

HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Commission Chamber, Room 215, Harris County Courthouse
102 N College Street, Hamilton, GA 31811
REGULAR SESSION
July 7, 2026
6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Susan Andrews, Bobby Irions, Rob Grant, Greg Gantt, Scott Lightsey. Staff Present: Russell Britt, County Attorney (via telephone); Sheriff Mike Jolley; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk. Also in attendance: Greg Gease, ACCG Field Services Manager.

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chair Andrews called the Regular Session to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. **INVOCATION / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Pastor Bo Barber from Prospect AME Church in Fortson gave the invocation and Commissioner Grant led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **MINUTES.** The motion to approve the minutes of the June 16, 2026 Regular Session was made by Vice-Chairman Irions, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.
4. **NEW BUSINESS.**

- A. **Defined Benefit Plan Amendment - Request of Sheriff Jolley.** Chair Andrews introduced the item related to a proposed amendment to the County's Defined Benefit Plan and that Sheriff Jolley would like to address the County Commission with a request to retain County employees after the normal retirement age of 65 by allowing an in-service distribution of earned benefits (Section 10.05).

Sheriff Mike Jolley addressed the Board and stated that he is before the Board tonight on behalf of 23+ employees of Harris County who have reached their age to initiate starting the option to now start drawing their earned benefits under Section 10.05 of the Defined Benefit Plan. Sheriff Jolley stated that he is concerned that employees that have reached the age of 65 and are still working for the County would not be able to have their earned benefits provided to their beneficiary if they were to pass away while still employed; that if in-service distributions were allowed that the implementation could contain a sunset clause to see if the benefit is beneficial to the County; that it would cost an additional \$38,200.00 per year; and that he believes that changing the plan will save the County money and that it is beneficial to implement this.

Brian McKeen, citizen who live on O'Neal Road in West Point, addressed the Board and stated that he is a "huge supporter" of Sheriff Jolley; that there are other ways to address concerns; that he suggests adopting a survivorship annuity concept to ensure that dependents receive an annuity upon an employee's death while still active, rather than opening in-service distributions broadly; that he advocates for succession planning to maintain institutional knowledge which is a common practice in the private sector; that the proposed in-service distribution is a stopgap that delays, rather than resolves, the costs and operational inefficiencies of backfilling positions when older employees eventually retire; that he has concerns related to IRS rules on bona fide separations of service and the particular complexities for elected constitutional officers who cannot "retire Friday and be rehired on Monday; and that there may be conflicts of interest if the Board is voting on measures that could directly affect their compensation or eligibility.

Greg Gease, ACCG Field Services Manager, clarified that the proposed provision is an "in-service distribution," not a retirement; that ACCG is only the plan administrator and has no financial stake in the County's decision; that pension funds are held in Harris County's trust; that if a participant dies before drawing, funds remain in the trust to pay future benefits; that the funds do not revert to ACCG or the County's general fund; that enabling in-service distributions increases near-term benefit pay outs because most eligible employees turn on benefits when allowed, creating an actuarial loss that is amortized over 20 years, estimated at about \$38,200.00 per year initially; and that the estimated "normal cost" is roughly \$4,000.00 per year once the initial impact washes out.

Commissioner Greg Gantt introduced a “survivorship lock-in” alternative that includes that at age 65, an actively employed participant would irrevocably elect a payment option and beneficiary; and that if the employee dies while still employed, the benefit would pay as if they had taken in-service distribution at age 65, protecting the family without broadly turning on benefits for all eligible employees or freezing accruals and promotions.

Mr Gease advised that ACCG legal and actuarial teams view this option as feasible with minimal expected cost; that plan documents can be drafted within weeks but that an actuarial review of 3-4 weeks would be needed for cost estimates; and that this option has never been implemented for their paid plans.

Commissioner Gant advised that the survivorship lock-in better balances family protection along with workforce development; and that this option would help avoid “pipeline clogging” where senior employees remaining indefinitely might stifle promotions and discourage mid-level retention.

Sheriff Jolley stated that many senior employees already remain past 65 and his priority is protecting current eligible staff.

Commissioner Greg Gantt requested that there be a second reading at the next meeting on July 21, 2026 related to both proposed amendments to the Defined Benefit Plan.

5. **COUNTY ATTORNEY.**

A. **REQUEST FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION.** County Attorney Russell Britt stated that he has a need for executive session for litigation and personnel .

6. **RECESS FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Commissioner Gantt made the motion to go into Executive Session for litigation and personnel at 7:27 p.m. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Irions, and passed unanimously.

7. **RESUME REGULAR SESSION.** The motion to go back into Regular Session was made at 7:54 p.m. by Vice-Chairman Irions, seconded by Commissioner Gantt, and passed unanimously.

8. **COMMISSIONER REMARKS - POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE.** Commissioner Lightsey addressed the Board and raised concerns about a June 18, 2026 “Roller Derby Pride Day” event held at the Community Center. Commissioner Lightsey’s remarks included that there was a halftime drag show; that young children were present since kids under the age of 5 were free; that the Chattahoochee Roller Derby was using the County facility’s address as its business location on Facebook; that the Recreation Director was unaware of the event’s specific nature before it occurred; and that he knew of a separate citizen complaint involving staff allegedly denying a request to baptize an 81-year-old in the Community Center’s zero-entry pool.

Chair Susan Andrews advised that there may be a procedural gap related to a group subletting space to another group without County knowledge, permission, or additional payment; that there is an absence of a mandatory security requirement for public events which poses potential safety risks if controversies draw opposing groups; and that the County Attorney is reviewing the facility rental policies to prevent unauthorized subletting and to consider security provisions.

9. **ADJOURNMENT.** The motion to adjourn was made by Vice-Chairman Irions, seconded by Commissioner Gantt, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Susan Andrews, Chair

Attest:

Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk