

**Habersham County Development Authority
Thursday, September 12, 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, September 12, 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, Allen Whitener, Jeff Bruns, Sidney Roland, Mike Franklin

Members Not Present: Gail Thaxton, Bryan Ferguson

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 Rope Roberts and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jim Butterworth.

Approval of Agenda

A MOTION was made by Sidney Roland, seconded by Jeff Bruns, and voted 5-0 to AMEND the agenda to remove Executive Session and to approve the agenda as amended.

Approval of Minutes

A MOTION was made by Jeff Bruns, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 5-0 to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2024, Regular Meeting.

Quarterly Financial Report

Habersham County Manager Tim Sims presented the Quarterly Activity and Financial report dated August 31, 2024. August YTD represents 16.67% of the Fiscal Year. Current revenues are 5% and expenditures are 6%. Total account balances equal \$1,181,732. The Wells Fargo investment account has increased. MOTION by Jeff Bruns, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 5-0 to approve the quarterly financial report dated August 31, 2024.

Old Business

- a) Airport Business Park/Phase II Business Park Update – Charlie Fiveash gave the update. “Project Hill” is the 15-acre parcel in Phase II that is under contract. The buyer’s initial due diligence period has expired, and they are requesting an

extension of thirty days, which will be discussed under New Business. Charlie said there is another company/prospect that is currently housed within the Habersham Metal building. However, they are growing and will soon need a place of their own. They would need about a 50,000 square foot building. The Higgins building continues to sit empty, but Charlie has had inquiries about the building through another broker. Mr. Higgins spent time on the phone with the broker so Charlie is somewhat optimistic that things will move forward with that property. Wilson Hutchinson is hoping for a build-to-suit on one of their parcels and they are working diligently toward finding a suitable client.

- b) Business Park Streetlight & Landscaping Billing Update – Patti McLarty gave the update. We have billed through 2nd quarter of 2024, and all the pad owners under the business park covenants have begun to pay. Patti will bill 3rd quarter expenses in October. Janney Sanders has prepared a letter to send to the pad owners regarding forming an owners' association which states that the Development Authority will not be responsible for managing the park's common areas or paying the bills for streetlights and landscaping effective January 1, 2025. We have billed \$8,800 and received payments of \$6,300, so we are doing well. The balance remaining is mostly the parcel owners not under our covenants, who do not seem to want to participate. Patti suggested we remove those companies from the calculated expenses and stop invoicing them, so we will be able to recoup a larger percentage of our money, as she doesn't feel like these companies will ever agree to pay. Patti reached out to HEMC last month and was told that there is still a significant balance remaining for the installation of the streetlights. In good faith, HEMC provided a 60/40 cost share estimate for the material costs and labor of the lighting project. The \$26,910 that the Development Authority paid was 40%. The remaining 60% balance, plus monthly energy costs, will be collected over time through the monthly bill, assuming the lights will remain on for many years. Patti will put Janney's letter on Development Authority letterhead, include a copy of the covenants, and send the letters out within the next couple of weeks.
- c) Courthouse Redevelopment Update – See New Business item a.

New Business

- a) Consider/Approve Parkside Partners Due Diligence Extension – Parkside Partners has submitted an amended MOU, asking for another 90-day due diligence extension. They are also asking to get \$25,000 of their earnest money refunded. All three entities (Development Authority, Habersham County, and City of Clarkesville) must agree to accept the amended MOU. Charlie explained that they firmly believe that Parkside is the right player to redevelop and repurpose our courthouse, and they have about \$120k invested in legal, engineering, and architect expenses in the project so far. Parkside had two different contractors to price the work out, and they have found the costs to be more than they'd expected. Parkside now wants to revisit the scope of the design to see where they

can cut some costs and get more competitive bids. Therefore, Charlie recommends we give them the time they have requested. The City of Clarkesville has discussed the amended MOU and is in favor of giving Parkside the extension. The Board of Commissioners will discuss and vote on the matter on Monday September 16th. MOTION by Mike Franklin, seconded by Jeff Bruns, and voted 5-0 to approve Parkside Partners' 90-day due diligence extension, with \$10,000 more "hard" cash.

- b) Consider/Approve Phase II "Project Hill" Due Diligence Extension – The buyer is requesting a 30-day extension of their due diligence period. They had a delay during the initial period due to looking into some space Fieldale told them they had available. They need additional time to continue the engineering and design phase of the project. MOTION by Sidney Roland, seconded by Jeff Bruns, and voted 5-0 to approve the due diligence extension for Project Hill.
- c) Discuss/Approve Piedmont University Bond Extension – Jeff Bruns recused himself from the vote due to being a Piedmont University employee. Janney Sanders explained that there are two revenue bonds (2013 series and 2014 series) the Development Authority holds for Piedmont University. Piedmont is looking to extend the maturity dates 18 months for both bonds, in order to get a better interest rate. There are two resolutions we need to adopt, one for each bond. Janney stressed that there is no financial obligation on the part of the Development Authority or the county. We are just the conduit that Piedmont University used to facilitate the loans from South State Bank. Janney will hold a TEFRA hearing on September 25th, which is required by law, after which the BOC Chairman must also sign the extensions. Jim Butterworth asked is there anything unusual, or any reason to be concerned? Janney answered no. MOTION by Mike Franklin, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 4-0 to approve the Piedmont University Bond extension.

Other Reports

- a) Continue Strategic Partnership Habersham Discussion – Jim Butterworth referenced two handouts given to the Authority regarding economic development funding in other Georgia counties. Jim stated that since we had been discussing ways to fund economic development here in Habersham County, it would be helpful to see what other counties are doing. The results of the research show that every county does it differently. Banks County's ED is handled by the Chamber of Commerce and the county provides no allocation for ED. Hart County's Development Authority is funded through the General Fund in the amount of \$175k, with one full time employee. Camden County, which is about our size, will be funded in the amount of \$3 million through SPLOST. Our neighbor Stephens County receives \$450,000 from the county for ED, as well as \$50,000 from the City of Toccoa, and they have 3 full time employees. Habersham County and the Development Authority's contributions to Partnership Habersham next year will total only \$16,000. While we may have a "nest egg" of \$1.2 million, we have no other source of income except property sales. Jeff Bruns added that our \$1.2 million can easily be eaten up by grading costs. Jim

asked the group to ponder the information given to them today. Jim feels like we need to have a short-term and a long-term strategic plan to get more funding for Economic Development. We must educate ourselves in the process. Jim would like to have a recurring agenda item for this discussion to continue in the future. Patti McLarty recommended the Authority have a strategic planning retreat in the near future. Mike Franklin added that the “partnership” piece of Partnership Habersham has been primarily sponsored by the private sector (75%). That makes it clear that the local private sector companies agree that more economic development planning needs to be done. Bruce Palmer said that the county and each municipality can contribute up to 1 mil toward economic development. Jim Woodward, who attended the meeting by Teams, agreed that we should have a strategic planning retreat.

Public Comment

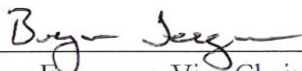
None

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is Thursday, October 10, 2024, at 3:30 p.m.

Adjourn

A MOTION was made by Jeff Bruns, seconded by Mike Franklin, and voted 5-0 to adjourn the meeting at 4:33 p.m.



Bryan Ferguson, Vice Chair



Attest: Charlie Fiveash