

**HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEETING MINUTES
6:00 P.M., MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2026
HABERSHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE
JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM
295 LLEWELLYN ST, CLARKESVILLE, GA 30523**

The Habersham County Board of Commissioners held a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, April 20, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Jury Assembly Room of the Habersham County Courthouse located at 295 Llewellyn St., Clarkesville, GA 30523.

Present was Chairman Bruce Harkness, Vice Chairman Dustin Mealor, Commissioner Kelly Woodall, County Manager Tim Sims, County Attorney Angela Davis, County Clerk Brandalin Carnes, staff, members of the media, and members of the public.

Absent was Commissioner Ty Akins.

Chairman Harkness called the meeting to order at 6:00p.m.

Commissioner Woodall led the Invocation.

Commissioner Mealor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Woodall, and voted unanimously (3-0) to adopt the agenda as presented.

PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- a. Recognition of James L. Smith's 40 Years of Service and Retirement
- b. Proclamation of May 3rd-9th, 2026 as Economic Development Week
- c. Proclamation of May 3rd-9th, 2026 as GA Small Business Appreciation Week

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- a. Janette Byrom: Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

Ms. Janette Byrom addressed the Commission regarding concerns related to property taxes and County funding priorities. She stated that rising property valuations have increased her tax burden and discussed the impact of changes to her homestead exemption following the passing of her spouse. Ms. Byrom expressed opposition to the use of County funds for nonprofit organizations that she believes should obtain funding through independent fundraising and community donations. She contrasted these organizations with County departments such as the Habersham County Animal Shelter, which she stated provides essential services but relies heavily on donations from the public to operate. Ms. Byrom questioned the allocation of taxpayer funds to outside organizations while County departments continue to depend on community support, and she urged the Board to reconsider funding priorities to better support internal County services.

- b. Bruce Palmer: Fire Department

Mr. Palmer addressed the Commission and responded to prior comments regarding County funding for nonprofit organizations, stating that financial support provided to outside agencies can reduce the need for the County to deliver those same services at a greater cost. He then addressed fire protection services within

the County, stating that three fire stations remain unstaffed and emphasizing the importance of adequate personnel to ensure public safety. Mr. Palmer noted that while additional firefighters have been added in recent years to improve staffing levels, some stations continue to operate without coverage. He stated that residents in all areas of the County contribute equally through taxes and should receive consistent levels of fire protection service, and he encouraged the Board to review budget priorities to determine whether additional staffing could be provided to improve coverage in underserved areas.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion by Commissioner Woodall, seconded by Commissioner Mealor, and voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the consent agenda as presented.

- a. Consider/Approve Minutes of March 16, 2026 Board of Commissioner Meeting
- b. Consider/Approve Minutes of March 16, 2026 Board of Commissioners Executive Session
- c. Consider/Approve Minutes of April 13, 2026 Town Hall Meeting on UDO
- d. Consider/Approve Surplus and Transfer of 1995 Chevrolet Kodiak C70 Tanker Truck Chassis to the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC)
- e. Consider/Approve First Amendment to Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Demorest for Fire Protection Services to Allow for Purchase of Surplus Fire Equipment and Gear from the City of Demorest
- f. Consider/Approve Purchase Agreement with Frazer for Remounting of a Frazer Med Unit
- g. Consider/Approve FY 2026 Contract with Legacy Link for Senior Center for Aging, Wellness, Nutrition and Transportation Services
- h. Consider/Approve Addendum #1 to FY 2026 Contract with Legacy Link for Senior Center
- i. Consider/Approve Participation by Habersham County in the National Opioid Settlement with the Six Remnant Defendants (Associated Pharmacies, Inc.; J M Smith Corporation; Louisiana Wholesale Drug Company, Inc.; Morris and Dickson Co.; North Carolina Mutual Wholesale Drug Company, Inc.; and United Natural Foods, Inc.) and Authorizing Chairman to Sign All Documents Necessary for Participation

REPORTS:

- a. County Manager's Report: Tim Sims, County Manager

APPOINTMENTS:

PLANNING COMMISSION

3- Year Term Ending 12/31/2027

1. Jessie Owensby (Resignation)- Bruce Harkness

Motion by Chairman Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously (3-0) to appoint Emily Herrin to fill this vacancy on the Planning Commission.

RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

3- Year Term Ending 12/31/2026

1. Joe Elam (Resignation)- District 3 Commissioner

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Woodall, and voted unanimously (3-0) to table this appointment until the June 15, 2026 Board of Commissioners meeting to allow for the new District 3 Commissioner to be elected on May 19th to make the appointment.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Consider/Approve Contract with Yellowstone Landscaping for Storm Debris Removal and Consolidation

Interim Public Works Director Mac Koon addressed the Commission regarding storm debris removal operations and reported that County crews have been actively working to address debris resulting from recent winter storm events. He stated that there are approximately 510 work orders associated with storm-related damage across the County, with approximately 148 to 150 of those specifically related to right-of-way debris cleanup. Mr. Coon reported that just over 50 of those right-of-way work orders have been completed to date, noting that the remaining work is primarily located in Zones 1 and 3.

Mr. Coon explained that due to the volume of remaining debris, County staff would not be able to complete cleanup efforts in a timely manner without additional assistance. He further stated that the presence of debris within the right-of-way is impacting the County's ability to begin its mowing cycle, which typically starts in April, and that debris must be removed prior to mowing operations to ensure safety and efficiency.

Mr. Coon also noted that while the County intends to seek reimbursement through FEMA for storm-related cleanup costs, the process has been delayed, and coordination through GEMA has not yet resulted in reimbursement approval. As a result, the County must proceed with debris removal using available funds while awaiting further determination.

Mr. Coon presented a proposal from Yellowstone Landscape to provide storm debris removal services at a rate of \$1,100 per load and stated that the estimated cost of the remaining work is approximately \$50,000. He further recommended approval of a not-to-exceed amount of \$66,000 to ensure sufficient funding to complete all necessary debris removal.

Motion by Commissioner Woodall, seconded by Vice Chairman Mealor, and voted unanimously (3-0) to approve contracting with Yellowstone Landscape for storm debris removal services in an amount not to exceed \$66,000.

- b. Consider/Approve 2026 Local Road Assistance (LRA) Administration Grant Application and Project List

Interim Public Works Director Mac Koon presented the 2026 Local Road Assistance (LRA) Grant application and explained that the program provides additional funding through the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) with no local match required. He stated that this funding is separate from the County's annual Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) allocation, which typically requires a 30

percent local match, and noted that the LRA funding allows the County to complete additional roadway improvements without that cost burden.

Mr. Coon reported that Habersham County is eligible to receive \$1,038,696.09 in state funding and that the total estimated project cost is \$1,038,978.86, with the difference of \$282.77 to be covered through SPLOST VII funds.

Mr. Coon explained that the proposed project includes approximately 4.47 miles of roadway resurfacing on various County roads, as well as approximately 0.65 miles of guardrail replacement to improve roadway safety. He noted that approval of the application would allow the County to move forward with submitting the request to GDOT for review and funding consideration.

Motion by Vice Chairman Meador, seconded by Commissioner Woodall, and voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the 2026 Local Road Assistance (LRA) Grant application and authorize the Chairman to sign all related documents.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Chairman Harkness inquired about the availability and retention of recorded meeting videos, specifically asking how long recordings are maintained for public access. Staff responded that videos are currently retained for a period of 90 days. Chairman Harkness asked that staff review the feasibility of extending the retention period to allow recordings to remain accessible for a longer duration.

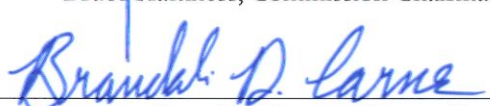
Chairman Harkness also raised the need for additional seating at the Aquatic Center and asked that staff evaluate options for acquiring additional chairs.

Chairman Harkness thanked those in attendance for their participation and support.

~~EXECUTIVE SESSION~~ No executive session was needed at this meeting.

ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Meador, seconded by Commissioner Woodall, and voted unanimously (3-0) to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
By: 
Bruce Harkness, Commission Chairman
Attest: 
Brandalin Carnes, County Clerk