

HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
6:00 P.M., MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2026
HABERSHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE
JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM
295 LLEWELLYN ST, CLARKESVILLE, GA 30523

The Habersham County Board of Commissioners held a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, September 21, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Jury Assembly Room of the Habersham County Courthouse located at 295 Llewellyn St., Clarkesville, GA 30523.

Present was Chairman Bruce Harkness, Vice Chairman Dustin Mealor, Commissioner Ty Akins, Commissioner Kelly Woodall, Commissioner Danny McClellon, County Manager Tim Sims, Attorney Jeff Strickland, County Clerk Brandalin Carnes, staff, members of the media, and members of the public.

Chairman Harkness called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Commissioner Woodall led the Invocation.

Commissioner Akins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Akins, and vote unanimously (5-0) to amend the agenda as follows:

Removal of Item “L. Consider/Approve Purchase of One (1) Grapple Trailer for Public Works” from the consent agenda.

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Woodall, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the agenda as amended in the previous motion.

PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a. Recognition of Habersham County 4-H Program and Participants

Commissioner Dustin Mealor presented a recognition honoring the accomplishments of the Habersham County 4-H Program and its participants. Commissioner Mealor explained that the program provides students in fourth through twelfth grades with opportunities to develop skills in agriculture, science, civic engagement, leadership, health and wellness, community service, and the arts. He recognized the outstanding achievements of Habersham County 4-H members throughout the year, including accomplishments in forestry, Cotton Boll and Consumer Judging, poultry judging, wildlife judging, livestock competitions, project achievement, and leadership activities. The following students were recognized for their individual accomplishments:

Stella Crump – Earned first place in her age group at the state level in both record bookkeeping and the Dress-A-Cow Contest.

Emmalee Turgeon – Advanced to the State Pantry Pride Competition in Perry; earned the prestigious title of Master 4-H'er in Food Fare at the 83rd Georgia 4-H State Congress in Atlanta; and was selected to serve as Recorder of the 2026–2027 Habersham County 4-H Council.

Grace Stewart – Advanced to the State Pantry Pride Competition in Perry; was selected as a Leadership in Action finalist for developing a youth Sunday school program; served as a Georgia 4-H Health and Wellness

Ambassador and was selected to continue in that role for 2026–2027; participated on the third-place state land judging team; and was elected Vice President of the 2026–2027 Habersham County 4-H Council.

Anna Ward – Advanced to the State Pantry Pride Competition in Perry.

Luke Nunnally – Earned the title of Master 4-H'er in Wildlife and through the Georgia 4-H Key Award Project; served as a Georgia 4-H Wildlife Ambassador; and was selected to serve as a 2026–2027 Ag Technology Ambassador.

Tyner Wood – Earned the title of Master 4-H'er in Public Speaking; served as a Georgia 4-H Health and Wellness Ambassador; served as Northeast District Senior Representative during 2025–2026; participated on the third-place state land judging team; and was elected President of the 2026–2027 Habersham County 4-H Council.

Buck Manglitz – Member of the Habersham County senior land judging team that earned third place statewide at the Georgia Land Judging Competition in Watkinsville.

Holly Samsel – Member of the third-place state land judging team; completed her term as Northeast District President; and was selected to serve as Senior Representative of the 2026–2027 Habersham County 4-H Council.

Vayda Sanders – Completed her service as Junior Representative for the 40 counties of the Northeast District.

Wyatt Albertson – Selected to serve as Junior Representative of the 2026–2027 Habersham County 4-H Council.

Eli Samsel – Selected to serve as Officer-at-Large of the 2026–2027 Habersham County 4-H Council.

Commissioner Meador also recognized Program Assistant Sydney Jackson for coaching and preparing the Habersham County senior land judging team, which earned third place statewide in August. He highlighted the students' participation in agricultural education, community service projects, leadership conferences, summer camps, and other activities throughout the year. Chairman Harkness expressed appreciation to the students, their families, volunteers, and Extension staff for their accomplishments and contributions to the community. The 4-H participants were invited forward to receive certificates of recognition and take photographs with the Commission.

b. Employee Spotlight: Deputy Andrew Rabern & Deputy Darius Dorsey (Sheriff's Office)

Sheriff Robin Krockum addressed the Commission to recognize Deputy Andrew Rabern and Deputy Darius Dorsey for their lifesaving actions on August 29, 2026. Sheriff Krockum explained that the deputies had just completed a traffic stop near SouthState Bank in Clarkesville when a woman approached them requesting assistance for her husband, who was unconscious and unresponsive inside their vehicle. The deputies immediately requested emergency assistance, removed the individual from the vehicle, and began performing CPR. Clarkesville Police Officer Brian Collins and Habersham County Emergency Services personnel also assisted with the response, and through their combined efforts, the individual's life was saved. Sheriff Krockum commended the deputies for their quick actions and professionalism, and Chairman Harkness and the Commission expressed appreciation for their service and dedication to the citizens of Habersham County.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

James "Jimmy" Dean addressed the Commission to express his appreciation for the success of the recent Habersham County Mountain Fair. Mr. Dean thanked the Commission, Ms. Shelley Tullis, and the many county employees and volunteers who contributed to the event. He stated that he and his family attended the event the previous Tuesday and thoroughly enjoyed the family atmosphere. He noted that the hometown atmosphere was contagious for both young and old and was an example of what makes Habersham County special. Mr. Dean specifically recognized the cooperation between the Sheriff's Office, Emergency Services, Facilities Management, and other county departments, stating that the coordination and preparation required before and during an event of that size reflected the hard work and dedication of county employees and volunteers. He expressed appreciation on behalf of his family, particularly his eight-year-old granddaughter, for everyone who made the event successful. Mr. Dean also humorously noted that he personally witnessed County Manager Tim Sims recruiting citizens to participate in the watermelon eating contest.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion by Commissioner Woodall, seconded by Commissioner Mealor, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda as previously amended during the adoption of the agenda.

- a. Consider/Approve Minutes of August 17, 2026 Board of Commissioners Meeting
- b. Consider/Approve Minutes of August 17, 2026 Board of Commissioners Executive Session
- c. Consider/Approve Amendments to Lease Agreement with Horizon Dreams, LLC for Airport Hangars H-1 and H-2
- d. Consider/Approve Adoption of Bylaws for the Habersham County Airport Commission
- e. Consider/Approve Contracted Instructor Agreement with Kristy Hill for Private Swim Lessons
- f. Consider/Approve Contracted Instructor Agreement with Amy Hood for Private and Group Swim Lessons
- g. Consider/Approve Contracted Instructor Agreement with Christine Tekippe for Aqua Aerobics Classes
- h. Consider/Approve Ratifying Award of Contract for Tennis and Pickleball Court Resurfacing (RFP 2027-03)
- i. Consider/Approve Ratification of Expenditure for Unanticipated Pool Filter Repair
- j. Consider/Approve Clean Water Act Section 319(h) Subaward Agreement with Georgia DNR/EPD for the Implementation of the 2026 Soque River Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) – Black Hawk Fly-Fishing Mitigation Project
- k. Consider/Approve Ratification of Agreement (SARP-Habersham-03) with Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) for Streambank and Riparian Enhancement Projects in the Upper Chattahoochee River and Lake Lanier Watershed
- l. ~~Consider/Approve Purchase of One (1) Grapple Trailer for Public Works – Removed during adoption of the agenda.~~

- m. Consider/Approve Authorizing Chairman to Sign All Necessary Documents for FY 2028 Grant Application for the Section 5311 Rural Transit Program with GDOT
- n. Consider/Approve Ratification of Business Associate Agreement with Emergency Billing, LLC
- o. Consider/Approve Revisions to Recruit Training and Reimbursement Agreement for EMS and/or Fire Related Training
- p. Consider/Approve Lease-Purchase Agreement for Forty-Six (46) Tasers for Sheriff's Office
- q. Consider/Approve Application/Renewal of Alcohol License:
 - 1. 2476 Cannon Bridge Rd Ventures, LLC (dba Country Boy), located at 2467 Cannon Bridge Rd in Demorest, for Malt Beverage and Wine Package Sales

