

Habersham County Development Authority
Thursday, August 14, 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, August 14, 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, Jeff Bruns, Allen Whitener

Members Not Present: David Lovvorn

Others Present: Tim Sims, Brandalin Carnes, Matt Skilling, Mike Beecham, Rope Roberts

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Jim Butterworth.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

The invocation was given by Mike Franklin, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jim Butterworth

Approval of Agenda

A MOTION was made by Mike Franklin, seconded by Bryan Ferguson, and voted 6-0 to amend the agenda by adding "SPLOST update" to Other Reports, and "Interest In Joint Development Authority" to Old Business, and to approve the agenda as amended.

Approval of Minutes

A MOTION was made by Sidney Roland, seconded by Allen Whitener, and voted 6-0 to approve the minutes of the July 10, 2025 Regular meeting.

Approval of Year-End Financials

Kiani Holden presented the year-end financials. Revenues collected were 254% of the total budgeted revenues, and expenditures were 56.55%. The bank account balances totaled \$1,382,278. That total includes the SouthState bank account, the Wells Fargo account, and the Ga Fund 1 account. Jim asked if we were getting any return on our money in the bank. Kiani said we are making good interest on our accounts. Jim asked Kiani to send him a breakdown of our interest income. Mike Franklin asked what types of accounts our money is in. Tim and Kiani explained that we have a regular checking account that earns low interest with SouthState bank, the Ga Fund 1 account is making about 5.1%, and the Wells Fargo account is in government mutual funds. Jeff Bruns asked about the accessibility of the funds in the Ga Fund 1 and Wells Fargo accounts. Tim said the money can be available from those accounts in a day. Mike Franklin asked if we had "fiduciary" accounts, which are guaranteed not to lose money. Tim said there are strict rules for fiduciary accounts, and he wasn't sure if we would qualify, and asked Mike if he would send him some information.

Old Business

1. Airport Business Park Update – The Hutchinson properties are still up for sale although there hasn't been much activity lately.
2. Phase II Business Park Update – Bryan Ferguson said he rode through the business park this morning and noticed that the building on the Pyratich site is up, and they were working on the siding. Bryan said it looks good. We still have a large parcel available for sale in Phase II. Rope Roberts asked if we have a recorded plat of the parcel and said he plans to help promote the property.
3. Administrative Update – Patti McLarty was not at the meeting but had provided some updates to Jim. Windstream has paid their bill in full. GTS Customs has not paid any of their invoices. Jim asked Matt Skilling if he thought it was time to send them a letter. Matt said he would draft a letter.
4. Partnership Habersham Update – Rope Roberts gave the update. They have interviewed two candidates for the Economic Development Director position and have two more interviews scheduled for next week. Partnership Habersham have been in talks with Tim regarding a media campaign to educate and promote SPLOST VIII. They will not be hiring an outside firm to manage the campaign because it costs too much. Rope said that Partnership Habersham was successful in promoting the past two SPLOST campaigns and they are planning to take the same approach for SPLOST VIII. The plans for promoting this SPLOST include 1) Emphasizing that this is not a new tax, but a continuation 2) Explaining that at least 30% of SPLOST revenues are paid by people who don't live in Habersham County or pay property taxes in Habersham County 3) The majority of the cities' project lists are for infrastructure or safety. There was a discussion among the members about how most citizens don't fully understand how SPLOST works and how important it is to educate. Tensions are currently very high regarding property taxes, the new high school scoreboard purchase, and the economy in general, and people are skeptical. Jim stressed if we don't have a good online presence regarding SPLOST, he doubts it will pass. He also talked about how Hall County put a great deal of SPLOST money into economic development several years ago.
5. Interest in Joint Development Authority – The Joint Development Authority is a board that meets quarterly, and members are representatives from Rabun, Banks, and Habersham counties. There are currently two openings, and the BOC is asking the Development Authority members to apply. Jim Butterworth and Mike Franklin expressed interest in joining the Joint Development Authority.

New Business

1. Consider/Approve continuation of streetlight billing (Tabled from July 10, 2025 meeting) – MOTION by Mike Franklin, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 6-0 to table until the September meeting.

Other Reports

SPLOST Update - Jim Butterworth said, based on the discussion about Hall County giving SPLOST money for economic development, we need to get the Development Authority more deeply involved in the conversation of the county helping to fund economic development. He feels that Habersham County's tax base is primarily residential because the Development Authority has not been properly supported, financially or otherwise. Jim asked Tim how much money has been allocated to the Development Authority in SPLOST VIII? Tim went over the proposed project list. The Tier 1 project is for six years of debt payment on a future jail. The remainder of the funds will

be split between the county and the cities based on population. The county has designated \$500,000 for economic development in the project list. Tim also explained next year, the county will have a campaign for a new sales tax, FLOST, which will directly offset property taxes. Jim said it's all part of a balancing act, and it seems Habersham County is way behind because of debt, particularly the hospital debt, which puts a burden on property owners, and the residents are tired of it. Tim explained that he will be spending the next two months educating the public about how SPLOST works and speaking with professional clubs like Rotary and Kiwanis. The county has also ordered signs that say "Funded by SPLOST" to go on roads that are being repaved. Rope Roberts suggested sharing information on projects that have been funded by prior SPLOSTs, and Tim informed him that neither the county nor the state has records of SPLOSTs prior to 1999. Jim offered the assistance of the Development Authority with the SPLOST campaign, and he pointed out that this is a situation where we really need an economic development director. Jim also expressed concern that only \$500,000 was allocated for an industrial park that will most likely cost more money than the Development Authority has in the bank, while the county commission is allocating \$3 million for a fire station at the same property. Jim suggested \$2 million be allocated to the fire station and the other \$1 million be allocated to the industrial park. Jim added that on the one hand, the Development Authority is tasked with broadening the tax base, but on the other hand, we are not given support by the commissioners or the county to do that. We should be concerned that the Development Authority is not given the financial support that we should get in order to broaden our tax base and reduce the hospital debt, and we should be part of the conversation, rather than being informed after the decisions have been made. Bryan Ferguson made the point that after purchasing the prison property, the Development Authority will have no cash left. He then said that we will not be able to achieve what the commission is asking us to achieve without the funds to do so.

Public Comment

None

Motion by Sidney Roland, seconded by Allen Whitener, and voted 6-0 to enter Executive Session at 4:35 p.m. for the purpose of Property Acquisition & Disposal, pursuant to O.C.G.A §50-14-3 (b)(1).

Executive Session

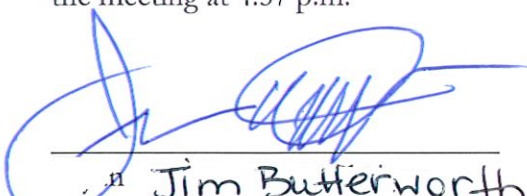
Motion by Allen Whitener, seconded by Bryan Ferguson, and voted 6-0 to exit Executive Session at 4:55 p.m.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is Thursday, September 11, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

Adjourn

A MOTION was made by Allen Whitener, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 6-0 to adjourn the meeting at 4:57 p.m.



Jim Butterworth
Chairman



Attest: Sidney Roland, Secretary