

**HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
6:15 P.M., MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 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, December 16, 2024 at 6:15 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 Mealar, Commissioner Jimmy Tench, County Manager Alicia Vaughn, County Attorney Donnie Hunt, County Clerk Brandalin Carnes, staff, members of the media and the public.

Commissioner Akins called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Commissioner Harkness lead the invocation.

Commissioner Tench lead the pledge of allegiance.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

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

1. Remove new business item a. "Consider/Approve Award of RFP 2024-10 for the Abatement, Building Demolition, Haulage of Waste to Proper Landfill(s) and Site Stabilization of the Old Habersham County Courthouse Building" from the agenda.

**PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- a. Employee Spotlight: Kinsley Fowler (Senior Center)
- b. County Offices Closed for Christmas Holiday on December 24<sup>th</sup> and December 25<sup>th</sup>. Landfill Open From 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on December 24<sup>th</sup> and Closed on December 25<sup>th</sup>.
- c. County Offices and Landfill Closed on January 1<sup>st</sup> for New Year's Day.
- d. Remembrance of Former District Attorney Michael "Mike" H. Crawford and Condolences to His Family.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- a. Map Amendment Application Z-24-03: Application from MPE Holdings, LLC for Map Amendment to Change Land Use District of Three Parcels (Parcels 055 013 and 055 043) Totaling 13.62 Acres and Located at the Intersection of Alto Mude Creek Road and Highway 365 from LI, Low Intensity District to HI, High Intensity District for Development as Commercial Property

Planning Director Mike Beecham addressed the Commission. The proposed map amendment totals 13.62 acres and consists of three parcels. Two of the parcels are 055 013 and 055 043 while the third parcel is the old right-of-way between the two parcels that was recently abandoned by Habersham County. The property is currently zoned LI, Low Intensity District but borders the four-lane Highway 365. The future character area

for the property is 365 Corrido which recommends commercial and industrial uses. All of the county's long range plans recommend this property develop commercially or industrially. All of the public input efforts have consistently stated this corridor should be the growth area for the county. The surrounding properties are largely residential and/or vacant with scattered commercial use, however this area is expected to experience commercial and industrial growth in the near term. The property will have to meet the Corridor Overlay Requirements and all buffering requirements when abutting residential properties. The Planning Commission had a hearing on this application at their December 3, 2024 meeting. There was one individual who voiced concerns to the Planning Commission regarding the impact on her historic property, which she states is the oldest home in Habersham County. They have been in the process of remodeling this home, which is located at 943 Ballew Road, immediately south of the proposed rezoning. The Planning Commission informed this citizen that any development would have to meet the County's buffer and setback requirements in addition to the Corridor Overlay requirements. The Planning Commission is recommending approval as they feel that the designation of the property as HI, High Intensity for commercial and industrial use is appropriate given it's location and the county's long range plans.

County Attorney Hunt invited the applicant to an opportunity to address the Commission regarding their requested map amendment. Applicant Victor Anderson informed the Commission that he and his brother purchased the property with the intent to commercially develop it, however this map amendment is required before they can do so. Mr. Anderson informed the Commissioners that he himself was a Habersham County Commissioner back when the Corridor Overlay Plan was developed, and that his proposed use of the property is within the plans that were laid out 13 years ago. While he understands the neighboring property owner has concerns regarding the effect on their historic property, he does not intend to do any development along the portion of the property that borders her residence.

County Attorney Hunt invited anyone else who wished to speak in favor of the map amendment application Z-24-03 an opportunity to do so. There was no one else present who wished to speak in favor of the application.

County Attorney Hunt invited anyone wishing to speak in opposition to map amendment application Z-24-03 an opportunity to do so. There was no one else present who wished to speak against the application.

Motion by Commissioner Meador, seconded by Commissioner Harkness, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve Map Amendment Z-24-03 as recommended by the Planning Commission.

- b. Conditional Use Application CU-24-09: Application from Marjorie Stephens for Conditional Use of 1.47 Acres of Property Located at 604 Barron Drive (Parcels 102 209, 102 175 & 102 177) in the Li, Low Intensity District for the Purpose of a Dog Training Facility.

