

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION**

June 20, 2017

7:00 P.M.

Commissioners Present: J. Harry Lange, Jim Woods, Susan Andrews, Martha Chewning, Becky Langston. Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; John Taylor, County Attorney; Nancy D. McMichael, County Clerk.

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Lange called the Regular Session to order.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** At the request of Chairman Lange, Jay Pease of Robinson Grimes & Co. (auditors), led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **MINUTES.** The motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Session of June 6, 2017, and the Work Session of June 6, 2017 was made by Commissioner Woods, seconded by Commissioner Chewning, and passed unanimously.
4. **NEW BUSINESS**
  - A. **Financial Statement: April 2017.** The motion to approve the April 2017 financial statement was made by Commissioner Woods, seconded by Commissioner Chewning, and passed unanimously.
  - B. **Second Reading: Application of Audrianna Reshae Chaudhry for Beer & Wine Off Premises at Citgo Quik Mart, 9089 GA Highway 18, Pine Mountain.** Chairman Lange said that this was the Second Reading and that the application has been recommended for approval by the Sheriff's Office and Community Development. Audrianna Reshae Chaudhry, applicant, had no comments. Chairman Lange asked if anyone wished to speak in favor of or in opposition to this application. There being none, he said asked for a motion. The motion to approve this application, pending evidence of a permit from the Georgia Department Agriculture that food can be sold and of the County Occupational Tax having been purchased, was made by Commissioner Woods, seconded by Commissioner Chewning, and passed with four in favor (Woods, Chewning, Lange, Langston) and one opposed (Andrews).
  - C. **Audit FYE June 30, 2016 Presentation and Adoption.** Clint Chastain, finance officer through contract with Severn Trent, appeared before the Board and reviewed various aspects of the Audit FYE June 30, 2016 to include that the General Fund reserves are at \$9.6 million. In conclusion, Mr. Chastain thanked the Board for having the forethought to contract for financial and auditing services from Severn Trent, whose assistance enabled Robinson Grimes & Co. to complete the audit. He also said the Paul Glick, former Finance Officer, did an excellent job in laying the groundwork for the audit. Jay Pease and Steven Voynich, of Robinson Grimes & Co., auditors, appeared before the Board regarding the audit. Mr. Pease reviewed various parts of the audit not covered by Mr. Chastain's comments. He, too, thanked the Board for the assistance of Mr. Chastain, staff of Severn Trent, Randy Dowling, and Paul Glick for the information and assistance required to complete the audit. Following discussion, the motion to accept and approve the audit was made by Commissioner Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Langston, and passed unanimously. Chairman Lange echoed the comments of Mr. Chastain and Mr. Pease regarding the assistance provided by Mr. Glick which directly facilitated the ability to move forward rapidly and get the audit completed.
  - D. **Budget FY 17/18 Public Hearing II.** Chairman Lange called the Public Hearing to order and said that the budget included the general funds, the enterprise funds, all other funds, a 2% salary increase for employees, and that the County would be absorbing the additional cost for health insurance currently paid by employees for dependent coverage so there is no change to the amount paid by the employee, unless the employee is on the buy-up plan. He said that this budget was a difficult process for the Board, having held five Work Session regarding same, during which items were deleted, reduced, or revised. He asked Randy Dowling, County Manager, for any final comments regarding the Budget. Mr. Dowling said that the changes to the budget are clarified on a three-page listing; that the budget and clarification pages are on the website; that the Board must approve a budget by June 30; and that Department Heads/Constitutional Officers all received the clarification pages and aware of changes made to their respective budgets. There being no further comments, Chairman Lange asked for comments from those in attendance.

Mike Jolley, Sheriff, appeared before the Board and said that the Board had requested a 3% cut from each department; that 3% for the Sheriff's Office was \$19,575 but he was able to cut more than \$27,000; that 3% for the Jail was \$13,556 which he is not able to do; and that he would like to have the approximate \$8,000 from the Sheriff's Office to be credited toward the Jail. Following discussion, the consensus was to treat the Sheriff's Office and Jail as one department for this budget whereby the Jail budget would not be cut and the entire 3% will come from the Sheriff's Office.

Wayne Harbert, citizen who lives on Grey Smoke Trail, appeared before the Board and said that he is disappointed more citizens were not in attendance for this particular meeting; that the Board has hard decisions to make regarding the budget; and that the budget should be items that are needed, and not just wanted.

Stacy Haralson, Clerk of Superior Court, appeared before the Board and said that she also cut 3% from each of her two departments (Superior Court and Clerk of Superior Court), but that if a court order is handed down and payment is directed, she has no choice but to make the payment; and that she hopes the remaining funds will cover what is required.

Lynn Sanders, citizen who lives on Dogwood Lane, appeared before the Board and said that she noticed that the budget includes funds going out of the County; and that the Board does a really good job but she would like to see the money stay in the County as much as possible.

Thomas Lakes, Probate Judge, appeared before the Board and said that he managed to cut his budget by 3% as requested; and that he wants clarification on how to address job reclassifications and salary increases for his employees. Consensus was the Judge Lakes should submit a proposal for review and response by the Board and to provide same to Randy Dowling, County Manager.

Joe Weldon, Coroner, appeared before the Board and again requested that the health insurance and retirement benefits that he had requested, but which have been cut from his budget, be reinstated; that he, like the Commissioners, works what is basically a full-time job for part-time pay; and that unlike the Commissioners, he does not receive insurance and benefits, he is requesting that things be equal. Chairman Lange thanked Mr. Weldon for his comments and said that the Board would take his request under consideration during deliberation of adoption of the budget.

- E. **Budget FY 17/18 Consideration and Adoption.** Chairman Lange said that five Work Sessions were held regarding the budget, which includes the General Funds, the Special Revenue Funds, the Capital Projects Fund, Debt Service, the Enterprise Funds (Airport, Solid Waste, Water Works), and other statistical information; that input was received from Department Heads and citizens; and that while the budget and millage rate are related, they are separate issues. He asked for comments regarding the request to reinstate the health insurance and retirement benefits for the Coroner. Commissioner Chewning said that it is a disservice to the Coroner that the issue was not previously addressed and that she is in favor of providing same. Commissioner Andrews agreed with Commissioner Chewning and said that for someone who does such a critical job such benefits should be provided, and Chairman Lange said he would support the benefits, totaling \$9,692 (\$7,562 for health benefits and \$2,130 for retirement) being reinstated. Following discussion, Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that he should be able to come up with the necessary funding.

Chairman Lange said that the budget is pretty much where it is going to be and shows a shortfall of expenses over revenues, but there are alternative ways of making up that difference by borrowing from other funds and a possible increase in the millage rate.

Commissioner Andrews said that the Board is elected by citizens to look after their tax dollars and to be fiscally responsible in keeping the County fiscally sound; that the County is certainly not in a financial crisis at this point, but if action is not taken now, that may not be true in a couple of years; that making sound financial management decisions include looking forward; that the proposed budget is sound; and that she supports the proposed budget, but care must be taken to stick to it to avoid being in worse shape than today.

Chairman Lange said that he while there have been times where funds have been spent on things that were thought to be good for the county, careful consideration needs to be done before anything new is undertaken. Commissioner Andrews said that about \$3,000,000 was cut from the proposed budget and that shows the Board is trying to spend on what is needed and not on what is wanted.

Commissioner Langston said that she has spent many hours on the budget; that she still has very strong reservations about the proposed budget; that there are things in the budget that could be postponed; that she is not happy with some of the things included in the budget; that she is happy with the public safety; that she is semi-happy with the 2% salary increase for employees because she would have preferred it to be at least 3%; and that she promised her constituents that she would vote her conscious, based on their input, and she plans on doing so tonight.

Chairman Lange said that Commissioners Langston's comments echo what all have felt, but having not had a millage rate increase for many years makes it tough to consider such and is something that may need to be considered in funding the budget shortfall; that while all would prefer to do more for employees, an upgrade of \$500,000 was done last year based on a salary survey and to keep the salary levels an increase of at least 1.5% is needed; and to help employees, the County is picking up the entire increase for dependent health coverage (except for those on the buy-up plan) of over \$300,000. He said the budget process has not been easy, but it will be a challenge to not only work within the budget but to also look forward to preparing for the future. He also said that other than the two business parks and property taxes, the County has very little retail and streams of revenue are needed to help meet budget demands in the future.

Commissioner Woods said that over that last 10 years, there has been a 9% decrease in taxes while the population has increased by over 5,000; that revenue has been decreased by the State having retained funds while requiring more work; that the issue is not the County spending a lot of money because the number of employees to perform the scope of their jobs is at the bare minimum; that everything that could possibly be cut from the budget has been cut; and that the County is getting less revenue while expenses are going up.

