

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
APPEAL HEARING AND REGULAR SESSION**

Harris County Courthouse
102 N. College Street, Room 215,
Hamilton, GA

January 20, 2026

APPEAL HEARING

5:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Susan Andrews, Rob Grant, Greg Gantt, Scott Lightsey.
Commissioners Absent: Bobby Irions. Staff Present: Stuart Sumner, County Attorney;
Clark Harrell, County Manager; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk; Anna Stanford, Animal
Control Officer. Also in attendance: Katonga Wright, attorney for the Elliotts.

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chair Andrews called the Appeal Hearing to order at 5:48 p.m. and turned the appeal hearing over to Stuart Sumner, County Attorney.
2. **HEARING.** County Attorney Stuart Sumner stated that this is an appeal hearing under the Animal Control Ordinance regarding the “dangerous” classification of dogs under the Ordinance, read the definition of a “dangerous” dog from the Ordinance, and reviewed the procedure for the Appeal Hearing.

Mr. Sumner swore in Anna Stanford, Animal Control Officer, and asked her to explain her findings regarding the investigation of the dogs.

Ms. Stanford explained that on December 5, 2025 that she was called out to the location of a dog bite and that the victim had already been transported to the hospital. She made contact with Jeff Sizemore, the owner of the property; that due to the severity of the bite and the dog not being on its owners’ property, she took the dog into custody for the 10-day quarantine; that she then declared the dog as a dangerous dog; that the dog was originally with Harris County Animal Control before it was transferred to the Harris County Humane Society and subsequently adopted out; that on December 6, 2025, she received a statement from Ms. Martin, the victim; and that Ms. Martin had multiple stitches to repair two dog bites. Ms. Stanford requested that the Board refer to the picture of Mr. Elliott carrying the dog that bit, a picture of another dog that was loose, and pictures that show the severity of the bites. Ms. Stanford provided the pictures the Ms. Wright and Mr. Elliott. Ms. Stanford then showed pictures of the dog owners’ fence/gate showing that it had no latch as well as a video showing how easy the fence could be pushed open; and that it wasn’t a secure closure for a dangerous dog. Ms. Stanford stated that due to the Harris County Humane Society behavioral information and her findings that she believes that the dog is a dangerous dog. Mr. Sumner would like the pictures and video provided to be included as part of the record with the pictures labeled 1 through 10 as Exhibit R-1 and the video as Exhibit R-2.

In response to questions from the Board, Ms. Stanford stated when a dog is declared a dangerous dog that, if outside, there needs to be a proper enclosure that has a floor and top and a lock; that if kept inside, the dog needs to be leash walked with a muzzle and have a collar and leash that declares that it is a dangerous dog; that there is a \$75.00 yearly fee; that insurance needs to be provided; that the insurance amounts come from Georgia law years ago and that we are working to update our ordinance; that Animal Control checks to verify that the dog’s containment is proper - at least once a year; that Animal Control provides signage for the dog owner; and that when a dog is declared dangerous that it is monitored more closely.

In response to questions from Ms. Wright, attorney for the Elliotts, Ms. Stanford stated that Phoenix was approximately 1-1/2 years old - 1 to 3 years at best; that the veterinarian in Alabama estimated the age; that Chicken Wing and Phoenix are the same dog; that it appeared that the dog was at the Harris County Humane Society in August and September of 2025; that the dog is about 45-50 lbs but could be less; that she knew that the victim had already been transported because she spoke with a deputy sheriff on scene; that the deputy sheriff had informed her that the dog was Mr. Elliott’s dog; that Ms. Martin had described the incident and that the bite was unprovoked and that Ms. Martin had yelled at Mr. Elliott to get the dogs; that Mr. Elliott doesn’t remember getting the dog or a lot of things that they have discussed; that Mr. Elliott doesn’t believe that the dog bit anyone; that during the 10-day quarantine period, there was a dangerous dog sign and no touching the dog for 10 days; that Mr. Elliott would come to visit every day and bring the dog a treat; that she

has witnessed the dog push through the gate; and that the Elliotts adopted the dog after October 10th.

County Attorney Stuart Sumner stated that the appeal hearing would need to be continued at a later date due to the Board of Commissioners' meeting at 6:30 p.m. Mr. Sumner would like the Alabama record and Notes from the Harris County Humane Society to be included as part of the record with the Alabama record labeled as Exhibit R-3 and the Harris County Humane Society notes as Exhibit R-3.

Chair Andrews recessed the appeal hearing until a later date to be determined.

3. **ADJOURNMENT**. The appeal hearing adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Susan Andrews, Bobby Irions, Rob Grant, Greg Gantt, Scott Lightsey. Staff Present: Stuart Sumner, County Attorney; Clark Harrell, County Manager; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk; Elizabeth Barfield, Chief Financial Officer.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**. Chair Andrews called the Regular Session to order at 6:30 p.m. Chair Andrews advised that she invited Minister Kim Towles to give the invocation and that she wanted to include members of our faith community to give the invocation.
2. **INVOCATION / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Minister Kim Towles gave the invocation. Commissioner Grant led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **MINUTES** The motion to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2026 Regular Session was made by Commissioner Lightsey, seconded by Vice-Chair Irions, and passed unanimously.

4. **CITIZEN COMMENTS**

- A. **Gail McLain and Robyn Shreve - SEWrorty Sisters Quilting Guild**. Gail McLain, President and Founder, appeared before the Board and advised that the SEWrorty Sisters Quilting Guild was formed in 2021 with members from Harris County and Muscogee County; that they foster art and make friends; that 33 quilters showed up for the first meeting and that they now have 97 members; that they meet the first Saturday of every month; that they have six retreats throughout the year at 4 locations - two at the FFA camp in Covington; that they have made and donated 131 quilts; and that they had their first annual quilt show in 2025 at WA-HA Music & Food Truck Festival in Waverly Hall. Robyn Shreve, Quilt of Valor, additionally stated that the Quilts of Valor Foundation has given 436,400 quilts to U.S. service members and veterans since 2003; and that 49 of those quilts were given locally. In response to a question from Commissioner Grant, they can provide them with contact information for people that can make quilts from t-shirts.

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. **Presentation of the FYE June 30, 2025 Annual Audit**. Chair Andrews introduced the presentation of the FYE June 30, 2025 Annual Audit.

Steven Voynich, CPA and Partner from Robinson Grimes, addressed the Board and stated that the audit report states that the financial statements present fairly in all respects; that the findings were related to the limited segregation of duties due to staffing and internal controls over financial reporting; that there has been a significant amount of work and incredible improvement; and he encouraged the Board to all to sit down when possible with the Finance team.

Chief Financial Officer Elizabeth Barfield stated that there were high numbers of adjusting entries; that Department Heads have been frustrated with the level of service; that she is reviewing work; that there is a lot to get done but they are getting there; that she has been interviewing to fill the open positions; that one candidate has Airport experience and one has Water Works experience; that the FY2024 audit was presented in August of 2025 and the FY2025 audit completed four months later; that she was still working on the payroll conversion to ADP and the completion of W2s and 1099s; that she is continuing to refine, train and

document processes; that she considers the completion of the audit a success with the other things that have occurred - the sudden need to process payroll without cross-training along with its prior customizations; that ADP will be standardized; that the FY2027 budget process starts soon; that she will continue to create and implement financial policies; that she will continue to train staff; that work will begin later this year on the FY2026 audit; and that support from Caselle has changed significantly for the worst since their merger.

The motion to accept the FYE June 30, 2025 Annual Audit was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Commissioner Gantt, and passed unanimously.

- B. **Comprehensive Financial Review.** Elizabeth Barfield, Chief Financial Officer, appeared before the Board and reviewed some of the changes that she is recommending related to moving \$330,000 for Moultrie Park and Pine Mountain Valley Park to SPLOST 2025 along with the Radio System change order and that the original plan was to use funds for maintenance; that she will bring amendments will be brought forward to include the dump truck purchase in TSPLOST along with the Man O'War Trail continuation; that they need to reduce expenses and capital spending; that they have every ability to operate at a surplus; that expenses have been minimized since September; and that they were paying invoices either Net 30 or the terms stated on the invoices. Discussion included that they need to be careful as reserves were "eaten into" for the second time; and that net reserves have gone down.
- C. **Elections Supervisor Recommendation.** Chair Andrews introduced the item related to the Elections Supervisor Recommendation and stated that the longtime Elections Supervisor retired on December 31, 2025 and that the Board of Elections and Registration has advertised the position and interviewed candidates. Chair Andrews recognized John Britt, Chairman of the Board of Elections and Registration, and Phillip Towles, also a member of the Board of Elections and Registration, in attendance at the meeting. Chair Andrews invited John Britt to discuss the process that went through in providing the recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Britt stated that at the end of November that Sherrail Jarrett expressed her desire to retire; that the job was posted and twelve applicants applied; that they gathered to select individuals to interviewed and interviewed three individuals; and that they are recommending the hiring of Morgan Bryce for the positions of Elections Supervisor. The motion to accept the nomination from the Board of Elections and Registration to hire Morgan Bryce as the Elections Supervisor was made by Vice-Chair Irions and seconded by Commissioner Lightsey. Discussion included an inquiry about the cost to train the new Elections Supervisor and whether it was already budgeted. County Manager Clark Harrell stated that there would be a training curve; that the Secretary of State's Office provides training; and that he can research that and let the Board know the costs. Mr. Britt advised that training will have to take place and is confident that the candidate will not have a problem with getting the needed training; and that there is a current employee that is also trained as an Elections Supervisor. The motion to accept the nomination from the Board of Elections and Registration to hire Morgan Bryce as the Elections Supervisor passed unanimously.
- D. **Resolution Setting Qualifying Fees for the 2026 Election and Authorizing Publication of Same.** Chair Andrews stated that the Board is required to set qualifying fees for the 2026 elections for salaried and non-salaried elected officials and publish same by February 1st. Chair Andrews read the proposed resolution aloud. The motion to approve and adopt the Resolution by the Board of Commissioners of Harris County, Georgia Setting Qualifying Fees for the 2026 Election and Authorizing Publication of Same was made by Vice-Chair Irions, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.
- E. **Additional Road for 2026 Local Maintenance Improvement Grant (LMIG).** Chair Andrews stated that Public Works is requesting that Robin Drive, an approximately 12-foot wide 1,400-foot-long road, be added to the Invitation to Bid with the five roads previously approved for leveling and resurfacing at an estimated cost of \$27,500.00.

