

# Growing Smart: Intergovernmental Coordination in Houston County Communities

## *Adjacent Local Governments*

### **WRATS**

- Involves the Cities of Warner Robins, Perry and Centerville and Houston County. It also includes Byron and Peach County, Robins Air Force Base, and the Georgia Department of Transportation.
- WRATS was formed to: (1) Maintain a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process; (2) Update and revise the 20-year intermodal transportation plan; (3) Create a functional relationship between transportation planning and city-county development; (4) Maintain an updated transportation database; and (5) Produce all documents and studies that are necessary to maintain a Certified Transportation Planning Process.
- Consists of three committees; Technical, Citizens Advisory, and Policy.
- The City of Warner Robins is the party with the primary responsibility for coordination.
- Extremely effective coordination mechanism; has been instrumental in helping significantly improve the transportation network in Houston County.

### **Jail Services Contract**

- Involves the Cities of Centerville, Perry, Warner Robins and the Houston County Sheriff's Office.
- Through this agreement, the Sheriff's office is to provide for the confinement, care, and treatment of inmates from the Cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins for a certain amount per day per inmate. Services to the inmate include training and employment, discipline, recreation, medical services, food, and sanitation.
- The Sheriff's Office is also responsible for the booking, fingerprints, processing, photographing, and checking for outstanding warrants.

- The Cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins and the Houston County Sheriff's Office are the parties responsible for the coordination of this agreement.
- This agreement should be viewed as an adequate and suitable coordination mechanism and serves all parties well. Each city is assured that inmates from that community will be well-cared for and in a facility that has the capacity, services and trained staff to handle any issue that may arise. Each municipality would have to go to a great deal of expense to provide the same services and would be duplicating what the Sheriff's Office would provide at a fraction of the cost. The Sheriff's Office is being provided adequate compensation from the cities to pay inmate expenses, and is able to utilize the existing space at the Detention Center.

### **Public Safety Radio Communications Agreement**

- Two agreements between Houston County and Peach County and the City of Fort Valley to use Houston County's 800 MHz Radio System for public safety radio communication.
- Houston County owns and maintains a 4-site simulcast, 11-Channel, 800 MHz APCO Project 25 Public Safety Radio Communications that provides radio and data communication coverage for areas within boundaries of Houston County.
- The intent of this agreement is to allow Peach County and Fort Valley to establish interagency public safety communications with Houston County.
- The agreement also allows Peach County and City of Fort Valley to purchase, at their expense, additional infrastructure to increase their area of radio communication coverage.
- Houston County is party that has the primary responsibility for coordination.
- This is an excellent coordination mechanism since it will allow these two communities to utilize state-of-the-art public safety communications technology which they alone could not afford by themselves. More importantly, it allows the public safety departments from these adjoining counties to better communicate with each other, which in turn leads to a higher standard of service for the residents of these communities.

**Agreement for Establishing and Maintaining a Centralized 911 Emergency Communications System**

- This agreement is between Houston County and the cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins.
- The intent of this agreement is to establish a county-wide centralized 911 Emergency Communications System for the protection of the citizens to centralize the various emergency communication systems that were operating independently within the County with the exception of Robins AFB.
- A Houston County 911 Emergency Communications Committee was formed to assist the Sheriff in various functions. This Committee is composed of the Mayors of the three cities, the County Commission Chairperson, Houston County Sheriff, and the Robins AFB Base Commander.
- Each party agreed to subsidize the 911 fund based on their share of the county-wide population from the most current census population counts.
- The Houston County Sheriff's Office would staff and operate the Centralized 911 Emergency Communications System.
- The agreement was amended to allow the carryover of Emergency Telephone Funds to help finance subsequent E 911 budgets.
- All four entities are responsible for the primary responsibility for coordination.
- The agreement provides substantial benefit to the participating parties by eliminating duplication and reducing costs, but more importantly, allows emergency calls to come into one source that, in turn, enables quicker dispatching of the appropriate emergency personnel and equipment.
- The amendment is a very sound agreement since it would allow monies designated for the centralized E911 Communications System that would have normally lapsed at the end of fiscal year, and would have had to be re-budgeted, can now be used in subsequent budgets to fund needed expenses recommended by the Houston County E911 Advisory Committee.

