

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
PLANNING SESSION**

July 30, 2020

2:00 PM

Meeting Room, Harris County Community Center  
(Limited Seating & Teleconference)

Commissioners Present (in person): Susan Andrews, Rob Grant, Andrew Zuerner. Commissioners Present (via telephone): Becky Langston, Harry Lange. Staff Present (in person): Randy Dowling, County Manager; Nancy McMichael, County Clerk. Staff Present (via telephone): Russell Britt, County Attorney. Also in attendance - Staff (in person): Kris Summerall, Alex Santiago; Citizen (in person): Richie Grantham; Staff (via phone): Wayne Morris, Mike Cardwell; Others (via phone): Alex Daman (at 2:00), Lee Walton (at 4:00).

**CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Langston called the meeting to order.

**Proposed Employee Compensation Plan: Alex Daman, CVIOG.** Alex Daman, with CVIOG, reviewed the PowerPoint presentation (via telephone) regarding the proposed employee compensation plan to include the project objectives; the project steps; the classification plan; the custom salary survey; the DCA local government salary survey; the Bureau of Labor Statistics; the proposed grade & step pay table; the key pay table characteristics; the four-pronged implementation strategy, which includes (1) address historical compression issues, adopting classifications and market rates (pay table), provide time in current position step adjustments, and classification and compensation plan maintenance; the proposed cost of implementation; fast facts; and total compensation consideration. Following discussion, while consensus was in favor of implementing the proposed compensation plan, there was concern as to the method of compensating employees for years of service with the County. Kris Summerall, HR Tech, is to contact Commissioner Lange regarding his concerns about the length of service payment. In response to questions Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that the County can afford the proposed plan, which is estimated to cost about \$2 million. Action is to be taken during the August 18 meeting.

**Mercer Medicine: Proposal for Use of Old Library.** Morgan Marlowe (coordinator of development with the Harris County School System), Ben West (executive director of finance & administration with Mercer University), Hugh Sosbee (government relations with Mercer University), and John Asbell (Georgia Power local manager), joined the meeting in person to discuss the use of the old Library as a medical facility to be operated by Mercer University School of Medicine. Mr. Marlowe said that Mercer Medicine would like to operate a medical facility in Hamilton; that the appropriate location appears to be the old Library, as recommended by the steering committee. Mr. West said that the medical facility will be operated by the Mercer School of Medicine and under the director by an on-site practitioner with service and residency students; that the medical service will include x-ray, possibly a CT scanner (depends on need) and also tele-health service and will serve anyone that walks through the door whether the person is indigent, uninsured, on Medicaid, and there will be a sliding scale to work with everyone. Mr. Marlowe said that strategy includes raising the funds necessary to renovate the building, which is estimated to be between \$600,000 and \$700,000; that the School Board is willing to offer the County storage area, at no cost to the County, in one of its buildings to help the County meet its storage needs; and that the School system is willing to do as much as possible to get Mercer Medicine to the County. In response to a question from Commissioner Andrews, Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that the CARES Act funding could probably be used in this endeavor, but he does not know for certain. Mr. Marlowe said that plans are to have the facility up and running by late Spring or early Summer 2021. In response to a question from Chairman Langston, Mr. Marlowe said that plans are to have all the funds necessary to make the renovations to the building, but that in order to start the fund raising, a commitment from the Commissioners is necessary. John Asbell said that should the fund raising not be successful, there are low-interest loans available for such. Mr. West said that house calls would be provided when needed; that while Mercer can't promise the practitioner will be from the community, the staff will be; and that Mercer will be here to get involved in the community. Following discussion, consensus was to take action during the August 4 regular session, and if approved, also authorize the County Manager and County Attorney to negotiate and work out the lease and/or other legal documents, which would then be brought back to the Board for approval.

**Impact Fees: Lee Walton, Wood PLC.** Lee Walton, with Wood PLC, reviewed the PowerPoint presentation (via telephone) regarding impact fees (IF) to include what an IF program is for, the basis for IF (planning & technical requirements), counties in GA with IF, who has IF in the USA, are IF flexible, limitations (roads, water, sewer, stormwater, parks, fire, police and library), and the steps involved to implement IF. Discussion included that IF cannot be used for schools; that implementation does not require approval by voters; that if established and approved by the DCA, IF plan has to be incorporated in the County's Comprehensive Plan, the rate can be adjusted, suspended or discontinued by the Board; that it will take about a year for the study; that IF cannot be used toward personnel or maintenance, such as for road paving, but can be used to increase capacity; that IF do not necessarily go back into the new development, which is more like a tax allocation district, but is broader in a geographical relationship; that IF would be potentially applicable for increasing a 8" water line to 12" for new development, for adding a new recreation field/park, and possibly for a new Sheriff's substation or a fire station, and for a new library; that the study should be performed by a consulting firm and is estimated to cost between \$75,000 to \$125,000 depending on the area of study; that IF receipts can be used to reimburse the General Fund for the study; that IF are not retroactive, but typically addressed on new development after IF are implemented; that IF would be applicable in a development built in phases; and that IF are not associated

with zoning, but with building permits. Consensus was to consider a study, but that the Board needs to come up with a list of IF projects at the next planning retreat - to identify areas to ascertain if the study will be beneficial or not. Commissioner Lange pointed out that developers are already required to pave roads and install infrastructure (water) so the Board needs to keep in mind what it currently gets from developers.