The motion to add Robin Drive for leveling and resurfacing to the Invitation to Bid along with the previously approved roads with the use of TSPLOST to fund same was made by Commissioner Gantt, seconded by Vice-Chair Irions, and passed unanimously.

- F. **Appointment to the Board of Elections and Registration.** Chair Andrews introduced the item related to the expired term of Tammy Pierce on the Board of Elections and Registration. A motion to approve the reappointment of Tammy Pierce to the Board of Elections and Registration for the term effective from January 1, 2026 until December 31, 2029 was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.
- G. **Appointments to the Recreation Board.** Chair Andrews introduced the item related to the expired term of the Board of Education Liaison on the Recreation Board and the recommendation of the Cataula Youth Sports Association to make an appointment to fill the unexpired term of Shane Morris. Chair Andrews stated that the Board of Education has recommended that Garnett Ray be appointed as their representative and the Cataula Youth Sports Association has recommended that Mike Thornton be appointed as their representative. A motion to approve the appointment of Garnett Ray for the term effective from January 1, 2026 until December 31, 2028 and Mike Thornton to fill the unexpired term from January 20, 2026 until December 31, 2026 was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Vice-Chairman Irions, and passed unanimously.
- H. **Appointment to the Development Authority.** Chair Andrews introduced the item related to the expired term of the District 5 position on the Development Authority and stated that she is recommending the appointment of Lauren Dimitri.

A motion to approve the appointment of Lauren Dimitri to the Development Authority for the term effective from January 1, 2026 until December 31, 2029 was made by Chair Andrews and seconded by Commissioner Lightsey. Discussion included that due to Ms. Dimitri being an attorney with Kia that she may have to recuse herself from certain items the Development Authority might consider and that may affect the ability for the Development Authority to pass items the Development Authority may consider due to voting requirements. The motion to approve the appointment of Lauren Dimitri to the Development Authority passed unanimously.

- I. **Appointment to the Harris County Housing Authority.** Chair Andrews introduced the item related to the need for an appointment to the Harris County Housing Authority due to the resignation of John Winchester who has moved away. Chair Andrews stated that Commissioner Rob Grant is recommending the of Claudette Boelter, who has previously served on the Harris County Housing Authority, to fill the unexpired term. A motion to approve the appointment of Claudette Boelter to the Harris County Housing Authority for the unexpired term that ends on October 31, 2028 was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Vice-Chair Irions, and passed unanimously.
6. **COUNTY MANAGER**
- A. **County Manager Correspondence.** County Manager Clark Harrell addressed the Board and advised that the right-of-way trimming continues; that the right-of-ways look good due to the hard work of the Public Works Department; that work is ongoing at Pate and Moultrie Parks in preparation for the Spring Little League season; that surveying has begun on the next phase of the Man O'War Trail; and that the Community Center will be hosting a 14 and under All-Star tournament next month for basketball. Mr. Harrell thanked the Board for their approval of projects for LMIG and LRA; that the County expects to receive another round of LRA funds in the next year or so; and that there is the potential for severe weather that he will defer to E911/EMA Director Melissa Price to provide updates. Discussion of the Board included their appreciation for the community outreach of Mr. Harrell; and that he has been meeting with citizens to resolve and solve problems.

7. **COUNTY ATTORNEY**

County Attorney Stuart Sumner stated that he did not have any further business to come before the Board this evening.

8. **ADJOURNMENT** There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Gantt, seconded by Commissioner Grant, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Susan Andrews, Chair

Attest:

Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk