

**HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING**  
**6:00 P.M., MONDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2024**  
**HABERSHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE**  
**JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM**  
**295 LLEWELLYN ST, CLARKESVILLE, GA 30523**

The Habersham County Board of Commissioners held a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, October 21, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Jury Assembly Room of the Habersham County Courthouse located at 295 Llewellyn St, Clarkesville, GA 30523.

Present was Chairman Ty Akins, Vice Chairman Bruce Harkness, Commissioner Bruce Palmer, Commissioner Dustin Mealor, Commissioner Jimmy Tench, County Manager Alicia Vaughn, County Attorney Donnie Hunt, County Clerk Brandalin Carnes, staff, members of the media and the public.

Chairman Akins called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

Commissioner Harkness lead the invocation.

Commissioner Palmer lead the pledge of allegiance.

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Commissioner Tench requested that he be provided with a copy of the minutes of the September 16, 2024 Board of Commissioners meeting as well as the video recording from that meeting. Chairman Akins informed Commissioner Tench that County Clerk Carnes will be happy to provide him with any records he needs.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the agenda with the following changes:

Request the addition of “Consider/Approve Request for Purchase of Budgeted Patrol Cars for the Sheriff’s Office” as item “c” under new business with reordering of subsequent new business items.

Removal of item “i. Consider/Approve Proposal for Garland/DBS, Inc. to Manage the Aquatic Center and AVITA Building Roofing Projects” from the consent agenda to place on new business as item “p”.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve.

**PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- a. Employee Spotlight: Kevin Rosenquist
- b. Proclamation of November 3, 2024 as Retired Educators Day
- c. Recognition of Community and County Efforts Regarding Hurricane Helene
- d. County Offices and Landfill Closed on November 11, 2024 Veterans Day Holiday

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- a. CU-24-08: Larry Green Seeking Conditional Use for Approximately 200 Acres Located at 5315 Piedmont Mountain Rd (035 044) in the LI, Low Intensity District for the Purpose of a Christian Retreat With Up to Five (5) Parsonages and Thirty (30) Cabins.

Planning Director Mike Beecham addressed the Commission. The applicant purchased approximately 200 acres for use as a Christian retreat with 5 parsonages for staff running the retreat and approximately thirty (30) cabins available for use by church groups, prayer retreat groups, etc. The surrounding area is residential, agricultural and undeveloped. The cabins will follow a cluster pattern to preserve as much open space as possible. The site will have multiple nature trails and quiet areas for prayer. There is an existing chapel built on the property on the west side of Piedmont Road which did not require a hearing as churches are allowed by right. The intent is for the cabins to be used/booked by church groups to visit. Three (3) parsonages are expected to be built initially but it could increase to five (5) eventually. These parsonages will be approximately 1200 square feet each and would be used to house the daily staff running the retreat. There will be a maximum of thirty (30) cabins with each being approximately 300-400 square feet. Bookings will not require a fee, however a donation to the ministry would be accepted. The property outside of the development will be placed in conservation status to ensure that it will not be developed. Mr. Beecham informed the Commission that there were no citizens that showed up to the Planning Commission meeting at which this application was discussed who wished to oppose the application or express concerns. There was concern among the Planning Commission regarding the site transitioning into a full rental campground, however staff informed the Planning Commission that they are treating the application the same as they would a typical cabin rental campground, hence the need for the conditional use. Concerns were also expressed by the Planning Commission regarding weddings and other events being held. Staff informed the Planning Commission that weddings area already allowed within the existing church, as they are at all, but events held on the property would require approval as an event venue.

The Planning Commission is forwarding conditional use application CU-24-08 to the Board of Commissioners with the recommendation of approval with the following conditions:

- 1) There can only be a maximum of thirty (30) cabins with a limit of 500 square feet each.
- 2) There can only be a maximum of five (5) parsonages with a limit of 1200 square feet each.
- 3) The developed area cannot exceed 15% of the total land mass of the property.
- 4) No long term rentals in the cabins as defined by the Habersham County regulations.
- 5) All rentals must be handled by and through the organization itself.

Attorney Hunt provided those who wished to speak in favor of conditional use application CU-24-08 an opportunity to do so.

Mr. Bill Stark spoke in favor of the conditional use, informing the Commission that outside of the work that he does with his company LeaderGov, it is his joy to be a part of this ministry. He feels that this ministry has changed his life and allowed him to grow in his faith through quiet prayer programs and retreats.

Lew Oliver spoke in favor of the application. Mr. Oliver wanted to disclose that he has given donations to this group and is likely to do work for them, however he would be giving them his full support regardless. He informed the Commission that the work that has been done with the property up to this point and the stone chapel that they have built is beautiful. The property has been cleaned up and guidance from parks and wildlife regarding the renewal of meadows on the property was sought out and incorporated.

Attorney Hunt provided those who wished to speak in opposition to conditional use application CU-24-08 an opportunity to do so. There was no one present who wished to speak in opposition to the application.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve with the following conditions recommended by the Planning Commission.

- b. 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of Amendment to Habersham County Code of Ordinances Section 68-1729 (“Access Management and Connectivity”) of Chapter 68 (“Comprehensive Land Use and Development”)

Planning Director Mike Beecham addressed the Commission. This agenda item is for a proposed amendment to the code of ordinances and as such will require two readings of the amendment prior to a vote. The County has had issues with developers creating multiple residential lots being on existing county roads to avoid having to meet the subdivision requirements including an internal road. Mr. Beecham reminded the had discussed this issue with the Commission that about a year ago had brought a recommendation to them that developments with more than four lots should not be allowed to have direct driveway accesses from the lots to a County Road. This proposed amendment is a short term fix to correct his issue while the County is still working with CPL to create an unified development code. The proposed amendment allows up to four lots to be developed on a county road. When five or more lots are proposed, an internal subdivision road is required. The amendment also requires interparcel access between non-single family uses. This is to prevent cars having to exit a property onto the county road just to access an adjacent property next door. Driveway separation is also regulated, which limits the number of driveways on an existing road. The proposed amendment also imposes some regulations on gated communities to ensure the gates don’t negatively impact the public road serving it. Mr. Beecham informed the Commission that this amendment does not affect current subdivisions, which are grandfathered in, however this amendment will apply to any new subdivisions.

Mr. Beecham stated that the Planning Commission has reviewed the proposed amendment and is forwarding it to the Board of Commissioners with recommendation of approval.

Attorney Hunt provided those who wished to speak in favor of the proposed amendment to Habersham County Code of Ordinances Section 68-1729 (“Access Management and Connectivity”) of Chapter 68 (“Comprehensive Land Use and Development”) an opportunity to do so. There were none present who wished to speak in favor of the proposed amendment.

Attorney Hunt provided those who wished to speak in opposition to the proposed amendment to Habersham County Code of Ordinances Section 68-1729 (“Access Management and Connectivity”) of Chapter 68 (“Comprehensive Land Use and Development”) an opportunity to do so. There were none present who wished to speak in opposition to the proposed amendment.

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, Seconded by Commissioner Palmer and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve acceptance of the first reading of the amendment. The second reading and final vote on this amendment is scheduled to be held at next Board of Commissioners meeting on November 18, 2024.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

- a. David Mickler: Mr. Mickler feels that the fee structure for the use of the Aquatic Center is discriminatory towards seniors, the disabled and veterans. Though individuals in these categories receive a discounted membership fee, they do not get a discount if they pay on a day-to-day basis. He feels that this is not fair given the fact that all children under the age of 17 get to swim for free with an adult that has a membership. Mr. Mickler stated that he has a disabled friend who used the aquatic center for therapy for the past 10 years, however when the Commission approved the new fee structure he was no longer able to afford to attend. Mr. Mickler also wanted to voice his concern for parents being able to bring their opposite gendered children into the bathroom/locker rooms with

them. Chairman Palmer reminded Mr. Mickler that he has had previous discussions with him before regarding the fact that a scholarship is available that would allow his friend to swim at no cost. He also wanted to remind Mr. Mickler that the waiver to the fee for in-resident pool usage was only waived for a 1-year period prior to reinstating it, so his friend had been paying for the usage of the pool for all but that 1-year trial period. Commissioner Palmer offered his assistance in helping Mr. Mickler friend fill out the paperwork for the scholarship. Mr. Mickler stated that his friend was already receiving the scholarship, however it only covers 70% of the cost and he has to pay the rest. Also, the scholarship process requires a letter from a government agency attesting to need and financials. Mr. Mickler wants those with disabilities to automatically be able to swim at the same fee rate as kids. Commissioner Akin informed Mr. Mickler that since he first started bringing these complaints to the Commission, the Recreation Board has been reactivated. He suggested that Mr. Mickler meet with the Recreation Board, as they are appointed by the Commission and can research the issue and give the Commission guidance on any needed policy changes.

- b. Renee Harrleson: Ms. Harrleson has lived on Ivy Mountain Rd she and her husband had moved to there in 1993. Since that time, the county has maintained both Ivy Mountain Road and Ivy Mountain Connector and residents have used both roads. The ability to use Ivy Mountain Connector was especially essential to residents on Ivy Mountain Road during this past storm brought on by Hurricane Helene. She feels that the Worley's have caused issues with the roads ability to be properly maintained by the County by purposefully grading over turnouts and setting post in ditches. She has heard Ms. Worley's many complaints at the Commission meetings, however the public has been openly driving on this road for many years without anyone having said they could not do so. Ms. Harrleson asked if the County has made any kind of decisions regarding Ivy Mountain Connector? Commissioner Akin stated that they had not yet. Ms. Harrleson would like to see a decision made soon.
- c. Lachelle Worley: Ms. Worley stated that she has been coming now been coming to the Commission meetings for several months regarding Ivy Mountain Connector. She informed the Commission that back in the 90's the landowner who owned both sides of the road had requested that Ivy Mountain Connector be closed as well. She had tried to obtain minutes from meetings regarding these discussions, but none have been found. Ms. Worley stated that the turnouts to which Ms. Harrleson was referring to never should have been graded onto her property in the first place. She wants everyone to know that she is not against the residents of Ivy Mountain Road, she is an advocate for the County to properly maintain their road so that they don't have to use Ivy Mountain Connector. Ms. Worley alleged that she had law enforcement called on her by the County Road Department so she couldn't stand on her land while they were grading it. Commissioner Harknes asked County Attorney Hunt if the Commission is ready to make a decision regarding Ivy Mountain Connector? Attorney Hunt stated that he has already given the Commission his professional opinion regarding this issue, and that they are just waiting on the Commission to make a decision. Attorney Hunt informed them that the County has a 20ft prescriptive easement already that allows them to continue to maintain the road and for the public to use it, **but this easement is not big enough to pave without**

#### **CONSENT AGENDA:**

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Akins and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda.

- a. Consider/Approve July 15, 2024 Executive Session Meeting Minutes
- b. Consider/Approve September 16, 2024 Work Session Minutes
- c. Consider/Approve September 16, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

- d. Consider/Approve Award of Contract for Firefighter Turnout Gear to NAFECO
- e. Consider/Approve Ratifying Contract with Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMS/HS) for Vulnerable Population Evacuation and Transportation Services
- f. Consider/Approve Memorandum of Understanding with Habersham County Board of Education for Use of Dewey Tench Pavilion and Fairgrounds as Reunification Site for Evacuations
- g. Consider/Approve Auctioning and Scrapping of Surplus/Obsolete Vehicles and Equipment
- h. Consider/Approve Lease Agreement with Air Methods for Old FBO Building at Airport
- ~~i. Consider/Approve Proposal for Garland/DBS, Inc. to Manage the Aquatic Center and AVITA Building Roofing Projects~~ Moved to new business item “p” during the adoption of the agenda.

**REPORTS:**

- a. County Manager’s Report: Alicia Vaughn, County Manager
- b. Departmental Report: Kathy Holcomb, Senior Center Director

**APPOINTMENTS:**

**BOARD OF TAX ASSESSORS**

Remainder of 3-Year Term Ending 12/31/2024

- 1. John King (Term Expires 12/31/2024)- Commissioner Mealor

Due to the limited availability of classes and no fault of his own, Mr. King had been unable to complete his required 40 hours mandatory training within the 180 days required by law. Mr. King had been registered to attend training in November, however this training was rescheduled for January, which is past the 180 day mark from the time he was appointed. For Mr. King to remain on the Board of Tax Assessors as a voting member through the remainder of his term of December 31, 2024 he must be reappointed. Commissioner Mealor would need also need to reappoint Mr. King again at the December Board of Commissioners meeting should Commissioner Mealor wish for him to serve a new 3-year term.

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Palmer, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the reappointment of John King to the Board of Tax Assessors for the remainder of his term ending December 31, 2024.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

## NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Consider/Approve Acceptance of Governor's Office of Highway Safety HEAT Grant and Traffic Enforcement Network Grant on Behalf of the Habersham County Sheriff's Office.

Chief Deputy Robin Krockum addressed the Commission. The Sheriff's Office is asking for Commission approval to accept two separate Governor's Office of Highway Safety grants. The Traffic Enforcement Network Grant will fund additional expenses related to the Northeast Traffic Enforcement Network. Habersham County is one of forty law enforcement agencies in this network, which covers all of Habersham, Rabun, Stephens, White, Forsyth, Hall Banks, Franklin and Hall counties. There are sixteen traffic enforcement networks in the state of Georgia that are funded by this grant through the Governor's Office of Highway Safety. Sheriff-Elect Krockum has served as the coordinator for this network for the past 10 years. This grant is funded at 100% and will provide \$33,058.64 which will be used as supplements for employee salaries, meeting expenses, and training/travel for two employees of the Habersham County Sheriff's Office to serve as Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator of this network. These two positions would be providing traffic related meetings on behalf of the network every month in addition to providing education and training.

The HEAT Grant has been received by the Habersham County Sheriff's Office in the past, and they have been awarded a renewal of this grant at 100% funding on a monthly reimbursement schedule. The HEAT grant will fund the salary of two employees, which will increase to three employees in November once they receive additional funding that is supposed to be awarded at that time. The initial Heat grant is for \$261,820 which includes two (2) salaries, two (2) patrol vehicles, two (2) in-car cameras with body cameras, two (2) radars, two (2) lidars, two (2) also sensors, vehicle fuel, vehicle maintenance and training/travel expenses related to the grant. Once they receive the additional grant funding of \$52,380 in November, it will be used toward the expenses for a third employee and their training/travel. This will make the total grant awarded \$314,200. The Sheriff's Office does not intend to hire new people for these three positions, and will instead move three existing employees into these positions and use the subsequent salary and benefit savings toward purchasing additional vehicles needed by the Sheriff's Office.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealar and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the acceptance of the HEAT grant and Traffic Enforcement Network Grant.

- b. Consider/Approve Purchase of Two (2) Fully Equipped Patrol Vehicles for Sheriff's Office Using HEAT Grant

Chief Deputy Robin Krockum addressed the Commission. The Sheriff's Office is asking for approval of the purchase of two (2) fully equipped patrol vehicles with the funding the HEAT grants funds that were approved as part of the previous agenda item. The HEAT grant is 100% funded on a reimbursement schedule with no local match. They would be purchasing these vehicles from Brannen Ford at state contract pricing.

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the purchase of two (2) fully equipped vehicles as part of the HEAT grant.

- c. Consider/Approve Purchase of Six (6) New Patrol Cars for Sheriff's Office

This item was added to new business during adoption of the agenda. Chief Deputy Robin Krockum addressed the Commission. The Board of Commissioners has already approved the purchase of six (6) new patrol cars for the Sheriff's Office as part of this year's budget. The Sheriff's Office is requesting approval to move forward with the purchase of these vehicles.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve.

d. Consider/Approve Creation of Full Time Public Information Officer Position for Sheriff's Office

Chief Deputy Robin Krockum addressed the Commission. Currently, Public Information Officer Rob Moore is being shared by the Board of Commissioners and the Sheriff's Office, both of which contribute 50% of his salary. Mr. Moore handles all of the press releases, media inquiries and social media for the Sheriff's Office. They feel that the demands of this position are such that it would be beneficial for them to have their own dedicated Public Information Officer. They are proposing to bring Mr. Moore to the Sheriff's Office to serve this role. As he would only be working for the Sheriff's Office, they would fund his position at 100%. They have the funds available to do so with no increase to their budget. Commissioner Harkness asked if the Board of Commissioners would be retaining the position that is being filled by Ashlyn Brady? County Manager Vaughn informed him that Ms. Brady's position is a temporary one, and that the Public Information Officer position for the Board of Commissioners Office would need to be advertised and she would have to apply for it should she want the position.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness, to approve the creation of a full-time public information officer position for the Sheriff's Office. Motion carries 4-1 with Commissioner Mealor dissenting.

e. Consider/Approve Airport 5-Year CIP for FY 2026- 2030

Amanda Rostin, Vice President for Lead Edge, addressed the Commission. A 5-year Airport Capital Improvement Plan (ACIP) is required to be submitted to the FAA and Georgia DOT annually by November of each year for planning and funding applications. It includes a list of requested projects, grant funding sources and the local funds required to match the grant requests. Ms. Rostin reviewed the list with the Commission. Project that have been planned for FY 2026 include taxiway lighting construction, the FY 27-30 DBE Plan update, and land acquisition phase 1. The estimated cost of these three projects is \$1.11 million, however FAA and GDOT project construction grants for federal FY26 would cover all but a local match of \$255,227. The Airport Commission unanimously recommended approval of the ACIP at their regular meeting held on September 10, 2024.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Palmer and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Airport CIP as presented for the Habersham County Airport for Fiscal Years 2026 through 2030.

f. Consider/Approve Contract with FBO Drive for Car Rental Services at Habersham County Airport

Chief Financial Officer Tim Sims addressed the Commission. This agenda item is to request Commission approval for an annual contract with FBO Drive for their provision of rental vehicles at the Habersham County Airport. Mr. Sims informed the Commission that there are no car rental companies located in Habersham County at this time, though the airport has a need for consistent and reliable car services for pilots and passengers at the airport. The airport has used both Enterprise and Hertz in the past, however both companies struggled to meet the demands of the airport. An RFP was put out for the provision of car rental services at the airport, however only two bids were received, one from FBO Drive and another from Enterprise. The proposal submitted by Enterprise was incomplete and contained no pricing information. Commissioner Akins inquires as to whether the airport still had courtesy cars? Mr. Sims informed him that they do still have these available, but they are used for pilots to run to town for lunch or other quick errands and are not meant for long periods of time. The rental cars that would be offered would be for long term use. The County will receive 12% of the rental fees taken in by FBO Drive and the only responsibility on the part of airport employees will be light cleaning of the cars. FBO Drive will handle all heavy cleaning and turnover

of rental vehicles and booking will be done completely virtually with cars being accessed using a lock box. The potential revenue based on past rental information would be around \$6,000 annually. There will be dedicated rental vehicles that remain on-site at the airport, which will remove accessibility issues encountered with other vendors in the past. At their October 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Airport Commission voted to recommend approval to the Board of Commissioners of awarding the contract to FBO Drive.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness to approve an annual contract with FBO Drive to supply Habersham County Airport with car rental services. Motion carries 4-1 with Commissioner Tench dissenting.

- g. Consider/Approve Resolution #2024-10-005 Authorizing the Chairman Sign Documents Entering Into A Lease Purchase Agreement with Leasing 2, Inc. To Finance the Purchase of One (1) 2024 E-One Typhoon Class HP75 Ladder Truck In An Amount Not To Exceed \$1,324,730 From Fire Line Equipment, LLC.

Emergency Services Director Jeff Adams addressed the Commission, informing them that Habersham County only owns one ladder truck, a 1999 Pierce Quantum Ladder truck that the County has owned since it was purchased used in 2016 for \$85,000. This ladder truck has spent approximately half its time since around 2018 out of service due to issues, and recently failed the non-destructive testing that is required to be performed every 5 years due to “critical structural concerns”. This ladder truck has had approximately \$65,000 in repairs completed on it since it was purchased. The National Fire Protection Association recommends replacement or refurbishment of ladder trucks every 25 years. The manufacturer (Pierce) estimates that it would cost between \$350,000 to \$750,000 to refurbish the current ladder truck. The Board of Commissioners approved the funds needed for leasing a new engine/pumper truck in the FY25 budget. Mr. Adams is seeking the Commission approval for using these funds to purchase this ladder/aerial truck instead of a new engine/pumper truck. **This would be a lease-purchase with a 10-year term, with annual payments of \$183,356.** While all of the municipalities have a ladder truck as well, most structural fire incidents in which ladder/aerial truck is needed require multiple to mitigate the situation. This ladder truck would also help with everyone’s ISO rating. These apparatuses are multifunctional and can be used for rescue operations as well as providing a safety barrier on accident scenes to provide protection to both rescuers and patients/victims. Mr. Adams informed the Commission that he would like to purchase the ladder/aerial truck new rather than used, often when it comes to used ladder trucks one is inheriting someone else’s problems. Commissioner Palmer echoed Mr. Adams concerns, citing as an example an accident that occurred in Hall County with a used ladder truck that caused disabling injuries to three firefighters that ended their career. Commissioner Harkness asked if the County’s old ladder truck would be sold, and if the County would disclose any issues that it has to the buyer? Mr. Adams stated that the testing information would be provided to those interested in purchasing the ladder truck. Commissioner Harkness asked if the new ladder truck would have a warranty? Mr. Adams informed him that it would come with a three-year warranty. Commissioner Harkness asked Mr. Adams to look into the possibility of purchasing an extended warranty, which Mr. Adams stated that he would do.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Meador to approve resolution #2024-10-005 authorizing the Chairman to sign documents entering into a lease purchase agreement with Leasing 2, Inc to finance the purchase of one (1) 2024 E-One Typhoon Class HP75 Ladder Truck in an amount not to exceed \$1,324,730 from Fire Line Equipment, LLC. Motion carried unanimously (5-0) to approve.

- h. Consider/Approve Donation of Firefighting Turnout Gear to NC State Firefighters Association

Emergency Services Director Jeff Adams addressed the Commission. He is requesting Commission approval to donate forty-one (41) sets of firefighting turnout gear to the North Carolina State Firefighter’s Association. Turnout gear has an industry standard lifespan of 10 years from the manufacturers date. This turnout gear is expired and has been replaced over the years with new (compliant) gear. There are several fire stations in



North Carolina that have lost much of their equipment and gear because of the flooding from storms generated by Hurricane Helene. Even though this gear is expired, for these fire departments that are in need, it is much safer than the alternative of having no gear at all. The North Carolina State Firefighters' Association has been made aware that the gear is beyond the recognized service date and would still appreciate the donation given the current situation.

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the donation of the firefighting turnout gear to North Carolina State Firefighters' Association.

- i. Consider/Approve Resolution 2024-10-006 for the Sale and Transfer of Grandview Street (Cornelia) Tower Infrastructure to Cleiman Communications, LLC and Authorizing the Chairman to Sign All Necessary Documents

Tom Priddy addressed the Commission. Habersham County leases the site that the old Grandview Circle radio tower sits on from Southern Company. Once the new radio system is operations, the old Grandview Circle tower site location will no longer be needed by Habersham County. Local radio station WCHM has a lease with Habersham County to co-locate on our tower infrastructure for their FM broadcast site. The owners of the radio station, Cleiman Communications, have stated their interest in purchasing the tower infrastructure. This infrastructure is estimated to have a fair market value of \$14,200 in its current condition. If the site has no tenant, the tower will have to be removed from Southern Company's property. Deconstructing the tower infrastructure has been quoted to cost the county approximately \$21,000. Cleiman Communications purchase of the tower infrastructure is dependent on their receiving a lease agreement with Southern Company for the property it sits on.

**Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the sale/transfer of the Grandview Circle tower infrastructure to Cleiman Communications.**

- j. Consider/Approve Acceptance of the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant Award

Public Works Director Jerry Baggett addressed the Commission. This agenda item is seeking approval from the Commission to accept the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant award. The BRIC grant is a federal grant program administered by the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency. The grant is intended to provide funding for the design and sizing of drainage structures in locations that are consistently flooded during low intensity rainfall events. The amount of the BRIC grant is \$100,299.50 with FEMA's sharing being \$75,224.62 and Habersham County providing a 25% local match of \$25,074.88. Mr. Baggett informed the Commission that GEMA is going to pay FEMA an additional \$5,000 to cover administrative fees. Grant Funds will be used to perform project scoping activities at the following project sites:

- 1) East Glade Creek Road at Glad Creek Tributary, FEMA Zone A
- 2) Wilbanks Road over Little Mud Creek, FEMA Zone AE
- 3) Wilson Road at Camp Creek, FEMA Zone X