**Fire District Boundaries: Cataula & Antioch.** Bill Czukur, Assistant Chief of the Cataula VFD, joined the meeting (in person) to respond to comments made by Antioch VFD Chief during the February planning session. Mr. Czukur distributed handouts of his prepared speech. Upon conclusion, Commissioner Andrews asked if the boundary issue had been before the Council of Fire Chiefs (CFC). Jack McClung, Chief of the Council of Fire Chiefs, was present (in person) and said that the discussion had not been before the CFC but that it should. Commissioner Andrews recommended that the matter be taken to the CFC for recommendation, and for same to be on the next planning retreat agenda. [Note: Handout can be found in "Miscellaneous Documents" file as MD# 20-09.]

**VFD Stipends: Pay by Calls/Responses.** Commissioner Andrews said that this is not to decrease the current stipends but to increase it based on calls. Consensus was for this matter to be taken to the Council of Fire Chiefs for recommendation, and for same to be on the next planning retreat agenda.

**Rehiring of Retired Employees Who Are Receiving Retirement Benefits from the County.** Discussion took place regarding changing the County's Defined Benefit Plan to allow retired employees who are receiving retirement benefits to return to work for the County. Consensus was to not amend the Plan to allow such.

**Reduction of Speed Limit on SR 85 near Waverly Hall Ballparks.** Discussion took place regarding a request from a citizen to reduce the speed limit on SR 85 from "somewhere between the Mexican restaurant and the Pure Oil gas station" to Waverly Hall town limits from 55 mph to 45 mph, and included that because this is a GDOT road, GDOT will perform the required study, at no cost to the County, if the BOC has no objections to the change. Consensus was to move forward with the process. Nancy McMichael, County Clerk, will notify GDOT.

**Proposed T-SPLOST Projects for March 2022 Referendum.** Discussion included the current T-SPLOST expires December 31, 2022; that the referendum to continue the 1¢ sales tax will be in March 2022 and projects are needed to submit to the River Valley Regional Commission for review; that one suggested project is the continuation of the Rails to Trails project from the Callaway Gardens Country Store to points south; that projects in the current T-SPLOST include the widening of US 27, the passing lane on US 27 south of Hamilton, the SR 103 passing lanes, and the roundabout at SR 315 @ SR 219; that suggestions from the Board included bridge repair over Ossahatchie Creek, Airport Runway extension, various road projects; that the projects have to be listed on the ballot, have to be approved by the executive committee roundtable and then by the full round table; that there is no limit as to the number of the projects the County can propose. Commissioners are to submit their projects to the County Manager.

**Community Center Fee Schedule: Amendment for Out of County Residential Fee.** Discussion took place to amend the current out-of-county residential fee from \$5/person/day and included that while that cost should remain, perhaps adding a choice of a \$5 one-time registration fee/person plus \$5/ID card fee/person plus \$100/person out of county fee with the card being good for one year, then \$50/card renewal fee, and if not renewed with 18 months of expiration, registration process begins anew. No objections to the change, and action will be taken during the August 4 meeting regarding same.

**COVID-19 Protocol for Employees.** Chairman Langston said she was concerned about protocol for employees as it pertains to COVID-19. Randy Dowling, County Manager, said that protocol is being handled and departments are complying with the Governor's recommendations, plus barrier glass is being installed in offices, in addition to the use of masks and hand sanitizer; that with exposure to the disease, the Health Department is followed. It was noted that it is up to the offices of elected officials to determine how best to continue to provide services.

**Sick Leave Bank Policy.** Discussion took place regarding the need to draft and consider a policy regarding a sick leave bank. There were no objections, and Nancy McMichael, County Clerk, is to draft same with review by the County Attorney before consideration by the Board during an upcoming meeting.

**Fireworks on County Property.** Discussion took place regarding the use of fireworks on County property; that while the County can regulate the use of its property, it cannot regulate the use of fireworks, which is controlled by the State; that the County can require evidence of proper approval from the Probate Judge as well as the insurance requirements of the State; and that the County Attorney has provided appropriate wording for the application form. Consensus was to move forward with the application form with appropriate wording for consideration by the Board during the August 18 meeting.

**Square in Hamilton.** Commissioner Grant said that because the first County Courthouse was located on the square in Hamilton, the County should negotiate with Hamilton about obtaining ownership of same and entering into an intergovernmental agreement with the City regarding upkeep.

**Woodland Hills DRI.** The Board was advised that copies of the results of DRI for Woodland Hills are in their mailboxes in the office.

**ADJOURNMENT**