

Habersham County Development Authority
Thursday, March 14, 2024 @ 3:30 pm
Executive Conference Room
130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523

The Habersham County Development Authority held a regular meeting on Thursday, March 14, 2024, at 3:30 p.m. in the Executive conference room in the Habersham County Administration Building located at 130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA, 30523.

Members Present: Gail Thaxton, Bryan Ferguson, Kelly Woodall, Jim Butterworth, Allen Whitener

Members Not Present: Jeff Bruns, Sidney Roland

Others Present: County staff, Members of the Public and Media

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Jim Butterworth.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

The invocation was given by Kelly Woodall and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jim Butterworth.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was amended to add item e. – Bond Update, and item f. – LOST Update. A MOTION was made by Kelly Woodall, seconded by Bryan Ferguson, and voted unanimously to approve the agenda as amended.

Approval of Minutes

A MOTION was made by Kelly Woodall, SECONDED by Gail Thaxton, and voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 29, 2024 Regular Meeting and Retreat.

Monthly Activity Report

Habersham County Manager Tim Sims presented the Monthly Activity and Financial report. February 2024 YTD represents 66.67% of the Fiscal Year. Current revenues are 50% and expenditures are 93%. Total account balances equal \$1,236,219. Jim Butterworth reminded the authority that out of that cash balance, we have a commitment of \$250,000 to help fund the demolition of the old courthouse. Tim stated that the last payment was made to HD Construction for the grading of Pad 10 in the amount of \$82,000. Tim also pointed out that the authority has made \$27,348 in interest since moving money to the GA Fund 1 account. Bryan Ferguson asked Tim the status of the issue with the first two payments to HD Construction. Tim said the GBI is now assisting with the investigation. Alicia Vaughn added that she had spoken with the pad owner, Tim Barbir, and made him aware of the situation as well. She told Mr. Barbir that if a lien was placed on his property due to this situation, that the county would take care of it.

A MOTION was made by Gail Thaxton, seconded by Allen Whitener, and voted unanimously to approve the February 28, 2024 financials as presented.

Old Business

- a) Airport Business Park Update – Charlie Fiveash gave the update. Charlie has met with a new prospect, who is a Tier 2 supplier to a large auto manufacturer from out of state. Charlie showed them the Higgins Building and discussed the potential of Pads 5 and 7 across the street. The prospect had specific questions regarding ceiling height. They are looking for a 40,000 to 70,000 square foot building. The Wilson Hutchinson buildings are behind schedule to begin construction according to their contract. However, last year they had a very interested party whose contract fell through. The owners have been waiting for almost 3 months for EMI to approve their plans for a spec building. Charlie doesn't feel like we can hold the owners accountable for their failure to begin construction within one year. The owner is now asking Charlie if they should just sell their sites. There was some discussion of whether the authority should use a different engineer. Charlie explained that we recently bid out for engineering services. The bids are currently under review.
- b) Business Park Streetlight & Landscaping Billing Update – Patti McLarty gave the update. 3rd and 4th quarter 2023 expenses have been invoiced. To date, the invoices total \$5,103.71 and the payments received total \$1,134.15. Only two tenants/owners have paid. Patti asked how to enforce and collect the payments. The bills have averaged \$188 per quarter, per pad. Jim suggested that Wade not hand-deliver invoices in the future because he is currently a candidate for commissioner. Patti has the contact information to mail or e-mail invoices. Janney suggested sending letters stating that the Development Authority will no longer be responsible for paying the invoices if all participants do not pay. The services can be disconnected or terminated. Jim asked the group for suggestions. Janney suggested including a letter with the 1st quarter 2024 bills giving a date of June 30th to turn off the service if the bills are still unpaid. Bryan Ferguson reminded the board that the Development Authority has already paid almost \$26,000 for the installation of the lights. Janney suggested adding something to the covenants regarding the payment of common expenses.
- c) Courthouse Redevelopment Update – To be discussed in Executive Session.
- d) Phase II Business Park Update – The prospect Charlie had for the Pyratech side of Phase II has decided to expand their business where they are currently located. There are no other prospects for Phase II at the moment. Charlie does not think the Development Authority should spend the money right now to cut in a road in Phase II. Rope Roberts has advised that the site be marketed in two large parcels. Gail Thaxton asked Charlie to give a follow-up on the realtor bids and fees, and whether the annexation process should be started soon. She added that Rope had stressed having infrastructure in place before marketing the property. In order to have the infrastructure, the property would need to be annexed into Baldwin. Charlie said there are two alternatives – Build spec buildings on the property before annexing, or annex the site before construction. Janney Sanders said we could put infrastructure on the site without annexing first, then annex when we have a buyer or tenant. Jim Butterworth suggested we make a list of topics to discuss with Baldwin. Charlie said Rope's recommendation is to let Charlie manage the marketing for Phase II, therefore eliminating the listing broker fee. Charlie said that most parties who are interested in the property would have their own agent or broker so we would still pay a partial fee. Tim Sims said they received 9 bids for real estate brokerage services. Chairman Butterworth suggested adding an action item to the April agenda.