REPORTS:

- a. County Manager's Report: Tim Sims, County Manager
- b. PTRLOST Update: Tim Sims, County Manager

APPOINTMENTS:

Avita Community Partners Board of Directors

Remainder of 3- Year Term Ending 06/30/2027

- 1. Brenda Hochmuth (Resignation)- At Large Appointment

Chairman Harkness explained that a potential candidate previously identified for the appointment was no longer available. The Commission discussed postponing the appointment until the following month to allow additional time to identify a qualified candidate.

Motion by Commissioner Woodall, seconded by Commissioner Mealor, and voted unanimously (5-0) to table the appointment for the seat left vacant by Brenda Hochmuth's resignation from the Avita Community Partners Board of Directors.

Development Authority

Remainder of 6- Year Term Ending 02/17/2028

- 1. Mike Franklin (Resignation)- Commissioner Harkness' Appointment

Chairman Harkness nominated James "Jimmy" Dean to serve the remainder of the term left vacant by Mike Franklin's resignation. Chairman Harkness spoke about Mr. Dean's business experience, involvement in the community, previous board service, and commitment to Habersham County.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor, and voted unanimously (5-0) to appoint Jimmy Dean to serve the remainder of the term left vacant by Mike Franklin's resignation from the Development Authority.

Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation & Development Council
Remainder of 1- Year Term Ending 12/31/2026

1. John Hagadorn (Resignation)- At Large Appointment

The Commission discussed postponing the appointment until the following month.

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Woodall, and voted unanimously (5-0) to table the appointment left vacant by John Hagadorn's resignation from the Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation & Development Council.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Consider/Approve Automatic Aid Agreement with the City of Cornelia for Fire Response within Demorest City Limits

Emergency Services Director Jeff Adams addressed the Commission regarding an automatic aid agreement with the City of Cornelia. Mr. Adams explained that Cornelia previously maintained an automatic aid agreement with the City of Demorest. However, Habersham County assumed responsibility for providing fire protection services to Demorest effective January 1, 2026. He stated that the proposed agreement would allow for the automatic dispatch of the neighboring fire department when qualifying fire-related calls occurred and would be mutually beneficial to both Habersham County and the City of Cornelia by improving coordination and emergency response.

Motion by Commissioner Woodall, seconded by Commissioner Akins, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Automatic Aid Agreement with the City of Cornelia for fire response within Demorest city limits.

- b. Consider/Approve Amended Master Agreement with Kimley-Horn for Airport Planning Services

Finance Director Kiani Holden addressed the Commission regarding an amended master agreement with Kimley-Horn for airport planning services. Ms. Holden explained that the Commission had previously approved an agreement with Kimley-Horn at the August meeting. However, when the agreement was submitted to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), staff were informed that separate master agreements were required for airport planning and airport engineering and design services. Although both services had been awarded to the same consultant, GDOT required that they be maintained under separate agreements because they had been procured separately. Ms. Holden stated that the amended agreement would provide professional airport planning services for a five-year period.

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Mealor, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the amended five-year Master Agreement with Kimley-Horn for Airport Planning Services.

- c. Consider/Approve Amended Master Agreement with Kimley-Horn for Airport Engineering and Design Services

Finance Director Kiani Holden addressed the Commission regarding the amended master agreement with Kimley-Horn for airport engineering and design services. Ms. Holden explained that this agreement was the companion agreement to the airport planning services agreement considered under the previous agenda item. The agreement would provide professional engineering and design consulting services for the Habersham

County Airport for a five-year period and satisfy GDOT's requirement that the services be covered under separate master agreements.

Motion by Commissioner Woodall, seconded by Commissioner Akins, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the amended five-year Master Agreement with Kimley-Horn for Airport Engineering and Design Services.

