

**MINUTES
CALLED MEETING
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONDAY, JULY 28, 2025
4:00 P.M.**

The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Called Meeting, Monday, July 28, 2025, at 4:00 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 Timmy Lucas; Commissioner Jon Tindall (via phone)
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT	None
STAFF PRESENT	County Manager James Shubert; Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Herzog; County Clerk Melinda Brooks
PRESS	Danny Bartlett, WJH & Mittie Vaughn, Ware Press Express
INVOCATION	The invocation was given Commissioner Burse
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Elmer Thrift

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Lucas made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Burse seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Leonard Burse-aye; Commissioner Jon Tindall-aye; Commissioner Barry Cox-aye, Commissioner Timmy Lucas-aye; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-aye.

GUEST SPEAKER: NONE

Board Appointments:

A. Seven Rivers Resource Conservation Development

This item is to replace Stephen Barnard, Sr., as the representative on the Seven Rivers RC&D Council. He has not attended a meeting since November 2023. He resigned his post as Commissioner in March 2024. The appointed representative is expected to attend the quarterly meetings at the Alma UGA Extension office on the fourth Tuesday of April, August at 10:30 a.m.

Commissioner Burse made a motion to appoint Commissioner Cox to the Seven Rivers Resource Conservation Development Council.

Chairman Thrift asked Commissioner Cox if he is willing to accept this appointment. Commissioner Cox applied in the affirmative.

Roll Call Vote: Commissioner Leonard Burse-aye; Commissioner Jon Tindall-aye; Commissioner Timmy Lucas-aye, Commissioner Barry Cox-aye; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-aye.

B. Board of Zoning Appeals

This item is to reappoint members to the Ware County Board of Zoning Appeals for all posts. Appointees are: Post 1 – Amelia Teston (previously served); Post 2 – Audra Padgett; Post 3 – Jeff Johns (previously served); Post 4 – Stephen Gilbert; Post 5 – Kathryn Taylor (previously served); Post 6 – Kristy King Foreman (previously on planning commission); Post 7 – Pam Taylor (previously served on BOZA and planning commission).

County Manager James Shubert explained that the Board of Zoning Appeals has not met in years, but its purpose is to hear variance requests. He explained that he is trying to reactivate the board. Interim Planning Director Dustin Minchew will keep a calendar to ensure that the board will meet quarterly. County Manager Shubert stated he has called all of the appointees, and they are willing to finish out these terms. He extended the expiration dates of each post as follows: Posts 1 & 2 will expire December 31, 2025; Posts 3, 4, & 5 will expire December 31, 2027; Posts 6 & 7 will expire December 31, 2026.

Commissioner Burse made a motion to reactivate the Board of Zoning Appeals (Posts 1–7) as stated, noting that all appointees have agreed to serve. Commissioner Lucas seconded the motion.

Chairman Thrift asked if there is any discussion. Commissioner Burse asked about the service of the BOZA. County Manager Shubert explained the Board of Zoning Appeals has the same power as the Board of Commissioners when hearing a variance request or appeal. He gave an example of an owner having a pie-shaped parcel with only 8 feet available for set back where there is a 10 feet requirement. The landowner can apply for a 2 feet variance with BOZA. Another example is for landowners applying to put a mobile home on their property to care for elderly parents. If a citizen disagrees with a decision made by BOZA, he or she can file an appeal to be heard by the Commission, who would make the final decision.

Roll Call Vote: Commissioner Leonard Burse-aye; Commissioner Jon Tindall-aye; Commissioner Timmy Lucas-aye, Commissioner Barry Cox-aye; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-aye.

AGENDA ITEMS

A. Resolution 2025-16: Approve Indigent Services Contract with Public Defender

This item is to approve the resolution that allows the Commission to enter into a contract with the Georgia Public Defender Council for Indigent Defense.

Chairman Thrift asked if this is the contract that is approved every half year. County Manager Shubert said that this contract is split because it is divided into two separate budget years.

Chairman Thrift asked for a motion on this item.

Commissioner Lucas made a motion to approve the resolution to extend the Indigent Services contract with the Georgia Public Defender Council. Commissioner Cox seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Commissioner Leonard Burse-aye; Commissioner Jon Tindall-aye; Commissioner Timmy Lucas-aye, Commissioner Barry Cox-aye; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-aye.

B. Approve Purchase Request: PM System for Vehicle Maintenance

This item is to purchase an asset management system that will allow the department to keep up with preventative maintenance for all assets in each department. The purchase price of the software, including support and training for the first year, is \$42,194.00. This cost would be split between the Ware County IT SPLOST Budget and the Vehicle Maintenance budget. The annual subscription fee is \$22,194.00. Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor explained to the Commission that this system will allow him to track exactly how much is being spent on each vehicle for regular maintenance and repairs. It will help when having to decide whether to repair or replace an older vehicle.

Commissioner Tindall asked how many units the system would accommodate and how many users would have access. Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor Carrin told him the capacity is 500 units and 20 users. Each department head with assigned vehicles would have access. Commissioner Tindall went on to say that his water testing company is required to have asset management programs by the USDA and other government programs. He stated it is a matter of time before it is required for other agencies (local governments) to have asset management in place to be eligible for grants, loans, etc.

Supervisor Carrin has spoken with surrounding counties, and some have asset management programs, not this one. He said there are cheaper ones and more expensive ones. Commissioner Burse stated he had spoken with Appling County staff, who love their system. Supervisor Beverly York spoke up and said that having the system would prevent a lot of paperwork and human error. She reiterated that SPLOST would pay the \$22,000, and the \$21,000 was already in the budget.

Chairman Thrift said he did not believe in preventative maintenance. He also told Mr. Carrin that he does not oppose the idea of asset management, and thought maybe the Commission table the idea until the August 11 meeting, until they could learn more about it. Mr. Carrin said he could give the Commission some references. Commissioner Tindall stated the Commission has a fiscal responsibility when purchasing equipment to take care of it. The County should be using preventative maintenance to make the equipment last longer. It keeps everyone accountable and shows the County is being fiscally responsible. Commissioner Cox noted that he used pencil and paper at the shop, and it worked for him but noted that may not have been the best way.

Commissioner Burse made a motion to purchase the Preventative Maintenance System in the amount of 42,194.00. Commissioner Lucas seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Commissioner Leonard Burse-aye; Commissioner Jon Tindall-aye; Commissioner Timmy Lucas-NO, Commissioner Barry Cox-NO; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-NO.

C. Approve Purchase Request: EMA Storage Building

This item is to approve the purchase of the EMA storage building. The Commission previously approved the purchase, but staff have been waiting for SPLOST funds to accrue. There had also been questions regarding putting the item out for bid. The law has since changed, increasing the price for required bids to \$250,000. EMA Director Jonathan Daniell received three quotes. Two-Way Barndominiums and Metal Structures, LLC had the lowest price at \$150,263.95, which includes concrete and the building. There was a lower quote, but it was for the building only.

Roll Call Vote: Commissioner Leonard Burse-aye; Commissioner Jon Tindall-aye; Commissioner Timmy Lucas-aye, Commissioner Barry Cox-aye; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-aye.

D. Title Research, Appraisal, and Purchase for Albany Avenue Grade Separation

This item is to give authorization to the County Attorney to complete title investigations on properties that will be purchased for the construction of the grade separation on Albany Avenue. It would also allow the County Manager to hire a certified appraiser to update and/or obtain new appraisals of such properties and to purchase such properties.

Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Herzog explained to the Commission that they can authorize the Manager to offer the appraisal price to the landowner. He would use the fair market value from the appraisal. If the owner and the County cannot agree on a price, the property would be filed in the court system, and the original appraisal (fair market price) would be paid. This would be a last resort. He noted that there can be a difference due to something being missed during the appraisal process, such as a fence or shed. If this is found, then the appraiser would have to re-evaluate the property and determine a new price. County Manager James Shubert noted that he would prefer to offer the appraised value to the property owner; and bring any requests for price negotiation to the Commission to approve or disapprove.

Commissioner Burse made a motion to authorize the County Attorney to complete all title work on properties that need to be purchased for the construction of the Albany Avenue grade separation and authorize the County Manager to offer the appraised amount. If not accepted, it can be brought back before the Commission. Commissioner Lucas seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Commissioner Leonard Burse-aye; Commissioner Jon Tindall-aye; Commissioner Timmy Lucas-aye, Commissioner Barry Cox-aye; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-aye.

Manager's Comments:

County Manager Shubert notified the Commission that he needs a list of roads to add to the 2026 as there is a \$500,000 surplus. He noted that the intersection of E. Waring Street and Dorothy Street has a 10-foot section that holds water near where the sewer was put in. He feels that part needs to be resurfaced to keep the water from standing in that spot. The section of Dorothy from Wacona Avenue to Tebeau Street is already on the list for the restriping grant. Also, on North River Road, there is a 100-foot section of the road's edge that is breaking away and needs to be repaired.

Needham Road has some of the same issues. He noted the goal is to repair/pave some of the short streets in the incorporated area and keep the graders in the unincorporated area to save wear and tear on the tires.

Commission Comments:

Commissioner Cox said the recently paved and striped roads look and ride much better. Astoria Road was the one noted.

Commissioner Burse noted that he was glad to see Commissioner Lucas back at a meeting and also mentioned it was good to see Danny Bartlett back at the press table.

Chairman Thrift said he knows there are people concerned about him and Thrift Brothers, LLC. He wants people to know that he ran Elmer Thrift Construction for 40 years, but he has no affiliation with Thrift Brothers other than being their father. He is no longer on their bond. He has no problem with people asking and stated that all is subject to open records. Commissioner Burse said he is glad that the Chairman broached the subject and appreciates that he cleared the air. He also noted that Thrift Brothers, LLC does good work.



ADJOURN

Commissioner Lucas made a motion to adjourn the Called Meeting. Commissioner Burse seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

Date proposed to be approved: August 11, 2025

ATTEST:


Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk


Elmer Thrift, Chairman

Date

[SEAL]