Chairman Lange commented that this is the first time the proposed budget has been on the website and that he asked that such continues in the future.

There being no further comments, Chairman Lange asked for a motion regarding the proposed budget and adopting Resolution.

The motion to approve the budget with the adjustment for the Coroner's benefits and adopt the Resolution regarding same was made by Commissioner Woods, seconded by Commissioner Chewning, and passed with four in favor (Woods, Chewning, Andrews, Lange) and one opposed (Langston). Commissioner Langston said that while she voted against the budget, it does not mean that she is opposed to everything in the budget; that there are many things she approves of; that a more austere budget could have been compiled; and that there are some things, in her opinion, are wants more than needs. Chairman Lange said that probably goes for most of the Board as there are items that each Commissioner would prefer to be more, less, added or deleted.

- F. **Wellness Grant Application**. Chairman Lange said that the County has received this grant, for which there is no match by the County, for several years; that it must be applied for annually; and that the funding must be used for health and wellness related promotions and activities. The motion to approve the grant application was made by Commissioner Langston and seconded by Commissioner Chewning. Commissioner Woods said that this was a last-minute addition to the agenda, which has occurred from time to time, and that he will table any future last-minute additions on which the Board is asked to act. The motion regarding the Wellness Grant passed unanimously.

5. **COUNTY MANAGER**

- A. **Project Updates**. Randy Dowling, County Manager, brought the Board up to date on various projects, as follows:
- (1) **Library**. Project is going well; that it is on time and on budget; that it is scheduled to open in early 2018; that no tax dollars are being used in this

project; and that the banner regarding the construction should be installed this week. Chairman Lange said that of the \$1.236 million donation goal, pledges have been received for \$670,000.

- (2) Website. The new website is up and that efforts are being made to keep the information on same current.
- (3) LMIG 2016 & 2017. Bid has gone out, the mandatory pre-bid was June 15, and the bids are due June 22 with award scheduled for July 5.
- (4) Hardage Road. Bid has gone out, and bids are due June 22 with award scheduled for July 5.
- (5) Kings Gap CDBG. With the completion of the FY 2016 audit, the CDBG project can soon be closed out.
- (6) 911 Radio System Improvements. The Request for Proposals (RFP) has gone out and proposals are due June 23 with award scheduled for July 18.

6. **COUNTY ATTORNEY**

A. **Agreements with New Horizons: Mental Health Center and Harris-Talbot Service Center**. John Taylor, County Attorney, said these are annual agreements, one each for the Mental Health Center and the Harris-Talbot Service Center for which New Horizons pays the County \$500 a month per building for use and maintenance in lieu of rent, and he recommended same of approval. Following discussion, the motion to approve both agreements was made by Commissioner Langston, seconded by Commissioner Chewning, and passed unanimously. (Documents can be found in "Contracts & Agreements" file as C&A #17-20 and C&A #17-21.)

B. **Agreement with Pond & Company: Task #4 - Engineering Design Service for Perimeter Security/Wildlife Fencing**. John Taylor, County Attorney, said that the agreement is with Pond & Company, the County's Airport consultant, and is under the master agreement for which a task order is done for each project. He said that this agreement is for the design and services study for the construction of fencing at the Airport for security and to keep wildlife off the runway at a cost of \$51,578, which is fully reimbursable from the GDOT; and that he recommended approval of same. Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that there will be no delay in payment of the reimbursement, and that the design should be finished in 90 days, after which the bid can be let. Commissioner Langston asked that action be tabled to the July 5 meeting and that the consultant review for the purpose of revising the cost of \$51,578, which she feels is an exorbitant amount. Mr. Dowling will notify the consultant to review the cost and to be present at the next meeting. Chairman Lange asked Mr. Taylor to review and revise the agreement so that it reflects the cost is covered by GDOT or FAA.

7. **RECESS FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION**. Chairman Lange made the motion at 8:45 PM to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing property acquisition or disposition and personnel matters. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Langston and passed unanimously.
8. **RESUME REGULAR SESSION**. The motion to go back into Regular Session was made by Chairman Lange, seconded by Commissioner Chewning, and passed unanimously.
9. **ADJOURNMENT**. There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Chairman Lange, seconded by Commissioner Andrews, and passed unanimously.

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J. Harry Lange, Chairman

Attest:

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Nancy D. McMichael, County Clerk