

Habersham County Development Authority
Thursday, November 14, 2024 @ 3:30 pm
Executive Conference Room
130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523

The Habersham County Development Authority held a regular meeting on Thursday, November 14, 2024, at 3:30 p.m. in the Executive conference room in the Habersham County Administration Building located at 130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA, 30523.

Members Present: Jim Butterworth (via teleconference), Allen Whitener, Jeff Bruns, Sidney Roland, Mike Franklin (via teleconference), Gail Thaxton, Bryan Ferguson

Members Not Present: None

Others Present: County staff, Charlie Fiveash, Attorney Jim Woodward, Attorney Janney Sanders, Rope Roberts, Mike Beecham

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Bryan Ferguson.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

The invocation was given by Sidney Roland and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bryan Ferguson.

Approval of Agenda

A MOTION was made by Gail Thaxton, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 7-0 to AMEND the agenda to remove Executive Session and to approve the agenda as amended.

Approval of Minutes

A MOTION was made by Sidney Roland, seconded by Mike Franklin, and voted 7-0 to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2024 Regular Meeting and the October 28, 2024 Special Called Meeting.

Old Business

1. Airport Business Park/Phase II Business Park Update – Charlie Fiveash gave the update. Charlie reminded the authority that we recently bid out real estate brokerage services. Wade Rhodes with Norton had been our broker for several years. Wade brought Charlie a prospect he is representing who may be interested in a parcel in Phase II. It is a group out of Gainesville named Clearview. James Irvin has drawn up a plan for a 33,000 square foot building on the Pyratech side. Charlie anticipates an offer in the 40's for an as-is site of about 5 acres before Thanksgiving. Rope Roberts asked why we would put a 33,000 square foot

building on a site that we were shown would accommodate a 105,000 square foot building. Jeff Bruns said we are selling raw land, not buildings, so that shouldn't matter. Charlie said these are only proposed layouts, and that the rule of thumb is 10,000 to 12,000 square feet per usable acre. Jeff then asked if we would have covenants designed before we sell any parcels in Phase II? Janney suggested adding a stipulation to the contract that the buyer must adhere to the covenants. Bryan said we need to be very clear with them that there will be no grading done to the lot by the Development Authority. Sidney asked how a 33,000 square foot building will affect the rest of the property, and what size building could be built on the remainder. Mike Beecham said there is a significant elevation difference between those two pads. Charlie added that this Pyratech side of Phase II is the less desirable area of the park, and that the Duncan Bridge lots will be much more desirable. Sidney asked if we have a direction on the covenants for Phase II? Janney said there would be similar restrictions to the existing ones, but we would have more options for enforcing them. Gail asked if the responsibility for landscaping or lighting falls under the association authority or the covenant authority. Janney said it would be under the covenant authority.

2. Administrative Update – Patti McLarty gave the update.
 - a. Landscape and Streetlight Billing - 3rd quarter 2024 billing has been completed and no payments have been received yet, so the balances owed look higher than normal. Patti wanted to point out the companies with \$0 payments listed. Patti has been dividing the expenses by 14 – which includes the ten business park lots as well as 4 adjacent companies who benefit from the services. Patti stressed that it was highly unlikely that we would receive any reimbursement from any of the companies who have not yet paid anything, and she recommends that we take those companies out of the calculation for the quarterly billing. Patti stated, “If we don't start splitting the expenses between the ones that will actually pay, we will continue to carry a balance.” One of the customers who has been paying their part contacted Patti after receiving the letter about forming an association and said that he doesn't feel like their company benefits from the services and Patti shared that with the board. The owner said they don't care about the streetlights, and they can cut their own grass. Patti said she feels like many of the owners share this opinion and she doesn't believe they will go through with forming an association. Jeff Bruns asked what is our cost to get out from under this? Patti said we need to get our remaining balance from HEMC and decide from there. Bryan Ferguson said he would find out the balance and let us know. Tim Sims asked if the existing covenants say anything about paying common expenses or forming an association? Janney Sanders said the original covenants were put in place before the Property Owners Association Act. The covenants were later amended, and Janney said they could not get everyone to agree with the new covenants. Patti explained that the cost per quarter for just the streetlights is only \$89 per owner when split 14 ways. Each quarter's landscaping bill is \$1200 and adds almost \$100 to each owner's bill. Janney said we do not have

an obligation to provide streetlights or landscaping to the park, so we should stop. Patti asked Janney if he had received any response from the letters we sent out. He said no. Mike Beecham suggested that Steelcell may want to keep their streetlights since they have 3 lots. Patti also shared that Charlie received a call from someone from Windstream saying we had some bulbs out in the streetlights. Patti called HEMC, who told her they will need the pole numbers of the ones that are out. Bryan said he thought they had been fixed, but that he would check on it. Charlie told the board that the City of Baldwin now has a public works building in the park area and maybe they would agree to pay their share. Patti told the board she has one more suggestion, which is to continue to bill the owners who are willing to pay and keep the lights on. She said since everything is organized now, it really isn't very time consuming to do a quarterly billing and she was happy to continue doing it. We could cut out the landscaping services, and bill quarterly for the streetlights, and not have to reimburse HEMC a bunch of money for the streetlight installation balance. Charlie reminded the group that we had approached the City of Baldwin to help cover the streetlight costs, and were told no. Patti reminded the group that Alice Venter had told the Development Authority that they would donate mulch through Rev Solutions for the common area beds. Charlie said Rev Solutions is also now in the business park and maybe we could ask them if they would like to be included in the services. Jeff Bruns asked if we are paying for landscaping at this minute in time? Charlie said yes, but the services could be stopped, especially during this season. Jeff continued by saying "cut it off right now, get a payoff for EMC, pay them off and turn the lights off. We no longer own any more property in the park". Charlie said Mr. Chairman, I don't know if that requires a motion or not". Janney said yes, we should have an official action. Patti advised there will be one more billing for expenses paid in 4th quarter 2024. Gail Thaxton said she can hardly believe we are in this place, with fundamental services like lighting and landscaping, that will only enhance their business presence. Sidney Roland asked how will ending the services affect us trying to market other nearby properties? Janney said that proper covenants will be put in place for Phase II, so we won't have this problem. **Jeff Bruns made a motion that we end all landscaping as of today, we get a payoff from HEMC and cut the lights off and let the owners contact EMC directly if they want streetlights. The motion was seconded by Gail Thaxton, and voted 6-0 to approve ending the landscaping services, getting a payoff from HEMC, and turning off the streetlights. Bryan Ferguson did not participate in the vote.**

- b. Training - Patti also explained to the group that all members of the Development Authority have completed their required training.
- c. AARF and SAM registrations – Patti explained that AARF stands for Annual Authority Registration & Financial reporting and is handled through the Department of Community Affairs. Annual registration is required within 6 months of the end of each fiscal year. SAM stands for System for Award

Management and is required by any entity wanting to be eligible for Federal grants, contracts, or assistance. Mike Beecham added that the SAM registration is good for several years. Patti has completed the reporting requirements for 2024.

3. Courthouse Update – Our urging resolution is on the agenda for the BOC meeting next Monday night to convey title of the old courthouse to the Development Authority and move forward with demolition of the courthouse. Jim Butterworth said Alicia asked him to present the urging resolution to the Board of Commissioners at Monday's meeting. Demolition bids are coming in lower than expected. The City of Clarkesville has been informed that they will no longer have any responsibility to invest in the demolition. There are quite a few parties who are interested in the property once the building is gone. Sidney asked how much did Parkside end up paying for the time invested? They originally paid \$100,000 in earnest money and were refunded \$10,000. Jim Woodward said technically the \$10,000 goes back to the Development Authority, but that the Authority could decide to give it back to the county, or the county could ask for it. Jim asked the board to give their opinion on whether to refund the \$10,000 to Parkside or keep it. Sidney Roland suggested giving the money back as an incentive to Parkside if they end up developing the property. However, the general consensus was that Parkside should have to pay the \$10,000 and shouldn't be refunded.
4. Strategic Economic Development Planning Update – There has been discussion among the Authority that we would apply for funding for a Strategic Plan for the community. The authority has applied through GMRC for a grant to cover the cost, and last week Georgia Power, unsolicited, gave the authority \$50,000 toward the cost of the strategic plan. The total cost of a professional strategic plan can be anywhere between \$75,000 and \$200,000.
5. Partnership Habersham Update – Rope Roberts gave the update. He will give the same update at the December BOC meeting. Rope shared a presentation by Partnership Habersham, in an effort to be transparent, which highlighted their recent accomplishments and projects. He reminded the authority that over 70% of Partnership Habersham's funding comes from the private business sector, which makes them a Public Private Partnership. The foundation of Partnership Habersham is to help existing industries, develop the county's workforce, and to help attract and recruit new industries. Rope thanked the Development Authority for their investment. Rope feels like the Development Authority should be a larger investor than the BOC. Partnership Habersham changed their bylaws this year so that they could have a place for the Development Authority, the Board of Education, and the Board of Commissioners on their executive committee. Rope praised Charlie for his work, and reminded the Authority that Charlie is very involved at a state level and is well known and respected, which is a great thing for Habersham County. One of the most important things Partnership Habersham does every year is the Ninth Grade Academy Career Fair, which helps kids decide their future careers, hopefully in Habersham County. Currently,

Partnership Habersham is pursuing large tracts along the Hwy. 365 corridor from Level Grove Rd. to the Hall County line. Rope urged that a SPLOST campaign needs to begin in early 2025. Partnership Habersham can help with the campaign. The next SPLOST will be on the 2026 ballot. The Inland Port will begin operation in 2026, and companies will be looking to our area for expansion. We need to work on getting infrastructure in place along the corridor. Rope concluded his presentation by saying that while he agrees with Charlie that a strategic plan is a vision, but that it's also an implementation plan on how the vision will be carried out.

New Business

1. Ratify vote for Sidney Roland as Development Authority Secretary – Motion by Jeff Bruns, seconded by Gail Thaxton, and voted 7-0 to ratify vote for Sidney Roland as Development Authority Secretary retroactive to July 1, 2024.
2. Ratify vote to extend due diligence for Project Hill – Motion by Mike Franklin, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 7-0 to ratify the vote to extend due diligence period for Project Hill until January 6, 2025.

Other Reports

1. Review 2025 Meeting Schedule – Patti shared the proposed 2025 meeting schedule and received no objections.
2. Review/discuss GMRC ARC Grant Strategic Plan contract – Patti shared a copy of the executed agreement between GMRC and the Development Authority.

Public Comment

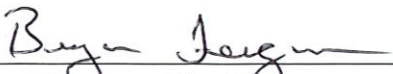
Rope Roberts shared that he has been contacted by an Atlanta developer named Hedgewood Homes, who has a strong interest in developing the courthouse property. Lew Oliver has worked with them on several projects. Rope feels like what they do would be a good fit for the property. Rope asked how this company can be notified when we issue an RFP for development? Patti said she can sign them up on the county's website to receive any bid opportunities that are issued. Tim Sims said he can add them to a list he keeps for people who reach out regarding specific bids.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is Thursday, December 12, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

Adjourn

A MOTION was made by Jeff Bruns, seconded by Allen Whitener, and voted 7-0 to adjourn the meeting at 4:51 p.m.


Bryan Ferguson, Vice Chair


Attest: Charlie Fiveash