

STATE OF GEORGIA COUNTY OF HENRY

The Henry County Board of Commissioners held a Called Joint Meeting with the Henry County Water Authority (HCWA) and Henry County Development Authority (HCDA) at 3:00 p.m., Thursday, October 24, 2024, in the Henry County Administration Building, Community Room, at 140 Henry Parkway, McDonough, GA.

Notice of this meeting was posted in the entrance foyer of the Henry County Administration Building and placed on the Henry County Website under Public Notices. The legal organ, *Henry Daily Herald*, was also notified. Those present were:

Henry County Board of Commissioners

Carlotta Harrell, Chair
Johnny Wilson, Vice Chair/District I Commissioner
Neat Robinson, District II Commissioner
Michael Price, District IV Commissioner
Kevin Lewis, District V Commissioner
Dee Anglyn, District III Commissioner (Not Present)

Henry County Development Authority/Board of Directors

Irvin K. Culpepper, Jr., Chair/District IV
Eddie Ausband, Vice Chair/District III (Not present)
Charles E. Marshall, County-at-Large
David Crow, District I
Siddiqah Gibson, District II
Cynthia Andrews, District V

Henry County Water Authority/Board of Directors

Warren Holder, Chair/District I
Sandra Rozier, Vice Chair/District IV (Via Phone)
Fred Mays, County-at-Large
Richard Sylvia, Jr., District II
Lindsey McGarity, District III
Myra Lott, District V

County Staff in Attendance: Cheri Hobson-Matthews, County Manager; Kevin Johnson, Deputy County Manager; Ashley Larrow, CM/COS; Roque Romero, Public Works Cluster Lead; Toussaint Kirk, Planning & Economic Development Cluster Lead; John Selfe, Tax Assessor/Chief Appraiser; Stephanie Braun, County Clerk; Jasmin Head, Deputy County Clerk and Serena Nowell, County Attorney.

Development Authority Staff in Attendance: Sharon Hill, Interim Executive Director; Susan Wise, Manager/Business Development; and Rod Meadows, Attorney for HCDA.

Water Authority Staff in Attendance: Tony Carnell, General Manager; Dave Peterson, CFO; Karen Lake-Thompson, Clerk; Tara Brown, Director, Strategic Planning; Scott Sage, Division Manager, Engineering; Pat Hembree, Division Manager, Water Production & Reclamation; and Andrew Welch, III, Attorney for HCWA.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Henry County Board of Commissioners for Thursday, October 24, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. was called to order.

Cheri Hobson-Matthews, County Manager, extended a warm welcome to all attendees and introduced several staff members in attendance.

Sharon Hill, Intern Director for the Development Authority introduced her Board members in attendance.

Tony Carnell, General Manager for Henry County Water Authority, introduced his Board members in attendance.

Chair Harrell, HCBOC, stated that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the vision for the County. She emphasized a commitment to moving beyond past challenges and focusing on future growth and development. She noted that each member of the Board of Commissioners has a vision for their respective districts, and as Chair, she aims to incorporate all of these visions into a countywide plan. She expressed the importance of aligning their efforts moving forward to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

County Manager Matthews stated that the goal for the meeting today is to focus on moving forward together and building partnerships. She presented a PowerPoint titled "Vision for Henry County" and outlined Chair Harrell's vision for the county, which includes becoming a medical hub, developing entertainment options, a hotel/conference center and an airport/aviation sector.

Chair Harrell invited each District Commissioner to share their visions for their districts.

Commissioner Kevin Lewis expressed his excitement about everyone being in the same room and shared his desire for stronger partnerships not only among those present but also with the cities. He expressed that the county cannot reach its full potential unless it works closely with the cities. He mentioned the need for a medical center or campus in the western and possibly southern parts of the county, so residents have access to medical services locally. Additionally, he stated the importance of creating an Airport Master Plan, as he believes the airport is a vital yet underutilized asset that can drive economic growth over the next twenty to thirty years. He noted that many of his constituents are asking for major retail developments and that he hopes to receive more updates on the retail strategy, as no new information has been shared since last year. He is hopeful they can move forward and receive additional details soon.

Commissioner Michael Price highlighted the unique diversity within his district, encompassing both rural and urban areas, and expressed his goal of achieving balanced, strategic development in these regions. He also expressed his desire to research what types of medical services are needed in the county that are currently unavailable. Commissioner Price referenced SPLOST VI, which will be on the upcoming ballot, noting the county's advantageous proximity to Interstate 75. He advocated for increased commercial development, such as restaurants and retail shops, along the interstate to attract travelers passing through Henry County. Additionally, he expressed support for residential development that includes green spaces to help alleviate traffic congestion and emphasized the value of incorporating parks within communities to enhance quality of life.

County Manager Matthews spoke on behalf of **Commissioner Dee Anglyn**, who recently enacted a moratorium due to the rapid development in his area. She emphasized the need to balance commercial and industrial development to help stabilize the tax base. The County Manager also stressed the importance of the Development Authority and the Water Authority aligning with the Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Map, and the Master Plan for the Ola area. He reiterated that without access to water and sewer, discussions about new developments should be avoided to prevent creating commercial spaces without the necessary infrastructure.

Commissioner Neat Robinson highlighted the importance of attracting quality commercial businesses. She noted that Fairview area currently serves as an athletic hub, with various parks and an upcoming senior center. She mentioned plans under SPLOST to build a new facility and emphasized the need for senior housing for residents aged 55 and older. Commissioner Robinson stated that the Fairview area requires more quality commercial businesses and that Fairview Road is being widened and she would like to see a golf cart community in the area she represents. She inquired whether there are any marketing efforts related to the medical hub and reminded attendees that each person at the table represents a district commissioner, working to fulfill the commissioners' vision. She viewed the special meeting as a crucial step forward and encouraged participants to share suggestions with their district commissioner. Her main focus remains on improving services for sports, medical needs, and seniors in the Fairview area, as well as enhancing the quality of older homes and commercial areas.

Vice Chair Johnny Wilson reported that Locust Grove is the industrial hub of the County. District 1 currently has approximately 95% of all industrial buildings, leaving little room for additional development. However, he mentioned that there is potential for a few more if the right opportunities arise. He highlighted that both the Atlanta Speedway Airport and Atlanta Motor Speedway are located within District 1, and one of the district's biggest concerns is infrastructure. Specifically, he noted that the existing infrastructure is insufficient to support the current roadways. **Vice Chair Wilson** discussed plans to widen Bill Gardner Parkway to four lanes from Interstate 75 to Highway 155. He indicated that if SPLOST VI passes, there will be a partnership with Locust Grove and GDOT to design a widening project for Highway 42, extending from King Mill Road to the city limits of Locust Grove. He also mentioned that the Bethlehem interchange project is set to begin in a couple of years, which is expected to create more industrial space. The City of Locust Grove has annexed land all the way up to King Mill Court, and he emphasized the importance of widening Highway 81 which is planned to accommodate four lanes and is scheduled for next year. He noted that there will not be significant residential growth in District 1 due to a lack of resources and stated that there is no push for residential expansion. The area aims to maintain its rural character, and during his eight years as commissioner he has only approved around 400 homes. He reiterated that the focus will remain on managing growth sustainably, ensuring that services are expanded before considering further residential development.

Chair Harrell noted that there has been considerable discussion among the commissioners regarding medical services. She requested that the development authority engage in conversations with Piedmont Henry about their vision for the county. She emphasized the importance of ensuring their successful expansion throughout the area.

Chair Harrell also expressed the need for a Master Plan for Interstate 75. While she supports development, she specified that she wants high-quality options and does not want an overabundance of fast-food restaurants. She hopes to see attractive retail establishments for visitors exiting Interstate 75. She then asked the County Manager to address the topic of workforce housing.

Cheri Hobson-Matthews, County Manager, responded that discussions have focused on ensuring that workforce housing is included in rezoning requests for residential developments. She mentioned that the

Planning and Zoning Department is currently in the process of rewriting the zoning ordinance to incorporate language related to workforce housing. The County Manager also asked the Development Authority and Water Authority about potential incentives for builders and developers who provide workforce housing to support the businesses that the development authority is recruiting to the county.

Chair Harrell announced the next item on the agenda: Enhancing collaboration with the cities, Chamber of Commerce, and other stakeholders. She emphasized the need for the Development Authority to collaborate with the cities regardless of whether they have their own Development Authorities or not and added that we are all part of Henry County and should be working together. Chair Harrell expressed concern that the retail strategy should not have been initiated without engaging the Chamber, highlighting the importance of teamwork to improve the county.

