

**MINUTES
WORK SESSION
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2025
3:30 p.m.**

The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session, Monday, March 10, 2025 at 3:30 p.m. in the Ware County Commission Chambers, 305 Oak Street, Suite 201 Waycross, Georgia 31501 with Chairman Elmer Thrift presiding.

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| CALL TO ORDER | Chairman Elmer Thrift |
| COMMISSIONERS PRESENT | Commissioner Barry Cox, Commissioner Leonard Burse, Commissioner Jon Tindall |
| COMMISSIONERS ABSENT | Commissioner Timmy Lucas |
| STAFF PRESENT | County Manager James Shubert; Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Herzog; County Clerk Melinda Brooks |
| PRESS | None |
| INVOCATION | The Invocation was given by Commissioner Burse |
| PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE | The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Elmer Thrift |

GUEST SPEAKER(S):

**Dr. William S. Clark - Okefenokee Swamp Park, former chairman board of trustees
Michael Lusk – Director National Wildlife Refuge**

Dr. Clark spoke to the Commission about the Okefenokee Swamp being nominated as a World Heritage site. The application was transmitted through the U.S. state department to UNESCO and is currently in Paris being evaluated. The vote will occur in the summer of 2026. He also said the UN only requires a report every so many years. Mr. Lusk also spoke positively about the nomination of the Okefenokee Swamp as a World Heritage site. He provided a copy of the book submitted with the application to the County Clerk.

AGENDA ITEMS:

A. Purchase Request: Auto Lift

This item is to discuss approval to seek bids for four pole rotary lift capable of lifting ambulances. Commissioner Cox confirmed that the shop does need the lift. When Commissioner Tindall asked if the lift would be located inside or outside of the shop, Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor Michael Carrin responded that it would be located inside of the shop.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

B. Resolution 2025-06: Establish a Moratorium on Acceptance of Application for Cryptocurrency Data Mining

Interim Planning Director Dustin Minchew told the Commission that they are seeking a pause until Ware can get some regulations in place. There are no current applications but the planning department would like to minimize the impact of the cryptocurrency data mining and get ahead of the curve.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

C. Resolution 2025-07: Establish a Moratorium on Acceptance of Application for Solar Energy Systems

Interim Planning Director Minchew said this is the same as the previous item, would like to pause. Chairman Thrift noted that Ware County already has some solar farms. Interim Director Minchew responded that they are trying to put rules in place. For instance, if a company damages a road, they have to repair it. They would also have to clean up any debris they leave behind.

Commissioner Tindall asked if there is anything written for that. Interim Director Minchew replied that is the reason for the moratorium. It would pause any applications until a zoning resolution is established.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

D. 2025 CDBG County Match Funding

This item is to request approval to use the 2026 LMIG from GDOT as the required match and leverage for the 2025 CDBG application. The 2026 LMIG is approximately \$1.12 million, and Ware County is asking for \$1 million for the 2025 CDBG. Ware County's out-of-pocket match will be 10% of the LMIG funds. Basically, the County would be getting \$1 million in LMIG and \$1 million in CDBG with a \$100,000 cost to the County.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

E. 2025 CDBG Potential Conflict of Interest

This item is to determine if any member of the Commission or their immediate family owns property in the targeted area and would benefit from this project. Chairman Thrift asked if any of the Commissioners own land on Pine Forest Road or Deerwood Road or would benefit from them being paved. He also asked if any of their immediate family owns land on these roads. All answered in the negative. No Commissioners or their immediate family own land on Pine Forest or Deerwood Roads.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

F. Resolution 2025-08: CDBG Submittal Resolution

This resolution allows the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to submit the 2025 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application on behalf of Ware County Board of Commissioners.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

G. 2025 CDBG Admin Contingent Contract

This agreement is between Ware County Commission and Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC). Should Ware County be awarded CDBG funds, this contract allows SGRC allows to handle the CDBG project on behalf of the Ware County Board of

Commissioners. SGRC would handle bid advertisement for engineering services, monitor all aspects of CDBG project for compliance, as well as oversee entire project.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

H. Recreation Department – Operation of Pool at Bailey Street Park

This is the MOU with YMCA for the operation for the operation of the Bailey Street Park pool. Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Herzog said she would like to update the wording of the MOU during the break between the work session and the regular meeting so the MOU can be approved during the regular meeting,

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

I. Iron Bridge Landfill Water Monitoring Agreement

County Manager Shubert explained that the landfill is currently out of compliance for water monitoring. The test normally done during fall months was not done in 2024 due to the contract being expired. Correspondence regarding contract renewal was being sent to the email of a previous employee, so current employees were not aware the contract had expired. This contract needs to be approved so the well water can be tested and the landfill brought back into compliance.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

COUNTY MANAGER REPORT:

PDP is updating the design based on changes suggested by the Commission. The 2022 LMIG project is complete except for some striping left on Augusta Avenue, W. Blackshear, Astoria Rd., Swamp Road, Jamestown Road, and Oregon Avenue. Roberts Civil Engineering is designing Wadley Road, Slash Pine Road, Elmer Thrift Road, and Banks Lane, which is going out to bid soon. Coastal Engineering is designing the short roads in Emerson Park for 2025 LMIG project. He explained to the Commission that the application for the second round of LMIG is due in June. The Commission needs to decide which roads need to be included and the preliminary budget. The 2024 second round of LMIG award was worth \$1.2 million and did not require a local match.

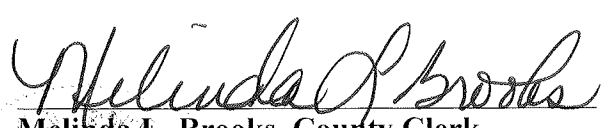
COMMISSION COMMENTS: none

ADJOURN:

Commissioner Burse made a motion to adjourn the Work Session, with Commissioner Tindal seconding the motion, which passed unanimously. The Work Session adjourned at 4:25 p. m.

Date proposed to be approved: July 14, 2025


Elmer Thrift, Chairman


Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

7-16-2025
Date

**MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
THURSDAY MARCH 10, 2025
4:30 p.m.**

The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Public Hearing, Monday, March 10, 2025 at 4:30 p.m. in the Ware County Commission Chambers, 305 Oak Street, Suite 201, Waycross, Georgia 31501 with Chairman Elmer Thrift presiding.

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| CALL TO ORDER | Chairman Elmer Thrift |
| COMMISSIONERS PRESENT | Commissioner Leonard Burse, Commissioner Barry Cox, Commissioner Jon Tindall |
| COMMISSIONERS ABSENT | None |
| STAFF PRESENT | County Manager James Shubert; Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Dorminey Herzog, County Clerk Melinda Brooks |
| PRESS | none |
| INVOCATION | The invocation was waived from Work Session |
| PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE | The Pledge of Allegiance was waived from Work Session |

Call to Order:

Chairman Thrift called to order the public hearing at 4:49 p. m.

Conditional Use Permit Request

Chairman Thrift explained that this is a request for a conditional use permit for a waste transfer station to be located at 3230 Smith Drive. He asked if anyone would like to speak in support of the item.

County Attorney Mrs. Herzog stated that before we hear comments on the item, lets have staff introduce the item.

Interim Planning Director Dusting Minchew introduced the request. He stated that this item was brought before the commission in 2022 and the item was table to allow Ryland and the Development authority to meet and see if they can reach an agreement on a land swap. Mr. Minchew stated that an agreement has not been reached and due to the time elapsed, this item was started over from the beginning. He stated that the Planning Commission has reviewed the item and recommended approval.

Chairman Thrift ask if EPD is okay with the location of the transfer station.

Mr. Minchew stated that there is an EPD permit contingent upon county approval. He stated that previous concern was the distance the from the proposed location to a food processing industry.

Commissioner Burse asked if the concerns of the Bailey International Foods have been addressed.

Commissioner Tindall stated that he has met with Mr. Rubenbauer and Mr. Richard Lee to make sure that the concerns from Bailey International Foods are addressed. He said that both have agreed to meet with the industry to make sure and current and future concerns were addressed.

Commissioner Burse stated that he okay with the request as long as an agreement made before the Commission makes a decision.

Dustin stated the distances between the properties and the distance between the current buildings.

Mr. Lee stated that the new transfer station will be located in the rear corner of the property.

Commissioner Burse asked if there were conditions set by EPD that have to satisfied.

Mr. Lee stated that the are 7 conditions that have to satisfied. He stated that one of the conditions is how the facility is washed.

Commissioner Burse asked if the commission would allow the owners to meet and come to an agreement before the commission makes a decision.

Commissioner Tindall stated he is okay with moving forward.

Commissioner Tindall asked about the dangers of the disposal of lithium batteries. A Ryland representative stated that a plan is in place.

Support

Chairman Thrift asked if anyone supported the permit request. No one spoke.

Oppose

Chairman Thrift asked if anyone opposed the permit request. No one spoke.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

Rezoning Request

This is a request to consider rezoning 3873 Scapa Road, Parcel Number "034B01 050 C" from A (Agriculture Forestry District) & A SDD (Agriculture Forestry Special Development District) to LI (Limited Industrial District) and LI SDD (Limited Industrial Special Development District) for the purpose of manufacturing and selling of utility trailers. The Ware County Planning Commission voted unanimously to deny the request at the February 11, 2025 meeting.

Interim Planning Director Dustin Minchew stated this was initially brought up due to complaints due to manufacturing at the site. A stop order was issued, and now Mr. Gomez is applying for manufacturing zoning. Commissioner Cox asked how many residences are near this location. Mr. Minchew said there are about 8 or 9 and showed the Commission on the map the distance between the business and residences. Commissioner Burse said he read in the notes that the applicant was not guided through the process. Interim Director Minchew said the applicant completed all of the documents, and the planning office did not assist. Mr. Gomez received a license to sell due to agriculture use. He manufactured the trailers for two years before complaints began. Commissioner Tindall noted the license says the dealership. It was explained the application was for the LLC (for wholesalers) to get a business license for sales. Commissioner Burse asked what was required, and Mr. Minchew told him the property would have to be rezoned.

Codes Director Dave Hanson explained to the Commission that paint is classified as toxic. The odor travels quite a distance, so you have to get an environmental permit. EPD is to help complete form. He turned in a blank form.

Support

Chairman Thrift asked if anyone was in support of the rezoning request.

Mr. Gomez stated that he is the owner of the company. He said he received two licenses for the property. One license was for parts and one was for wholesale.

Chairman Thrift asked if a permit was given a permit for the business.

Mr. Shubert stated that he was given a license for parts and wholesale. He stated that what he applied for was parts and wholesale of trailers and that manufacturing was not listed.

Leon Spivey – 539 Red Bluff Church Rd Pearson, GA

Mr. Spivey stated he has known Mr. Gomez for 15 years and knows him to be a man who wants to do the right thing. He said we all need to do what is right and glorify Jesus Christ. He also stated he doesn't want the Commission to do the wrong thing by denying the zoning request.

Maria Mata 5555 Walkerville Rd, Patterson

She is his interpreter when needed and assisted him with paperwork. She was unfamiliar with some of the information.

Oppose

Chairman Thrift asked if anyone was opposed to the rezoning request.

Bonnie Crosby 3877 Scapa Rd.

Mrs. Crosby lives next door to the property being reviewed for rezoning but does not personally know Mr. Gomez. His business operates six to seven days each week. The employees do open air painting of the trailers. The overspray blows over into her yard. Also paint soaks into the ground, and this is concerning because she uses well water. There is burning of materials that contain toxic chemicals. The employees whistle and make cat calls at her 14-year-old daughter.

Ricky Crosby 3877 Scapa Rd

Mr. Crosby stated Mr. Gomez has 11 acres next door to his three acres, but the spraying takes place only 39 feet from the property line. He said the employees wear hazmat suits and respirators; however, he cannot open his windows or grill outside due to the paint and other chemical fumes carried by the breeze to his property. He also mentioned that his child has asthma. Mr. Crosby noted that the physical trash blows over onto his property and the bass music is played loudly, so that it carries across the property.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**CLOSURE**


Commissioner Tindall made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Burse seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The public hearing adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Date proposed to be approved: July 14, 2025



Elmer Thrift, Chairman

ATTEST:



Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

7-16-2025
Date

