill in the Legislature to clean up HB581 and limiting homestead exemptions to five acres and inquired as to whether that would affect the GMASS update. Ms. Mallory stated that it won't affect what they are working on currently as values have to be set and mailed by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Williams Radio System Update.** Melissa Price, EMA/E911 Director, introduced Ken Steere, Director of Programs at Williams Communications. Mr. Steere gave the Board an overview of all of the tower sites; that the microwave links provide redundancy in the system; that the microwave path surveys, securing site locations, finalization of tower loading, and FCC RF licensing are in-process. He further advised that three towers will need to be built and that the others are existing; that Dean's Two Way has established great relationships for use of existing towers and shelters; that they have been working with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at Pine Mountain for that location; that customer design review will occur once tower structurals are complete; that lead time cycles have been good so far; and that all radio equipment will have redundancy and aggressive coverage requirements - mobile, portable and in-building. Dominick Acuri, Partner at Televate, added that the tower owners were aware of the project and were ready to go when Williams contacted them and that has been very helpful; that the site visits have been completed; that recently the microwave path studies (line of sight) confirmed that lengths are feasible and will work as designed; and that structural analysis of the towers will be key to make sure they can mount the antennas at the needed heights. Brian Williams, Community Development Director, stated that they won't need any changes to zoning and any permits needed would be at no cost since this is a County project.

Vice-Chair Andrews said that it would be nice to receive updates at the future quarterly planning sessions to make sure that the Board is aware of any issues in a timely manner.

**Health Care Upon Early Retirement.** Kris Summerall, Payroll and Benefit Technician, compiled information about the costs and savings related to the prior offering of health care upon early retirement and that the County saved \$54,381.59 in a one-year period. Commissioner Gantt asked if she could continue to track this through time. Ms. Summerall stated that she will continue to keep track of any savings that are realized. She further said that she has provided two additional years of information that shows information related to eligible employees should the Board decide to offer this program again. Commissioner Gantt said that he would like to process the information before considering another offer of health care upon early retirement.

**Humane Society Lease Agreement.** County Clerk Andrea Dzioba stated that at the last Regular Session meeting there was discussion about some of the information in the current lease agreement from 2008; that the Board mentioned that they may want to define the relationship between the Humane Society and Harris County; and that due to some changes that the Humane Society has had there have been miscommunications. Discussion of the Board included whether it was needed to put the services that the Humane Society will do for Harris County and their relationship into an agreement; that the Board would like a list of the services that have been traditionally part of the partnership; and then the Board could review and make a decision. Theresa Haralson, Animal Control Facility Operations Specialist, advised that she believes that

there should be a more defined agreement and that Kathryn Genova also believes that it is important for things to be defined. There was a consensus of the Board for Harris County and the Humane Society to sit down to discuss and define services further and then bring the information back to the Board.

**Amendments to the Unified Development Code.** County Clerk Andrea Dzioba stated that Commissioner Irions had requested that they discuss chickens in R-1 Zoning again and that there was a desire of Chairman Grant to discuss Table 4-1 related to 10 acres and dogs in Section 328.02. Vice-Chair Andrews stated that backyard chickens and gardens are being encourage even in urban areas and that Commissioner Irions wanted to discuss being able have hens in R-1. Brian Williams, Community Development Director, and County Clerk Andrea Dzioba informed the Board that there can be chickens in R-1 right now except in a major subdivision and that there is a two acre minimum. Discussion included that the Board would only have to remove the language related to major subdivisions; whether there would be odor issues; that right now there are hundreds of homes that have chickens even if they aren't supposed to; and that Brian Williams recommends keeping the lot size at two acres for chickens.

The Board has a consensus to remove the major subdivision language in Article 3, Section 308.03 but to leave it at a minimum of two acres for now.

Additional discussion was held related to the number of dogs/cats allowed in A-1 zoning; that there is a difference between the number of chickens and dogs/cats since people don't eat dogs/cats; that people should be able to have as many dogs/cats as they want in A-1 zoning; that this is only related to pets and not a breeding kennel; and that the dogs/cats should not create a nuisance.

The Board has a consensus related to reconsidering the limits on dogs/cats in A-1 zoning and that there should not be a limit in A-1 zoning.

Discussion was also held related to Table 4-1 related to the 10-acre minimum in A-1. Chairman Grant stated that he would like the requirement to be 5 acres instead of 10 acres. Mr. Williams reminded the Board that R-R is 5 acres. Discussion included that R-R has some restrictions that A-1 doesn't; that A-1 gives you more flexibility; that if the A-1 land is already platted that it doesn't need to be 10 acres; that Chairman Grant would like someone with A-1 property to be able to sell off a portion of their property without having to rezone it; that the current split will not allow anyone to get down lower than two acres; that you would have to have a minimum of 4 acres to rezone it to R-1; that the Board will continue to look at what their options might be; and that they should also discuss the lot frontage being a ratio instead of just a two acre lot because so many lots have a 100' frontage and are 800' deep.

**Agricultural Center.** Chairman Grant stated that he spoke with Steve Morgan at the Extension Office; that he would like it if the running of the Agricultural Center was moved to the Extension Office instead of Recreation; that Recreation doesn't have the expertise but that the Extension Office would be able to manage and oversee it better; and that there may need to be a budget for the Agricultural Center - or included in the Extension Office budget. Vice-Chair Andrews stated that the agreement between Harris County and the Extension Office should be clear; that she talked to Brian Jack's Field Representative at the Cattlemans' dinner meeting; that he told her to send him the plan that was developed because Brian Jack is compiling a list of projects for his district that he would submit for Federal funding.

The Board had a consensus to have Vice-Chair Andrews send the Agricultural Center plan to Brian Jack's office.

**Expanding the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).** Chairman Grant advised that Jim Livingston at the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) informed him that the County would need to make a request and that someone from the County would need to be LAP certified. County Clerk advised that the former County Manager asked Public Works Director Brian Griffith to start the process to be Local Administered Project (LAP) certified and when the former County Manager left Mr. Griffith withdrew from the program. Discussion included that they need more information from Mr. Livingston about what would need to be completed.

**School Board Meeting Date.** Chairman Grant would like the Board to have another Joint meeting with the Harris County Board of Education in March and he requested that the Commissioners send County Clerk Andrea Dzioba two dates that they would be available and that she will work on scheduling it. Vice-Chair Andrews would like to have a presentation with handouts of the things that the County has completed and is working on currently like the radio system.

*Commissioner Irions arrived at 7:00 p.m.*

**ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Gantt, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

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Rob Grant, Chairman

Attest:

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Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk