

HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS CALLED MEETING
5:00 P.M., MONDAY, MAY 10, 2021
HABERSHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE
JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM
295 LLEWELLYN STREET
CLARKESVILLE, GA 30523

A called meeting of the Habersham County Board of Commissioners was held on Monday, May 10, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. in the Jury Assembly Room of the Habersham County Courthouse in Clarkesville, Georgia.

Present: Chairman Dustin Mealor; Commissioner Bruce Palmer; Commissioner Bruce Harkness; Commissioner Jimmy Tench; County Attorney Donnie Hunt; County Manager Phil Sutton; County Clerk Lindsay Underwood; County Department Directors; Individuals from the Media and Public.

Chairman Mealor called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Commissioner Harkness led the Invocation.

Chairman Mealor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Palmer, and voted unanimously to adopt the agenda.

ELECT VICE-CHAIR FOR REMAINDER OF 2021

Chairman Mealor asked for nominations for Vice-Chair for the remainder of 2021.

Commissioner Harkness nominated Commissioner Tench to serve as Vice-Chair for the remainder of 2021. The nomination was seconded by Commissioner Tench.

Chairman Mealor nominated Commissioner Palmer to serve as Vice-Chair for the remainder of 2021. The nomination was seconded by Commissioner Palmer.

Hearing no further nominations, Chairman Mealor called the vote for Commissioner Tench to serve as Vice-Chair for the remainder of 2021.

Commissioner Harkness: yea
Commissioner Tench: yea
Chairman Mealor: nay
Commissioner Palmer: nay

MOTION FAILS

Chairman Mealor called the vote for Commissioner Palmer to serve as Vice-Chair for the remainder of 2021.

Commissioner Harkness: nay

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Commissioner Tench: nay
Chairman Meador: yea
Commissioner Palmer: yea

MOTION FAILS

Motion by Commissioner Meador, seconded by Commissioner Harkness to table the election of a Vice-Chair for the remainder of 2021 until the June Commission Meeting.

Commissioner Harkness: yea
Commissioner Tench: nay
Chairman Meador: yea
Commissioner Palmer: yea

MOTION PASSES 3-1

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

a. Discussion on FY2022 Fee Schedule and Budget

Tim Sims, Finance Director, addressed the Board and reviewed a presentation regarding the FY2022 Fee Schedule and Budget. County Manager Phil Sutton reminded the Board that these are preliminary numbers and had changed slightly since the presentation was sent out prior to the meeting. He added that he would come back with his final recommendation for the Board to review next Monday. At that time, the Commission will need to have their recommendations prepared and a consensus will need to be reached in order to proceed with the hearings in June. Three schedule options for the June hearings were presented and the Commission will need to provide feedback on their preferred schedule next Monday as well. Much discussion ensued regarding the FY2022 Budget.

b. Discussion on Sheriff's Proposal-Deputy Salaries

Sheriff Joey Terrell addressed the Board, the Sheriff's office has performed a survey of nine local departments and out of those nine, Habersham County pays detention officers the lowest. He stated they are continuing to lose people, including one today, and are having issues obtaining qualified applicants despite running ads in the paper. He said that since his presentation at the last meeting, he has had many individuals say that they are willing to have their taxes increased to pay his employees what they deserve. Commissioner Palmer expressed concerns that this is a short-term solution and asked that benefits other than pay be considered in the future. County Manager Phil Sutton stated that they could add the Sheriff's proposal for incremental increases for accomplishing certain milestones into the pay study that is being conducted so that the County has costs associated with that type of benefits program. Much discussion ensued.

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Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Palmer, and voted unanimously to approve an increase in salary of \$2.30 per hour for the Sheriff's Department effective immediately.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Consider/Approve Revisions to Employee Health Insurance Plans

Vinitha Robinson, Human Resources Director, addressed the Board. The County's benefits broker, MSI Benefits, has recommended changes to the County's Employee Health Insurance Plans including switching to the Aetna network, an increase in employee deductions for the dental high-plan, and other changes that will result in costs savings for the County.

Commissioner Tench said he knew someone who had gone to the hospital and was going to be charged \$1400 for an MRI, but at the imaging center the same test was \$400. Ms. Robinson explained that if it was at the local hospital, they should not have been charged for a deductible due to an existing agreement with Habersham Medical Center. Discussion ensued.

Motion by Commissioner Plamer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness, and voted unanimously to approve revisions to the Employee Health Insurance Plans and to authorize the County Manager to sign all contracts for Health, Dental, Vision and Stop Loss Insurance for FY2022.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Personnel, Property Acquisition/Disposal

Motion by Chairman Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Palmer, and voted unanimously to enter into executive session to discuss Personnel and Property Acquisition/Disposal after a 5-minute recess (6:37 p.m.)

ROLL CALL VOTE

Commissioner Harkness-yea
Commissioner Tench-yea
Chairman Mealor-yea
Commissioner Palmer-yea

MOTION PASSES

Reconvened in Executive Session at 6:42 p.m.

Present: Chairman Dustin Mealor; Commissioners Bruce Harkness, Bruce Palmer, and Jimmy Tench; County Attorney Donnie Hunt; Associate County Attorney Megan DiNatale; County Manager Phil Sutton; County Clerk Lindsay Underwood

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Chairman Mealor, and voted unanimously to come out of closed session (8:10 p.m.)

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County Attorney Donnie Hunt reported that all matters discussed in Closed Session were limited to those matters allowed by the laws of the State of Georgia and asked for a motion authorizing the Chairman to make such a representation under oath on the affidavit.

Motion by Commissioner Tench, seconded by Commissioner Palmer, and voted unanimously to adopt the representation authorizing such affidavit as per the Attorney's recommendation.

ADJOURN: 8:11 p.m.

Motion by Chairman Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Palmer, and voted unanimously to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

By: _____
Chairman Dustin Mealor

Attest: _____
County Clerk Lindsay Underwood