

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION**

April 16, 2024
6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Rob Grant, Susan Andrews, Greg Gantt, Scott Lightsey, Bobby Irions. Staff Present: Randy Dowling, County Manager; Russell Britt, County Attorney; Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk.

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Grant called the Regular Session to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. **INVOCATION / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Vice-Chair Andrews gave the invocation. Chairman Grant led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **MINUTES** The motion to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2024 Regular Session was made by Commissioner Lightsey, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews, and passed unanimously.
4. **DISCUSSION.** Chairman Grant requested that the County Manager provide an update on the financials to the Board of Commissioners. County Manager Randy Dowling read correspondence that he handed out to the Board which included that an extension for the FY 2023 audit was requested by the previous Chief Financial Officer and the extension until June 30, 2024 from the State was granted; that the previous Chief Financial Officer voluntarily resigned on December 18, 2023 and his last day was on December 29, 2023; a new Chief Financial Officer was hired and started employment on January 29, 2024; that she has been to training for our financial system, worked to gain access to all of the banking and investment accounts, and has been working on the budget-to-actuals; that all County departments have access to their budgets and can see all of their budget transactions in real time as they occur; they are also coordinating with the new Chief Financial Officer with any issues that need resolving such as miscodings; a new staff accountant position has been advertised; projects are being completed and issues are being resolved; and that the County is in good, stable financial condition. Chairman Grant stated that he has also been involved in helping to get the new Chief Financial Officer access to bank accounts and has had several Zoom calls with the State Department and that some of the bureaucracy was on the State side and not with the County.
5. **APPEARANCE OF CITIZENS**
 - A. **Morgan Marlowe - Harris County Mismanagement.** Morgan Marlowe, citizen who lives on GA Hwy 18, stated that he believes that we don't have a County Manager but a Project Manager; that projects and processes related to the airport bid, fire training center, UDC, Impact fees, and AG Center were messed up; that the AG Committee wasn't provided a budget or directive; that he never received an answer related to Community Development and the Oakhurst stove issue; discussed issues that he has had vs. rules for County projects; that he doesn't believe there is any management going on with people or projects.

Brian McKeen, citizen who lives on O'Neal Road, addressed the Board and said that he echos a number of the concerns of Mr. Marlowe; that when you talk to people about people that most have people that are liked or disliked; asking people whether they think County Manager is doing a good job; that he has not found anyone that has said that he is doing a great job; that he has reached out to Commissioners and has been told that they can't fire him because he has a contract; that they can but there are consequences; that he wonders who is the liaison to CVIOG - the County Manager or Human Resources; that he has better benefits than himself; that the contract is one-sided; that it is an economic decision; and that there was no requirement for another 4-year agreement.

Dwight Langston, citizen who lives on Creekside Court, stated that he has some concerns; that the Board may have an update related to financials but that they don't have financial statements; that the Board is failing the taxpayers by not having the County Manager provide the financial statements; that it is easy to claim a former employee; that financials should be presented in a timely manner; and that this makes Harris County government look "awful."

- B. **Bo Barber II - North Harris County Infrastructure and County Services Concerns.** Bo Barber, II, citizen who lives on Old West Point Road, addressed the Board and stated that he is concerned that the quality of life is suffering on the north end of the County; that roads have been turned into service roads for the city; that there is zero traffic management; that Old West Point Road and Davidson Road are being used by 18-wheelers; that signs are up and Public Works keeps replacing signs that are being run over; that the shoulders on the roads are degrading; that it is unsafe for residents' children; that there were no potholes a year ago; that there is illicit activity; and that they need help from Sheriff's Office.

6. **OLD BUSINESS**

- A. **Revised Pine Mountain Valley Park Concept Plan.** Chairman Grant introduced the item related to the revised Pine Mountain Valley Park Concept Plan. Ashley Marston, Recreation Director, and Mike Fuson, Assistant Director of Recreation, were available to answer any questions or concerns.

Ashley Marston, Recreation Director, addressed the Board that the revised Concept Plan and cost estimates are what they have before them. She stated that they took out the Miracle field, four pickleball courts, the inclusive playground was replaced by a regular playground, and that the irrigation was removed from the softball field.

Discussion included that the included playground does have handicap accessible components to it; that the existing Pavilion will be completed prior to the July 4th event held out there by the Pine Mountain Valley Fire Department; and that there are three restroom stalls in the women's and two in the men's with one urinal.

Connie Guy, citizen who lives on Bugg Road, expressed concerns about the new estimated costs far exceed the \$250,000 to develop Pine Mountain Valley Park to develop the park; that she wants to know how many residents received the surveys, what questions were on the surveys, what was the sample size; that fences keep people out; that mulch walking paths require constant maintenance and upkeep; will the playground be unlocked, restrooms cleaned, and overtime and holiday pay paid to employees to open and close the park; that SPLOST has \$4 million to Recreation; that they should stop spending taxpayer money; and that it is negligent to commit taxpayer money to five times an agreed amount for a fenced, locked, gated park in Pine Mountain Valley.

Mike Fuson, Assistant Director of Recreation, addressed the Board and advised that there was a citizen survey that was delivered to Pine Mountain Valley area via paper that was handed out, was supposed to go out in the water bills, and that there was an online survey that was left up on the Harris County website, the Parks and Recreation website and Facebook approximately 1-1/2 months. Mr. Fuson stated that he believed that they received a little over 300 responses and that they compiled the responses and compiled a wish list of what they wanted and what they didn't want. He said that he created 150 paper surveys and that everything else was digital.

Additional discussion included that the perimeter fence and gates would be similar to the ones at Ellerslie Park; that the gates are on timers so that they open in the morning and close in the evening; that park staff would be rotated to clean bathrooms and provide maintenance; that Phase I is getting the grounds ready; and that everyone wanted a playground and a place safe to walk.

The motion to approve the proposed Phase I construction at the Pine Mountain Valley Park as provided in the Concept Plan excluding the perimeter split rail fence and signage/gates and that the information also be presented to the Pine Mountain Valley Chamber of Commerce was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.

7. **NEW BUSINESS** There were no New Business items.

8. **COUNTY MANAGER**

- A. **Project Updates.** Randy Dowling, County Manager, reviewed the status of all major projects as contained in the approved budget and provided an update on same to the Board. Discussion included

9. **COUNTY ATTORNEY.** Russell Britt, County Attorney, said that he had no additional business to come before the Board this evening.
10. **ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Gantt, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews and Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Rob Grant, Chairman

Attest:

Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk