

**HARRIS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION**

May 21, 2024
6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Rob Grant, Susan Andrews, Greg Gantt, Scott Lightsey, Bobby Irions. Staff Present: Russell Britt, County Attorney; Andrea Dzioba, Interim County Manager/County Clerk; Elizabeth Barfield, Chief Financial Officer.

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Grant called the Regular Session to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. **INVOCATION / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Chairman Grant led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **MINUTES** The motion to approve the minutes of the May 7, 2024 Work Session and Regular Session was made by Commissioner Irions, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.
4. **PRESENTATIONS**
 - A. **Proclamation - Community Action 60th Anniversary and Community Action Month.** Chairman Grant read the Proclamation recognizing Community Action 60th Anniversary and designating May as “Community Action Month” in recognition of the Enrichment Services Program. Jamie Thomas, Senior Director of Mission Advancement for Enrichment Services was presented with the Proclamation.
 - B. **New Horizons - Community Mental Health Needs Assessment.** Dr. LaKaren Rickman, Clinical Psychologist, from New Horizons Behavioral Health presented to the Board their recent Community Mental Health Needs Assessment and stated that there is a shortage of mental health providers; that they want to help build the workforce; that increased access is needed; that they need to meet people where they are; that they are working to educate communities; and that they are trying to destigmatize mental health issues.
5. **APPEARANCE OF CITIZENS**
 - A. **Jim Furin - U.S. Postal Service and April Water Bill Late Fees.** Jim Furin, citizen who lives on West Dogwood Lane, stated he was in attendance to continue to address the water bill late fees; that he has received a couple of emails related to water bills and the postal service delays; that this is about the citizens of Harris County and people who have a difficult time; that the Board has the power to suspend water bill late fees; and that he would like water bill late fees to be suspended through May or June or until the postal service gets “their act together.” In response to Mr. Furin’s comments, Commissioner Gantt stated that it seems like a small matter to some people; that some people want to utilize the postal service; that they have the right to pay by check; and that it may take more work but that it isn’t fair to ignore the issue. Chairman Grant advised that it may be something that needs to be looked into further.
6. **OLD BUSINESS**
 - A. **Bid Award: Elevated Water Tank.** Chairman Grant introduced the item related to the bid award for the elevated water tank and stated that previous questions related to the graphics on the tank have been addressed. The motion to approve the approve the Agreement and Limited Warranty Deed with Mulberry Grove Development Company, LLC and award the bid to Caldwell Tanks in the amount of \$4,584,495.00 (with 500 day construction time), and authorize the Chairman and County Clerk to execute all necessary documents relating to this project was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews, and passed unanimously.
7. **NEW BUSINESS**
 - A. **RVRC - Comprehensive Plan Update and Transmittal.** Jim Livingston, Executive Director at River Valley Regional Commission, was in attendance to address the Board. Additionally, Blaine Hoskins, Rick Morris, and Allison Slocum from River Valley Regional Commission were in attendance. Mr. Livingston advised the document included is the update of the Joint Comprehensive Plan; that they are getting ready to send it to the Georgia

Department of Community Affairs; that the County would then adopt; that the Work Program should reflect what has been provided; that there have been a number of public meetings for feedback from citizens; and that the surveys have gotten a good response. Blaine Hoskins stated that there has been an update to the demographics as well as current and future land use maps. The motion to approve the transmittal of the Comprehensive Plan to the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was made by Commissioner Lightsey, seconded by Commissioner Gantt, and passed unanimously.

