HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Commission Chamber, Room 215, Harris County Courthouse
102 N College Street, Hamilton, GA 31811
REGULAR SESSION
July 21, 2026
6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Susan Andrews, Bobby Irions, Rob Grant, Greg Gantt, Scott Lightsey. Staff Present: Russell Britt, County Attorney; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk. Also in attendance: Kale Hodges, ACCG Director of Retirement Services.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**. Chair Andrews called the Regular Session to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. **INVOCATION / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**. Commissioner Scott Lightsey 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 February 26, 2026 Strategic Navigation Session, the June 8, 2026 Called Session, and the July 7, 2026 Regular Session was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Commissioner Gantt, and passed unanimously.

4. **PRESENTATION**.

   A. **Proclamation - National Health Center Week 2026**. Chair Andrews introduced Dr. Asante Hilts from Valley Health Care System who was in attendance to receive a proclamation to recognize National Health Center Week 2026. Dr. Asante Hilts introduced their Board of Directors members, Dr. Eula Pines and Miss Dorothy Mabry, and their Chief Financial Officer Jeff Kirkpatrick and acknowledged their contributions. Dr. Hilts advised that the health center in Fortson serves approximately 100 patients per month and offers medical, women's health, and dental care. The motion to approve the proclamation for National Health Center Week 2026 was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Vice-Chairman Irions, and passed unanimously. Chair Andrews read the proclamation and presented it to Dr. Hilts.

5. **OLD BUSINESS**.

   A. **Defined Benefit Plan Amendment**. Chair Andrews introduced the second reading of a proposed Defined Benefit Plan amendment.

   Sheriff Mike Jolley addressed the Board and requested that the Board have a motion and a second related to Amendment #5 so that additional discussion can take place. Sheriff Jolley stated that he believes that employees that have reached the age of 65 and have been with the County for five years or longer deserve to receive their earned benefit; that the employees know what they want to do with it; that it doesn't need to stay with ACCG or in any type of annuity or investment pool; and that employees should have the right to do what they would like to with their earned benefit.

   Cindy Jolley addressed the Board and stated that the pension plan is "basically an earned income based on years of service;" that it used to include an in-service option to continue service beyond normal retirement age with an election to pay out survivor benefits in the event of the death of an employee; that it can be considered an incentive for employees to stay long-term; that the pension plan is no supposed to be used to measure or manage employee performance; that she does not believe that the Plan was changed properly when the in-service option was removed; and that she is asking that the in-service option be restored.

   Chair Andrews stated that on July 7th the Board considered the request of Sheriff Mike Jolley to amend the provisions of the Defined Benefit Plan to allow employees after the normal retirement age of 65 to choose an in-service distribution of earned benefits, Section 10.05 and that Commissioner Gantt has requested that this second reading be held. Chair Andrews further advised that Commissioner Gantt would like the Board to consider an alternative to in-service distribution - a survivorship lock-in at age 65 - which would enable an employee at age 65 to name a beneficiary to his or her annuity so that in the event that the employee passes away that the benefit would pass on to their beneficiary.

Kale Hodges, ACCG Director of Retirement Services, addressed the Board and stated that the first proposal is simply changing the in-service provision and that the second proposal changes the pre-retirement death benefit to give the employee that reaches the normal retirement age of 65 the option to elect a survivor benefit, not just the lump sum payment as there is now. Mr. Hodges further stated that they are required to occasionally submit plan documents to the IRS to obtain their review of the plan and receive a favorable determination letter and that a restatement was completed in 2011.

The motion to approve the Amendment #5 to allow employees an in-service retirement to include a two-year sunset and authorize the Chair to execute any necessary documents was made by Commissioner Lightsey, seconded by Commissioner Grant, and failed for a lack of majority with two in favor (Lightsey, Grant), two opposed (Irions, Gantt), and one recusal (Andrews).

Commissioner Grant stated that there has been a lot of discussion about this topic; that nothing has been done; and that he would like to help the employees.

The motion to approve a "Survivorship Lock-In at Age 65" and authorize the Chair to execute any necessary documents was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Vice-Chair Irions, and passed with three in favor (Irions, Grant, Gantt), one opposed (Lightsey), and one recusal (Andrews).

6. **NEW BUSINESS**.

A. **Comprehensive Plan Amendment**. Chair Andrews introduced the item and advised that Economic Development Director Greg Panzer would like the Board to consider authorizing the initiation process to amend the County's Comprehensive Plan, including updates to the Future Character Development Map and Character Development Area Vision Statements, as appropriate.

Mr. Panzer addressed the Board and stated that he believes that some things have changed since the Comprehensive Plan was lat updated in 2024; that the process would consider a handful of areas of opportunity; that opportunity for non-residential and non-agricultural uses in the right areas will help to further diversity the tax base; that the areas have to make sense; that any amendments would not rezone a property; and that the rezoning application processes would still apply.

The motion to approve initiating an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan was made by Commissioner Gantt, seconded by Vice-Chair Irions, and passed with four in favor (Andrews, Irions, Gantt, Lightsey) and one opposed (Grant).

B. **Appointment to the Board of Tax Assessors**. Chair Andrews advised that Melissa Hammer has resigned from the Board of Tax Assessors and that Addis Bugg has expressed interest in serving on the Board of Tax Assessors.

The motion to appoint Addis Bugg to serve on the Board of Tax Assessors in the unexpired term until December 31, 2029 was made by Chair Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Grant, and passed unanimously.

C. **Engineering Proposal - Mountain Hill Realignment**. Chair Andrews advised that as part of the work being performed in the Mulberry Grove/Hwy 315 area that Harris County needs to realign approximately 1,000 linear feet of the existing Mountain Hill Road; that prior drawings prepared by A & R Engineering and American Engineers, Inc provide a general concept for the location and alignment of the proposed roadway realignments for Carter & Sloope, Inc. To use in the design.

Becky Langston, citizen who lives on Creekside Court, addressed the Board and advised that in 2007 there was a citizens committee that met with developers and voiced their concerns; that the developers made concessions at that time; that with the realignment of Mountain Hill Road that the stakeholders in the area feel that it is important and timely to resurface the concessions that the developers of the Grove made in 2007; that many of those that participated in those takes are no longer here; and that she would like to have the concessions entered into the current public record.

Dwight Langston, citizen who lives on Creekside Court, addressed the Board and stated that Bill Linsicomb of Highgrove Partners made concessions which were included in the July 3, 2007 meeting minutes as follows:

"After the presentation, he (Mr. Linsicomb) said that some of the concessions they have made as a result of various meetings with neighbors include (1) 100 foot buffer around the entire property, (2) in areas adjacent to Creek Bend, Mountain Hill Crossing, and Poplar Place subdivision, there will be another 100 feet of medium density land use to ensure that there will be no commercial uses adjacent the subdivisions; (3) reduced the hi-tech corporate office space and commercial by 890,400 square feet; (4) reduced the apartment count by 15% and reallocated its position to be more sensitive to the surrounding subdivisions; (5) provided 296 acres of open space, parks and buffers, not including the 30-40 acre site community center; (6) consolidated the school site of over 60 acres; and (7) agreed to a steering committee to continue to have communications with the surrounding neighborhoods."

"Dwight Langston, citizen who lives in Creek Bend Subdivision, appeared before the Board and said that while he and his wife were initially opposed to the project; that they have discussed the project with the developers and have had some of their concerns addressed; and that the only thing not mentioned tonight is that there would be a 100 foot professionally maintained buffer on the commercial side of Mountain Hill Road. Mr. Linsicomb said that is correct. Mr. Langston said that as the project has been presented, he and his wife are now in favor."

Mr. Langston further informed the Board that given the fact that so many of the people who were involved in the developments discussions are no longer here that it is important to the stakeholders and the affected area to have the concessions made public once again.

The motion to accept the Engineering Proposal/Scope of Services and authorize the Chair, County Manager, and County Clerk to execute any documents related to same was made by Commissioner Gantt, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.

D. **Distribution Tree Trim/Clearing Easement with Georgia Power Company (081 092)**. Chair Andrews advised that Georgia Power has approached the County regarding the need an additional tree trim / clearing easement on County-owned property along an existing power easement west of GA Hwy 85 across from Ellerslie Park and Central Church Road.

The motion to approve the execution of the Distribution Tree Trim / Clearing Easements with Georgia Power (081 092) and authorize the Chair, County Manager, and County Clerk to execute the easement documents was made by Commissioner Lightsey, seconded by Commissioner Gantt, and passed unanimously.

E. **Distribution Tree Trim/Clearing Easement with Georgia Power Company (081A040)**. Chair Andrews advised that Georgia Power has approached the County regarding the need an additional tree trim / clearing easement on County-owned property located on the northwest corner of the intersection of GA Hwy 85 and GA Hwy 315 across from the Ellerslie Volunteer Fire Department Building.

The motion to approve the execution of the Distribution Tree Trim / Clearing Easements with Georgia Power (081A040) and authorize the Chair, County Manager, and County Clerk to execute the easement documents was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Vice-Chairman Irions, and passed unanimously.

7. **COUNTY MANAGER**.

A. **Project Updates**. County Clerk Andrea Dzioba informed the Board that C.W. Matthews has been completing the work on the shoulders of the roads that have been resurfaced and it is expected that they will complete the project this week. She further advised that in the next couple of weeks, the Department of Natural Resources will be completing and inventory related to Willis Lake Dam at Ellerslie Park and that the visit is to view the dam, verify that there are no changes to capacity and survey the downstream. Ms. Dzioba also stated that the first two public hearings related to the property tax increase will be held on August 4, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. and during the regular meeting at 6:30 p.m.; that the County advertised based upon keeping the same millage rate of 9.13.

Chair Andrews advised that there has not been an increase in the millage rate but when the County collects one dollar more in a year than was collected the year before that the County has to advertise that as a tax increase and that there is not an anticipated increase in the millage rate.

8. **COUNTY ATTORNEY**.

   A. **Antenna Site Agreement with SBA Towers III LLC**. County Attorney Russell Britt introduced the item related to an Antenna Site Agreement with SBA Towers III LLC and stated that this is to lease space for the new radio system equipment to be placed on the tower site located in Waverly Hall; that the lease has been negotiated and that there have been a lot of concessions including that the per year escalation is 3% instead of the initial request of 5% and an included non-appropriation clause so that if a future Board doesn't appropriate the necessary funds that the County can get out of the contract with no penalty.

   The motion to approve the Antenna Site Agreement with SBA Towers III LLC and authorize the E911/EMA Director to execute the necessary documents was made by Commissioner Grant, seconded by Vice-Chair Irions, and passed unanimously.

9. **ADJOURNMENT**. The motion to adjourn was made by Vice-Chairman Irions, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

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Susan Andrews, Chair

Attest:

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Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk