

**Habersham County Development Authority
Thursday, August 10, 2023 @ 3:30 pm
Executive Conference Room
130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523**

Members Present: Gail Thaxton, Allen Whitener, Jeff Bruns, Bryan Ferguson, Jim Butterworth, Kelly Woodall

Members Not Present: None

Others Present: County staff, Members of the Public and Media

Call to Order and Invocation

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 pm and invocation given by Gail Thaxton.

Approval of Agenda

A MOTION was made by Kelly Woodall, SECONDED by Jim Butterworth, and voted unanimously to amend the agenda to include nomination of Vice-Chair and to approve the amended order of business.

Nomination of Vice Chair

Bryan Ferguson was nominated and appointed Vice-Chair by consensus.

Approval of Minutes

A MOTION was made by Jeff Bruns, SECONDED by Kelly Woodall, and voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2023 regular meeting.

Monthly Activity Report

Alicia Vaughn presented the Monthly Activity and Financial report. July YTD represents 8.3% of the Fiscal Year. Current revenues are .9% and expenditures are 4.35%. Total account balances equal \$1,364,311.

A MOTION was made by Jim Butterworth, SECONDED by Bryan Ferguson, and voted unanimously to approve the monthly financial report as presented.

Old Business

Airport Business Park Update – Charlie Fiveash gave the update. He and Wade held the first meeting of the Airport Business Park association in July. There were about 15 in attendance, though several owners were not present. Wade is willing to step up and be the chair of the new association since he is an owner in the park as well. Most of the owners there seemed to be in agreement to pay for the basic expenses for streetlights and landscaping. However, several of the representatives at the meeting stated that the streetlights do not come down to their businesses and therefore they get no benefit for them and don't agree with paying the expense for them. Bryan Ferguson presented an estimate from HEMC for the cost of additional streetlights to be installed from Airport Road to Industrial Blvd, which is approximately 2,100 feet. The estimate is for ten new poles, identical to the ones previously installed, for an up-front cost of \$70,926 and a monthly cost of \$19.95 per light. The cost of labor and material has gone up since we installed the original lights. A MOTION was made by Kelly Woodall to approve the plans as presented by HEMC to install ten new poles for the cost of \$70,926. There was no second to the motion and Mr. Woodall rescinded the motion. Jeff Bruns asked why the additional lights were not

included in the original project. Mike Beecham said that the original streetlights were only installed in the area where the owners were under the Airport Business Park covenants and under Development Authority control. He suggested that the other business should be required to adopt the covenants of the business park in order to benefit from the lights. Alice Venter from the City of Baldwin added that the City of Baldwin would like to help with the landscaping and beautification in the business park. Charlie then brought up the fact that several years ago, when the FAA turned over the graded sites to the Development Authority, there was a bid put out to realtors to list and market the sites in the Airport Business Park. Only one bid was received, and that was from Norton. Wade Rhodes/Norton has been the listing agent since that time. Charlie feels it is prudent that the Development Authority puts out another bid or RFQ for realtors in order to ensure that we have full market coverage and are following protocol. Alice Venter commented that although she is a real estate agent herself, she wonders if it is the best use of public funds/taxpayer dollars to pay real estate commissions. Wade Rhodes asked to comment and said that the Development Authority and the business park were broke whenever he assumed responsibility for marketing the park. He said the Development Authority now has \$1.3 million in the bank and that he feels partially responsible for that. He also stated that whether he or another broker is selected, the Development Authority absolutely needs a real estate broker to sell any property. Janney Sanders as well as Jeff Bruns agreed that the Development Authority needs a real estate broker. A MOTION was made by Jeff Bruns, seconded by Jim Butterworth, and voted unanimously to put out a bid or RFQ in relation to commercial realtors/listing agents to market and promote Development Authority property. Charlie will coordinate with the county finance department to proceed with the RFQ/bid process.

