

Habersham County Airport Commission

Meeting Minutes

June 9, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

Executive Conference Room

Habersham County Administration Building
130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523

The Habersham County Airport Commission held a regular meeting on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the Executive conference room in the Habersham County Administration Building located at 130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA, 30523.

Members Present: D. Higgins, Lawrence Bridges, Andy Anderson, Justin Schapansky

Members Absent: Spencer Carr

Others Present: Patti McLarty, Bill Harden, Kiani Holden, Lead Edge Design Group, Jeff Strickland, members of the public

Call to Order: D. Higgins called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

Invocation and Pledge: D Higgins gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of Agenda: Motion by Lawrence Bridges, seconded by Justin Schapansky, and voted 4-0 to approve the agenda as presented.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Lawrence Bridges, seconded by Andy Anderson, and voted 4-0 to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2026 regular meeting.

Financials: Kiani Holden presented the current financials dated May 31, 2026. May 2026 represents 92% of the fiscal year. Therefore, expenditures should be less than or equal to 92% of the FY2026 budget, while revenues should be 92% at a minimum. Actual revenues collected were 90.7% of the total budgeted revenues, while operating expenditures were 93.4%. The bank balance as of May 31, 2026, was \$66,597. The lower bank balance is due to Kiani transferring \$300,000 from the airport account to the general fund to repay expenses paid by the general fund throughout the year. This transfer did not cover our "loan" from the general fund for airport projects. Kiani also reported that the airport's liability insurance has just been renewed. Justin Schapansky asked whether the county "shops" the airport's liability insurance. Kiani said yes but added that there are only a small number of companies who provide airport-specific coverage. She noted that fuel tank insurance is very expensive.

Approval of Financials: Motion by Andy Anderson, seconded by Justin Schapansky, and voted 4-0 to approve the current financials dated May 31, 2026.

Public Comment: Jim Butterworth addressed the commission. His original concern had been the proposed hangar rent increase, which he is not in favor of. However, after reviewing various airport contracts and financial information, he said his perspective had changed substantially. Jim described the airport as personally significant, because he learned to fly there as a teenager, and has maintained a strong connection to the airport throughout his life and career. Jim said he understands the need for additional revenue; he believes the larger issue is developing a long-term vision to transform our airport from a financial burden into an economic and community asset. He went on to say that the proposed rent increase would only generate about \$27,000 annually, which is relatively insignificant in the overall budget. He recommended instead, actively recruiting corporate jet traffic and building new hangars for the people on the wait list. He also recommended revisiting the rates we charge Air Methods and

US Forestry, saying that while he understands that both provide an important service to our community, both entities pay much higher rental rates at other airports. Jim also shared that the Development Authority actually owns the FBO building as well as several adjacent acres, and that they can help the airport with financing to construct additional hangars and other things to attract aviation-related businesses. Jim enthusiastically suggested that we could create a “destination” airport experience that would attract both the local public as well as pilots by building a restaurant overlooking the ramp, outdoor seating areas, public observation spaces, and meeting facilities. He also recommend we bring in other partners to collaborate the planning such as the County Commission, Development Authority, Partnership Habersham, Georgia Power and HEMC Economic Development, and local business leaders. He ended by saying that our airport should be viewed as an economic development engine, and he offered his assistance in helping to create a strategic vision. He introduced Alex Robinson, Executive Director of the Development Authority and Partnership Habersham. Alex agreed with Jim’s statements and emphasized the airport’s value as an economic development asset and expressed a willingness to help coordinate stakeholders and collaborative efforts.

Reports:

Fuel Sales and Airport Revenues: Bill reported that during May 2026 the airport sold 5,954 gallons of Jet-A fuel, 291 gallons of full-service Avgas, and 5,285.3 gallons of self-service Avgas. Current self-service Avgas pricing is \$6.35 per gallon, and full-service pricing is \$6.80 per gallon. Jet A pricing is \$6.58 per gallon. Additional revenues included \$500 in overnight fees, \$180 in call-out fees, \$750 in facility fees, and \$47.97 in oil sales. Total fees collected for the month were \$1,430.

