

**HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
6:00 P.M., MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2021
HABERSHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE
JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM
295 LLEWELLYN STREET
CLARKESVILLE, GA 30523**

A meeting of the Habersham County Board of Commissioners was held on Monday, September 27, 2021, at 6:00 P.M. in the Jury Assembly Room of the Habersham County Courthouse. Present was Chairman Mealor, Commissioner Harkness, Commissioner Palmer, Commissioner Tench (via virtual teleconference), Interim County Manager Alicia Vaughn, County Attorney Donnie Hunt, County Clerk Brandalin Carnes, department heads, staff, members of the media and public.

Commissioner Mealor called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Harkness lead the invocation.

Commissioner Harkness lead the pledge of allegiance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- a. Chairman Mealor read a proclamation declaring the month of October 2021 as Dysautonomia Awareness Month in Habersham County.
- b. Chairman Mealor announced that county offices will be closed on October 11, 2021, due to the Columbus Day holiday. The landfill will remain open.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

a. Consider/Approve Map Amendment Application Z-21-02:

Planning and Development Director Mike Beecham spoke on behalf of the Habersham County Development Authority who are the owners of the property in question. They are asking for the 45.59 acre tract of land located at 736 Duncan Bridge Road to be changed from AG, Agricultural District to HI, High Intensity District for the purpose of developing potential industrial property. No one spoke in opposition. Motion made by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and vote unanimously to approve.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

CONSENT AGENDA:

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

- a. Consider/Approve the Minutes of the August 16, 2021, Work Session

- b. Consider/Approve the Minutes of the August 16, 2021, Regular Meeting
- c. Consider/Approve the Minutes of the August 16, 2021 Executive Session
- d. Consider/Approve Tax Affidavit 2021-3
- e. Consider/Approve Tax Affidavit 2021-4
- f. Consider/Approve Purchase of one (1) 5” Hose Mule System And Six (6) Mounting Plates For Fire Apparatus
- g. Consider/Approve Purchase of Two (2) 2022 F-250’s for Road Department
- h. Consider/Approve Purchase of CAT 725 Off Road Truck for the Solid Waste Department
- i. Consider/Approve Purchase of Kubota M5-111HFC-1 Tractor for Road Department

REPORTS:

- a. The Manager’s Report was presented by Interim County Manager Alicia Vaughn.
- b. A Department Report was given by Public Information Officer Carolyn Gibson. Ms. Gibson updated the Commission of her success with her Constant Contact email campaigns, through which she has sent over 150,000 emails since it’s inception.. She informed the Commission of the success of the social media campaign in selling 9/11 Memorial T-Shirts to raise money for the community paramedic program. She has plans to expand the county’s social media presence through Linked In. Ms. Gibson went over the results of a recent survey regarding interest in having a county farmer’s market. 330 people responded with 94.8% saying that they are in favor of this.

APPOINTMENTS:

HOSPITAL AUTHORITY- 3-year term

- 1. Teri Newsome- Term Expires 6/30/2021- District 5 Appointment
Tabled at June, 21, 2021 meeting until November 15, 2021 meeting
- 2. Kerry Loudermilk- Term Expires 6/30/2021- Commissioner Palmer’s (District 1) Appointment
**Tabled at August 16, 2021 meeting until September 2021 meeting **

Motion made by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Meador and voted unanimously to nominate a slate including Mary Smith, Kerry Loudermilk and Michael Newell for the Hospital Authority to choose from for the position opening.

DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY- 6-year term

- 1. R. Allen Smith (Resignation)- Term Expires 2/17/2022- Commissioner Tench’s Appointment