### **Unified Animal Control Agreement**

- Parties to this agreement include Houston County and the Cities of Centerville, Perry and Warner Robins.
- This agreement unifies all animal control rules in Houston County under a common set of regulations and language.
- Houston County is the party with the primary responsibility for coordination.
- Prior to the agreement, each of the communities in Houston County had their own set of animal control regulations creating confusion, duplication and waste of money. With this agreement, Houston County is responsible for employing an animal control officer and administering the regulations that apply to all of the communities in the county. In addition, the cities are no longer responsible for this service, thus freeing up monies that can be used for more pressing needs, and also citizens enjoy a better level of service.

### **Selling of Water Agreement**

- Houston County and the Cities of Centerville, Perry and Warner Robins are partners in this agreement.
- The agreement calls for Houston County to provide and sell water to the Cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins for an agreed upon price, and the Cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins will, in turn, resale to its water customers.
- Houston County is the party with primary responsibility for coordination.
- This is an agreement that benefits all parties. The Cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins are able to obtain water at a reasonable price in newly annexed areas and not have to go to the expense of pumping additional water out of the ground and treating it. The County is able to sell excess capacity and receive income for it that it can be used to expand or improve the existing system.

### **201 Facilities Plan**

- The parties involved in this Plan are Houston County and the Cities of Centerville and Warner Robins.

- The Plan calls for the wastewater generated in the Planning Area (all incorporated and unincorporated areas of North Houston County) as comprised of Sandy Run Creek, those portions of Echeconnee Creek lying within Houston County, and Beaver Creek to Highway 96, but excluding Robins Air Force Base to be treated at the Warner Robins wastewater treatment facilities.
- The City of Warner Robins has the primary responsibility for coordination of Plan's implementation.
- This Plan allows for the maximization of existing facilities that have excess capacity and enables both the City of Centerville and Houston County not to construct expensive wastewater treatment systems, thus saving these communities considerable monies.

**Agreement for the Use and Distribution of Proceeds from the 2001 and 2006 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax for Capital Outlay Project**

- The governments who are parties to these agreements are Houston County and the Cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins.
- These agreements are pursuant to Article IX, Section 3 of the Georgia Constitution that allows local governments to finance certain capital outlay projects using the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST)
- The agreements also outlined how the municipalities and County would divide the proceeds of the SPLOST.
- The body that has the primary coordinating responsibility for the SPLOST is Houston County.
- The benefits of using the SPLOST is enormous to the local governments since they are able to use this source of funding to finance important capital outlay projects rather than using other local sources that prove to be more costly in the long-term. In addition, these agreements show a sense of solidarity and cooperation in determining the SPLOST funding priorities.

## **Emergency Management Agreement**

- Parties to this agreement include Houston County and the Cities of Centerville, Perry and Warner Robins.
- This agreement establishes a local organization for emergency management under a legally appointed local director; establishes local emergency management powers; entitles the County and Cities to receive federal disaster funds provided all state and federal requirements are met; specifies immunity of state and political subdivisions for personal injury or property damage sustained by any person appointed or acting as a volunteer emergency management worker or member of any agency engaged in emergency management activities; and specifies that an approved emergency management plan has been developed and sent to the Georgia Emergency Management Agency.
- Houston County is the party with the primary responsibility for coordinating this agreement.
- When it comes to impacting the health and safety of the community residents: 1). it is critical that all of the jurisdictions in a county agree in establishing an emergency management agency with a qualified director under one umbrella; and 2) that an emergency management plan has been approved and each jurisdiction has signed off on it. In addition, giving each jurisdiction certain emergency management powers, the ability to receive federal disaster funds, and immunity from liability for personal injury or property damage that resulted from carrying out emergency management activities is also important. This agreement does all of the above, thus aiding in providing better public safety services to residents of Houston County.