Courthouse Redevelopment Update – Alicia Vaughn has sent a draft of an IGA to City of Clarkesville, who has tentatively agreed to loan half the cost of demolition to the county. The Development Authority would also loan half the cost of demolition to the county. The county would repay the Development Authority and the City of Clarkesville, along with interest, within ten days of the sale of the courthouse. There would later be a development agreement between the County, Development Authority, and City of Clarkesville for the redevelopment of the property. This is a tentative plan, and the final IGA will be brought to the Development Authority for approval once it is approved by Clarkesville.

Other Property Updates – None

New Business

None

Other Reports

Alice Venter, Mayor of Baldwin, asked to speak. She has recently learned that local governments are allowed to contribute up to the equivalent of 3 mils of their digest each year toward economic development. She feels like the Development Authority has grown, but still struggles for funding. There has been a lot of contention between the Development Authority and Baldwin and some other government boards – but hopefully through the HC3 meetings that have been held over the last year and a half have built some bridges. She knows the Development Authority needs funds to develop the Reed property (which would benefit Baldwin as well as the county). She wants to advocate for other municipalities to contribute to the Development Authority, to put more money in their pocket, a shared pot to attract economic development. She mentioned this to her council on Tuesday and it was rather contentious, but she feels like the contention has been built around a lot of misunderstandings, and that the city of Baldwin is now, more than ever, supportive of economic development. She feels it will be a great investment of taxpayer dollars to promote economic development in Habersham County, even

though Baldwin is poor. She fully intends to advocate with the other municipalities as well. She also said that the county gives \$50k to Partnership Habersham every year to do what they do, but she feels like some of those funds could be better used by the Development Authority for grading land and making property available for people to come. Ms. Venter ended by saying to the Development Authority that Baldwin is on their side, and that they are going to be knocking on doors. Charlie Fiveash clarified that the Development Authority contributes \$15k and the county contributes \$35k to Partnership Habersham. He also said his contract with the Development Authority will come up for discussion at the end of this month and will be re-evaluated by the authority and Partnership Habersham. Charlie added that the Development Authority came up with the idea to put him in this role, and not a staff member. There has been rumors that Alicia had "hand-picked" him for his role with the Development Authority, and that is misinformation and not true. He stated there were many hands that were involved in the process. Alice Venter added that she knows how rumors fly in the community, and that she has had people ask her about Charlie's involvement with the Development Authority and if he is getting paid, etc. She said she didn't know, but that if the Development Authority was getting funds from the municipalities under the plan she mentioned earlier, that the Development Authority could hire an Economic Development Director that is trained, qualified, knocking on doors, pounding the pavement and making things happen. Jim Butterworth asked to speak. He said, "I sense some contention, but whatever this authority is paying Charlie Fiveash, we need to triple it. And if you (Alicia Vaughn) hand-picked Charlie, you are to be commended. The team that has been brought together here is first class. People are going to talk about you behind your back, it doesn't matter. Our job is this agenda right here, not, quite frankly, to have other people, elected or not, participate and create some contention. This is our task here, so I don't think it is necessary for us to start throwing rocks. It is time for us to focus on this agenda."

A MOTION was made by Kelly Woodall, seconded by Bryan Ferguson, and voted unanimously to enter Executive Session at 4:17 p.m.

Executive Session

A MOTION was made by Bryan Ferguson, seconded by Jim Butterworth, and voted unanimously to exit Executive Session at 4:59 p.m.

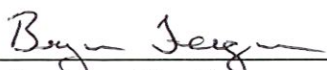
A MOTION was made by Jeff Bruns, seconded by Kelly Woodall, and unanimously voted to extend Wade Rhodes' contract for the Reed Property for a period of 90 days.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is Thursday, September 14, 2023 @ 3:30 pm, Habersham County Administration Building.

Adjourn

A MOTION was made by Kelly Woodall, SECONDED by Bryan Ferguson, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:09 pm.


Bryan Ferguson, Vice Chair


Attest: Charlie Fiveash