No valid applicants were available to choose from at this time. Motion made by Chairman Meador, seconded by Commissioner Tench and voted unanimously to table the appointment until the October commission meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- a. **Consider/Approve Rescheduling November Commission Meeting:** County Clerk Brandalin Carnes informed the Commission of days that were available for rescheduling the November meeting. Discussion was had amongst the Commission. Motion made by Chairman Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness, and voted unanimously to approve rescheduling the November 15, 2021, Commission meeting for November 18, 2021.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **Consider/Approve RFP Award for Radio System:** Finance Director Tim Sims informed the Commission that the county received proposals from three vendors and that the review committee and TUSA consulting meet on several occasions to analyze and score proposals. After having ranked vendors, they made negotiations to determine where the final cost estimates for the Radio Systems purchase and installation fell within the budget constraints of the county. TUSA representative Alan Talkington added that the budget accounts for a 15-year time frame. He also went on to say that the original amounts quoted were between \$12 Million to \$15 Million for infrastructure alone but they were able to make cuts to keep only what they believe to be the necessities to get the price down to \$9,654,534.89 with CI/L3. He stated that when he conducted the initial needs assessment for Habersham County that our coverage fell in the upper 70's and lower 80's percentile. With this new radio system, the county will be guaranteed to have at least 95% coverage. A question was asked by a member of the public regarding if the RFP considered the cost for radios for the municipalities and Commissioner Mealor informed that the municipalities would be responsible for their own radio costs and that all cities were invited to be part of the RFP process, though some did not participate. Finance Director Tim is recommending the award of RFP #2021-11 Project-25 800 MHz Radio System to Communications International, Inc/L3 Harris (CI/L3) in the amount of \$9,654,534.89. Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Palmer and voted unanimously to approve.
- b. **Consider/Approve Premium Pay for Public Safety Personnel:** Finance Director Tim Sims informed the Commission that Habersham Counties Public Safety Departments are having a difficult time with staffing due to difficulty recruiting to fill vacant positions and shift vacancies from illness, scheduled vacations and quarantining from COVID-19 exposure. It is recommended that ARP funds be used to provide "shift bonus/differential" supplements to encourage employees to pickup shifts where possible. It is also suggested that a onetime bonus of \$500 be paid to all full-time employees. Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously to approve.
- c. **Consider/Approve Fire Recovery USA for Insurance Reimbursements:** Emergency Services Director Chad Black informed the Commission that some insurances will pay a fee to responding fire department for vehicle or house fires. This is money Habersham County Emergency Services is missing out on that could alleviate some of the tax burden on citizens. Fire Recovery bills insurance to see if they will pay this fee. If so, than they get a portion of what they are able to collect. If insurance will not pay, their will still be no out of pocket charge to the fire victim. This is just an attempt at collecting reimbursements where they are available. Discussion was had amongst the Commission regarding whether we need to request RFP's for this service. The Commission decided that it would be best to go ahead and request RFP's to make sure everything is being conducted fairly. Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously to generate and execute an RFP for the purpose of invoicing insurance companies for fire and emergency service responses.

- d. **Consider/Approve Removal of Admission Fee for County Resident Use of Aquatic Center:** Parks and Recreation Director Kurt Cooper informed the Commission that the removing the fee for Habersham County residents would open up the use of the facility to low-income individuals and households. The Aquatic Center budgets revenues for admission fees of \$95,000 a year, however it has only brought in \$90,492 in FY 2018, \$93,438 in FY 2019, \$60,708 in FY 2020 and \$67,514 in FY 2021. The benefit provided to the citizens of Habersham County will outweigh the cost of losing revenue from these fees. Mr. Cooper states that fees will still be charged for all non-county residents, special reservations, facility rentals and athletic team participation. Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously to approve.
- e. **Consider/approve Amendment to the 401(a) Defined Contribution Plan for Senior Management of Habersham County and Updates to Schedule A:** Human Resource Officer Vinitha Robinson was not available to present the agenda item. Mrs. Vaughn informed the Commission that this agenda item is to make the corrections needed to give her the agreed upon retirement benefits in her contract. Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Palmer and voted unanimously to approve.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: None

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Personnel, pursuant to O.C.G.A § 50-14-3(b)(2); Litigation, pursuant to O.C.G.A §50-14-2; and Property Acquisition, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(1).

Motion by Commissioner Meador, seconded by Commissioner Harkness to enter into executive session for purpose discussing Personnel, pursuant to O.C.G.A § 50-14-3(b)(2); and Litigation, pursuant to O.C.G.A §50-14-2; and Property Acquisition, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(1) at 7:25 P.M.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Commissioner Harkness- Yea
Commissioner Tench- Yea
Commissioner Meador- Yea
Commissioner Palmer- Yea

MOTION PASSES

Reconvened into executive session at 7:33

Present: Chairman Meador, Commissioner Bruce Harkness, Commissioner Bruce Palmer, County Attorney Donnie Hunt, Interim County Manager Alicia Vaughn and County Clerk Brandalin Carnes.

Absent: Commissioner Tench was not present during executive session due the fact that he had joined the meeting via teleconference.

Commissioner Tench was no longer present via teleconference when Commissioners Meador, Harkness and Palmer returned from executive session. He remained absent for the rest of the meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Meador, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted 3-0 to return from executive session at 9:08 P.M.

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 Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted 3-0 to adopt the representation authorizing such an affidavit per the Attorney's recommendation.

ADJOURN: 9:11 P.M.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted 3-0 to adjourn at 9:11 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

By: _____
Chairman Dustin Mealor

Attest: _____
County Clerk Brandalin Carnes