## **Mutual Aid Agreement for Fire and Police Protection**

- Those jurisdictions participation in this agreement are Houston County and the Cities of Centerville, Perry and Warner Robins.
- The purpose of this agreement is to secure the benefits of mutual aid in fire and police protection. Dispatching of equipment and personnel is subject to certain conditions.

- Houston County and the three cities are equally responsible for coordination of this agreement.
- During times when extra fire and police protection is needed, it is important to know that neighboring local governments can be called upon to assistance under certain perimeters. This means more lives and property will be saved which is a great relief to local citizens and business owners. This agreement also reduces the need for additional manpower and equipment.

### **Mutual Aid Agreement for Fire Protection and Hazardous Materials Incident**

- Houston County and Robins Air Force Base are the two parties to this agreement.
- At the request to a representative of Robins Air Force Base Fire and Emergency Services Flight Fire Department from the Houston County Fire Department, firefighting equipment and personnel from Robins Air Force Base will be dispatched to any point within the area the Houston County Fire Department normally provides fire protection or hazardous materials incident response. The same process is in place if Robins Air Force Base needs assistance from Houston County Fire Department.
- Houston County and Robins Air Force Base are equally responsible for coordination of this agreement
- This agreement augments service by Houston County to residents of the unincorporated areas, thus providing better fire protection to those residents. Robins Air Force Base benefits from this agreement not only in times of major fire and hazardous waste disasters that occur on the Base, but also response to aircraft crashes.

### **Traffic Signal Agreement**

- The parties to this agreement are Houston County and City of Warner Robins.
- The agreement calls for the City of Warner Robins to provide maintenance of the County's traffic control devices at the intersections specified in the agreement. In addition, the City of Warner Robins will report and coordinate service needs on state highways from SR 96 north to the Bibb County line.

- The City of Warner Robins is the party with the primary responsibility for coordinating this agreement.
- The City of Warner Robins has a full-time Traffic Operations Manager that has the expertise and in most cases the time to provide this type service in the portions of the unincorporated area that are in close proximity to the City of Warner Robins. This saves the County the expense of hiring additional personnel to handle this operation.

### **Recreation Services Agreement**

- The governmental bodies who are parties to this agreement are: Houston County, City of Centerville, City of Perry, City of Warner Robins and the Houston County Board of Education.
- The agreement calls for: 1). Houston County to phase out its recreation department and provide support for the recreation departments of Warner Robins, Centerville and Perry; 2). Cities of Centerville, Perry and Warner Robins agree to allow non-residents of their respective municipalities to participate in any and all activities of their recreation departments at the rates established by the respective city; 3). Certain employees of the County Recreation Department become employees of Warner Robins; 4). Transfer of County Recreation Department assets to Cities of Perry and Warner Robins; 5). County making three annual payments to the Cities of Centerville, Perry and Warner Robins; 6). Establishment of an overview committee to review at least twice a year the operation of the respective municipal recreation programs; and 7). County provides in-kind services through the Public Works Department, and the Board of Education agrees to make their recreation facilities when possible.
- The Cities of Centerville, Perry and Warner Robins along with the Houston County Board of Education are bodies responsible for the coordination of this agreement.
- The agreement absolves Houston County of the responsibility of providing recreation services and places in the hands of communities that have the facilities and programs and experience staff to properly manage such facilities and programs. The savings from this transfer are being used to fund more critical service needs. With the Board of Education facilities involved, it substantially increases the recreational opportunities for city and county residents.