Planning Director Mike Beecham addressed the Commission. Applicant Marjorie Stephens is requesting a conditional use to allow her to open a dog training facility at her residence on 604 Barron Drive. The home sits on a .83-acre parcel and there are two additional parcels across Barron Drive totaling .67 acres which is proposed to be used. The applicant currently has a dog training facility in Cleveland, but has had to move to Barron Drive to care for her elderly parent who owns the property. She plans to have a training facility at the house and the facility across the road will be a dog sports training facility. She anticipates having only one to two animals along with their owners at the facility at a time. Most of the training will occur behind the current house with an existing chain link fence. She plans to erect a new fence around the dog sports training area which would be located at the corner of Stewart Lane and Barron Drive. There may be special events with multiple dogs, but only periodically. Based on her current business in Cleveland, she anticipates only 3 to 4 daily sessions. The surrounding area is largely residential with a few scattered vacant parcels. Planning Office staff had concerns based on the type of use within an established neighborhood, however they felt the impact would be minimal given the limited nature of the training numbers. The Planning Commission had a hearing

on this application at their December 3, 2024 meeting. Three citizens were present at that meeting to speak in opposition to the request, stating their primary concerns as being noise from barking, traffic safety given the curvy nature of Barron Drive, decrease in their property values, and sight distance due to the proposed fencing at the intersection of Stewart Lane and Barron Drive. There were also several comments requesting speed bumps on Barron Drive. The Planning Commission recommended approval with the following conditions:

- 1) All proposed fencing for the agility area must be a privacy fence at least 6 feet tall.
- 2) No external lighting.
- 3) No breeding or boarding of dogs on the premises.
- 4) Hours of operation are to be 9am-5pm (7 days a week)
- 5) Habersham County Road Department must check the sight distance on proposed fence location for the agility area before installation.

County Attorney Hunt invited the applicant to an opportunity to address the Commission regarding their requested conditional use. Ms. Marjorie Stephens informed the Commission that she doesn't intend to build a facility, she just wants the ability to use her equipment on the existing property. She informed the Commission that she felt that there may be a misconception that she intends to build a dog park, as she just so happens to be an advocate for a dog park complex in Clarkesville. She wants everyone to know that is not her intent for this property, and that the type of business she operates is dog sports training. The type of training that this involves includes such things as rat hunting, shed hunting, searching and rescue/recovery, etc. Commissioner Palmer inquired as to whether or not Ms. Stephens would be boarding animals on her property? Ms. Stephens informed him that no animals would be boarded on the property, and that most people will not realize that there are any business activities going on at all on the property as the area will not be visible. Ms. Stephens is requesting that if approved, the Commission grant her flexibility with the hours of operation as the type of training that she does involves training the owners as well and she needs to be available when the dogs owners are not working. She would need to be able to conduct business in the evening and on weekends. Commissioner Akins asked Ms. Stephens about the events that she stated she would potentially have more than one or two dogs at? Ms. Stephens stated this would be like a birthday party for the dogs and would be at most four or five dogs.

County Attorney Hunt invited anyone else who wished to speak in favor of conditional use application CU-24-09 an opportunity to do so.

Ms. Melissa Harper spoke in favor of CU-24-09, stating that she is a patron of Ms. Stephens' current business and that she appreciates the individualized training that she and her dog receive. She is requesting the Commission approve application CU-24-09 with the flexible business hours that Ms. Stephen's is requesting.

Ms. Lisa Fry spoke in favor of CU-24-09, stating that she has been a patron of Ms. Stephen's for over two years now, and that prior she was having to drive to Lawrenceville for her dogs training. She too enjoys the individual attention that Ms. Stephens is able to offer from her smaller class sizes as well as the fact that the training is based on positive reinforcement, which builds trust between the owner and the dog. She is requesting the Commission approve application CU-24-09 with the flexible business hours that Ms. Stephens is requesting so she can continue to provide what Ms. Fry feels is an important service.

County Attorney Hunt invited anyone wishing to speak in opposition to conditional use application CU-24-09 an opportunity to do so. here was no one else present who wished to speak against the application.