Regarding workforce housing, she noted that there are individuals working in Henry County who cannot afford to live here. As new companies move in, she questioned what measures will be taken to give back to workforce housing. She stressed the need to think creatively and abandon outdated practices, urging everyone to embrace new approaches moving forward.

Chair Harrell also mentioned that a common request from constituents is for more restaurants and entertainment options in the community. She explained that the intention behind the retail strategy was to identify the county's needs. However, she expressed disappointment that, after a year, they have still not received any information regarding this strategy. Highlighting that Henry County is a significant logistics and manufacturing hub, she acknowledged the benefits to keeping taxes low but noted that space is limited. She asked what other opportunities might exist to make the community more complete and encouraged exploration of options that would benefit the county.

Chair Harrell then invited John Selfe with the Henry County Tax Assessor's office to speak about incentives and tax abatements.

John Selfe, Chief Appraiser for the Henry County Board of Assessors, presented a PowerPoint presentation. He explained that the Board of Assessors does not have the authority to provide tax abatements, so they do not negotiate directly with businesses. Their primary function is to value non-traditional taxable leaseholds created when Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) are finalized. They work closely with the Development Authority and have established abatement schedules consistent with the level of investment and the specific industrial types involved.

Mr. Selfe provided an example of a Fortune 500 company and demonstrated how it has paid real property and business personal property taxes in the county. This example illustrated the number of jobs the company has brought to the area and the taxes it has contributed. The company, which entered the county around 2012, has provided over 340 jobs.

He noted that there are 98 large industrial facilities in Henry County, many of which pay between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 in taxes each year. He explained that one building could represent the tax revenue equivalent of 365 homes. He further stated that the industrial component accounts for about 14% of the net tax digest. Most industrial properties are stable and help diversify the tax base.

Mr. Selfe concluded by emphasizing the need for a diversified tax base to maintain a viable economic environment. This concluded his presentation.

Commissioner Robinson commented on an abandoned warehouse in her district. **Sharon Hill, Interim Director of the Development Authority**, responded that when a developer purchases a large tract of

land, it becomes their property. She clarified that the Development Authority does not induce the property; it is entirely the developer's decision. Commissioner Robinson inquired about conditions regarding the property, to which Ms. Hill explained that such matters would have gone through the planning and zoning process. Chair Harrell noted that these decisions were made by previous commissioners. Ms. Hill further stated that if the properties are zoned appropriately, developers can utilize them as they see fit, even if the community may not want certain types of development.

Ms. Hill mentioned that she has reached out to the Planning and Zoning Department to discuss how to best approach future development planning. She emphasized the importance of having these conversations. She highlighted that Andersons is expected to open their facility soon, which will eventually bring over 1,000 people to the area. She questioned how the community would be planned to accommodate this influx, noting that there is currently nothing in the area to support these workers. Many employees will have only 30 minutes for lunch, and she pointed out that the area is essentially a food desert. She stressed the need to improve the planning process and work collaboratively, urging everyone to step out of their silos. Ms. Hill emphasized that they must facilitate discussions about the community's vision. She noted that Henry County is an ideal location for distribution, given its proximity to the Port of Savannah, Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, Norfolk Southern, and Interstate 75, which is why many warehouses are located there.

Ms. Hill stated she has reached out to the Chamber of Commerce, Planning and Zoning, and the cities in Henry County, except for McDonough and Hampton. They have made plans to meet and discuss the necessity of partnership. In her less than 30 days in this role, she has been working to bridge any gaps. She remarked that economic development needs to evolve, focusing on building communities through collaboration with various partners, including the medical and educational sectors, particularly in workforce development. She works closely with Southern Crescent Technical College, noting that Luxottica is the largest private employer in the area and that Southern Crescent is training students for jobs there. She also mentioned collaboration with Henry County Government to provide internships and efforts with Henry County Schools to establish a pipeline so that high school seniors can transition directly into jobs after graduation. She stated that this approach will be a key focus for the Development Authority moving forward.

Chair Harrell asked Tony Carnell, the General Manager for the Henry County Water Authority, to discuss infrastructure and water updates. Mr. Carnell began by outlining the current state of the county's water infrastructure, highlighting ongoing projects aimed at improving service delivery and capacity.

Mr. Carnell provided a brief history of HCWA's water distribution and wastewater collection system, stating that the five (5) reservoirs were built to provide water to residents/businesses funded through the 2-Mil Tax. In addition, HCWA owns and maintains Class 1 dams, and manages pressure zones throughout the County.

HCWA works from a 2020 Master Plan (MP), with a \$1.1 Billion budget which is updated every five (5) years, the 2025 MP budget is projected at \$2 Billion, which goes to the cost of goods and services. The Walnut Creek Water Reclamation Facility expansion is now 2x the cost due to inflation. HCWA has a \$111 Million revenue budget and a \$87 Million expenditure budget.

It's been 20 years since HCWA increased residential impact fees. However, due to inflation/rising costs HCWA increased impact fees in January 2024. Population and area growth also impacts the system. HCWA is always looking for redundancies in the system. HCWA also values the importance of working

relationships with the Cities, as well as renewing the Comprehensive Plan Agreements with the Cities before the end of the year.

HCWA works closely with the County SPLOST department and GDOT, pertaining to the relocation of water/sewer lines caused by road construction projects. HCWA also recently entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with GDOT for the Bethlehem Bottoms Interchange Project, which is a 30" waterline, one of the largest in our system.

Emergent contaminants such as PFAS/PFOAs (polyfluoroalkyl substances) are not in our drinking water, due to HCWA's reservoirs being closely contained within Henry County. However, some contaminants have been detected in our wastewater system (biosolids treatment) which will raise the costs of wastewater treatment to dispose the contaminants from the wastewater system. PFAS/PFOAs are a nationwide challenge because the containments are very minute and cannot be filtered using traditional methods. HCWA does not produce the contaminants, they enter the wastewater system through a variety of methods (i.e. fire-retardant clothing being washed and leached into the sewer system).

The Lead & Copper Rule established by the Environmental Protection Agency mandated all water utilities to provide an inventory of all service lines of both utility-owned and customer-owned for the detection of lead in the system with a deadline of October 16, 2024. HCWA successfully completed the inventory within Henry County and determined there are no lead lines in the system. The Cities will also have to provide an inventory as well.

Moving forward to 2025, the Walnut Creek Water Reclamation Facility expansion will ensure treatment and capacity to meet projected new developments and population growth. Redundancies in technology are also important, updating the SCADA system to protect against cyber-attacks, smart meters that notify customers of leaks and utilizing AI technology to improve processes. HCWA is adding a new department, Operations Technology to handle all the new and emerging technology.

The Authority Board also stressed the importance of having a formalized Employee Succession Plan, which was completed. The most important Authority resource is water and the employees. Mr. Carnell thanked the Authority Board and the Commissioners for making the appointments and for their continued support.

Mr. Sage showed a video timeline of HCWA's system progression from 1970 – 2024. Mr. Sage also noted it is a regulatory requirement by the Metro North Georgia Water Planning District's Water Resource Plan. The long-range water and wastewater master plans objectives are orderly development of water and wastewater facilities overtime as well as regulatory compliance. The key plan drivers are population projections, demand/flow projections, asset condition and regulatory compliance. HCWA's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) was last updated in 2020, with the next scheduled for 2025. Mr. Sage showed detailed graphs using projected population growth and water demand derived from 2020 US Census data. Mr. Sage also presented the 30-Year Water & Wastewater Master Plan for 2020-2050 planning period showing capital improvement projects. Mr. Hembree provided an overview of population projections, scenarios and plant capacity that determines when to expand the water treatment system. Mr. Sage continued the presentation highlighting HCWA's water distribution system and the challenges of pumping water (approximately 20 miles) from the southern end to the northern end of the County. Mr. Sage also showed map locations of HCWA's water/wastewater facilities, and active capital improvements projects. Mr. Hembree followed with highlighting HCWA's wastewater facilities and treatment capacities.

In closing, **Mr. Warren Holder, HCWA Chair**, thanked Chair Harrell and the Board of Commissioners for giving HCWA an opportunity to meet and share industry insights and challenges. He gave a brief

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history of when the Water Authority was created and stated he would also like to include the School Board in the next collaborative meeting.

Irvin Culpepper, HCDA Chair, also thanked Chair Harrell for this meeting, and stated that they will be meeting with the other agencies (Tax Assessors, Planning & Zoning and the Water Authority) in the near future.

The County Manager closed out the meeting with appreciation for being on a more unified front. Henry County is working on a Strategic Plan in the next 45 days and she will invite the two authorities, as well as many other essential agencies, for a seat at the table so the county can collaborate and recharge and reset as a whole to make Henry County the best place to live, work and play!

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

Carlotta Harrell, Chair

Stephanie Braun, County Clerk