

**MINUTES
CALLED MEETING
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONDAY, JUNE 25, 2026
10:00 a.m.**

The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Called Meeting, Monday, June 25, 2026, at 10:00 a.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 (arrived at 10:13 a.m.), Commissioner Jon Tindall
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT	Commissioner Timmy Lucas
STAFF PRESENT	County Manager James Shubert; Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Herzog; County Clerk Melinda Brooks
PRESS	WJH
INVOCATION	Commissioner Tindall
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	Chairman Elmer Thrift

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion was made by Commissioner Tindall to approve the agenda as presented, with Commissioner Cox seconding the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

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

GUEST SPEAKER: None

APPOINTMENTS

A. Ware County Department of Family and Children Services Board

County Manager James Shubert explained to the Commission that Patrick Simmons' term will expire on June 30, 2026. He said that Mr. Simmons is willing to serve another five-year term beginning on July 1, 2026 and expiring on June 30, 2027.

Commissioner Cox made a motion to reappoint Patrick Simmons to the Ware County Department of Family and Children Services Board. Commissioner Tindall seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Leonard Burse-ABSENT; Commissioner Pope-aye; Commissioner Timmy Lucas-ABSENT; Commissioner Barry Cox-aye; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-aye.

AGENDA ITEMS

A. Resolution 2026-08: Adopt Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

This item was moved to the end of the agenda to allow Commissioner Burse to vote as he was not yet in attendance.

Commissioner Burse made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-08, adopting the FY27 budget totaling \$54,486,093.00. Commissioner Tindall seconded the motion.

Discussion: County Manager Shubert explained that the total budget amount is \$54,486,093.00, but that includes special funds, such as SPLOST. He clarified that the actual operating budget is \$34,415,351, which is up \$1.9 million from Fiscal Year 2026. Commissioner Cox asked if a 5% COLA was included for employees and whether it would be split into two installments like last year. Mr. Shubert said a 5% COLA is factored into the budget, and the full 5% would take effect as of July 1. Commissioner Burse expressed his agreement Commissioner Tindall noted that revenue collections are at 85% as of May, expenditures are at 97%, and asked whether the County would finish the year under budget. Accounting supervisor Beverly York anticipates that it will be closed based on expected monies.

Roll Call Vote:

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

B. Resolution 2026-09: Adopt 2026 Joint Waycross-Ware County Comprehensive Plan

County Manager Shubert explained to the Commission that this resolution is to adopt the 2026 Joint Comprehensive Plan for Waycross and Ware County. The comprehensive plan is a joint planning document that establishes a framework for future growth, development, and community priorities for both jurisdictions. Pursuant to Georgia's local planning requirements, local governments must update and adopt a comprehensive plan every five (5) years to maintain Qualified Local Government (QLG) status to remain eligible for state grants, loans, permits, and other funding opportunities. Adoption of the 2026 Joint Comprehensive Plan ensures Ware County's continued compliance with these requirements and preserves its eligibility for state and federal assistance programs.

Commissioner Tindall made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-09 adopting the 2026 Joint Waycross-Ware County Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Cox seconded the motion.

Discussion: Chairman Thrift noted that he wanted to look at the details in the plan at a later date.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Leonard Burse-ABSENT; Commissioner Jon Tindall-aye; Commissioner Timmy Lucas-ABSENT; Commissioner Barry Cox-no; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-aye.

C. Purchase – Emergency Management Agency (EMA) – Utility Vehicle

County Manager Shubert told the Commission that EMA is requesting the purchase of a four-seat utility vehicle to support emergency management operations during disaster response activities and other field operations. Quotes were received as follows:

Okefenokee Cycle Center, Blackshear, GA – Polaris Ranger Crew - \$19,473.64

Honda of South Georgia, Tifton, GA – Honda Pioneer Crew - \$22,144.95

No quote was received from the Kawasaki dealership, but one was requested.

Funding for this purchase will be provided by revenue received from Seminole County for the use of Ware County's mobile communications tower during a previous hurricane season.

