

HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION MINUTES
4:30 P.M., MONDAY, AUGUST 16, 2021
HABERSHAM COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING
COMMISSION CONFERENCE ROOM (MAIN FLOOR)
130 JACOB'S WAY CLARKESVILLE, GA 30523

A work session of the Habersham County Board of Commissioners was held on Monday, August 16, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. in the Commission Conference Room of the Habersham County Administrative Building located at 130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523.

Present: Chairman Mealor; Commissioner Bruce Harkness; Commissioner Jimmy Tench; Commissioner Bruce Palmer; County Attorney Donnie Hunt; Interim County Manager Alicia Vaughn; Deputy Clerk Brandalin Carnes; County Department Directors; Individuals from the media and public.

Chairman Mealor called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Commissioner Mealor lead the invocation.

Commissioner Mealor lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

a. Rescheduling of November Board of Commissioners Meeting

Mrs. Vaughn informed the Commission that the ACCG County Reconnect Conference in Savannah will be held November 15th through November 18th. The final day of the conference is in direct conflict with the regularly scheduled November 18th Board of Commissioners meeting. She recommended that the Commission consider moving the date of the November meeting in advance time to give the public ample notice, and recommended November 8th as it would be after the election for the District 5 Commission Seat but prior to the Thanksgiving holiday season.

b. Downtown Clarkesville KIA Memorial and Gazebo Maintenance

Mrs. Vaughn informed the Commission that Facilities Director Mike Bramlett received a quote from Ammons Grave Restoration out of Cleveland, GA for the professional restoration and twice a year cleaning of the KIA Memorial. The initial restoration would be \$2650.00 which includes cleaning, regrouting and securing loose steps, recoloring the lettering, repairing the floor grout and caulking the gaps in the marble. The ongoing twice a year maintenance would only be an annual cost of \$600. With the Commission's permission, this would be added as a line item to the annual budget. Regarding the Gazebo, Mrs. Vaughn informed the Commission that she has inspected it and found that there were ADA compliance issues and general safety issues such as damage to the sidewalk leading up the steps, damage to the steps themselves, and rotted wood causing soft spots in the gazebo's flooring. Aesthetically speaking, it needs a new coat of paint as well. She had reached out to Clarkesville City Manager Keith Dickerson who states the City of Clarkesville is adamant about being the ones to address the maintenance of the Gazebo. Discussion was had by the Commission regarding who had liability if someone was injured on the Gazebo? Mr. Hunt informed the Commission the liability would lay with the County and that because the County is now aware of the safety issue, we are especially obligated. He suggested that the best course of action would be to

rope off the Gazebo and start the planning process for the County to make the repairs needed to reopen it.

c. Finance Department Reports at Commission Meetings

Mrs. Vaughn asked the Commission to consider allowing the Financial Report given at Commission meetings to be quarterly rather than monthly. The Commission would still receive a paper report of the county's financial status, however the verbal recap by Finance Director Tim Sims would only be given on a quarterly basis. Mrs. Vaughn explained that Finance has been inundated with applications for ARP funds and grants and that Mr. Sims time was best spent where it saves or brings in the most money for the county. Discussion was had over the current report schedule, and it was suggested that if the Financial Report moves to quarterly than it would allow for monthly reports from Department Heads in its place.

d. ARP Funds and Potential Projects

Mrs. Vaughn informed the Commission that \$8 million dollars of ARP funds were set to be released locally and that half had already been sent out to the counties and received into the general fund. Now the state of GA will be receiving a 1st tranche of ARP funding that will be made available for local governments to apply for, with the main areas of focus being negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency, and water/sewer/broadband infrastructure. The County only has until August 31st to send in applications for these funds, which is an extremely short window. Her goal is to send in as many applications as possible for Habersham County. Mike Beecham is working on an application for storm water projects. She is going to try to see if she can fit the communications project into the economic impact category and has contacted the state regarding it but has not yet heard back yet. Commission Harkness brought up the sewer and water issues with the county and Mrs. Vaughn informed him that while she could encourage the cities to apply for the funds as well, that the county itself does not have any projects in place that we are in control of for which we can apply for assistance. Mrs. Vaughn informed the Commission that because the deadline of August 31st prevents bringing forth individual applications to the Commission for approval, that an item would be on the agenda asking for permission from the Commission for Finance Director Tim Sims to be authorized to send in applications for projects as they come in with the constraint that any monetary matches must come from ARP funds.

e. ARP NTIA Broadband Grant Through Partnership with Windstream

The county is working with Windstream to apply for a separate NTIA grant to extend broadband coverage throughout the county. The joint development authority is assisting HEMC in applying for these same funds. The conversation digressed back into water and sewer issues.

f. Fee Free Use of Recreation & Aquatic Facility for Residents

Mrs. Vaughn informed the Commission that she believes that ARP funds can be used towards the construction of the pickle ball complex that has been under consideration for the past several Commission meetings. She informed the Commission that the players had an event last weekend that raised a significant amount of funds. Mrs. Vaughn asked the Commission to consider doing away with the \$4 daily use fee for residents to use the Recreation Center facilities as it discourages low-income families and seniors from being able to access services that are mostly funded by property taxes that could improve their health and wellbeing. Last year the facility only brought in \$67,000 from the daily use fees. She went on to state that this fee waiver would only be for Habersham County residents, and that non-residents would still pay to access the facilities.

ADJOURN: 5:25 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Chairman Mealor and unanimously approved to adjourn at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

By: _____
Chairman Dustin Mealor

Attest: _____
County Clerk Brandalin Carnes