- d. Consider/Approve Resolution Required for Pre-Application for Grant Funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for Ball Field Lighting Project

Finance Director Kiani Holden addressed the Commission regarding a proposed grant pre-application through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for improvements to the ball field lighting systems. Ms. Holden explained that the county's financial policy generally allows staff to pursue grant opportunities without prior Commission approval, with the award being brought before the Commission for consideration. However, due to the significant local match required for this grant, she felt it was appropriate to seek the Commission's approval before submitting the pre-application. Ms. Holden reminded the Commission that replacement and retrofitting of the existing ball field lighting systems had been discussed for several years and that converting the existing lighting to energy-efficient LED technology would be a significant expense. Staff had obtained estimates from Georgia Power and divided the ball field lighting improvements into zones to better manage the potential project costs and grant match requirements.

The estimated project cost presented was approximately \$841,071.14, with a required 50-percent local match of approximately \$420,535. Ms. Holden explained that the county budgets approximately \$100,000 annually for grant matches and anticipated that adequate funding could be accumulated before the local match would be due, if the grant were awarded. She noted that the grant was highly competitive and that there was no guarantee the county would receive funding. She also explained that the LWCF program requires property receiving funding to remain dedicated to outdoor recreation. The proposed improvements would include retrofitting existing lighting to LED technology and installing updated controls that would allow staff to operate and monitor the lighting remotely. The upgrades were also expected to reduce energy consumption and maintenance expenses.

Chairman Harkness asked whether the county had obtained estimates from other providers. Ms. Holden explained that another provider had been consulted but that its proposal was significantly more expensive because it involved a complete system replacement rather than retrofitting the existing equipment. County Manager Tim Sims clarified that the Georgia Power estimate was being utilized for grant application purposes and that, if the county received the grant, the project would be competitively bid before a contractor was selected.

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Meador, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the resolution authorizing submission of the Land and Water Conservation Fund ball field lighting and controls grant pre-application to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and committing the required 50-percent local match if the application is successful.

- e. Consider/Approve Amendments to the Intergovernmental Agreements For Habersham County's Provision of Animal Control Services to the Municipalities of Alto, Baldwin, Cornelia, Demorest and Mount Airy

County Manager Tim Sims addressed the Commission regarding proposed amendments to the intergovernmental agreements for animal control services provided to the Town of Alto and the cities of Baldwin, Cornelia, Demorest, and Mount Airy. Mr. Sims explained that the amendments would change the jurisdiction responsible for adjudicating animal control cases occurring within municipal limits from Habersham County Magistrate Court to the respective municipal courts. He stated that the amendments

would not change the county's responsibility for providing animal control services within the participating municipalities. Rather, animal control violations occurring within municipal limits would be handled through the appropriate municipal court system, which could help streamline enforcement proceedings and improve the efficiency of case processing. Mr. Sims explained that the City of Clarkesville was still reviewing its amendment due to a transition in city management and that the agreement would be brought before the Commission at a future meeting. He also clarified that Habersham County does not provide animal control services within the Town of Tallulah Falls.

Motion by Commissioner Woodall, seconded by Commissioner Akins, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the first amendments to the Intergovernmental Agreements for the administration and enforcement of animal control provisions with the Town of Alto and the cities of Baldwin, Cornelia, Demorest, and Mount Airy.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Commissioner Harkness thanked everyone for attending the meeting and expressed appreciation to the county employees, volunteers, public safety personnel, and citizens who serve the community. He also recognized Commissioner Mealor for his years of public service to Habersham County and the City of Baldwin.

Commissioner Mealor had no additional comments.

Commissioner Akins had no additional comments.

Commissioner Woodall thanked the citizens who attended the meeting. He stated that citizen participation and involvement are important to the Commission because the commissioners serve on behalf of the citizens. He emphasized that representative government requires listening to the community and balancing the responsibilities of county government with the needs and wishes of its citizens.

Commissioner McClellon had no additional comments.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: No executive session was needed at this meeting.

ADJOURN

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Mealor, and voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

By: _____
Bruce Harkness, Commission Chairman

Attest: _____
Brandalin Carnes, County Clerk