

**MINUTES
WORK SESSION
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025
3:30 p.m.**

The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session, Monday, May 12, 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, and Commissioner Timmy Lucas
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT	None
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):

- **Barry Deas – Manor Resident**
Mr. Deas addressed the Commission regarding the caution light at the intersection of Highway 122 and Highway 84 in Manor. He said during the construction phase of turning Highway 84 into a 4-lane highway, the overhead caution light was removed and placed on signs beside the road, which is where they remain. He said they are hard to see, and there is a lot of truck traffic. When GDOT finally agreed to do a traffic study, it was conducted in January, which is the slowest time of the year. During the growing season, semi-trucks from Moore's and Cornelius's Farms are constantly pulling out onto the busy four-lane at this intersection. The caution lights would help unsuspecting drivers be aware. County Manager James Shubert noted that he would contact GDOT regarding conducting another traffic study during the summer season.
- **Matt Hayes – Local Car Show Enthusiast**
Mr. Hayes told the Commission he participates in the local car show quarterly. He would like to bring life to Waycross by bringing a car show to the Waycross airport. He would bring high dollar cars to the airport for people to drag race on the runway. He said the airport would need to be closed for the day, and that he would provide for the cost of the ambulance, off-duty officer, porta-johns, etc. He

said he could go to other local airports, but he would like to bring this to Waycross.

- **Brooks Strickland – Okefenokee Swamp-UNESCO World Heritage Site**
Mr. Strickland addressed the Commission regarding UNESCO, which is part of the UN, and its agenda which is the opposite of U. S. rights. He stated he was not asking the County to stop the nomination because he understands they cannot do that. Because the UN encourages agenda 2030, he said Ware County needs a resolution that states Ware County does not and will not implement UN policy.
- **Travis Sanctuary – Okefenokee Swamp – UNESCO World Heritage Site**
Mr. Sanctuary echoed Mr. Strickland's sentiment that a resolution is needed. He said that UN policies will filter down through our government and will not come with a stamp showing they are of UN origin.
- **Hamp Ammons – Okefenokee Swamp – UNESCO World Heritage Site**
Mr. Ammons also spoke on the effects of UNESCO stating that, once selected, a World Heritage site will remain one forever, and it's important to look at the economic impacts. He said other sites have flatlined economically, and that communities had changed after UNESCO became involved.
- **Michael Lusk – Director of Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge**
Mr. Lusk told the Commission that President Richard Nixon signed the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1972. He also said Presidents Reagan and Trump supported the World Heritage sites even when they withdrew the United States from the UN. He said several American historic sites have been designated World Heritage sites, including Independence Hall, the Alamo, and the Statue of Liberty. He offered copies of letters written by former Georgia governor Sonny Perdue and current Lt. Governor Burt Jones in support of the Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge becoming a World Heritage Site. He also noted that he has been in contact with employees of another World Heritage site. These people have not had to deal with UNESCO, nor have they mentioned any adverse effects on their community.

AGENDA ITEMS:

A. Appointment: Ware County Board of Elections, Post 1

The term for Post 1 of the Ware County Board of Elections will expire June 30, 2025. Dr. Rodney Brown, the current Post 1 board member, is not seeking reappointment. Three names were submitted by the Republican party to be considered for appointment: Andrew Preston, Grayson Grobsmith, and Karen Woodard. Elizabeth Pond also sent an email asking to be considered for appointment. The new term will begin July 1, 2025 and will expire on June 30, 2029. Republican Party president spoke up to as she wanted the Commission to understand that the Republican Party only endorsed the three candidates whose names were submitted. It was clarified that the party can recommend candidates for appointment, however, the Commission is under no obligation to choose those who are recommended. The Commissioners can make their own recommendations as well.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

B. Appointment: Ware County Board of Elections

The term for Post 2 of Ware County Board of Elections will expire June 30, 2025. Mr. Vernon Chambless, the current Post 2 board member, is seeking reappointment to the board. The new term will begin July 1, 2025 and will expire June 30, 2029. The Commission may also consider the names listed under Agenda Item A.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

C. Bid Award: Lawn Maintenance for Ware County Properties

The current lawn maintenance contract with Southeast Lawn Pro will expire on June 30, 2025, so Ware County advertised for sealed bids and received 8 responses. The lowest bid was from Outdoor Living Southeast from Valdosta for \$2,500 per month. The second lowest bid was from the current contractor, Southeast Lawn Pro at \$3,700 per month. The next closest bid was from Coastal Greenery at \$4,880.03 per month. The highest bid was from Servus Land Management for \$17,000 per month. The difference between the current vendor) and the lowest bidder is \$1,200 per month or \$14,400 per year. Current vendor has given satisfactory service, responds quickly to requests, and are proactive. Staff checked references for the low bidder and all were satisfactory with no problems mentioned.

Commissioner Burse tried to give the percentage for local vendors but stated he also has to be wise and prudent with taxpayer dollars. Commissioner Lucas noted that if the local vendor is doing a good job, then the County should keep that company. In other words, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”. Commissioner Cox voiced concerns regarding how fast an out-of-town vendor could respond to an emergency. Commissioner Tindall echoed these same sentiments. There was much back and forth discussion. Brandon Courson, owner of Southeast Lawn Pro, was in the audience. No other bidder was present.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

D. Bid Award: Field Maintenance Spraying at Trembling Earth

The current vendor is Coastal Sports Terf, LLC. A request for sealed bids was advertised and four responses were received. The low bidder was Storey Landscaping at \$29,000. The current vendor’s bid was \$31,150, which is the amount being paid for the current contract. County Manager James Shubert explained to the Commission that the Recreation Department Director Lance Adamson is recommending the contract be awarded to the current vendor, Coastal Sports Terf, LLC. This vendor is certified and has done a satisfactory job. Mr. Shubert noted that the application submitted by Storey Landscaping was incomplete. He failed to sign the page stating he would abide by the terms of the contract.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

E. Bid Award: 4 Post Lift for Vehicle Maintenance

A request for bids was advertised, and this was the only response received. The bid for a four-post medium duty lift from Lewis Tool and Equipment was for \$35,831. This price includes the price of installation. Commissioner Cox assured the Chairman that this lift is needed in the shop.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

F. Accept RFP for Debris Monitoring During Declared Disaster

County Manager James Shubert explained to the Commission the purpose of request for proposal is to lock in a price during the contract period, in the event of a natural disaster. Three responses were received. He explained that staff is recommending using Thompson Consulting based on the price schedule and experience. This company was used in 2023 during Hurricane Idalia and again in 2024 during Hurricane Helene. EMA Director Jonathan Daniell explained that a monitoring company is required as they monitor what is picked up is eligible for reimbursement. They make sure the truck is full instead of half-full and the debris is legitimate. Ware County only collects vegetative debris. Commissioner Tindall asked EMA Director Daniell if this contract would be reimbursable. He responded that this contract has to be in place before a disaster is declared in order to be reimbursed. Commissioner Burse asked when would this contract have to be paid. Mr. Daniell explained that the contract is only paid if it is activated during a disaster.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

G. Accept RFP for Debris Removal During Declared Disaster

County Manager Shubert explained that like the last agenda item, a request for a proposal was sent to lock in a price during the contract period in the event of a natural disaster. 9 responses were received for debris removal. Mr. Shubert recommended accepting two proposals in the event the amount of debris to be removed is more than one company could handle. Based on the pricing schedule and past experience, CrowderGulf is recommended as the primary vendor for debris collection. Herzog Solutions, LLC is recommended as the secondary vendor if needed. Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Herzog told the Commission that she is not related to or affiliated with Herzog Solutions, LLC, which is based out of St. Louis, Missouri.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

H. Approve Quit Claim Deed to Transfer Property to Waycross-Ware County Development Authority

WWDA Director Jason Rubenbauer told the Commission that he is trying to clean up the deeds for the develop authority. He is requesting a sliver of land by GATX to be transferred WWDA from Ware County, stating this is more of a housekeeping item. The currently drafted deed does not reserve a drainage easement.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

I. Approve Upgrades/Repairs to the Pebble Hill Fire Station

Fire Chief Dee Meadows explained to the Commission upgrades of the volunteer stations is starting again. The upgrade of stations at Boggy Bay and Waresboro have been completed. He presented two quotes for the upgrade of Pebble Hill Fire Station No. 8. Both quotes are local. One was from C & T Metal Roofs & Construction in the amount of \$6,275.00. The lower quote in the amount of \$5,200 was from Spencer Kelly. This quote included installing pressure treated wood for the fascia, which would void any warranties on the fascia metal. County Manager Shubert told the Commission that staff recommends approving the C& T Metal quote for \$6,275.

Chief Meadows noted that the roof is needing some repairs although there is some life left in it. He asked if he could have the contractor give him a quote while he is repairing the station. The Commission gave him permission, with Commissioner Tindall noting that it would be cheaper to get a quote then instead of calling him to come back.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

J. Board of Elections: TextMyGov Software Update

County Manager Shubert explained to the Commission that this request is to approve the purchase of a notification software for the Board of Elections. The agreement will be for three years with an annual cost of \$4,000. He asked Board of Elections Supervisor Carlos Nelson to explain about the software. Supervisor Nelson told the Commission that this is a messaging app that will link to information on the website. Brunswick-Glynn County Board of Elections uses this software and has given very positive reviews about how well it works. He explained that the app will increase staff efficiency as citizens will be able to check the app instead of calling the office. The app provides links to the website, election notifications, and allows citizens to report issues and address problems.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

K. 2025 GDOT SAP (Safety Action Plan) Grant

County Manager Shubert told the Commission that GDOT is offering a Safety Action Plan (SAP) using funds from the FY 2025 supplemental budget for safety improvements. The amount to be awarded is \$291,000 and requires a 10% match from the County (\$29,100). The application is due May 29, 2025. GDOT provided a project list that the Commission must use to choose which roads will be improved under this grant. The Commission agreed to check out the list and get back with the manager regarding their individual choices.

L. Approve the Purchase of 4 Quick Turn 360 Target Boxes

Public Safety Training Center Director Brian Varnadore presented a purchase request to replace four quick turn 360 target boxes for a total of \$14,614.70. He explained four of the turning target boxes, which look like people) are not functioning or turning like they should do during shooter training. There has been no maintenance work done, and previously there was no a maintenance contract in place. Due to the director position being vacant for a while, there is money in the budget to replace these boxes. The company, InVernis, is located in Suwanee, Georgia. Mr. Varnadore gave the Commission an update on how things are going at the training center. He also reported that the Georgia State Patrol will send 8 instructors for a handgun safety class.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

COMMISSIONER ITEMS: None

COUNTY MANAGER ITEMS: None

ADJOURN:

Commissioner Lucas made a motion to adjourn the Work Session. Commissioner Burse seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The Work Session adjourned at 5:44 p. m.

Date proposed to be approved: July 14, 2025


Elmer Thrift, Chairman


Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

7-16-2025
Date

