

Habersham County Development Authority
Thursday, January 9, 2025 @ 3:30 pm
Executive Conference Room
130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523

The Habersham County Development Authority held a regular meeting on Thursday, January 9, 2025, 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 (entered meeting at 4:09 just before Executive Session), Sidney Roland, Mike Franklin, Bryan Ferguson

Members Not Present: Gail Thaxton

Others Present: Charlie Fiveash, Tim Sims, Mike Beecham, Kiani Holden, Wade Rhodes, Patti McLarty, Attorney Matt Skilling, James Irvin

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:33 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

A MOTION was made by Bryan Ferguson, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 5-0 to approve the agenda as presented.

Election of Officers

Chairman – Bryan Ferguson nominated Jim Butterworth for Chairman. Mike Franklin seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. All members were in favor of naming Jim Butterworth as Chairman.

Vice-Chair – Mike Franklin nominated Bryan Ferguson for Vice-Chair. Sidney Roland seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. All members were in favor of naming Bryan Ferguson as Vice-Chair.

Approval of Minutes

A MOTION was made by Mike Franklin, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 5-0 to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2024 Regular Meeting.

Approval of Quarterly Financial Report

Tim Sims presented the financial report for the period ending December 31, 2024. Tim stated there were some expenditures for December that had not yet been posted as of 12/31/24. December YTD represents 50% of the Fiscal year. Therefore, expenses should be equal to or less than 50% of the FY2025 budget, while revenues should typically be at 50%. Revenues collected were 28% while expenditures were 17%. The bank account balances total \$1,180,927. Charlie asked what the yield is on that cash. Tim explained that the Wells Fargo account has not performed the way he had hoped, but that we have recouped a good bit of what we lost in the account last year. Mike Franklin asked if Tim had ever looked into doing any institutional investments or fiduciary investments where we don't lose any money. Mr. Franklin said they (his personal business) are making 10½% to 12% off fiduciary investments that are in institutional investments, which is a very unique class. Mike offered to reach out to his investor and get them in touch with Tim. Motion by Sidney Roland, seconded by Allen Whitener, and voted 5-0 to approve the financials as presented.

Old Business

1. Airport Business Park/Phase II Business Park Update – Charlie Fiveash gave the update. Activity on existing buildings, particularly the Higgins building, is quite slow. Mr. Higgins has indicated that he has no prospects. There has also been no activity on pads 5 or 7 which were planned to have spec buildings. As we are receiving interest in Phase II sites, we need to discuss infrastructure plans for roads and utilities.
2. Administrative Update – Patti McLarty gave the update. 4th quarter 2024 billing will be done in January. After that, Patti stated that she needs direction on whether to continue billing the streetlights quarterly. She said that most of the parties involved are paying their bills, and that she is willing and happy to continue billing in order to recoup our expenses for the streetlights. Jim said he is concerned about the grass getting too high and there not being streetlights when we still have buildings to sell. Patti reminded the board that there is still a balance owed to HEMC for the installation of the poles and streetlights. Patti will get with HEMC to determine what that balance is. Charlie reminded everyone that this is the only business park we have in Habersham County, and we want to take pride in ownership of it. We need to make sure the business park is maintained at a certain level. He explained that in larger business parks, you would normally see an association which collects dues for maintaining the park, or there is a management company paid to do the upkeep. At what level do we want to maintain this park? Some of our adversaries have called the business park an “ugly metal building park”, but we still want to maintain it in a professional manner. Patti reminded Charlie that he mentioned at the last meeting bringing in the Airport, Baldwin's new public works building, and Rev Solutions, and asked who would reach out to those entities to discuss sharing the costs.
3. Courthouse Update – Jim Butterworth shared the update. The City of Clarkesville has reached out to the Board of Commissioners with an offer to purchase the courthouse property for \$250,000. Jim has shown the commissioners that the

Development Authority has a standing offer from Parkside to purchase the property after demolition for \$1.1 million. The cost to demo the courthouse is just under \$200,000. Therefore, the county's profit would be \$900,000, a difference of \$650,00 versus selling the property to Clarkesville. Jim encouraged the members to reach out to the county commissioners to share their opinions on the courthouse.

4. Strategic Economic Development Planning Update – Charlie addressed the topic. Partnership Habersham has initiated discussions about a strategic plan for our community. We are at a crossroads in terms of what strategic growth or smart growth looks like. We've got a strong contingency that addresses smart growth, and we also have a contingency that says no growth. We must address that issue. The Development Authority has applied for a grant through ARC (Appalachian Regional Commission) to supplement the cost of the strategic plan. We have also received a donation from one of our utility partners to assist with the cost. Using these funds, and potentially some funding from the grant, Partnership Habersham, or even the county, could help us implement a professionally rolled out strategic plan. The question is when to do that? We need to determine that. Charlie added that it may not be in the next few months. Patti McLarty informed the group that the deadline for the ARC grant pre-application is March 11, 2025, and we need to schedule a meeting with Patrick Larson from GMRC to assist with the pre-application.
5. Partnership Habersham Update – Charlie stated that all is well with the Partnership, but he didn't have any specific updates that hadn't been covered. Charlie expressed gratitude for the Development Authority's continued financial support of Partnership Habersham. They are publicly and privately funded, and their biggest supporter ended their support, one municipality halved their contribution, and another ended their support as well. Partnership Habersham brings resources to the table including the marketing of Airport Business Park Phases I and II, and other issues that become before the Authority, as well "loaning" Charlie to serve as Economic Development director.

New Business

None

Other Reports

Chairman Butterworth shared a spreadsheet that was created to track timelines/deadlines for projects and other Development Authority business. The spreadsheet is color coded to indicate action in 30 days, 60 days, or 90+ days.

Public Comment

None

Jeff Bruns entered the meeting at 4:09.

Wade Rhodes and James Irvin left the meeting at 4:09.

Motion by Mike Franklin, seconded by Bryan Ferguson, and voted 6-0 to enter executive session at 4:10 p.m.

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

Motion by Sidney Roland, seconded by Bryan Ferguson, and voted 6-0 to exit executive session at 4:31 p.m.

Motion by Mike Franklin, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 6-0 to amend the contract for 0 Pyratich Drive in the special stipulations section with the following conditions:

- Purchase price of \$40,000 per acre for 5 acres
- The buyer is responsible for building a road to the western property line to county specifications
- The buyer is responsible for installing a 6" water line, to the western property line, to county specifications
- The buyer is responsible for all engineering costs
- The buyer is required to have a performance bond
- The buyer is to meet the business park's updated covenants and restrictions
- Property sold as-is for a total of \$200,000
- Due Diligence period of 60 days
- This offer is available until Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

Motion by Mike Franklin, seconded by Sidney Roland, and voted 6-0 to approve the 10-day due diligence period for Project Hill until January 16, 2025.

Motion by Mike Franklin, seconded by Jeff Bruns, and voted 6-0 to extend the due diligence period for Project Hill for an additional 60 days from January 17, 2025 with the following conditions:

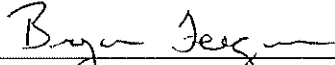
- The \$10,000 earnest money the Development Authority currently holds will become non-refundable.
- The due diligence period will be extended for 60 days from January 17, 2025. The buyer is to pay an additional \$15,000 earnest money, which is refundable within the 60-day extension period.
- If an additional due diligence period is requested, the additional \$15,000 will become non-refundable.
- The buyer is to meet the business park's updated covenants and restrictions.
- The Development Authority will not annex the property into the City of Baldwin prior to closing.

Next Meeting


The next regular meeting is Thursday, February 13, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

Adjourn

A MOTION was made by Jeff Bruns, seconded by Mike Franklin, and voted 6-0 to adjourn the meeting at 5:37 p.m.



Bryan Ferguson, Vice Chair



Attest: Charlie Fiveash