

**MINUTES  
WORK SESSION  
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2025  
3:30 p.m.**

**The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session, Monday, October 13, 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.**

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

**GUEST SPEAKER(S):**

**Mark Wiles – Georgia Forestry Commission**

Mr. Wiles and his wife, Stephanie, gave an update on the Community Wildfire Defense Grant. This grant provides funds for community protection plans for communities at risk from wildfire. Ware County is considered a hot spot, and the largest wildfire in the state's history occurred here. They have been working with the local fire teams to assess the local area and fire stations. They have a form to use to help determine whether an area's level of risk is high, moderate, or low. Within a few months, they hope to have an in-depth, comprehensive plan for the County to use as a guide to mitigate risk. This plan is used to apply for federal grant money to assist the fire department. They have completed plans for Rabun and Union Counties in Northeast Georgia. They are also currently assisting McIntosh County with the same type of plan. Mr. and Mrs. Wiles will return in a few months with an update.

**Jan Outlaw & Judy Lingenfelter – Hog Creek Bridge**

Mrs. Outlaw and Mrs. Lingenfelter appealed to the Commission regarding having a temporary bridge in place during the repair of Hog Creek Bridge so that the residents of Bickley would not have to drive too far off their normal route. By their calculations, they believe it will be a 27-mile one-way detour. They voiced concerns regarding response

time for emergency vehicles. Commissioner Cox noted that the State has done all it will do as far as the bridge. Anything else would be up to the County. County Manager James Shubert explained that building a temporary bridge can take a while due to permitting wetlands mitigation. Chris Kingsbury of Atlas Technical Consultants spoke up and said GDOT looks at population when determining whether or not to put in a temporary bridge. He noted the project is being let in November, and this would delay that project. He offered to speak with the GDOT representatives at the regional office in Jesup the following day, when he would be there for a meeting on another project. He said he would follow up with the County Manager.

#### **Chris Kingsbury – Atlas Technical Consultants**

Mr. Kingsbury told the Commission that he has the Comprehensive Transportation Plan update, which is 159 pages long. While only the County is required to adopt the plan, it is good to coordinate with the City and to possibly have a resolution from the City showing support for the plan. There is also a bypass feasibility study, which offers different bypass options. He left copies of the study and the plan for the Commission to review before stating he would be back within the next month.

### **AGENDA ITEMS:**

#### **A. ESG – Industrial Park Water Connection**

No one from the City of Waycross was present. However, Will Corbitt from Satilla Water and Sewer Authority was in the audience to answer questions from the Commission. The Chairman asked about the vote from the previous month. County Clerk Brooks read the record from the September 8 meeting as a reminder of what transpired. She read:

*“The exact wording of Commissioner Tindall’s motion was ‘Mr. Chairman, I make a motion that we approve the industrial park water loop in idea, in principle, subject to the revised plans being submitted and an MOU executed between the appropriate parties.’ Commissioner Cox seconded the motion. Votes were as follows: Burse: no; Tindall: aye; Lucas: absent; Cox: aye; Chairman: aye.”*

Commissioner Burse spoke up to reiterate that he is not opposed to the idea, but noted that no plans have been shared with the County regarding how the lines will be run. He is asking that plans be shared with the County.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

#### **B. Ordinance 2025-3: Weight Limit for Winn Clay Drive**

County Manager James Shubert explained to the Commission that this is a request to establish a weight limit on Winn Clay Drive and to add a four-way stop at Stetson Drive and Mesa Drive. With trains blocking the crossings, log trucks and semis are using Tanner Lane to get around the trains. He said the intent is to reduce heavy vehicle traffic, which contributes to roadway wear and other safety concerns. Commissioner Cox stated he would like to see speed limit signs posted on Mesa Drive.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

#### **C. Request to Add Veteran’s Day to Ware County List of Approved Holidays**

County Manager Shubert told the Commission that Veterans’ Day was previously discussed as a possible holiday when Juneteenth was addressed; however, it was never added. Commissioner Burse stated he is in favor of Veterans’ Day as a holiday. His son is

a veteran, and two of his granddaughters are actively serving in the U. S. Navy. Commissioner Cox expressed his agreement. County Manager Shubert noted that the only additional expense is for public safety employees, as the cost of daily salaries is already built into the budget.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**D. Approve Public Safety Radio Tower Leases:**

