

HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUBJECT: Fire Consolidation Feasibility Study

DATE: 01/14/2025

RECOMMENDATION

POLICY DISCUSSION

BUDGET INFORMATION:

STATUS REPORT

ANNUAL- \$55,000

OTHER

CAPITAL-

Funds will come from General Fund Contingency.

COMMISSION ACTION REQUESTED ON: 01/21/2025

PURPOSE: To seek approval from the Habersham County Board of Commissioners to approve the contract and service agreement with Southeastern Fire Consulting Company, LLC. SEFCCO will evaluate the fire service delivery and Fire Protection Classification in Habersham County, including the cities which have indicated by resolution a desire to participate in the study.

BACKGROUND / HISTORY:

- a. In July of 2024, Habersham County Administration and Emergency Services was approached about having a discussion with the municipalities regarding the consolidation of fire services throughout the county.
 - b. The subject was initially introduced to the city officials, informally, at the Fall HC3 meeting.
 - c. A meeting was conducted at Demorest City Hall on November 21st, 2024, to introduce the subject to all interested city officials and to indicate the commitment of the municipalities by resolution by the end of December 2024.
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FACTS AND ISSUES:

- a. Baldwin, Clarkesville, Cornelia, Demorest and Tallulah Falls produced resolutions to participate in the study.
 - b. The city officials have committed to providing the necessary information to Thad Dixon, the consultant, to conduct the analysis of the fire response system in the county.
 - c. The contract specifies \$55,000.00 for the study.
 - d. There is no post-study obligation on the part of the cities.
 - e. The Fire Protection Classification (ISO) for unincorporated Habersham County was last evaluated in December of 2018 and published in July 2019. The current classification is 5/10. Most of the county is a Class 5, but a few small areas are a 10. Automatic Aid agreements with the city departments and surrounding counties assist in bringing some areas into the 5 Classification.
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OPTIONS:

- 1) Approve recommendation: Agree/Approve contract with SEFCCO to conduct the Consolidation Feasibility Study for Habersham County and the cities which have indicated by resolution to be included.
- 2) Deny recommendation: Deny the approval of the contract with SEFCCO.
- 3) Commission defined alternative: As specified by the commission.

RECOMMENDED SAMPLE MOTION:

Motion to approve the contract with Southeastern Fire Consulting Company, LLC to conduct the feasibility study and evaluation of the Fire Service Delivery and Fire Protection Classifications of unincorporated Habersham County and the municipalities which have agreed by resolution to participate.

DEPARTMENT:

Prepared by:

Jeffrey D. Adams

Director: __

Jeffrey D. Adams _____

**ADMINISTRATIVE
COMMENTS:** _____

_____ **DATE:** _____

County Manager

SEFCCO

SouthEastern Fire Consulting Company, LLC

**1695 West Martintown Road
North Augusta, SC. 29860**

Phone Number (912) 660-3187

E-Mail chiefdixon@sefcco.com

www.sefcco.com

QUOTE FOR SERVICE & CONTRACT

Prepared for

Habersham County, GA.

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Note: Below this page, the signing official for Habersham County, GA needs to initial and/or sign all yellow highlighted lines.

CLIENT INFORMATION

CLIENT NAME: Habersham County, GA		
ADDRESS: 130 Jacob's Way		
CITY: Clarkesville	STATE: GA	ZIP CODE: 30523
PHONE NUMBER: (706) 839-0200		DATE: January 13, 2025
CONTACT PERSON: Jeff Adams Fire Chief – Habersham County, GA		CELL PHONE: (706) 968-0509
NOTE: Consolidation of one or more municipal fire departments into the Habersham County Fire Department		
NOTE: During this process, SEFCCO will evaluate operation of the individual participating municipal fire departments as stand-alone vs part of the county wide fire department.		
Additional Contact Person:		
This contract is designed so that we walk through each section with the client prior to signing. It is our intention to make sure that every question is answered and that all information is disclosed in full.		

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES and ACTIONS

The SouthEastern Fire Consulting Company, LLC (here after referred to as SEFCCO) has prepared this Quote for Services for Habersham County, GA and all participating municipalities. This quote & contract has been prepared at the request of Jeff Adams, Fire Chief, Habersham County, GA.

SEFCCO will conduct an analysis of the fire operations of Habersham County, GA and each of the participating municipalities.

SEFCCO will conduct an analysis of the ISO/VERISK public protection classifications (PPC) of the Habersham County Fire District and each independent municipal fire rating as they currently stand.

SEFCCO will conduct an analysis of the relative classification for the Habersham County Fire protection district and of each participating municipality. SEFCCO will then do an analysis of the effect of merger between individual standing fire departments vs. a consolidated fire department.

SEFCCO will conduct an analysis on merger of property owned by individual municipalities into the Habersham County Fire Department.

SEFCCO will conduct an analysis of the merger of personnel by individual municipalities into the Habersham County Fire Department.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES and ACTIONS

SEFCCO will conduct a budget analysis on Habersham County as it pertains to the merger of the individual municipal fire departments within Habersham County.

SEFCCO will conduct a thorough study of the Habersham County Fire Department which will include response times, barriers to response (natural and man-made), and a travel study in order to recommend fire station and fire company placement for maximum efficiency. As part of this section, we will look at the proximity of the current municipal fire stations to see if spacing modifications need to be made, as part of a consolidated agency.

The above item is part of the Deployment Analysis section of the Public Protection Classification. As part of this study, we will recommend improvements to the Deployment Analysis, which will improve response times and public safety for citizens and emergency responders.

Once this contract is effective, all participating agencies (outlined on page XX) will be requested to provide a variety of information including but not limited to: the last ISO/Verisk Survey, Itemized lists of vehicles and equipment, Real Property (such as fire stations), Personnel Listings including rank structure and salaries, Budget Information, Emergency and Non-Emergency Response Information, ETC...,

SEFCCO will request for each agency to list any challenges that they face so that these situations can be addressed.

G.I.S. Graphic Information Systems

SEFCCO will be looking at current mapping information for Habersham County and its municipalities. As part of this process, we will be creating new response mapping. We request access to the Habersham County GIS services during this study. This will save Habersham County additional charges as our contracted GIS service will charge for service and that amount will be outside of the contracted amount for this study.

Recommendation

During this process, we recommend that a training session be held for public officials which explains the process of the ISO/Verisk Public Protection Classification. This is optional for our clients but it is a good way for all to see that the PPC Rating is a community effort and not just that of the fire department. We offer this training at no additional charge.

Examples of who would attend are... the Fire Department, Water Department, 911 Communications Center, GIS Department, Personnel from County & City Management & Financial, Chamber of Commerce and or any other local organization that the Habersham County Government deems necessary.

This process of bringing these parts of the government and community together, to share the ISO process, creates buy-in and gives everyone a sense of ownership.

Payment for Consultation Services

SEFCCO has two payment methods for our services...

Our first and preferred method of payment is by Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT). If Habersham County selects this method of payment, we will provide an EFT Authorization Form with the detailed payment information.

The second method of payment is by official government check. If this method is selected, we request that checks are mailed to the address on the header of this contract by certified mail with return receipt. We have put this request on all items arriving by U.S. Mail due to delivery issues in our area.

The total contracted amount will be divided into 12 monthly installments, (see page-5). The first installment will be due upon signing of this contract, and the remaining 11 installments will be due on the signing date each month. Invoices will be sent to the Habersham County accounts payable department at the start of each month.

DISCLAIMER

SEFCCO will not accept responsibility for the loss of points during the upcoming Insurance Service Office, Fire Suppression Rating Schedule survey. SEFCCO will show areas of deficiency, but it is ultimately the responsibility of the Habersham County, GA to act upon the recommendations made by SEFCCO.

SEFCCO is not responsible for the operations of Habersham County, GA. SEFCCO makes recommendations for improvements based on recognized standards and best practice. Any advice that is given also takes into consideration the safety of the public and fire department personnel.

SEFCCO has provided this quote/contract to advise of the consultation services that we can offer to the Habersham County, GA. The client is responsible for and makes the decisions to act upon or not act upon the advice given.

SEFCCO only employee's Fire Service Professionals who are proficient and experienced with issues dealing with ISO/Verisk (Insurance Service Office), standards for the fire service such as NFPA National Fire Protection Association, and fire service management.

CLAIM OF RESPONSIBILITY

SouthEastern Fire Consulting Company, LLC will stand by the advice that we give during our consultation based on current ISO/Verisk, NFPA, AWWA (American Water Works Assn.), State of GA fire standards (Title 25) and codes of the State Fire Marshalls office.

SouthEastern Fire Consulting Company, LLC will only present truthful and factual information as part of this or any ISO Fire Suppression Rating Schedule Survey. To falsify or misrepresent information during this or any ISO survey carries the penalty of insurance fraud, SEFCCO will not be a party to such activities.

EXTENT OF THIS CONTRACT

This contract will be in effect from the date signed until and will remain in effect for a period of 12 months. SEFCCO will stay engaged with the consultation services of the 12-month period. SEFCCO will return for the ISO/Verisk Suppression Rating Schedule survey and be available for the results at no additional charge. This service is covered under this contract.

SEFCCO is charging a \$30,000 base fee plus \$5000 for each participating municipal fire department. Participating municipalities as of January 13, 2025, are as follows: Baldwin County, GA, Clarkesville, GA, Cornelia, GA, Demorest, GA and Tallulah Falls, GA. Total for consultation services by SEFCCO is \$55,000 and due in 12 monthly installments. First installment of \$4583.33 is due upon signing of contract.

This charge is for the fire department consolidation study for Habersham County and its participating municipalities. During this time SEFCCO will provide consulting services from our office and on sit in the Habersham County, GA fire district. Covered under this charge for consultation services, SEFCCO will make site visits as deemed necessary (including meetings, assessments, evaluations, etc.) Any extension of services and or scope extending beyond the life of this contract is negotiable.

SEFCCO

SouthEastern Fire Consulting Company, LLC

Phone Number (912) 660-3187
E-Mail chiefdixon@sefcco.com

CONTRACT SIGNATURE SHEET

CLIENT NAME: Habersham County, GA		
ADDRESS: 130 Jacobs Way		
CITY: Clarkesville	STATE: GA	ZIP CODE: 30523
PHONE NUMBER: (706) 839-0200	DATE: January 13, 2025	

Authorized signature, printed names & Date Signed..... Date _____

SEFCCO - Signature _____ / Printed Name _____

SEFCCO - Initials (Must match initials at the bottom of each page) _____

SouthEastern Fire Consulting Company, LLC

Title of official representing the SouthEastern Fire Consulting Company, LLC _____

Habersham County, GA - Signature / Printed Name

Habersham County, GA - Initials (Must match initials at the bottom of each page)

Habersham County, GA - Official

Title of Official representing Habersham County, GA

**STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF HABERSHAM**

RESOLUTION NO.: 12-24-03

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF CORNELIA AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE WITH HABERSHAM COUNTY IN A FIRE CONSOLIDATION FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR FIRE SERVICES IN HABERSHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA

WHEREAS, the City of Cornelia is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of its residents through efficient and effective fire protection and emergency response services; and

WHEREAS, Habersham County has proposed a study to evaluate the feasibility of consolidating fire protection and emergency services between the City of Cornelia and other municipalities within Habersham County to improve service delivery, enhance coordination, and achieve potential cost savings; and

WHEREAS, the City of Cornelia recognizes the importance of evaluating opportunities to enhance service delivery while maintaining fiscal responsibility and high-quality services; and

WHEREAS, participation in the fire consolidation feasibility study does not obligate the City of Cornelia to proceed with consolidation but allows for informed decision-making based on comprehensive analysis and community input; and

WHEREAS, collaboration with Habersham County and other stakeholders in this study aligns with the City's strategic goals of fostering intergovernmental cooperation and ensuring sustainable public safety services;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Commission of the City of Cornelia and it is hereby resolved and certified by the authority of the same as follows:

- 1. Approval to Join the Study:**

The City of Cornelia agrees to participate in the fire consolidation feasibility study in partnership with Habersham County and other participating municipalities.

2. Fees for Consultant:

The County has agreed to and shall pay for the cost of the study.

3. Designation of Representative:

The City Commission designates the City Manager as the City's representative to participate in the study process and provide input on behalf of the city.

4. Community Engagement:

The City Commission commits to ensuring community engagement throughout the study process to gather input and maintain transparency.

5. No Obligation to Consolidate:

Participation in the study does not obligate the City of Cornelia, in any way, to proceed with consolidation. Any decision regarding consolidation will require further evaluation and separate approval by the City Commission.

SO RESOLVED this 3rd day of December, 2024 by the City Commission of the City of Cornelia.

**CITY OF CORNELIA
HABERSHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA**



John Borrow, MAYOR

ATTEST:



Debbie Turner, CITY CLERK



**STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF HABERSHAM**

RESOLUTION NO.: 2024-1203

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF DEMOREST AGREEING
TO PARTICIPATE WITH HABERSHAM COUNTY IN A FIRE
CONSOLIDATION FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR FIRE
SERVICES IN HABERSHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA**

WHEREAS, the City of Demorest is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of its residents through efficient and effective fire protection and emergency response services; and

WHEREAS, Habersham County has proposed a study to evaluate the feasibility of consolidating fire protection and emergency services between the City of Demorest and other municipalities within Habersham County to improve service delivery, enhance coordination, and achieve potential cost savings; and

WHEREAS, the City of Demorest recognizes the importance of evaluating opportunities to enhance service delivery while maintaining fiscal responsibility and high-quality services; and

WHEREAS, participation in the fire consolidation feasibility study does not obligate the City of Demorest to proceed with consolidation but allows for informed decision-making based on comprehensive analysis and community input; and

WHEREAS, collaboration with Habersham County and other stakeholders in this study aligns with the City's strategic goals of fostering intergovernmental cooperation and ensuring sustainable public safety services;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Demorest and it is hereby resolved and certified by the authority of the same as follows:

1. Approval to Join the Study:

The City of Demorest agrees to participate in the fire consolidation feasibility study in partnership with Habersham County and other participating municipalities.

2. Fees for Consultant:

The County has agreed to and shall pay for the cost of the study.

3. Designation of Representative:

The City Council designates the City Manager and Fire Chief as the City's representative to participate in the study process and provide input on behalf of the City.

4. Community Engagement:

The City Council commits to ensuring community engagement throughout the study process to gather input and maintain transparency.

5. No Obligation to Consolidate:

Participation in the study does not obligate the City of Demorest, in any way, to proceed with consolidation. Any decision regarding consolidation will require further evaluation and separate approval by the City Council.

SO RESOLVED this 3 day of December, 2024 by the City Council of the City of Demorest.

**CITY OF DEMOREST
HABERSHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA**

Jerry Harkness, MAYOR

ATTEST:

[Signature]
CITY CLERK



**STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF HABERSHAM**

RESOLUTION NO.: 24-07

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF TALLULAH FALLS AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE WITH HABERSHAM COUNTY IN A FIRE CONSOLIDATION FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR FIRE SERVICES IN HABERSHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA

WHEREAS, the Town of Tallulah Falls is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of its residents through efficient and effective fire protection and emergency response services; and

WHEREAS, Habersham County has proposed a study to evaluate the feasibility of consolidating fire protection and emergency services between the Town of Tallulah Falls and other municipalities within Habersham County to improve service delivery, enhance coordination, and achieve potential cost savings; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Tallulah Falls recognizes the importance of evaluating opportunities to enhance service delivery while maintaining fiscal responsibility and high-quality services; and

WHEREAS, participation in the fire consolidation feasibility study does not obligate the Town of Tallulah Falls to proceed with consolidation but allows for informed decision-making based on comprehensive analysis and community input; and

WHEREAS, collaboration with Habersham County and other stakeholders in this study aligns with the Town's strategic goals of fostering intergovernmental cooperation and ensuring sustainable public safety services;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Town Council of the Town of Tallulah Falls and it is hereby resolved and certified by the authority of the same as follows:

1. Incorporation of Recitals:

The above stated recitals are true and correct and are incorporated as though fully set forth herein.

2. Approval to Join the Study:

The Town of Tallulah Falls agrees to participate in the fire consolidation feasibility study in partnership with Habersham County and other participating municipalities.

3. Fees for Consultant:

The County has agreed to and shall pay for the cost of the study.

4. Designation of Representative:

The Town Council designates [Title or Position, e.g., Fire Chief, Town Manager] as the Town's representative to participate in the study process and provide input on behalf of the Town.

5. Community Engagement:

The Town Council commits to ensuring community engagement throughout the study process to gather input and maintain transparency.

6. No Obligation to Consolidate:

Participation in the study does not obligate the Town of Tallulah Falls, in any way, to proceed with consolidation. Any decision regarding consolidation will require further evaluation and separate approval by the Town Council.

SO RESOLVED this _____ day of _____, 202__ by the Town Council of the Town of Tallulah Falls.

TOWN OF TALLULAH FALLS



MIKE EARLY, MAYOR

ATTEST:



TOWN CLERK

[TOWN SEAL]

**STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF HABERSHAM**

RESOLUTION NO.: 2024-12157R

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF BALDWIN AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE WITH HABERSHAM COUNTY IN A FIRE CONSOLIDATION FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR FIRE SERVICES IN HABERSHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA

WHEREAS, the City of Baldwin is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of its residents through efficient and effective fire protection and emergency response services; and

WHEREAS, Habersham County has proposed a study to evaluate the feasibility of consolidating fire protection and emergency services between the City of Baldwin and other municipalities within Habersham County to improve service delivery, enhance coordination, and achieve potential cost savings; and

