

Habersham County Development Authority
Thursday, January 8, 2026 @ 3:30 pm
Executive Conference Room
130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523

The Habersham County Development Authority held a regular meeting on Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. in the Executive conference room in the Habersham County Administration Building located at 130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA, 30523.

Members Present: Jim Butterworth (TEAMS), Sidney Roland, Mike Franklin, Jeff Bruns, Allen Whitener, Bryan Ferguson, David Lovvorn

Members Not Present: None

Others Present: Tim Sims (TEAMS), Patti McLarty, Matt Skilling, Jim Woodward (TEAMS), Tommy Thurmond, Kelly Woodall

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:31 p.m. by Bryan Ferguson (serving as Chair).

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

The invocation was led by Sidney Roland and the and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bryan Ferguson.

Approval of Agenda

A MOTION was made by Bryan Ferguson, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 7-0 to amend the agenda to add "Discussion of Hutchinson Property" under Old Business. MOTION by Allen Whitener, seconded by Allen Whitener, and voted 7-0 to approve the agenda as amended.

Approval of Minutes

A MOTION was made by Sidney Roland, seconded by Allen Whitener, and voted 7-0 to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2025 Regular meeting.

Election of Officers

Chairman – Jeff Bruns nominated Jim Butterworth for Chairman. Sidney Roland seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. All members were in favor of naming Jim Butterworth as Chairman.

Vice-Chair – Mike Franklin nominated Bryan Ferguson for Vice-Chair. Sidney Roland seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. All members were in favor of naming Bryan Ferguson as Vice-Chair.

Secretary – Mike Franklin nominated Sidney Roland for Secretary. Bryan Ferguson seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. All members were in favor of naming Sidney Roland as Secretary.

Old Business

1. Partnership Habersham Update – Tommy Thurmond gave the update. Alex Robinson was unavailable for the meeting but provided a report for November and December activities. Workforce Development -The Habersham Works program will kick off January 15th and will conclude May 14th with a certificate ceremony. The courses will be instructed by staff at NGTC. There are 13 students participating in the inaugural program. The 2025 State of the County address took place on December 10th in front of 115 attendees. Habersham County, City of Baldwin, Town of Mt. Airy, and City of Cornelia provided updates. Alex has begun working on the first Strategic Plan for Partnership Habersham. This will outline the goals and objectives for the three strategic pillars: Business Attraction, Existing Industry Support, and Workforce Development. Partnership Habersham has \$50,000 set aside for the Strategic Plan. Jim stressed that the Development Authority should continue supporting Partnership Habersham financially, and he hopes the Board of Commissioners will continue their support as well and possibly increase funding.
2. Airport Business Park Update – see item 5.
3. Phase II Business Park Update– Clear View Enterprises is finishing up construction on their new building. Jim added that he is very impressed with how quickly they have moved on the project. They purchased the property, graded it right away, and decided not to annex into Baldwin, which sped up the process of development.
4. Administrative Update
 - Annual Registrations for SAM and DCA – Patti McLarty explained that the required SAM registration (System for Award Management) was completed in December, as well as the DCA Annual Registration for Authorities. Both are now in compliance until the end of 2026.
 - Updated DCA Training Requirements – Patti received information from DCA that the training requirements for Development Authorities have changed for 2026. In addition to the 8 hours of training required for new members, all members will need to complete an additional two hours of training each year. Carl Vinson will be offering some 2-hour training courses. Patti will gather the information on available courses and share with the members. Jim said that he is protective of the board when it comes to “requirements” since we are a volunteer board.
5. Discussion of Hutchinson Property - The Hutchinson properties on Pads 5 and 7 were purchased over two years ago. The Development Authority granted leniency by allowing development of one lot at a time and extending the requirement to construct a building within one year. To date, no development has occurred on either lot, and both are now listed for sale. About a year ago, Janney sent a letter to Wilson-Hutchinson reminding them of their obligation to construct a building. Around the same time, Jim and Bryan met with the owners, who stated they planned to break ground on one lot and later develop the other. Bryan asked whether another letter should be sent by our attorney. Matt said he would review the by-laws to determine available options. While the Authority does have the option to repurchase the property at the original sale price, this is not a good use of funds at this time. Jim noted that while the contract does not allow us to force a buyback, it does prohibit the owner from selling the lots at a profit. Jim also added that while Charlie was still here, the owners of the lots told Charlie they were thinking of building an airplane hangar. Matt said he will review the sale documents and by-laws, and he will advise from there.

New Business

Jim shared that he and Bryan learned a great deal on their recent “road trip” visits to some of our local industries and he thinks it would be beneficial for the board to hold a meeting outside of the conference room a few times a year to visit our new and existing industries. On their trip, Jim and Bryan saw that many of our existing industries are outgrowing their facilities and some are leasing space from other businesses. Many are needing to expand, and maybe we can see what those companies need and help facilitate that. Bryan said the Clear View facility was very impressive. They then visited Mac Tech, who are leasing space inside Habersham Metal. However, Habersham Metal is looking to expand, and they need that space back. So, Mac Tech is looking for a new facility, which prompted Jim and Bryan to talk about the Hutchinson property. They also visited Mac Tech, which is leasing space inside Habersham Metal and renting warehouse storage from Scovill. They then visited Foundations, which manufactures corrugated tubing for carpets and fabrics and is currently leasing space from Scovill. Foundations manufactures tubing for Mac Tech, so it would make sense for the two companies to relocate near one another. Jim pointed out that we have a strong Board of Commissioners, a very effective Development Authority, and that Partnership Habersham is primed and ready to move forward. He stated that if we begin having open and public conversations and achieve successes with our existing industries, we will be in a very strong position. This will also help address concerns from those who may not fully understand that, until industry is supported and expanded, the tax burden will continue to fall on homeowners. Bryan added that we still have property in Phase II as well. Mike Franklin added that he just read that across the country, there are more expansions of existing industry than new industries. Mike suggested that someone from the Development Authority could be responsible for reaching out to existing industries. Jim said that’s a great idea and that Alex Robinson is the new person responsible for that.

Public Comment

Commissioner Kelly Woodall thanked the board for their work and said that we are in a precarious situation in that the community as a whole is worried about “unrestrained growth”. However, Kelly feels that the Development Authority brings “restrained growth” by directing growth to industrial parks and areas where we want the growth to happen. Bryan added that people look at us and focus on the “Development” part of Development Authority, not realizing we have a narrow focus in the community, and we are serving the people by bringing in companies and industries that are good for our community, unlike “developers”, who are in it for the money. Kelly recalled a few years ago when he was on the Development Authority that we turned down a family-owned business in the business park because no jobs would be created, which is not in line with our priorities. Now, Clear View is sitting on that property, who will provide more jobs.

Other Reports

Jim has requested that we have a retreat soon. Patti will get some dates together and asked the board members to watch their e-mails for more information.

MOTION by Mike Franklin, seconded by David Lovvorn, and voted 7-0 to enter Executive Session at 4:13 p.m.

Executive Session

MOTION by Mike Franklin, seconded by Allen Whitener, and voted 7-0 to exit Executive Session at 4:25 p.m.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is Thursday, February 12, 2026, at 3:30 p.m.

Adjourn

A MOTION was made by Sidney Roland, seconded by Allen Whitener, and voted 7-0 to adjourn the meeting at 4:27 p.m.

Bryan Ferguson, Vice Chair

Attest: Sidney Roland, Secretary