These funds will allow them to obtain consulting design services to perform hydraulic analysis to determine the correct drainage structure size to accommodate runoff from storm events. This will allow Habersham County to budget and schedule funding for construction at these locations as well as become eligible for additional funding opportunities for the construction phase of the projects, ultimately removing or reducing a high flood hazard location in Habersham County's transportation network. In addition to accepting the award of the BRIC Grant, he is seeking approval of a proposal from Rochester to provide the consulting design services.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve acceptance of the BRIC Grant Award Agreement and authorize the Chairman to sign all related documents.

k. Consider/Approve Change Request for Animal Shelter Value Engineered Design

Jerry Baggett addressed the Commission. This agenda item had been discussed during the work session and direction had been given by the Commission to ask Croft and Associates to include back into the design the pad ready area necessary for the ability to expand the shelter in the future. Commissioner Meador stated that he had meant to request that the agenda be amended to remove this item from new business, but had forgotten to do so.

Commissioner Palmer stated that he would like a work session to be scheduled for the Commission prior to the regularly scheduled November Commission meeting so the Commission can try to come to an agreement on the value engineered design rather than keep making changes.

Motion by Commissioner Meador, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously (5-0) to table this item till the November Board of Commissioners meeting.

l. Consider/Approve Resolution #2024-10-001 Updating Grants Application and Administration Policy

Chief Financial Officer Tim Sims addressed the Commission. This item is to seek approval of revisions to the Habersham County Grant Administration Policy and Procedures Handbook, which has not been updated since 2018. The Finance Department had a new grant coordinator position approved in 2023 and would like the policy to be revised to reflect the current practices and updated federal and state requirements.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Palmer, to approve the Grant Administration Policy and Procedures Handbook as presented and authorize the Chair to sign the resolution 2024-10-001 pertaining to those policies. Motion carries 4-1 to approve with Commissioner Tench dissenting.

m. Consider/Approve Resolution #2024-10-002 Updating Purchasing Rules and Regulations Manual

Chief Financial Officer Tim Sims addressed the Commission. This agenda item is to seek approval for revisions to the Habersham County Procurement and Purchasing Rules and Regulations Manual. This policy has not been updated since 2017. The Finance Department is proposing revisions of this policy to reflect current practices as well as to reflect current economic changes. In regard to the economic changes, the increased costs of goods over the past 8 years has made some of the thresholds unfeasible. Previously, a purchase order was required for any purchase of \$1,000 and above. The Finance Department would like to increase the threshold at which a purchase order is necessary to \$2,500. Previous policy also only allowed the CFO to approve purchases up to \$7,500. He is requesting that the threshold for purchase approval by the CFO to be increased to \$15,000. He is also requesting that the County Manager's threshold of approval be increased to \$25,000 before a sealed bid is required.

Commissioner Meador reviewed the quote/bid requirements for procurement and inquired about the three "verbal quotes" needed for purchases between \$2,500 to \$7,500. Commissioner Meador felt that these quotes really need to be in writing to show that they were received. Mr. Sims informed him that this wording was really meant to be "informal quotes" such as email responses. Commissioner Meador requested that the change be made to reflect "informal written quotes".

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Palmer to approve the Procurement and Purchasing Rules and Regulations Manual, pending the requested change by Commissioner Mealor to request three “informal written quotes” for purchases between \$2,500 and \$75,000, and authorize the Chairman to sign resolution 2024-10-002 pertaining to those policies. Motion carried 4-1 with Commissioner Tench dissenting.

n. Consider/Approve Resolution #2024-10-003 Procurement Card Policies and Procedures Manual

Chief Financial Officer Tim Sims addressed the Commission. Habersham County does not currently have a procurement card policy that is separate from the purchasing policy and procedures. The Finance Department would like to propose an independent Procurement Card Policy to reflect current practices and reflect a change in the new procurement card system from Truist to Bank of America. Bank of America is the preferred vendor for Procurement Card systems from the State of Georgia and will allow Habersham County to acquire annual rebates, which is not the case with Truist Bank. This policy will reflect the same thresholds as the purchasing policy that was approved in the previous agenda item.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Palmer, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the proposed Procurement Card Policies and Procedures Manual and authorize the Chair to sign resolutions 2024-10-003 pertaining to those policies.

o. Consider/Approve Resolution #2024-10-004 P-Card User Agreement for Elected Officials Per O.C.G.A. § 36-80-24

