

**MINUTES
WORK SESSION
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONDAY, JULY 14, 2025
3:30 p.m.**

The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session, Monday, July 14, 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 Rebecca Ditto; County Clerk Melinda Brooks
PRESS	Danny Bartlett - WJH
INVOCATION	The Invocation was given by Danny Bartlett
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Elmer Thrift
GUEST SPEAKER(S):	None

Employee of the Month: Madelyn Saunders – Planning & Codes

County Manager James Shubert and Interim Planning Director presented Planning & Codes Employee Madelyn Saunders as the County Employee of the Month. She was given a \$100 check in appreciation for her dedication and loyalty.

Proclamation: Parks and Recreation Month

Recreation Director Lance Adamson told the Commission that July is designated by the US House of Representatives as Parks and Recreation Month.

Guest Speaker (For Items Not on the Agenda)

Roger Collins – Ware County Tax Commissioner

Mr. Collins said the Chief Appraiser should have the tax digest to him by the end of the week, so the Commission needs to be considering the millage rate. He recommends a rollback, and he will figure out the amount of the rollback once he receives the tax digest.

Commissioner Burse stated he heard the law was passed allowing the Board of Education to roll back to 10 mills with no penalty. Tax Commissioner Collins said the law did pass, and the BOE is aware. He also stated the BOE would have rolled back more last year but was

held to 14 mills due to prevent the loss of \$12 million in federal funds. Commissioner Tindall suggested that all three entities (Waycross City Commission, Ware County Commission, and Ware County Board of Education) hold a meeting to discuss millage rollback and FLOST and what is best for the citizens.

Commissioner Burse asked when the millage rate and tax bills are due. Tax Commissioner Collins said the digest is due the first of September, and the bills are sent out right after that. County Manager Shubert said he would contact the City Manager and School Superintendent to arrange a meeting the first of August.

AGENDA ITEMS:

A. Resolution 2025-13: TREES Act

This resolution is to provide temporary tax relief for eligible standing timber located in a disaster area in Ware County. Citizens will have to complete a properly completed application to be considered for a refund provided by the TREES Act. This resolution also designates the Tax Commissioner as the point of contact and authorizes him to accept these certification forms and supporting documents.

County Manager Shubert asked Tax Commissioner Collins to explain the TREES Act. Mr. Collins told the Commission this was put in place because of Hurricane Helene to offset the damage incurred by landowners. Not everyone will be eligible; only those landowners who cut their timber beginning September 28, 2024 through 2025. This is a \$17.5 million grant for local governments. The amount Ware is eligible for is an average of 2021, 2022, and 2023 timber tax. It will be received after February 15, 2026 once the fourth-quarter timber tax from 2025 is reported. He said if he is suspicious of an application, Georgia Forestry will audit the timber stand.

Chairman Thrift asked about state programs for landowners who have a small percentage of timber damaged, but did not cut their timber. Mr. Collins said the Department of Agriculture has some programs. He explained that the TREES Act is only for those who cut or harvested timber and received money in return. He did state the application is very detailed and must be completed in full by eligible applicants only.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

B. SPLOST Purchase Request: Recreation Department

This request is to purchase two (2) 72-inch Toro mowers in the amount of \$33,527.82, one (1) Toro Sand Pro 3040 field groomer in the amount of \$34,395.94, and one (1) scoreboard for the football field in the amount of \$13,115. This is also a request to approve payment for the repair of the lights on multiple fields in the amount of \$25,779.88. The total amount of this request is \$106,505.64. The funds will come from 2014 and 2022 SPLOST. Recreation Department Director Lance Adamson presented the purchase request to the Commission. The County Manager explained that all items discussed during the budget retreat were not added to this purchase request so as not to deplete the SPLOST funds that have been collected so far due to ongoing AC issues. He did say that one of the side-by-side work buggies could be added, which would increase the total purchase cost to around \$140,000.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

C. SPLOST Purchase Request: Public Works

This request is for approval to seek bids for equipment for Public Works. The equipment includes two (2) 60-HP open cab tractors with 6' to 7' rotary mowers, two (2) Kenworth 480 dump trucks with 16 feet ox bodies (or the equivalent), one (1) 50,000 lb. excavator with thumb control, one (1) 8-foot tiller for 100-HP tractor, and lease or purchase two (2) motor graders.

