

**HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING MINUTES
6:00 P.M., MONDAY, JUNE 23, 2025
HABERSHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE
JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM
295 LLEWELLYN STREET, CLARKESVILLE, GA 30523**

The Habersham County Board of Commissioners held a special called meeting on June 23, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Jury Assembly Room of the Habersham County Courthouse located at 295 Llewellyn St, Clarkesville, GA.

Present was Chairman Jimmy Tench, Vice Chairman Bruce Harkness, Commissioner Ty Akins, Commissioner Kelly Woodall, County Manager Tim Sims, County Clerk Brandalin Carnes, staff, media, and members of the public.

Commissioner Dustin Mealor and County Attorney Donnie Hunt was absent.

Chairman Tench called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Commissioner Akins lead the invocation.

Commissioner Harkness lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Woodall, and voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the agenda as presented.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

a. First Reading of the Proposed FY 2026 Budget

County Manager Tim Sims informed the Commission that the Finance staff have worked diligently to keep the proposed budget as lean as possible. One of the challenges staff have had with trying to draft a budget is that they still have not received a tax digest from the Tax Assessors Office. The Tax Assessors' Office is hoping to have the digest available by Friday this week. At this time, they are using an estimate of 4% organic/new growth in the digest which would include a full rollback in the proposed FY 2026 budget. Additional challenges included an increase of over \$600,000 to the premium for employee health insurance renewals, an increase of \$505,819 in the retirement payment, and an increase in the base salary of select elected officials' departments of \$830,868.

Financial Administrator Kiani Holden gave the Commission a presentation on the proposed FY 2026 budget. This presentation went over much of the same information as the presentation given during the June 16, 2025 work session. She informed the Commission that the budget being proposed tonight for FY 2026 across all funds is \$80.37 million, which is a decrease of 5.23% from the FY 2025 budget of \$84.57 million. This proposed FY 2026 budget has a general fund of \$40.88 million, which is a 4.19% increase from the FY 2025 general fund of \$39.17 million. After having reviewed the \$3.15 million in requested CIP projects from the Departments, only \$1.08 million in capital improvements are being recommended for inclusion in the FY 2026 budget, of which \$1.01 million will be covered with existing fund balance. This includes the Commissioners request to add the \$150,000 needed for remodeling the dugouts back into the budget per their request at the June 16th work session. Finance staff were able to absorb this added expense with no additional increase to the budget, as new quotes have been received for other capital projects that have come back as significantly less than was initially estimated and budgeted for their completion. The budget for replacement of the roof for the AVITA building has been reduced from \$115,000 to \$55,000 and the budget for the Tyler New World Enterprise Public Safety software for the Sheriff's office has been reduced from \$355,00 to \$220,000. There were several requests for new positions and reclassifications, however adding any of these positions into the FY 2026 budget has been left to the discretion of the Commissioners, and there has been no consensus so far to do so. The Commissioners will need to keep in mind that this budget with a full rollback does not have those positions included, so adding them back would increase the budget. At this time, the budget also includes a 3% salary increase starting January 2026, for which Ms. Holden had a consensus from the Commission. Commissioner Akins and Commissioner Harkness both felt that the Commission should include funding for a Deputy Coroner, as Mr. Franklin has been serving as the Deputy Coroner

for many years and they felt it would be beneficial to have an additional person trained in the position to assist. Ms. Holden reviewed the items on the Commissioner's Directive Spending List that she had received a consensus on.

Commissioner Akins said that he knows the topic of impact fees have come up in the past, and he feels that the Commission is wanting to move forward on looking into this to help offset the residential tax burden. Mr. Sims informed him that Planning Director Mike Beecham is currently looking into this and that they will be bringing more information to the Commission.

The Commission opened the meeting up to the public to provide individuals who wished to do so an opportunity to address them regarding the proposed FY 2026 budget. The only individual present who wished to speak was Ms. Carly McCurry. Ms. McCurry wanted to know what factors contributed to the noticeable increase in the Sheriff's Office budget and how these resources would be allocated? She stated she realizes there were two new positions added to the Sheriff's Office for Code Enforcement as well as a Public Information Officer, but she would like to know why these administrative positions were prioritized over patrol positions? Ms. Holden informed Ms. McCurry that those three positions were not new, they were moved out from under the Direction of the Board of Commissioners to allow the Sheriff to have oversight of those positions. Ms. McCurry asked for clarification regarding the projected 4% increase in tax revenues, asking what the nature of this tax is? Mr. Sims informed Ms. McCurry that the 4% increase in revenues is not considered a tax increase as it is from new organic growth such as newly constructed buildings or subdivided properties, not from inflation in reassessments.

There was no official action taken on the proposed FY 2026 budget at this meeting, as the Commission intends to hold a second hearing and vote on the FY 2026 budget at a special called meeting on July 30, 2025.

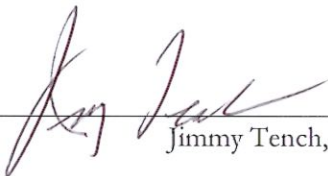
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

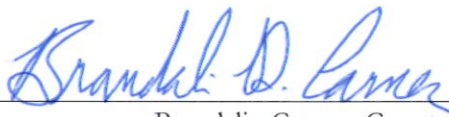
There were no additional comments from the Commission.

ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Woodall, seconded by Commissioner Harkness, and voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

By:  _____
Jimmy Tench, Commission Chairman

Attest:  _____
Brandalin Carnes, County Clerk