## *Independent Special Authorities and Districts*

### **Agreement for Posting and Housing of Ambulances**

- This agreement is between the Hospital Authority of Houston County and Houston County.
- It calls for: (1) the posting and housing of Houston Healthcare EMS ambulances at various strategically located fire stations throughout the county with the ambulance crews driving throughout the day and awaiting their next assignment; and (2) the availability to house ambulance crews in select fire stations 24 hours a day when the ambulance is not on response.
- Houston County has the primary responsibility for coordination.
- This is a very adequate and suitable coordination mechanism because: (1) Houston County does not have to take on this emergency responsibility; (2) ambulances will be able to react to calls quicker since they will be on the road throughout the day; and (3) it provides for a logical distribution of ambulances throughout the county.

### **Creation of Perry-Houston County Airport Authority**

- Members of this Authority will be appointed by the City of Perry and Houston County.
- The powers granted to this Authority are like those of most authorities, and have the ability of issue revenue bonds for the purpose of paying all or part of the cost of one or more projects.
- The City of Perry and Houston County, through their appointment of members, have joint responsibility for coordination.
- The biggest advantage of having such an authority as opposed to having either the City of Perry or Houston County be responsible is the fact the Authority can focus on this one facility alone, and utilize the various resources granted to it under the law to make the improvements necessary to make it an outstanding resource for the residents and businesses of the City of Perry and Houston County.

## *School Boards*

### **Vision 2020**

- An agreement that includes Houston County; the Cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins; and the Houston County Board of Education.
- The intent of this agreement is to provide for coordination of planning by all departments, agencies, boards, commissions, committees, and other institutions of the County, Cities, and Board of Education.
- Membership on this “Council of Governments” includes the Chair of the Houston County Board of Commissioners, the Mayors of the three cities, and the Chair of the Houston County Board of Education along with several ex-officio members.
- The functions of this Council includes: (1) Advise County, Cities, and Board of Education on challenges confronting the community; (2) Coordinate and review planning by county municipal governments and the Board of Education; (3) Assist in the implementation of the Houston County Service Delivery Strategy agreement; and (4) Establish procedures for and take action to require, communication and coordination among county and municipal agencies.
- All parties have equal responsibility for coordination.
- This agreement provides an exceptional opportunity for communication and coordination between the parties. The decisions made by this body, however, are not binding and only advisory in nature and may not be implemented by the respective policy boards.

## *Independent Development Authorities and Districts*

### **Houston County Development Authority**

- Those party to the agreement include Houston County and the Cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins.
- The basis for the agreement was to develop and enhance the overall economic climate of those who are part of this agreement.

- The Authority serves as the singular contact for industrial projects in all of Houston County and is authorized as a conduit to issue Industrial Revenue Bonds to facilitate industrial prospects within its geographic service area.
- Members on the Authority include appointed representatives from Houston County and the cities.
- With their appointed representative, Houston County makes all Board appointments and has responsibility of coordination.
- By having a Development Authority that the jurisdictions in Houston County are members of allows them to act as one voice working together to improve the economic climate of the County. In addition, it also eliminates duplication of services, conflicts between the entities, and costs associated with providing these services.

#### **Middle Georgia Regional Development Authority**

- Houston County along with Dooly, Peach, and Pulaski Counties are parties to this agreement.
- The Authority was created to expand economic development opportunities in the four counties, and to allow Houston County to take advantage of the state tax breaks provided to those counties involved in a regional development authority with those of a lesser Tier.
- Each participating county appoints two members and with this, each share responsibility for coordination.
- Having a Regional Development Authority benefits Houston County in that it can benefit from the same tax advantages that the other members of the Authority enjoy. In addition, the Authority promotes regional cooperation and teamwork, and allows the members to take advantage of each others resources to strengthen the members' economic base.

## *Federal, State and Regional Programs*

### **Federal Highway Administration**

- The Federal Highway Administration is a major agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation. The annual budget is more than \$30 billion which comes from fuel and motor vehicle excise taxes.
- FHWA provides the Warner Robins Area Transportation Study (WRATS) with funding to plan various transportation-related projects, such as, the Long-Range Transportation Plan for the WRATS Study Area.
- FHWA has representation on the WRATS committees.