- B. **Inmate Work Agreement with the City of Manchester.** Chairman Grant introduced the item related to the proposed Inmate Work Agreement with the City of Manchester and provides for an increase in the number of inmates provided to the City of Manchester for an inmate work detail from eight inmates to ten inmates and that all of the other information in the agreement is the same as the one currently in place. The motion to approve the Inmate Work Agreement with the City of Manchester effective until June 30, 2025 was made by Vice-Chair Andrews, seconded by Commissioner Gantt, and passed unanimously.
- C. **Intergovernmental Agreements by and between the Georgia Department of Corrections and Harris County (County Capacity) for Prison.** Chairman Grant advised that this is an amendment to the original agreement and that the amendment is effective from April 1, 2024 until the expiration date of June 30, 2024 and increases the amount paid per inmate per day from \$22.00 to \$24.00. He stated that additionally there is a new agreement effective from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025 for the Board's consideration which includes the same provision. The motion to approve the amendment and the renewal Intergovernmental Agreements with the Georgia Department of Corrections and authorize the Chairman to execute the necessary documents was made by Commissioner Gantt, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously.

8. **COUNTY MANAGER.**

- A. **Financial Update.** Chief Financial Officer Elizabeth Barfield addressed the Board and provided a brief history of the Finance Department beginning in 2020 when the department was fully staffed. She advised that in 2023 the department lost an accounts payable/accounts receivable employee and a purchasing employee. Ms. Barfield stated that she when she began her employment in January of 2024 that she was tasked with several objectives - complete the Fiscal Year 2023 audit which has an extension until June 30, 2024; complete the reconciliations for Fiscal Year 2024; begin work on the Fiscal Year 2025 budget; and continue to complete the day-to-day activities. She advised that the Fiscal Year 2024 audit is about to start and is due in December. She said that she has been working diligently to getting access to all of the financial systems and accounts. Ms. Barfield said that everyone in the office has worked together to get things completed as a team and that employees are as frustrated as much as the citizens are and requested some patience while they are completing the needed tasks. She described the processes that the department has been handling while working to get the financials up-to-date and the difficulties and time involved while doing same. She has now been working to get up-to-speed on the Fiscal Year 2025 budget and working on day-to-day tasks and never knows what that may include. Ms. Barfield stated that she is reluctant to release numbers that are not complete since they are being highly scrutinized and advised that they are taking everything very seriously and working very diligently. In response to an inquiry from the Board, she advised that the bills are being paid in a timely manner, payroll is being handled, and the bank accounts are in great shape.
- B. **Project Updates.** Interim County Manager/County Clerk Andrea Dzioba informed the Board that they are still working on employee compensation study and are providing feedback to CVIOG; that the Comprehensive Plan provided this evening will be transmitted to the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) and the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for their review and comment; that a meeting occurred today related to the Public Works Facility and that the group which includes Public Works staff, the engineer, and the contractor meet frequently to discuss the project; that oral presentations (three hours each) for two of the companies that bid on the radio system were held today to provide information to the end users, allow feedback, provide answers to any questions and "test drive" the equipment; and that the Recreation

Department received the supplies necessary to repair some of the guardrails on the Man O' War Trail and should be complete in the next couple of weeks. Chairman Grant stated that he spoke with the Harris County Chamber of Commerce who advised that last year's Airport Open House attendance was approximately 1,200 people and this year's attendance was approximately 1,800 people even with the rain and clouds. He thanked Airport Director Ronnie Pendergrass and the Harris County Chamber of Commerce for their hard work. Chairman Grant also stated that tourism numbers are up, that the use of the Man O' War Trail is "sky high" and that usage is expected to increase as summer approaches.

9. **COUNTY ATTORNEY.**

A. **REQUEST FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION.** County Attorney Russell Britt said that he had a need for an executive session under personnel and litigation.

10. **RECESS FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Chairman Grant made the motion to go into Executive Session for personnel and litigation at 7:25 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Irions and passed unanimously.

11. **RESUME REGULAR SESSION.** The motion to go back into Regular Session was made at 7:41 p.m. by Commissioner Gantt, seconded by Commissioner Irions, and passed unanimously.

12. **OTHER**

A. The motion to proceed with the proposal for services from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government for the search for the new County Manager was made by Chairman Grant, seconded by Vice-Chair Andrews, and passed unanimously.

13. **ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Irions, seconded by Commissioner Lightsey, and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Rob Grant, Chairman

Attest:

Andrea Dzioba, County Clerk