Airport Manager Update: Airport Manager Bill Harden gave the update. A new shipment of Jet A fuel was just received without any issues. Weed spraying and mowing have been completed and will continue. The new solar light at the fuel farm is working great, and the pole light is now working properly. The avgas rollback meter has been repaired. Two part-time employees have been hired for the summer and are being trained on airport operations and maintenance. Bill informed the board that two of the new runway lights were damaged by a gear-up landing. Bill is working with the pilot and the county through the insurance process. The airport’s large tractor is having hydraulic issues and needs to be repaired. Finance Director Kiani Holden added that she and Bill have been working on an idea to allow hangar tenants to receive fuel by truck at their hangars at self-service pricing. This will provide a benefit to tenants in light of the proposed rent increase. This service will be effective July 1st.

Airport Update: Lead Edge Design Group – Phil Eberly gave the update. The lighting project is complete except for punch list items which include grass establishment, replacing damaged lights, and contractor clean-up work. Phil also suggested asking for assistance from local pilots to help test and document activation ranges from various directions to help evaluate the new pilot-controlled lighting system.

Old Business: None

New Business:

- Consider/Approve revised Minimum Standards document – Jeff Strickland made the requested changes to our Minimum Standards document. Motion by Lawrence Bridges, seconded by Andy Anderson, and voted 4-0 to approve the Minimum Standards document for commercial services and recommend to the Board of Commissioners for approval.
- Discuss Airport Fee structure – Kiani Holden led the discussion. She explained that market rates for hangars generally range from .25 to .30 cents per square foot, and our current rates range from .18 to .24 cents per square foot. At last month’s meeting, Spencer Carr and Kiani created a hybrid formula to determine what our new hangar rates should be. While researching and preparing to inform the tenants of the rate increase, it was discovered that the lease agreements only allow a rent increase at the lease term renewal, not on a fiscal year or calendar year. Most of our lease agreements renew in January or February. Andy Anderson wondered if the modest rent increase was worth the administrative headache it would bring,

as well as tenant frustration. A discussion ensued about other ways the airport could save or redirect money instead, such as reducing staffing costs, reallocating vehicles, expanding fuel sales, or increasing other revenue sources. Justin Schapansky suggested outsourcing the grounds maintenance and mowing, therefore requiring less staff. The board ultimately agreed that increasing our Jet A sales and bringing in more corporate clients and tenants would be our strongest long-term financial opportunities.

- Discuss addendum to lease agreements – Jeff Strickland recommended we gradually update the lease language so that future rate adjustments align with the county's fiscal year.

Other Reports: None

Motion by Lawrence Bridges, seconded by Justin Schapansky, and voted 4-0 to enter Executive Session at 10:15 a.m.

Executive Session to review prospective Airport Consultant proposals, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(4) and O.C.G.A. § 50-18-72(a)(10)

Motion by Andy Anderson, seconded by Lawrence Bridges, and voted 4-0 to exit Executive Session at 11:00 a.m.

Motion by Lawrence Bridges, seconded by Justin Schapansky, and voted 3-1 to award the Airport Consultant Planning Services contract to Kimley Horn. The dissenting vote was by Andy Anderson.

Motion by Lawrence Bridges, seconded by Justin Schapansky, and voted 3-1 to award the Airport Consultant Design Services contract to Kimley Horn. The dissenting vote was by Andy Anderson.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is Tuesday, July 14, 2026, 2026, at 9 a.m. in the Executive Conference Room at the Habersham County Administration Building located at 130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523.

Adjournment:

Motion by Andy Anderson, seconded by Lawrence Bridges, and voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 a.m.



Chairman – D. Higgins



Secretary – Andy Anderson