Chief Financial Officer Tim Sims addressed the Commission. Effective January 1, 2016, O.C.G.A. 36-80-24 prohibits county elected officials from using procurement cards and government credit cards unless the county governing authority authorizes the issuance of such cards by public vote and has promulgated specific policies regarding the use of such cards. Habersham County adopted a procurement policy in December 2015 which met the requirement of HB 192, however because the Finance Department is requesting revisions to the purchasing policy and separation of the purchasing policy from the procurement card and credit card policy, it is appropriate that the establishing a separate procurement card and credit card policy for Habersham County Elected Officials as well.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Procurement Card and Credit Card Policy for Habersham County Elected Officials and authorize the Chairman to sign resolution 2024-10-004 pertaining to those policies.

p. Consider/Approve Proposal for Garland/DBS, Inc. to Manage the Aquatic Center and AVITA Building Roofing Projects- moved from consent agenda item “I” during the adoption of the agenda.

This agenda item was moved from the consent agenda to new business during the adoption of the agenda. Chief Financial Officer Tim Sims addressed the Commission. Garland is a state contract manager that helps with roofing and small construction projects. They had difficulty in getting anyone to respond to the RFP for the Aquatic Center and AVITA building roofing projects. Mr. Sims assured the Commission that they had reached out to local vendors, but none of them submitted proposals. They reached out to other counties who recommended Garland to manage the roofing projects. Garland came and assessed both roofs with infrared cameras. The AVITA roof was graded as being in near failure. The sloped areas of the Aquatic Center Roof are in a failure state, with the remaining roof portions being at end-of-life and near failure. The Aquatic Center Roof will need to be replaced. There are not enough funds to repair the entirety of the AVITA building roof, so this year they will only be replacing the gutter and soffits on this building and repairing the

damages to the carport. The remaining repairs needed will need to be put into the budget for next year. The money for both of these projects was approved in the CIP. Commissioner Harkness asked if there was any possibility that claims could be made for damage to the roofs from storms? Mr. Sims informed him that he had looked into this, but there is no damage that could be attributed to hail.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve proposal #25-GA-240821 for roofing materials and services with Garland to manage the roofing projects at the Aquatic Center and AVITA building.

### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

Commissioner Palmer voiced his thankfulness that Habersham County received less storm damage that expected from Hurricane Helene. He wanted to thank all the employees who worked long hours clearing roads and ensuring the safety of citizens. Commissioner Palmer had driven donated supplies down to South Georgia yesterday and there are still trees down everywhere. He feels that Habersham County dodged a bullet.

Commissioner Harkness echoed Commissioner Palmers sentiments, stating that he feels that Habersham County has the best employees ever. He wanted everyone to know that he feels that he feels that he support the animal shelter and its employees, however as Commissioners they need to also consider the need for a new jail, new landfill and water and sewer. Growth is coming whether they like it or not, and it is up to the Commission to figure out how to manage it so that it is smart growth.

Commissioner Tench had no additional comments.

Commissioner Akins wished to thank Commissioner Tench for being the voting delegate and representing the Habersham County Commissioners at the recent ACCG Legislative Leadership Conference.

Commission Mealor had no additional comments.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Personnel, pursuant to O.C.G.A § 50-14-3(b)(2); and Property Disposal, pursuant to O.C.G.A. 50-14-3§ (b)(1)

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness to enter executive session for the purpose of Personnel, pursuant to O.C.G.A § 50-14-3(b)(2); and Property Disposal, pursuant to O.C.G.A. 50-14-3§ (b)(1).

### **ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Commissioner Palmer- aye  
Commissioner Harkness- aye  
Commissioner Akins- aye  
Commissioner Mealor- aye  
Commissioner Tench-aye

Motion carries unanimously (5-0) to enter executive session at 8:35 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness seconded by Commissioner Mealor, and voted unanimously (5-0) to leave executive session at 9:41 p.m.

County Attorney Donnie Hunt reported that all matters discussed in executive session were limited to those matters allowed by the laws of the State of Georgia and asked for a motion authorizing the Chairman to make such a representation under oath on the affidavit.

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Mealor, and voted unanimously (5-0) to adopt the representation authorizing such affidavit as per the Attorney's recommendations

**ADJOURN**

Motion by Commissioner Mealor seconded, by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the meeting at 9:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Commission Chairman Ty Akins

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
County Clerk Brandalin Carnes

DRAFT