Commissioner Palmer asked Ms. Stephens the accommodations that she would need in regard to her business hours? Ms. Stephens informed him that she only does training during the daylight hours, so there isn't really an issue with the hours being proposed during the winter when the days are shorter, however during the summer time the days are longer and the equipment gets hot during the middle of the day, she would like to

be able to have classes in the morning and in the evening during the daylight hours. She doesn't ever have any classes that go past 7 pm. Discussion was had amongst the Commission regarding the hours of operation and how to word the motion

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Mealor, to approve conditional use application CU-24-09 with the following conditions:

- 1) All proposed fencing for the agility area must be a privacy fence at least 6 feet tall.
- 2) No external lighting.
- 3) No breeding or boarding of dogs on the premises.
- 4) Allowed hours of operation will be from 7 am - 7 pm on weekdays and 9 am - 5 pm on weekends.
- 5) Habersham County Road Department must check the sight distance on proposed fence location for the agility area before installation.

Motion carries (3-2) to approve with Commissioner Akins and Commissioner Harkness dissenting.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

- a. Mr. Ken Haines wished to address the Commission regarding two separate issues. The first issue is that he feels that there should be a posted minimum speed limit on Highway 197 as he consistently gets stuck behind people going to Cornelia who are driving way under the speed limit with no ability to pass them. Secondly, he would like the Commission to meet with the Board of Education to discuss increasing the income limit of \$12,000 for senior school tax exemption to account for inflation that has occurred since it was set in the 1980's. He has addressed the Board of Commissioners several times about this in public comment, and has been told by the County Manager that he needed to discuss this with the Board of Education. Mr. Haines has met with the Board of Education and says that they have stated they are willing to meet with the Board of Commissioners to discuss the issue. He is asking the Board of Commissioners to setup this meeting to address the issue.
- b. Mr. Josh Peck expressed his support for the demolition of the Old Courthouse building. While he is a native New Yorker, his wife's family has lived in Habersham County for many generations. When they moved to Habersham County in 2020, he was charmed by the city of Clarkesville and its shops, but felt that the old courthouse yellow and stained blight on the community. He doesn't understand why the county continues to allow this to steal potential tax revenue that could be received from the property being retail space or homes. He understands that demolition is costly and cumbersome, but he wants the Commission to consider what allowing it to stand is costing the County. He feels that the best path forward involves a crane and a wrecking ball.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA:**

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Mealor, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consent agenda as presented.

- a. Consider/Approve October 21, 2024 Executive Session Meeting Minutes
- b. Consider/Approve November 18, 2024 Work Session Minutes
- c. Consider/Approve November 18, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

- d. Consider/Approve December 3, 2024 Special Called Meeting Minutes
- e. Consider/Approve Authorization of ARPA Revenue Recovery Funds
- f. Consider/Approve DHS Coordinated Transportation Services Grant Agreement for FY 2025
- g. Consider/Approve Premium Proposal from ACCG-IRMA for First Responder Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Coverage
- h. Consider/Approve Lease Agreement with D. Higgins for Airport Hangar B-3
- i. Consider/Approve Resolution Approving the Waiver of Certain Penalties and Interest by the Habersham County Tax Commissioner
- j. Consider/Approve Authorizing Habersham County Tax Commissioner June Black-Warren to Accept Alternative Payment Methods (Checks, Money Orders, ACH Transfers, Credit/Debit Cards)
- k. Consider/Approve Alcohol Sales Renewal/Application for:
  - 1. Country Boys LLC, located at 2476 Cannon Bridge Road, Demorest- Malt Beverage and Wine Package Sales
  - 2. Smitnick 4221 LLC (dba Duncan Bridge Market), located at 4221 Level Grove Road, Cornelia- Malt Beverage and Wine Package Sales
  - 3. B3JK Enterprises LLC (dba Yonah Coffee & Café), located at 691 Old Historic Hwy 441, Suite 8-9, Demorest- Malt Beverage, Wine and Distilled Spirits Consumption on Premises
  - 4. Clarkesville United Inc (dba Clarkesville Food Mart), located at 4900 Talmadge Dr, Clarkesville- Malt Beverage and Wine Package Sales
  - 5. Clarkesville Prime LLC, located at 3134 Old Historic Hwy 441, Turnerville- Malt Beverage and Wine Package Sales
  - 6. Leo Das LLC (dba A to Z Grocery), located at 1723 Crane Mill Rd, Alto- Malt Beverage Package Sales
  - 7. AATV 2017 LLC (dba Cool Springs Exxon), located at 2059 Cool Springs Rd, Clarkesville- Malt Beverage and Wine Package Sales
  - 8. Circle K Stores Inc #2723324, located at 5000 Talmadge Drive, Clarkesville- Malt Beverage and Wine Package Sales
  - 9. D and G 2024 Inc (dba Riverbend Store), located at 1941 Highway 105, Demorest- Malt Beverage and Wine Packages Sales
  - 10. Chicago's Pizza Inc, located at 879 Historic Highway 441N, Demorest- Distilled Spirits, Malt Beverage and Wine Consumption on Premises

**REPORTS:**

- a. County Manager’s Report: Alicia Vaughn, County Manager
- b. Radio System Update: Lynn Smith, EMA/E911 Director

**APPOINTMENTS:**

**LIBRARY BOARD**

Remainder of 3-Year Term Ending 06/30/2027

- 1. Matthew Osborne (Term Expires 06/30/2027) At-Large

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Mealor to appoint Bridget Enfinger to the Library Board. Motion carries unanimously (5-0) to approve the appointment.

**BOARD OF TAX ASSESSORS**

3-Year Term Ending 12/31/2027

- 1. John King (Term Expires 12/31/2024) Commissioner Mealor’s Appointment
- 2. James Dean (Term Expires 12/31/2024) Commissioner Harkness’ Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness to reappoint John King to the Board of Tax Assessors. Motion carries unanimously (5-0) to approve the appointment.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Mealor to reappoint James Dean to the Board of Tax Assessors. Motion carries (5-0) to approve the appointment.

**PLANNING COMMISSION**

3-Year Term Ending 12/31/2027

- 1. Greg Hill (Term Expires 12/31/2024) Commissioner Akin’s Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Harkness to reappoint Greg Hill to the Planning Commission. Motion carries unanimously (5-0) to approve the appointment.

- 2. D. Higgins (Term Expires 12/31/2024) At-Large Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness to reappoint D. Higgins to the Planning Commission. Motion carries unanimously (5-0) to approve the appointment.

- 3. Jessie Owensby (Term Expires 12/31/2024) Commissioner Harkness’ Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor to reappoint Jessie Owensby to the Planning Commission. Motion carries unanimously (5-0) to approve the appointment.

- 4. Mike Van Winkle (Term Expires 12/31/2024) At-Large Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Akins, seconded by Commissioner Harkness to appoint Larry Phillips to the Planning Commission. Motion carries unanimously (5-0) to approve the appointment.

**CHESTATTEE CHATAHOOCHEE RC&D**

1-Year Term Ending 12/31/2025

1. Bruce Palmer (Term Expires 12/31/2024) At-Large Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness to reappoint Bruce Palmer to the Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D. Motion carries unanimously (5-0) to approve the appointment.

2. Jimmy Kowalsky (Term Expires 12/31/2024) At-Large Appointment

Commissioner Palmer informed the other Commissioners that Mr. Kowalsky does not wish to be reappointed as he already serves on the Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D as the Chattahoochee Soil and Water Conservation District representative.

Motion was made by Commissioner Harkness to appoint Andrea Harper to the Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D. This motion was objected by Commissioner Tench as he states that during her tenure as a County Commissioner Ms. Andrea Harper signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement related to the dealings with the hospital. Commissioner Harkness requested to withdraw his motion to allow for further investigation of the matter.

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness, and voted unanimously (5-0) to table this appointment until the January 21, 2025 Board of Commissioners meeting.

**DBHDD REGION 1 ADVISORY COUNCIL**

3- Year Term Ending 11/30/2027

1. Jeremy Noles (Term Expires 11/30/2024) At-Large Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness to reappoint Jeremy Noles to the DBHDD Region 1 Advisory Council. Motion carries unanimously (5-0) to approve the appointment.

**RECREATION BOARD**

Initial Term of January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025

1. Habersham County School System Representative- At-Large Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harknes to appoint Matt Shirley to the Recreation Advisory Board as the school system representative. Motion carries unanimously (5-0) to approve the appointment.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- ~~a. Consider/Approve Award of RFP 2024-10 for the Abatement, Building Demolition, Haulage of Waste to Proper Landfill(s) and Site Stabilization of the Old Habersham County Courthouse Building~~

This item was removed during the adoption of the agenda.

- b. Consider/Approve Ground Lease for Construction and Lease of One (1) 60' by 60' Box Hangar at Airport

Phil Eberly, Airport Consultant with Lead Edge, addressed the Commission. Mr. Eberly reminded the Commission that earlier in the year the Commission put out an RFP for four (4) ground lease sites for the construction of 60x60 box hangars. The contracts for these ground leases specify the standards for how the hangars will be built and that the term of the ground lease is for 20 years. After that 20 year term the ownership of any improvements made on the site reverts back to Habersham County. In the meantime, Habersham County will benefit from the receiving rent for the ground leases, the increase in fuel purchases and the increase in number of based aircraft at the airport. He reminded the Commission that an RFP has been put out for these ground leases twice. The first time the RFP was put out only one response was received, and the Commission awarded the ground lease. This is the second time the RFP has been put out and they again have only received one response. If this ground lease is awarded there will be two site remaining and they will be putting the RFP out for a third time for ground leases for those sites. The proposal was scored by Lead Edge, the Airport Commission and staff with Mr. Higgins, as a member of the Airport Commission, recusing himself from the process. The Airport Commission voted to recommend approval of the ground lease with Higgins Construction to the Board of Commissioners.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Mealor and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve signing a ground lease with Higgins Construction for construction of one (1) 60' x 60' box hangar at the Habersham County Airport.

- c. Consider/Approve Consolidation of Amy's Creek Voting Precinct into the Habersham North Voting Precinct and the Mud Creek Precinct into the Habersham South Precinct

Elections Supervisor Laurel Ellison addressed the Commission. She is requesting the number of voting precincts be reduced from six (6) to four (4) by consolidating Amy's Creek Precinct into the Habersham North Precinct (located at the Ruby Fulbright Aquatic Center) and by consolidating the Mud Creek Precinct into the Habersham South Precinct (located at the Elections & Voter Registration Office). Ms. Ellison stated that there is low voter turnout at both the Amy's Creek Precinct and Mud Creek Precinct, and that consolidating them would not only reduce some of the confusion that occurs on election day for voters but also reduce the amount of poll workers needed which would save the county money. Ms. Ellison informed the Commission that the Amy's Creek Precinct is located inside a fire department, which leads to issues from congestion on Election Day. There have been times where voters vehicles are parked in the way of fire trucks. Additionally, the firemen are locked out of the room where there washer and dryer are located for the three days in which the voting equipment must be kept secure during elections. Ms. Ellison stated that many of the voters from Amy's Creek vote early via either absentee mail ballot or during early/advance voting, making Election Day turnout lower. Ms. Ellison informed the Commission that consolidation of the Mud Creek precinct will create less confusion for voters, as they often have voters from Mud Creek show up to the South Precinct on Election Day thinking they can vote there because they voted at the South Precinct during early/advance voting during a previous election year. If the consolidation is approved, the four remaining precincts will be Habersham North Precinct (16,252 registered voters), Habersham South Precinct (15,430 registered voters), City of Demorest Precinct (1,253 registered voters) and the Town of Mount Airy Precinct (947 registered voters).

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the consolidation of Amy's Creek Precinct into the Habersham North Precinct and the Mud Creek Precinct into the Habersham South Precinct, with the new changes taking effect beginning in 2025.



d. Consider/Approve Revisions to Rental Contracts for the Habersham County Fairgrounds and Facilities

Ms. Cassie Head, Vice Chair of the Recreation Advisory Board, addressed the Commission. The Recreation Advisory Board has spent numerous hours reviewing the County's rental agreements for fairground related properties as a result of multiple complaints that were received from community members during event hours. Events at the Dewey Tench Pavillion have led to multiple 911 calls and complaints to the Board of Commissioners. The Recreation Advisory Board has met with community members and sought counsel from County Attorney Donnie Hunt regarding their legal obligations to patrons and ability within the contract to limit activities. The revised agreement has several changes to allow the County to take more actions when agreements are violated, which will allow them to better serve the citizens who live in the surrounding radius of the fairgrounds. Some of these changes include:

- Expanding wording regarding banned substances to include vaping products, nicotine products, and all intoxicating substances whether listed or not.
- More clearly defining "lights out", with a failure to vacate resulting in additional charges to the lessee.
- All events must end at 10 p.m. with cleanup allowed till 11 p.m. There is no longer an ability to purchase extra hours to extend the time of the event to midnight.
- Returning to the previously implemented practice of requiring security officers for all private event rentals with pricing and staffing level expectations included and events being cancelled if proof of officers retained is not provided to the County.
- No amplified sound being allowed after 10 p.m. with an explanation of warnings for loud music and resulting actions that will be taken by the County.
- The fee schedule will now be attached to the fairground rental contract and indemnity.

