

Habersham County Development Authority
Thursday, April 11, 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, April 11, 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: Jim Butterworth, Gail Thaxton, Bryan Ferguson, Allen Whitener, Jeff Bruns, Sidney Roland

Members Not Present: None

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 Charlie Fiveash and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jim Butterworth.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was amended to add item g- Marketing & Brokerage Services Update. A MOTION was made by Bryan Ferguson, seconded by Allen Whitener, and voted unanimously to approve the agenda as amended.

Approval of Minutes

A MOTION was made by Gail Thaxton, SECONDED by Sidney Roland, and voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2024, Regular Meeting.

Monthly Activity Report

The next financial update will be at the June 13, 2024 regular meeting. This will be a quarterly update.

Old Business

- a) Airport Business Park Update – Charlie Fiveash gave the update. He has received a few calls regarding the Higgins building. Don Higgins informed Charlie that ownership of the building has now been transferred to his son D Higgins. Charlie asked the authority for recommendations of handling the situation and finding out from D Higgins what his intentions are for the building. The building is complete. Bryan Ferguson said this would be a good time to do a “reset” on this property and establish a good relationship with the new owner. Charlie said the building was built under the pretense that building in the Development Authority's Park, on Development Authority's land, and while the owner can

lease it to whoever they want to, the Development Authority's purposes for having the business park is for job creation, community investment, and adding to the county's commercial tax base. Jeff Bruns asked if there is anything in the park covenants stating that a building in the park must be marketed and occupied? The covenants don't currently state that, and Janney and Wade Rhodes suggested putting language to that effect in the covenants. Alicia added that if the Development Authority should get a big company interested in one of our properties, an IDB bond with a lease-back should be issued to hold their feet to the fire regarding their intentions and community investment in the property. Bryan suggested approaching D Higgins with how can we help you? Jim suggested either forming a small group to approach D Higgins or inviting him to our next meeting. It was discussed and agreed that an informal small meeting as a first step would be best, and that inviting D Higgins to a Development Authority meeting would be a good second step. Charlie also informed the authority that the landscaping company will soon be ramping up springtime clean-up efforts like trimming, pine straw replacement, etc.

- 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. Last month the DA discussed sending out a letter with past due notices, with a condition that if the bills are not paid by June 30th, the services will be cut off. Jim asked what the negative impacts of cutting off the services are? Charlie said that having poor landscaping will not help fill our empty lots and buildings. Also to consider, will we need to repay the owners who have paid for the services? Wade Rhodes asked Patti to clarify who has paid and who hasn't. Wade will help try to collect the past due money and encourage the owners to continue to pay for the services. Wade will remind them that forming an association to pay common area expenses is their responsibility. He feels like once each owner begins paying, they will continue to pay with no problem.
- c) Courthouse Redevelopment Update – To be discussed in Executive Session.
- d) Phase II Business Park Update – There is a new prospect to be discussed during Executive Session.
- e) Bond Update – Alicia Vaughn gave the update. She is working with county attorney Donnie Hunt to write an agreement for the HCDA to pay county CFO \$1,500 per year, per bond, for bond management fees. Currently the HCDA only has one bond to manage. She is working with Donnie Hunt to create the lease agreement, which should be ready to review at the May meeting.
- f) LOST Update – Jim Butterworth gave the update. On HB581, the legislation that passed is very complicated, and it did not have the language to support what the county needs to do regarding collecting LOST. The language allows for a FLOST (flex-penny). Alicia plans to meet with the chairman of the ways and means committee because on paper, it all sounds good, but trying to implement the changes would present many challenges. HB581 also includes the creation of a floating state homestead exemption. The bill also restricts the reassessment of residential properties. Each taxing authority (county, cities, school system) will have to decide whether to opt out of the bill. There will be a statewide referendum on the November election that Alicia feels most citizens will vote yes for because it offers tax relief for citizens with homesteaded property. Between November and March, each taxing authority must decide whether to opt out of the bill. The homestead exemptions Habersham County currently offers are more advantageous to our citizens than HB581. Alicia will discuss this bill more in depth at the next HC3 meeting scheduled for June 26th. Jim asked

- Alicia how HB581 affects or applies to the HCDA? Alicia explained that if the county did receive the flex penny, some of that money could be earmarked for economic development.
- g) Marketing & Brokerage Services Update – Charlie said the discussion is: should we continue doing what we have been doing for several years, which is to use a real estate broker to market DA property? Rope Roberts is encouraging Charlie to handle the marketing and brokerage services for the HCDA since Charlie is a licensed broker. Charlie said he doesn't have a strong opinion either way. Charlie said there were several brokerage bids received from the recent RFQ. Charlie is looking for guidance from the DA. Gail Thaxton asked when the current contract with Norton expires. Gail then referred to notes she took from the retreat in February saying there was a general consensus from the board to allow Charlie to market the DA's properties for now, then re-address the topic when we have more property available. Charlie said Wade had sold the lots in Phase I without having to work with an outside broker, so fees were saved, and Wade also discounted his fees for some of those lots. Wade waived his fees completely for the sale of Pad 10. Jim Butterworth asked if Wade Rhodes wanted to add anything to the discussion. Wade told Charlie that since Charlie is still a licensed broker, Charlie is able to list properties on the LoopNet and Georgia MLS. Wade said he agrees with Gail that until we get more property, Charlie can handle the task. Patti McLarty reminded the board that there are still open bids from the RFQ that need to be answered if the DA decides to not use an outside broker. Charlie will get with Tim about how to handle those bids. Alicia said we could reach out to the bidders and ask them to keep them open for a couple more months, since it's unlikely their bid would change in that period of time. A MOTION was made by Gail Thaxton, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted unanimously to authorize Charlie Fivcash to handle the DA's brokerage services upon the termination of Wade Rhodes/Norton's contract, to be reviewed every six months.

New Business

None

Other Reports

None

Public Comment

None

MOTION by Sidney Roland, seconded by Allen Whitener, and voted unanimously to enter Executive Session at 4:15 p.m.

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

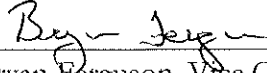
MOTION by Jeff Bruns, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted unanimously to exit executive session at 5:03 p.m.

Next Meeting

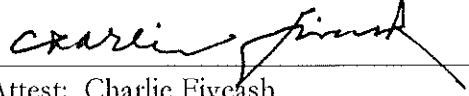
The next regular meeting is Thursday, May 9, 2024, at 3:30 p.m.

Adjourn

A MOTION was made by Jeff Bruns, seconded by Gail Thaxton, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:04 p.m.



Bryan Ferguson, Vice Chair



Attest: Charlie Fiveash