Public Works Director Larry Thrift presented this to the Commission. Chairman Thrift said he wants more than a 60-HP open cab tractor, so the Public Works Director will check on an 80-HP tractor and see if the frame is the same. He explained the current excavator has over 9,000 hours and is experiencing issues with the computer and wiring harness. The Chairman told him to get a price for one dump truck. County Manager Shubert explained that the County can lease two graders for \$5,000 per month and replace them in five years, or replace two at 12,000 hours. Staff can get a bid on purchase and lease. Mr. Shubert requested permission to put these items out for bid. Commissioner Cox said to get a bid and come back.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

D. Procurement Policy Update – Mandatory Under Georgia Law

County Manager Shubert explained that this request is to amend Ware County's Procurement Policy to comply with HB 137, which increased the dollar value for Public Works bid requirements. Public Works construction projects have increased from \$100,000 to \$250,000. Public Works road construction or maintenance projects delivered through a private contractor have increased from \$200,000 to \$250,000.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

E. Bid Award: Street Paving – 2023 Local Funds Phase 1 – Coastal Engineering

Vice Chairman Cox read this agenda item. This is a short street paving project for California Avenue, Alabama Avenue, Columbia Avenue, New Hampshire Avenue, Illinois Avenue, Missouri Avenue, Utah Avenue, Wyoming Avenue, Tori Circle, Taylor Street, Ben Hill Avenue, Quail Street, Dove Street, Robin Street, Greenbriar Road, Adams Street, Eva Street, Glosson Street, and Glenn Circle. The lowest bid of the three received was from Thrift Brothers, LLC in the amount of \$1,351,112.15. This project will be funded by the 2025 LMIG \$1,119,535.22, and the remaining \$231,576.93 can be paid from Regional SPLOST discretionary funds or 2022 SPLOST. Commissioner Burse asked how long they have to complete the project. County Manager Shubert told him the contractor has 240 days to complete the project. The County has three (3) years to close out the project with GDOT. When asked whether Thrift Brothers, LLC would be able to complete the multiple projects they are currently handling, County Manager Shubert stated that the company submits performance bonds to guarantee project completion. He also mentioned that they have several crews working on different aspects of each project and rotate between jobs as needed.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

F. Resolution 2025-14: Relocate Roscoe Mixon Road

County Manager James Shubert explained to the Commission that once the Resolution is approved, the road work is ready to be done. The warranty deeds and plats have been completed. The area has been surveyed. Public Works Director Larry Thrift told the

Commission stakes need to be put back out to mark the boundaries of the new road. The existing road has a 30 ft ROW, and the church is giving the County a 45 ft. ROW. Commissioner Burse said he understands the church has plans to expand, but he has some questions about the road. It had been explained to him that the road beside the church would become property of the church, and the church would deed the 45 ft. ROW to the County. He wondered if the County would be setting a precedent by building this road, and if it would cause someone to come along later and ask for the same. County Manager Shubert explained that historically, the County has helped churches. In this particular instance, it is being done for the safety and welfare of the children who attend the church. Per aerial photos, there is only 20 feet between the church and the road where children run and play. Mr. Shubert explained that sometimes people move roads for the sake of convenience to prevent splitting their property.

Commissioner Burse asked approximately how long it would take to build the road. Public Works Director Thrift said it could probably be done in one and a half days.
Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

G. Contract with CSRA Probation Services

This item is to approve a one-year contract between Ware County, Ware County State Court, and CSRA Probation Services for adult supervision. The contract begins July 1, 2025, and expires on June 30, 2026, with an option to renew for one additional year.
Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

H. Surplus Miscellaneous Items

This is a request to surplus items no longer in use, including: desks, chairs, filing cabinets, map drawers, 14 courthouse pews, 2 carts, 1 storage building, old AC units, and 12 pallets of bricks. Most of the bricks are from the old hospital, but a couple of pallets remain from when the administration building was built. Commissioner Cox noted that it may be a good idea to hold out the bricks matching the admin building for future repair, if it were to incur damage.
Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

I. 2023 CDBG – Phase 2 Dusty Lane (TA #2) & Katie Lane (TA #3)

This item is to approve adding Phase 2 to the 2023 CDBG project. The original CDBG project is under budget by \$267,144.12, so DCA approved adding Dusty Lane and Katie Lane as Phase 2 of the project. The flat elevations on these roads will require additional piping. Ware County will be required to contribute \$26,196.88. Once Phase 2 is bid out, it could fall within the \$267,477.12 budget. There are three power poles in the ditch (our ROW). The power company does not have prior rights, so it should be their responsibility to have them moved. The contractor's estimate included a removal cost of \$5,000 per pole, but the actual cost will most likely be only half of that amount. The County Manager is to contact the power company regarding the removal of the poles.
Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

COUNTY MANAGER ITEMS: None

COMMISSION ITEMS:

Commissioner Burse mentioned there have been a few tragedies in the community over the weekend. A father and son were killed in a motorcycle accident. Two recent graduates of Ware County High were struck by lightning while fishing. One of them was the grandson of his cousin. He asked that everyone remember the families of those who lost loved ones.

Chairman Thrift said he got a call about the pipe on Hwy 177/Sams Road being “blowed out again”. County Manager Shubert explained that this pipe is on the State ROW and is GDOT’s responsibility. He said there is a new GDOT area engineer, and he will reach out to him.

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 4:51 p.m.

Date proposed to be approved: August 11, 2025


Elmer Thrift, Chairman


Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

8-13-2025
Date

