

Habersham County Development Authority
Thursday, April 17, 2025 @ 3:30 pm
Executive Conference Room
130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523

The Habersham County Development Authority held a regular meeting on Thursday, April 17, 2025, 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, Bryan Ferguson, Sidney Roland, Mike Franklin (entered meeting at 4:00 p.m.), Allen Whitener, David Lovvorn

Members Not Present: Jeff Bruns

Others Present: Tim Sims, Kiani Holden, Janney Sanders, Rope Roberts, Mike Beecham, Charlie Fiveash (via TEAMS), Brandy Carnes, Media

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 p.m. by Jim Butterworth.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

The invocation was given by Bryan Ferguson and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jim Butterworth.

Approval of Agenda

A MOTION was made by Bryan Ferguson, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 5-0 to amend the agenda by removing Executive Session and to approve the agenda as amended.

Approval of Minutes

A MOTION was made by Sidney Roland, seconded by Bryan Ferguson, and voted 5-0 to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2025 Regular meeting.

Approval of Quarterly Financials

Kiani Holden gave the update. The quarterly financials are dated March 31, 2025. March YTD represents 75% of the fiscal year. Revenues collected were 245% of the total budget revenues, while expenditures were 24%. Revenues are high because of recent property sales. The SouthState Bank balance was \$259,263, the Wells Fargo account balance was \$576,425, and the GA Fund 1 balance was \$559,668, for total account balances of \$1,395,355. This total represents \$818,931 cash in bank and \$576,425 in investments. Kiani pointed out that on the balance sheet, the total assets do not match the total account balance because when Kiani runs the reports, the interest earned is included in the account balances, but that total has not yet been added to the balance sheet. Sidney Roland asked if the SouthState and Wells Fargo accounts are interest-bearing accounts. Kiani said yes, they are, and she will find out the interest rates. Tim said GA Fund 1 is around 4.7%.

A MOTION was made by Sidney Roland, seconded by Bryan Ferguson, and voted 5-0 to approve the quarterly financials dated March 31, 2025.

Old Business

1. Airport Business Park Update - Charlie Fiveash gave the update. Charlie shared that since joining Partnership Habersham, he has attended 63 Development Authority meetings and today is the first one he has missed (due to a funeral in Coastal Georgia). Charlie welcomed David Lovvorn to the team. Charlie shared the good news that we have some activity on one of our vacant sites. Wilson-Hutchinson was planning to attend today's meeting but since Charlie was unable to attend in person, there will be a private meeting held with the developers and the chair and vice chair to learn of their plans for their lots 5 and 7. Up until now, they have not performed per their agreement to put buildings on the site. However, Wilson-Hutchinson have submitted plans and permits to build a 15,000 square foot building on pad 7, which is across from the Higgins building. That building will include one pre-leased tenant with a ten-year lease, and the other portion of the building will be two speculative units. Charlie added that Scott Hutchinson is planning to move his family to Rabun County on Lake Burton, which certainly shows some commitment to this community. Jim asked about the plans dated 2023 that were included in the meeting packets and Charlie was unsure how those documents ended up in the packets. Jim asked if Charlie had received any type of revised plans or copies of permits or other documents from Scott Hutchinson on their new plan, and Charlie said he has not, he took what Scott told him in good faith. Jim said we've been taking their word in good faith for 30 months. Jim asked Charlie to tie them to a timeline. Jim would like to have a date for moving dirt or buying steel. Charlie said he will follow up with Scott. Higgins Building Update - Charlie has worked with Patti to prepare a letter to Mr. Higgins, asking him to attend the May meeting to give an update on marketing efforts for his building. Jim has spoken with D Higgins about the building. D said they are in the process of installing a sprinkler system in the building, so that's some progress. The Higgins have sent a request to Baldwin for a certificate of occupancy. D also told Jim that someone was lined up to rent the building but backed out three days ago. Jim believes they are trying to market the building. Jim offered help from the Development Authority, and D told him they would take all the help they could get. We've seen that the 40,000 square foot Higgins building may be too large for many prospects, and Rope and Charlie have discussed what may be the "sweet spot" as far as size for our community.
2. Phase II Business Park Update - The second piece of good news Charlie shared was that construction materials have been ordered for the Clearview building on the Pyratich site, and they will be breaking ground soon. Charlie informed the board that he has received no updates on Project Hill, so he feels like that deal has died. We've heard that one of their customers has filed for reorganization, so that has put their project plans on hold. We do have one other prospect, which is an existing business park owner looking to expand into Phase II.
3. Administrative Update - Patti McLarty was unable to attend the meeting due to an emergency. Included in the packet was the business park billing worksheet dated 3/12/25 which shows a balance due from tenants of \$2,817.04. Tenants have been billed through 12/31/2025.
4. Partnership Habersham Update - Rope Roberts began the update. Rope and Charlie attended the GEDA luncheon this week to represent Habersham County. They spoke with project developers and reminded them of where we are, and that we have property to sell. Charlie is planning to take some project managers to lunch, one on one, to show them our plans for development in the county. As far as the strategic plan, we want to

do that next quarter, which would put approval at the beginning of 2026. We will hopefully be able to include information about the County South project. Sometime before the end of the year, the plan is for Rope and Mike Beecham to meet with Cornelia, Baldwin and Alto to discuss their plans for infrastructure for all the potential developments along the south corridor. Charlie continued the update. Partnership Habersham is in the process of hiring a full-time administrative assistant. The position is currently posted, and they hope to hold some interviews next week. They have received over 100 applicants on Indeed. Most were not qualified, but there was one good candidate. There is also a community activist who is interested in the job. Charlie explained to new member David Lovvorn what the structure of Partnership Habersham is in relation to the Development Authority, and the many things Partnership Habersham does for our community. The Development Authority helps fund \$15,000 to Partnership Habersham. The county was Partnership Habersham's largest funding partner but defunded them by 97% and the Partnership is trying to get some of that money reinstated.