Commissioner Tindall made a motion to approve the purchase of the Polaris Ranger Crew 1000 for \$19,473.64 from Okefenokee Cycle Center in Blackshear, GA. Commissioner Burse seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

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

D. Purchase Request – Fire Rescue – Personal Protection Equipment

County Manager Shubert explained NFPA-compliant turnout gear for firefighters has a maximum service life of ten (10) years from the date of manufacture. Several sets of gear currently in service are nearing expiration and must be replaced to ensure firefighter safety and maintain compliance with applicable standards. The purchase request includes seven (7) turnout coats for \$14,294.00; seven (7) turnout pants for \$8,981.00; two (2) fire helmets for \$812; and two (2) fire boots for \$780; with a total cost of \$24,867.00. Replacing this equipment is necessary to ensure firefighters have safe, reliable, protective gear while responding to fires and other emergencies. The use of expired turnout gear will reduce protection against heat, flames, and other hazards encountered during emergency operations.

Commissioner Tindall made a motion to approve the purchase of the requested turnout gear for \$24,867.00. Commissioner Cox seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Leonard Burse-aye; Commissioner Pope-aye; Commissioner Timmy Lucas-ABSENT; Commissioner Barry Cox-aye; and Chairman Elmer Thrift-aye.

E. Award Contract for Runway 1/19 Rehabilitation

County Manager Shubert reminded the Commission that they awarded East Coast Asphalt, LLC the bid for Runway 1/19 rehabilitation. The bidders were East Coast Asphalt, LLC, Thrift Brothers, and The Scruggs Company. East Coast Asphalt, LLC was the low bidder at \$1,731,196.00. The project cost will be split between federal, state, and local as follows:

Federal (95%): \$1,644,636.20 State (2.5%): \$43,279.90 Local(2.5%): \$43,279.90

Commissioner Burse moved to approve the contract for the Airport Runway 1/19 Rehabilitation with East Coast Asphalt, LLC, in the amount of \$1,731,196.00. Commissioner Tindall seconded the motion.

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

COUNTY MANAGER REPORT:

County Manager Shubert thanked staff for meeting the tight budget preparation timeline.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Cox asked for an update on the striping project. County Manager Shubert said it should begin anytime. Commissioner Cox said there is no striping on the Zion Hill Church Road, so he would like for that road to be prioritized. He also asked for an update on Folks Bennett Road and Tara Road paving projects. Mr. Shubert explained a Notice to Proceed has been issued for Tara Road. The design for Folks Bennett Rd is being developed. He also noted ditches on Katie Lane and Dusty Lane (part of the 2023 CDBG project) have been pulled. The contractor should be preparing to mix and pave although the recent rain may have caused a delay.

Commissioner Burse mentioned the Bailey Street pool is being utilized by the citizens. He has seen several adults with child enjoying the pool. He also gave a shoutout to Ware County Fire Chief Dee Meadows and Coroner David Jordan who were recently featured in the Waycross Magazine.

Chairman Thrift mentioned the drainage issues with the canals in the city and county, partly due to houses having been built on the edge of the canals. The Commission discussed the need for updating infrastructure, which would begin by consulting with the EPD or the Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Waycross.

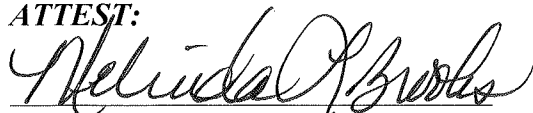
Commissioner Cox asked for an update on the old courthouse pipes. Mr. Shubert said he has estimates for replacement pipes but he needs to write a bid. He asked if the Commission wanted to do drainage and sewage or just supply. All Commissioners agreed it would be best to do both at the same time. The current drains are cast iron, and the supply lines are galvanized. Commissioner Tindall stated that if the fittings are lead, there is a possibility of getting state funding to assist with replacement costs. Mr. Shubert said the remaining 2014 SPLOST building funds would be used to help cover the cost of replacing the pipes. The rest would come from the 2022 SPLOST building fund.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Tindall made a motion to adjourn the called meeting. Commissioner Burse seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 a. m.

Date proposed to be approved: July 13, 2026

ATTEST:


Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk


Elmer Thrift, Chairman

7-16-2026
Date