WHEREAS, the City of Baldwin recognizes the importance of evaluating opportunities to enhance service delivery while maintaining fiscal responsibility and high-quality services; and

WHEREAS, participation in the fire consolidation feasibility study does not obligate the City of Baldwin to proceed with consolidation but allows for informed decision-making based on comprehensive analysis and community input; and

WHEREAS, collaboration with Habersham County and other stakeholders in this study aligns with the City's strategic goals of fostering intergovernmental cooperation and ensuring sustainable public safety services;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Baldwin and it is hereby resolved and certified by the authority of the same as follows:

1. Approval to Join the Study:

The City of Baldwin agrees to participate in the fire consolidation feasibility study in partnership with Habersham County and other participating municipalities.

2. Fees for Consultant:

The County has agreed to and shall pay for the cost of the study.

3. Designation of Representative:

The City Council designates CAO Emily Woodmaster as the City's representative to participate in the study process and provide input on behalf of the City.

4. Community Engagement:

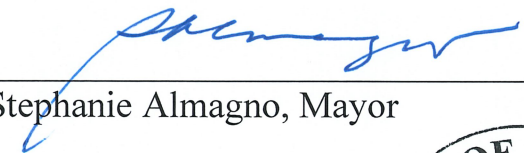
The City Council commits to ensuring community engagement throughout the study process to gather input and maintain transparency.

5. No Obligation to Consolidate:

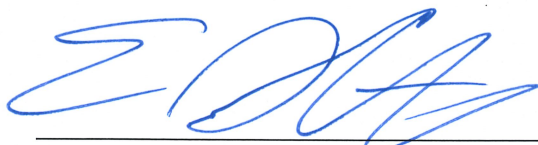
Participation in the study does not obligate the City of Baldwin, in any way, to proceed with consolidation. Any decision regarding consolidation will require further evaluation and separate approval by the City Council.

SO RESOLVED this 9th day of December, 2024 by the City Council of the City of Baldwin.

**CITY OF BALDWIN
HABERSHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA**


Stephanie Almagno, Mayor

ATTEST:


Erin, Gathercoal, City Clerk



[CITY SEAL]

**STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF HABERSHAM**

RESOLUTION NO.: 2024-8

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF CLARKESVILLE
AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE WITH HABERSHAM COUNTY
IN A FIRE CONSOLIDATION FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR FIRE
SERVICES IN HABERSHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA**

WHEREAS, the City of Clarkesville is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of its residents through efficient and effective fire protection and emergency response services; and

WHEREAS, Habersham County has proposed a study to evaluate the feasibility of consolidating fire protection and emergency services between the City of Clarkesville and other municipalities within Habersham County to improve service delivery, enhance coordination, and achieve potential cost savings; and

WHEREAS, the City of Clarkesville recognizes the importance of evaluating opportunities to enhance service delivery while maintaining fiscal responsibility and high-quality services; and

WHEREAS, participation in the fire consolidation feasibility study does not obligate the City of Clarkesville to proceed with consolidation but allows for informed decision-making based on comprehensive analysis and community input; and

WHEREAS, collaboration with Habersham County and other stakeholders in this study aligns with the City's strategic goals of fostering intergovernmental cooperation and ensuring sustainable public safety services;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Clarkesville and it is hereby resolved and certified by the authority of the same as follows:

- 1. Approval to Join the Study:**

The City of Clarkesville agrees to participate in the fire consolidation feasibility study in partnership with Habersham County and other participating municipalities.

2. Fees for Consultant:

The County has agreed to and shall pay for the cost of the study.

3. Designation of Representative:

The City Council designates the Fire Chief and City Manager as the City's representative to participate in the study process and provide input on behalf of the City.

4. Community Engagement:

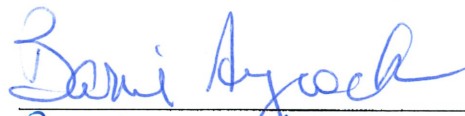
The City Council commits to ensuring community engagement throughout the study process to gather input and maintain transparency.

5. No Obligation to Consolidate:

Participation in the study does not obligate the City of Clarkesville, in any way, to proceed with consolidation. Any decision regarding consolidation will require further evaluation and separate approval by the City Council.

SO RESOLVED this 9 day of December, 2024 by the City Council of the City of Clarkesville.

**CITY OF CLARKESVILLE
HABERSHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA**



Barrie Aycock, MAYOR

ATTEST:



CITY CLERK

