

**MINUTES  
WORK SESSION  
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2026  
3:30 p.m.**

**The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session, Monday, February 9, 2026, 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 Timmy Lucas, and Commissioner Jon Tindall
<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>	Danny Bartlett
<b>INVOCATION</b>	Commissioner Tindall
<b>PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE</b>	Chairman Elmer Thrift

**GUEST SPEAKER(S): Robert Wallace 707 Knight Ave.**

Mr. Wallace addressed the Commission regarding renaming a local road after a hometown hero. He explained that Carroll County Investigator Taylor Bristow died in the line of duty in August 2024, while trying to serve a warrant on child exploitation charges. Investigator Bristow began his career with the Waycross Police Department. His parents still live in the home on Cameron Lane where Taylor spent his childhood. Mr. Wallace has spoken with residents who live on this road, including those who originally selected the original name. All support renaming Cameron Lane to Taylor Bristow Road. He also requested that the fees and costs be waived for this project.

Commissioner Tindall gave his full support to the project. He stated he knew Investigator Bristow as a teenager and knew his commitment to the greater good of mankind. Commissioner Lucas declared he backs the idea 100%. The other Commissioner concurred. Commissioner Burse did say that when a concession is made (such as waiving fees), he is always concerned that a precedent will be set, prompting others to seek the same privilege. However, he acknowledged that this circumstance is different. It is to honor a public servant who lost his life in the line of duty, giving the ultimate sacrifice.

County Manager James Shubert advised that the costs would be roughly \$400, including the cost of four road signs and the name change application fee. He also explained that a public hearing is still required. To give time to advertise, this could probably be done at the April

meeting.

**Billy Carter – Chief Appraiser, Board of Tax Assessors**

Mr. Carter addressed the Commission to convey his staff's appreciation for the 2% COLA passed at the January 9 meeting. He stated that he is currently fully staffed and hopes to remain so. He thanked the Commission for its action to support the County staff.

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

**A. Consider Estimates for Paving of County Roads**

County Manager Shubert presented a list of six roads to the Commission for consideration for paving with the remainder of the 2025 LMIG funds, which is approximately \$658,843.51. This list contained the following roads: Folks Bennett Road (including Indian Mound Road), Solomon Street (including 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and South Avenue), Neal Penland Road (including Brenton Lane, Faith Lane, Myles Lane, and Cindy Lane), Hayes Road, Will Cox Road, and Gooding Bay Road (2 miles extending from Valdosta Hwy/Hwy 84). Hofstadter and Associates gave a cost estimate, including engineering fees, for each road. The approximate total for the five remaining roads is \$2.9 million. Mr. Shubert noted that there is an estimated total of \$5.8 million dollars in TIA discretionary funds.

Commissioner Cox said he has spoken with citizens in the area but noted that not all want Neal Penland Rd to be paved. County Manager Shubert explained that Folks Bennett Road, with Indian Mound Road, would be considered because the goal is to get citizens within one mile of a paved road. He noted that some of the designs would be altered to meet the needs, so some costs would be reduced. He recommended starting with Folks Bennett Road, Solomon Street, and Gooding Bay Road. The total cost would be around \$1.8 million. With the 2025 LMIG balance of \$658,843.51 to be applied to this cost, the remaining portion for the County to pay would be about \$1.1 million.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**B. Discussion of Funding for State Patrol Building (Post 22)**

County Manager Shubert advised the Commission that State Representative Burchett approached him regarding the funding of the building. In 2024, the Commission pledged \$1.5 million for the construction of a new building. Rep. Burchett said if the Ware County Commission would commit to providing \$300,000 towards the new building, he would request \$2.7 million in funding from the State of Georgia. If the funding is approved by the State Appropriations Committee, Ware County's total commitment would be reduced from \$1.5 million to \$300,000 and the two acres already pledged.

**Added to Regular Meeting Agenda**

**COUNTY MANAGER COMMENTS:**

Mr. Shubert explained the Notice to Proceed for the State Street/US 1 overpass should be out by the end of this month. An NTP has been issued on the Hog Creek Bridge project. The Gum Swamp project has been let. He noted that there will be a level 2 assessment of the Albany Avenue overpass due to 22 locations of potential environmental issues.

**COMMISSION COMMENTS:**

Chairman Thrift noted that with the dry weather, the canals need to be cleaned out while the water level is down. Commissioner Cox noted a church (with no living members) is having trouble removing two giant trees felled by Hurricane Helene in 2024.

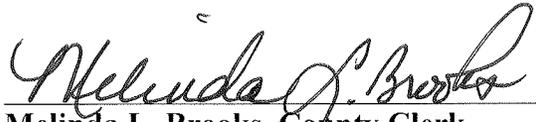
Commissioner Burse asked about the Freedom Shrine display that was discussed a few months ago. He remembered seeing the display at the library reopening and thought it was a nice addition to the building. Exchange Club President-elect Danny Bartlett explained that he found the perfect display area in the downstairs lobby of the Administration building. He noted that the cost of the display is around \$1,500, and he can order it once he has the funds to purchase it. The Commission gave the okay for the county manager to purchase a Freedom Shrine to display with County funds.

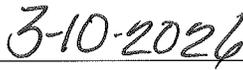
**ADJOURN:**

Commissioners Lucas and Tindall simultaneously moved to adjourn the Work Session. Commissioner Cox seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The Work Session adjourned at 4:25 p. m.

Date proposed to be approved: March 9, 2026

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Elmer Thrift, Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