New Business

1. Consider/Approve continuation of streetlight billing – We previously had a company doing landscaping in the business park, but that service was terminated earlier this year. The City of Baldwin has indicated some interest in helping with the landscaping services. Jim has met with Baldwin twice to discuss the details of what they are willing to do. Once that is determined, Jim will bring that information to the board. Jim feels like landscaping and maintenance is important since the business park has our name on it. The Development Authority continues to pay for the monthly streetlight bill, which has been invoiced back to the owners once per quarter. The Development Authority paid the initial costs to install the streetlights. At this point, we are looking to try to get out of the business of running the Industrial Park. To that end, there is a remaining balance owed to HEMC of around \$19,000 for the balance of construction. The issue is that's the biggest speedbump in walking away from the business park. There are two options – we could walk away, leaving the balance to be paid by the business owners. But if they don't pay, HEMC will be out \$19,000. Or the Development Authority could pay the \$19,000 balance off, leaving a small monthly bill from HEMC for the lights. If the small monthly bill for the lights is not paid by the property owners, the lights would then be turned off. Janney Sanders explained that HEMC was contracted by the Development Authority to install the streetlights and we are therefore responsible for the bill. Initially, the City of Baldwin was asked to help with the costs of the lights, but they said no. Technically, the lights are in the City of Baldwin. Jim said he could bring the issue up at his next meeting with Baldwin. He said he would welcome a board member to go with him, and Mike Franklin volunteered. Motion by Mike Franklin, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 6-0 to table this item until after Jim Butterworth and Mike Franklin meet with the City of Baldwin.
2. Consider/Discuss updated business park covenants for Phase II – Janney asked the board to review the current covenants for Phase I and advise Janney of the changes they would like for Phase II covenants. Janney wants to ensure that this time we have a fully operational property owners association built into the covenants. The original covenants were made before Janney represented the Development Authority. The first revision was done in 2014 when many of the owners were already in the park. Some of the owners adopted the amended covenants, but some did not. Janney will make sure the updated covenants include the necessary wording for a property owners association. Janney asked for any other changes

the board would like to see in the new covenants. Jim asked if anyone had any suggestions. No one did. Jim said our Phase I covenants have saved us in a few situations, and Janney agreed and said those will remain but be strengthened. Janney will come up with a draft for the board to review and approve at the May meeting.

Other Reports

Jim told the board he had attended the Development Authority budget hearing with the Board of Commissioners. Jim asked for more money, but he realizes the money that the county commission would give us is not enough to truly function in our role. However, he feels the discussion opened the door for possibly more county funding in the future. The South County project (180 acres owned by the DOC) must next be approved by the Department of Corrections, and then we must purchase it at market price. Then we must address sewer, water, and grading. But that's industrial development, which will help our tax base. Bo Hatchett and Victor Anderson have both said that proceeds from this development should go toward paying off hospital debt. So, there are some issues to address there. Jim has e-mailed out some talking points for the County South project to the Development Authority members. Jim hit some high points and used AI to generate some good talking points. Sidney asked what is the timeframe? Jim said the DOC will meet here in a month or two. The property is earmarked to go to Habersham County. However, the purchase must be approved by the Board of Commissioners. We have first right of refusal. Hopefully when/if the commissioners approve the purchase, we will have close to enough funds to purchase the property. Then we will need to discuss bonds or TAD or other options for financing. Jim said this is a 20-year project. Jim asked Mike Beecham for his opinion on the project. Mike said that he and Phil Sutton met with the DOC about 10 years ago regarding the property, but the DOC had no interest in selling it at that time. Mike thinks it's a great idea, with sewer available in that area along the corridor.

Charlie wanted the board to be aware that we are part of a Joint Development Authority with Rabun and Banks Counties. A member of the Development Authority is appointed to serve on this board, along with a county staff member and a Commissioner. Charlie explained that our engagement in the JDA allows us to qualify for additional state tax incentives, which would be useful in large development projects. Unfortunately, the current chairman is no longer as engaged as he was previously. The Development Authority needs to stay involved with the JDA. Commissioner Ty Akins has served on the JDA for several years, and he is willing to help keep the JDA active. Kelly Woodall was previously the Development Authority representative, but he is now a Commissioner and needs to be replaced. Rope Roberts added that the JDA can also help existing industries who are expanding.

Public Comment

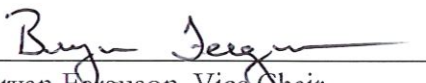
None

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is Thursday, May 8, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

Adjourn

A MOTION was made by Mike Franklin, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 6-0 to adjourn the meeting at 4:36 p.m.


Bryan Ferguson, Vice Chair


Attest: ~~Charlie Fivcash~~
Sidney Roland, Secretary