EMA Director Jonathan Daniell explained to the Commission that the radio tower owned by Monroe Communications at 570 Pafford Road supports the essential communications infrastructure for public safety and county operations. The County has been renting space on this tower for years, but these will be the first written leases. Although Monroe Communications owns the tower, each Ware County department owns its radio equipment. The monthly lease amount is determined by the location on the tower and increases as equipment is placed higher on the tower. Each department's lease is valid for one year and will have to be approved individually. The lease amounts are as follows:

- Ware County EMA – \$255/month
- Ware County Public Works – \$125/month
- Ware County EMS – \$130/month
- Ware County Fire Rescue – \$230/month
- Ware County Sheriff's Office – \$130/month

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**E. Resolution 2025-20: Approve Rural Public Transit Grant Application**

County Manager James Shubert explained to the Commission that this resolution authorizes the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to submit the rural public transit grant application to the Georgia Department of Transportation. This program allows those without transportation (elderly or low income) to call the local regional transit and schedule a ride to a job, the grocery store, a medical appointment, or other place. It is a form of public transportation, and there may be a cost to some riders, depending on circumstances. Commissioner Tindall pointed out that there is no cost to Ware County for this application to be submitted.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**F. Resolution 2025-21: Approve Roth IRA Contribution Option**

ACCG Regional Retirement Manager Paul Smith presented the Roth IRA Contribution plan to the Commission. He explained that this option allows employees to make after-tax contributions to the 457(b) deferred compensation plan. Using himself as an example, he said this would have been a good alternative when he was saving for retirement. Now that he is of age, he has to pay taxes on what he withdraws, which is not good. He told the Commission that there is no extra cost to the County to have this option available to employees. HR Director Theresa Young added that several employees had asked her about an after-tax investment option, so she contacted Mr. Smith. Even if an employee already has a private Roth IRA, they can also have a Roth IRA through their employer's contribution plan.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**G. Alcohol License Request: 2501 Plant Avenue**

The County Manager told the Commission that applicant Sunny Patel purchased and

remodeled the building at 2501 Plant Avenue with the intent to open a liquor store. He has no disqualifiers. Many years ago, this building was a medical supply store. It was most recently Mannco Trophies and an insurance company.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**H. Alcohol License Request: 1900 Alma Highway**

County Manager Shubert told the Commission that this alcohol license request is a change of ownership for the convenience store at the forks of Jamestown. The applicant, Amrish Patel has no disqualifiers. He will sell beer and wine for off-premises consumption.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**I. Alcohol License Request: 1902 Alma Highway**

County Manager Shubert told the Commission that this alcohol license request is for the package store attached to the convenience store at 1900 Alma Highway. It is the same change of ownership, except it is for the sale of liquor for off-premises consumption. Mr. Amrish Patel has no disqualifiers.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**J. Approve Borrow Pit Option Agreement**

County Manager Shubert explained to the Commission that this borrow pit agreement is between Mark Besson and Ware County. Mr. Besson lives on Leo Barber Road in Manor. Most of the dirt has already been dug. This agreement gives the County permission to go on his property and get the dirt and dig more, if necessary.

**COUNTY MANAGER COMMENTS:**

County Manager Shubert advised the Commission that County Clerk Melinda Brooks traveled to Macon the previous week to accept a \$1,000,000 CDBG check on behalf of the Commission. This grant will fund a paving and drainage improvement project on Deerwood Road and Pine Forest Road, located off of Josephine Park Road.

**COMMISSION COMMENTS: None**

**ADJOURN:**

Commissioner Burse made a motion to adjourn the Work Session. Commissioner Tindall seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The Work Session adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Date proposed to be approved: December 8, 2025

  
Elmer Thrift, Chairman

  
Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

12-11-2025  
Date