### **Georgia Department of Community Affairs**

- Designed as an advocate for local governments, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs was formed in 1977.
- Its function today is to: (1) Manage a host of federal and state programs; (2) Serve as the state's leading agency in housing finance and development; (3) Approve building and other codes to be adopted by local governments; (4) Approve minimum standards for comprehensive and solid waste management plans; and (5) Foster partnerships with state government, local governments, and the private sector

### **Georgia Department of Transportation**

- Formed in 1972 by then Governor Carter, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) plans, constructs, maintains, and improves the state roads and bridges; provides planning and fiscal support for other modes of transportation, including public transportation and airport; provides airport and air safety planning; and provides administrative support to the State Tollway Authority and the Georgia Rail Passenger Authority.
- GDOT works closely with WRATS in providing planning technical assistance and has representation on its committees.

### **Robins Air Force Base 21<sup>st</sup> Century Partnership, Inc.**

- The Partnership is a non-profit corporation that serves as the community focal point for enhancing the military value of Robins Air Force Base and the military value of the Middle Georgia community.
- The corporation consists of an Executive Board with various committees, with an Executive Director managing the day-to-day operations of the organization.
- Coordination with Houston County and the cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins is the responsibility of the Executive Board and its appointed Executive Director.
- Robins Air Force Base is not only the largest employer in the Middle Georgia region, but also the State of Georgia. Insuring the military value of the Base and the Middle Georgia community is critical to the continued survival and growth of the Base and the economic well-being of the surrounding communities and the State of Georgia, as witnessed in the latest round of BRAC hearings.

### **The Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition (MGCCC)**

- The Coalition was formed in 2004 to promote clean air in the Middle Georgia region and to develop strategies to reduce air pollution below the National Ambient Air Quality Standards of the Clean Air Act.
- Members include the Mayors and County Commission Chairpersons of the cities and counties of Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, and Twiggs Counties. There are also ex-officio members who are representative from local and state agencies (including Georgia DOT and EPD, colleges and universities, Georgia Senators and Congressman, local transportation planning agencies, and Robins Air Force Base.
- Responsibility for coordination is shared by all of the participating members.
- With Bibb County and portions of Monroe County under non-attainment for several air quality standards, realizing the impact of this designation on the mission of RAFB, and understanding that growth in the surrounding counties could lead to the same designation in those counties unless a cooperative regional effort is made to establish effective strategies to improve air quality, the MGCCC came into existence. Again, as

in all of the regional partnerships noted in this section, cooperation and maximizing existing resources is the key in developing effective solutions to issues faced by all.

### **Middle Georgia Regional Development Center**

- Established through the enactment of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and succeeded by the Middle Georgia Area Planning and Development Commission that was formed in 1965.
- Membership, which is mandatory as specified in the Georgia Planning Act, includes 11 counties and 22 cities, including Houston County and its three municipalities.
- Services provided to Houston County and the three cities include planning, economic development, public administration, grant writing and administration, and information technology. It also serves as the designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA).
- Coordination responsibility is shared equally by the member local governments.
- The MGRDC provides a conduit to address regional problems and issues; obtain services that an individual local government would likely not have the staff to provide or afford; and provide opportunities for networking and education/training.

### ***Service Delivery Strategy Summary***

- The Local Government Services Delivery Strategy Act, better known as HB 489, was passed by the Georgia General Assembly in 1997.
- The intent of the Act is: (1) To provide a flexible framework for local governments and authorities to agree on a plan for delivering services efficiently, effectively, and responsibly; (2) To minimize any duplication and competition among local governments and authorities providing local services; and (3) To provide a method to resolve disputes among service providers regarding service delivery, funding equity, and land use.
- Status of current SDS Update – All communities have adopted the SDS. The City of Warner Robins and Houston County are working to finalize the wording that is mutually acceptable to both parties.

