

**MINUTES
WORK SESSION
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONDAY, JULY 13, 2026
3:30 p.m.**

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

CALL TO ORDER	Chairman Elmer Thrift
COMMISSIONERS PRESENT	Commissioner Leonard Burse, Commissioner Barry Cox, Commissioner Jon Tindall, and Commissioner Timmy Lucas
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT	None
STAFF PRESENT	County Manager Scott Moye; Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Herzog; County Clerk Melinda Brooks
PRESS	None
INVOCATION	Commissioner Leonard Burse
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	Chairman Elmer Thrift

PRESENTATIONS:

Dr. Bill Young Thank You Letter

County Clerk Melinda Brooks told the Commission a proclamation had been provided to Sweat Memorial Baptist Church for their pastor's retirement. He sent a thank you letter, which she read to the Commission.

Fire Chief Dee Meadows

Fire Chief Meadows told the Commission on Monday, July 6, lightning struck the steeple of Deenwood Baptist Church. A fire broke out in the steeple and roof. The City of Waycross Fire Department and Pierce County Fire Department provided mutual aid and helped save much of the building. According to the State Fire Marshal, this is one of maybe five fires in which the brick walls are still standing after this kind of fire. Chief Meadows presented Waycross Fire Chief Blackburn and Pierce County Fire Chief Goble to the Commission to formally thank them for their service. All Commissioners thanked both men for their assistance, and several stepped down to shake their hands.

GUEST SPEAKER(S):

Brad Robinson and Daniel Taylor – Practical Design Partners

They gave an update on Albany Avenue Overpass. Found two sites with contaminated soil with underground fuel storage tanks. These will have to be removed and soil rehabilitated and retested. It will be on the EPD timeline; from sending a letter to the property owner for

cleanup to actually preparing to take possession could be six months. Because CSX approval is required on plans, the estimated time frame before the project is let will be about a year.

Commissioner Tindall asked what the time frame for bridge construction would be if all the surrounding properties and rights-of-way were acquired and outside work was done first. Brad said although the time is driven by property acquisition, the County would still be looking at July 2027 for letting the project.

AGENDA ITEMS:

A. Appointment to the Land Bank Authority

County Manager Shubert reminded the Commission of the resignation of Mr. William Simmons from this board due to other obligations. His term will expire on December 31, 2028. Mr. Fred Lee, Jr. submitted a letter expressing his interest in fulfilling Mr. Simmons' unexpired term. Mr. Lee spoke to the board, first thanking them for their service and then expressing his anticipation of making progress with the Land Bank Authority if appointed. Commissioner Tindall remarked that he would like to see some movement on the board to sell these properties and put them to good use for the community.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

B. Resolution 2026-10: Contract with Georgia Public Defender Council

County Manager explained that the Public Defender's budget year runs from January through December, whereas the County budget year runs from July through June.

Because of this, the contract with the Georgia Public Defender Council is only for a six-month period. This contract is for the second half of their budget year (July-December).

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

C. Resolution 2026-11: Contract with Unison Behavioral Health

County Manager Shubert presented the Unison Behavioral Health Contract to the Commission, noting the County's total annual contribution is \$50,026.00. This breaks down into \$29,515 for the County's participation, and \$20,511 for services provided to the jail. All counties in the region participate: Atkinson, Bacon, Brantley, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Pierce, and Ware. Chairman Thrift asked if all counties paid the same. Unison Board Member Carlos Nelson was in the audience. He explained that participation is based on population. Some counties provide land, buildings, and in-kind services in lieu of payment. He and County Manager Shubert explained that Unison provides mental health and drug counseling. They also provide a counselor at the jail to ride with deputies on calls requiring assistance in certain situations. Accounting Supervisor Beverly York spoke up, stating that this contract amount has been the same for the previous nine years.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

D. Purchase Request for Fire Rescue – 2 Ford F250

County Manager Shubert explained the Fire Chief and Battalion Chief are requesting to replace their current older trucks with the F-250s. Fire Chief Dee Meadows explained these trucks will be equipped with skid units consisting of a 150-gallon water tank, pump, and hose reel to assist with response to brush and wildland fires. He can respond to a small grass fire with his truck rather than pulling a large tanker truck. It would be more

cost-efficient. Georgia Forestry Commission will assemble the skid units and fund 50% of its cost, with the exception of the pump. The County's cost per pump is \$2,231. Quotes were received as follows:

Robbie Roberson Ford	\$60,299.00/Ford 250	\$120,598.00 total
Hendrick Automotive Group	\$60,838.57/Chevrolet 2500	\$121,677.14 total
Allan Vigil Ford	\$67,435.00/Ford F250	\$134,870.00 total

County Manager Shubert recommends going with Robbie Roberson Ford, which had the lowest quote. Funding will be through the 2022 SPLOST Public Safety Allocation.

Commissioner Cox told the Commission that he remembers in the past the fire chiefs had a water tank on their truck to assist with small fires; he thinks it is a good idea. He also likes the idea of staying local with the vehicle purchase.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

E. Purchase Request EMS – Repeater and Radio Upgrades

EMS Director Perry Blackburn explained to the Commission this request is to purchase a VHF digital repeater and digital radios. This will upgrade the current system used by EMS, which can lose communication in parts of the County. This upgrade will improve coordination between EMS and dispatch. He is recommending Monroe Communications, which had the lowest bid at \$10,122.00. The other bidders were Two-Way Communications at \$10,723.00 and RCE of Valdosta at \$11,463.00. County Manager Shubert said funding for this purchase will be through the 2022 SPLOST public safety allocation.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

F. Discuss DNR Grant for Pickleball Courts at Trembling Earth Recreation Complex

Recreation Department Director Lance Adamson explained to the Commission that the Department of Natural Resources grant portal will open August third, so staff is seeking guidance for the amount to request. The maximum grant amount is \$750,000, but it is a 50/50 match. The Commission has to determine the number of courts to build. The engineer's estimate is for 8 courts at a cost of \$2.4 million. The project can be built in phases. Commissioner Cox noted that it may be best to start with four courts.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

G. Discuss Road Projects for the 2027 LMIG Application

County Manager James Shubert advised the Commission that the Georgia Department of Transportation has opened the 2027 Local Maintenance Improvement Grant application portal. Ware County's allocation is \$1,344,927.82. Sandhill Road is the only roadway identified for resurfacing under this program. He needs each Commissioner to suggest roads for resurfacing. Commissioner Burse mentioned that resurfacing or paving shorter roads would provide "more bang for the buck". Commissioner Cox suggested adding Nabors Drive to the list to move the grader from that neighborhood. When asked, Mr. Shubert noted that the LMIG amount may allow resurfacing on about five miles of roadway.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

COUNTY MANAGER REPORT: None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

County Clerk Melinda Brooks presented the Scrap Tire Abatement Reimbursement grant program. She explained there are three different branches of this grant, but per Commissioner Cox's request, the amnesty event would allow Ware County citizens to bring their tires to a collection site at no cost. When the application is submitted, the event date, number of tires to be collected, transporter information and permit, and collection site with EPD permit. EPD permit is not required, but a letter on County letterhead giving specific information would suffice. The application can take 90 days to process, so Mrs. Brooks asked the Commission for a collection date. They decided on Saturday, November 14, which would give more than 100 days for the application process. Mrs. Brooks advised she would update the Commission with any information at the August 10 meeting.

ADJOURN:

Commissioner Burse made a motion to adjourn the Work Session. Commissioner Lucas seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The work session adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Date proposed to be approved: August 10, 2026


Elmer Thrift, Chairman


Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

8-12-2026
Date