- e) Bond Update – Alicia Vaughn explained the basics of how bond management works. We currently only have one bond, which is for the new Cornelia hotel. Someone must set up and monitor a detailed spreadsheet, make sure the company is making their payments, coordinate with the tax assessor’s and tax commissioner’s offices, other municipalities, school district, etc. These duties were removed from Charlie’s job description, but the bond still must be managed, either by or on behalf of the Development Authority. Alicia spoke with Tim about potentially managing the bond, with the Development Authority paying the county a certain amount per bond. Or it could be managed through a bond attorney’s office or an accountant’s office. Janney added that many development authorities have an annual “carrying” fee on each bond. Janney also recommended we speak with Brittany Ivey in Stephens County because she has handled several bonds for Stephens County. This topic will be discussed further, and action taken at the April meeting.
- f) LOST Update – Jim Butterworth gave the update. There are two bills currently in legislation that are related to SPLOST. Victor Anderson’s bill would remove the two-penny cap or exclude E-SPLOST from the two-penny cap, which would only affect the 7 or 8 Georgia counties who don’t currently have LOST. This bill is stalled in the house. The other bill would remove all limitations of SPLOST for every county in Georgia, which means counties could potentially charge as much sales tax as they want. The Senate finance chairman, where the proposed bill currently sits, is opposed to this other bill. Senator Bo Hatchett has invited Jim Butterworth and anyone else on the board to go to the capital and talk to the finance committee about the proposed legislation. Another option would be to take verbiage from Victor Anderson’s bill and attach it to another bill at the end of the legislative session.

New Business

- Discuss/Adopt Purchasing Policy – Janney Sanders wrote the policy specifically for our Development Authority since the county’s policy did not exactly match the authority’s needs. The policy is complete except for the limitation in paragraph 3. There was discussion about what dollar amount that limitation should be. Also, Janney was asked to remove the sentence “(Need more detail?? Not sure what other things are routinely paid for)” from paragraph 2. MOTION by Kelly Woodall, seconded by Gail Thaxton, and voted unanimously to adopt the revised purchasing policy with a limitation of \$5,000.
- Discuss/Approve purchase of business cards, embroidered apparel, and nametags – Jim suggested the board get nametags and/or business cards for when attending meetings or meeting with a prospect. He also mentioned the option of buying some embroidered apparel. Kelly Woodall suggested nametags over embroidered apparel. MOTION by Gail Thaxton, seconded by Bryan Ferguson, and voted unanimously to approve the purchase of business cards and nametags.
- Discuss/Approve using county vs. personal e-mail addresses – Most of the board members seemed in favor of using a county e-mail address rather than their personal e-mail address. Janney reminded everyone that all county business communication is subject to open records. Some members are currently using their work e-mail address. MOTION by Gail Thaxton, seconded by Bryan Ferguson, and voted unanimously to approve the creation and use of county e-mail addresses.

Other Reports

Kelly Woodall informed the authority that this would be his last meeting as a board member, due to the fact he is running for commissioner. He was thanked for serving on the board and offered best wishes.

Public Comment

None

MOTION by Bryan Ferguson, seconded by Kelly Woodall, and voted unanimously to enter Executive Session at 4:41 p.m.

Executive Session- Property Acquisition & Disposal, pursuant to O.C.G.A §50-14-3 (b)(1)

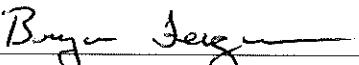
MOTION by Kelly Woodall, seconded by Gail Thaxton, and voted unanimously to exit executive session at 4:56 p.m.

Next Meeting

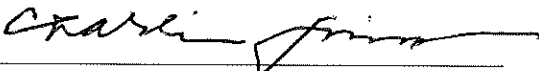
The next regular meeting is Thursday, April 11, 2024, at 3:30 p.m.

Adjourn

A MOTION was made by Gail Thaxton, seconded by Bryan Ferguson, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:58 p.m.



Bryan Ferguson, Vice Chair



Attest: Charlie Fiveash