Motion by Commissioner Harkness, seconded by Commissioner Palmer, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the revisions to the rental contracts for the Habersham County Fairgrounds and Facilities as recommended by the Recreation Advisory Board.

e. Consider/Approve Agreement with Fusion Green Technology for Electronics Recycling

Solid Waste Director Johnnie Vickers addressed the Commission. There is currently no electronic recycling being offered by Habersham County. Fusion Green Technology is a locally owned company located in Cornelia who is willing to pay Habersham County for electronics based on the poundage and type of electronics collected. There are no other companies in the surrounding counties that offer this service. The only thing that the county has to supply is a space for Fusion Green Technology to provide their own collection containers. This company will accept most battery and corded appliances with the exception of their not accepting tube televisions. These will be double door containers that citizens can walk right inside of to drop off electronics, and which can be locked at night to prevent items from being stolen. The agreement would be for a one-year period with the option of renewing for additional years based on performance and demand. This will help in reducing the amount of electronics going into the landfill.

Motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Harkness, and voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the agreement with Fusion Green Technology for electronics recycling for one year with automatic renewal on the anniversary date.

- f. 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of Amendment to Article II (“Open Burning”) of Chapter 30 (“Fire Prevention and Protection”) of the Habersham County Code of Ordinances with Revisions to Sections 30-19 (“General Requirements”); 30-20 (“Open Burning on Privately Owned, Residential Property”); 30-21 (“Construction Site Burning”); 30-22 (“Agricultural Land Clearing or Right-of-Way Burning”) and 30-23 (“Emergency Burning”).

Emergency Services Director Jeff Adams addressed the Commission, reminding them that they had approved revisions to this ordinance around a year ago. These revisions went back to Georgia Forestry and they determined that additional verbiage was needed. The changes that are being proposed are what is being required by Georgia Forestry and include verbiage regarding the five-star safety standards.

This is the 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 required readings of the proposed amendments. The 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, hearing and vote is slated to be on the agenda for the January 21, 2025 Board of Commissioners meeting.

### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

Commissioner Mealor wanted to thank County Manager Vaughn for everything she has done in her time as County Manager. He feels that she has been a real asset to Habersham County.

Commissioner Harkness expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to have worked with Commissioner Palmer and County Manager Vaughn, stating that they dedicated themselves to the community and that he feels that Habersham County is better off because of them both. He thanked all those present for attending the meeting and wished them a Merry Christmas.

Commissioner Palmer thanked County Manager Vaughn for everything she has done for Habersham County as well as the things she has done to assist him as a Commissioner. He wishes her the best in her endeavors. He also wanted to thank County Attorney Hunt for having provided great guidance to the Commission, even if at times it wasn't what they wanted to hear. Commissioner Palmer expressed his gratitude to the other Commissioners as well and challenged them to continue to pursue training and education opportunities, like those provided by ACCG, to help them in their decision making. He wished to thank the employees of Habersham County, stating that he felt that they had an amazing team and were more like family. Lastly, he thanked the citizens of Habersham County, stating that it has been a pleasure to serve them these past four years.

Commissioner Tench informed County Manager Vaughn that he guessed that County Clerk Carnes would have to take all the ribbing now.

Commissioner Akins expressed that he had learned a lot as a new Commissioner from Commissioner Palmer, and that Commissioner Palmer always gave 110%. In regard to County Manager Vaughn, she has been a constant professional who provided a lot of reassurance by always having a path forward and an answer as they moved from one disaster to the next.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Litigation, pursuant to O.C.G.A § 50-14-2; 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)

Commissioner Harkness inquired of County Attorney Hunt if the executive session was legally required? Attorney Hunt confirmed this to be so.

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness, to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing Litigation, pursuant to O.C.G.A § 50-14-2; 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 Akins- aye  
Commissioner Palmer- aye  
Commissioner Harkness- aye  
Commissioner Mealor- aye  
Commissioner Tench-aye

Motion carries unanimously (5-0) to enter executive session at 8:23 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Mealor, seconded by Commissioner Harkness and voted unanimously (5-0) to leave executive session at 9:24

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 Harkness, 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 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

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