

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for its Regular Monthly Meeting on Monday, January 8, 2024, at 5:00 p.m., in the Courtroom at the Brooks County Courthouse, located at 100 East Screven Street, Quitman, GA. Commissioners present were: Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman, Mr. James Maxwell, Vice Chairman; Ms. Myra Exum; Mr. Willie Cody; and Mr. Lee Larko. Others present were Mrs. Jessica McKinney, County Administrator; Ms. Patricia Williams, County Clerk; Ms. Kim Daniels, Human Resources; Mr. Jason Kemp, County Attorney; and various residents.

**1. PUBLIC HEARING – Special Exception – Keith & Jacquelyn Sirmans – Transfer Event Venue into their Name – (Sign-In Sheet Provider)** – County Attorney, Jason Kemp, took the lead until a chairman is nominated.

Ms. Sherry Davidson, Zoning & Code Enforcement, presented the Petition by Keith & Jacquelyn Sirmans for a Special Exception to transfer a community event venue into their name. Applicants purchased the existing venue on December 30, 2021. Prior to purchasing the property at auction, Mr. & Mrs. Sirmans came to the County Office and spoke with the Zoning Administrator who advised them that it has always been a venue; and they only need to get a business license, which they did and has every year. The property is located at 4578 Hempstead Church Road, just west of Barney, GA in unincorporated Brooks County, being more specifically described as Map No. 139, Parcel No. 18A, of Brooks County.

Zoning Administrator received a call regarding a complaint from the neighboring property owner about noise, however, the Applicants are following the adopted noise ordinance. There were no complaints filed with the Sheriff's Office regarding loud noise. After going out to assess the complaint, Ms. Davidson advised them they would need a Special Exception; and they complied. The Planning Commission met on December 30, 2023, and voted unanimously to approve the application to continue operating a community event venue.

Mr. Larko stated it is good use of property and he does not have a problem with it, but his concern is with the owner/management being present to make sure it conforms with the noise ordinance. Mrs. Sirmans is also a Caterer, and stated she was at the event and not aware of the noise.

The County Attorney asked for those who signed in to speak for or against the request. Mrs. Sirmans spoke and stated that they checked to find out if they could continue as a business. She stated that out of respect for neighbors, they comply with the noise ordinance and would appreciate it if they could continue the business. Mr. Sirmans spoke and stated that he enjoys Brooks County and was excited when they saw the property and found out what they needed to do. He further stated that they spoke with neighbors about the time. He enjoys the business and is trying to make a living.

Mr. Whitehead spoke against stating that he lives over 700 feet from the venue. The noise was loud during a football game and could hear the music and think he should

not be able to hear the music or the PA system. He further stated there is an issue, there should not be speakers outside, the music should be inside. Mrs. Whitehead commented she is sorry, she supports small businesses, is not against celebrating, but it is an invasion of their peace and quiet. She stated she does not feel she is being unreasonable.

County Attorney closed the public hearing at 5:28 pm.

## **2. CALL TO ORDER**

**Prayer & Pledge of Allegiance** – County Attorney called the Regular Meeting to order. Pastor Gwin Jarriel, Brooks County Ministerial Association, led all in attendance in prayer and pledge of allegiance.

## **3. CHAIR & VICE CHAIR ELECTIONS**

**A. Nominations/Election – Chairman (Attorney Leads)** – County Attorney, Jason Kemp, took the lead for the yearly organizational meeting for the Board until the Chairman is elected. Mr. Kemp opened the floor for nominations for Chairman. Mr. Larko made the motion nominating Mrs. Exum for Chairman for 2024. Mr. Kemp called for the vote. Mrs. Exum and Mr. Larko voted yes. Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Cody opposed, the vote was 2 to 2. County Attorney called for any other nominations. Mr. Maxwell nominated Mr. Folsom for Chairman for 2024, Mr. Cody seconded. The County Attorney called for the vote. Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Cody, and Mr. Folsom voted in favor. Mrs. Exum and Mr. Larko opposed. The vote was 3 to 2 appointing Mr. Folsom as Chairman for 2024.

**B. Nominations/Election of Vice Chairman (Chair Leads)** – Chairman Folsom opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chair. Mr. Larko made the motion nominating Mr. Cody as Vice Chair for 2024. Mr. Cody declined due to his work schedule. Chairman called for any other nominations. Mr. Cody nominated Mr. Maxwell for Vice Chairman; Mr. Maxwell seconded. Chairman called for the vote. Mr. Cody, Mr. Maxwell, and Mr. Folsom voted yes. Mrs. Exum and Mr. Larko opposed. The vote was 3 to 2 for Mr. Maxwell to serve as Vice Chairman for 2024.

Chairman called meeting to order at 5:32 pm; and asked for an amendment to the agenda. Mr. Larko made the motion to amend the agenda to delete/remove Item D under New Business, the CAT Financial Resolution, it is not needed due to it being a renewal contract, and to correct/change dates for December meeting minutes from December 4, 2022, and December 11, 2022, to 2023, in section 4, item A & B, Mr. Cody seconded.

## **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

On the motion by Mr. Cody, seconded by Mr. Maxwell, the Board unanimously approved the following minutes as read:

- A. Regular Monthly Meeting
- B. Special Called Meeting/Work Session

December 4, 2023  
December 11, 2023

**5. INVITED GUESTS – (2 MINUTES)**

**A. Buddy Holwell – Property & Liability Insurance & Workers' Comp Renewal** – Mr. Buddy Holwell, Holwell & Fletcher, presented the renewal of the property & liability insurance and workers' compensation for 2024. He advised the Board of the 2022 claim count which was costly due to lightning damage. Mr. Holwell informed the Board that he addressed workers' comp claims on the Fire Coalition and got them taken off, and the County received a check for reimbursement for \$36,000. The County got certified by the State of Georgia for drug free workplace and received a \$20,000 reduction in premium. Mr. Holwell thanked the Board for letting him service the County; and asked if he could do anything to let him know.

**6. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES & DEPARTMENTS – (5 MINUTES)**

**A. Brooks County Fire Department – Chief Weeks** – Chief Weeks provided report for December 2023 for activities/projects with the Brooks County Fire Department:

- Responded to total of 68 calls for service, 25 medical calls, 12 canceled or no incident found, 3 structure fire, 1 cooking fire, 8 MVA with injuries and 8 MVA no injuries, camper fire 1, brush fire 1 dumpster fire 1 power lines down, and 3 other service calls.
- **Training:** Fire attack, pumper operations, foam application and Hazmat.
- **Update:** Station 2 is ISO approved and the maps will be updated this quarter.
- **New Projects:** Brooks Fire Dept. is now servicing and flowing hydrants for Barwick and Pavo.
- **New Employees:** We are currently looking for a new Firefighter to hire due to one of ours leaving.

**B. Brooks County Road Depart – Amy Hart** – Provided report for December 2023:

- Steady working with skeleton crew and getting roads passable.
- There was a total of 324, up 104 from last month, actions taken on roads in December. There were 152 roads for grading/ditching, installed/repaired 9 culverts and driveways; cleaned out 19 pipes/outfalls; removed 4 trees, limbs, and logs, 39 beaver dams cleaned, repaired 11 potholes, replaced/installed 11 signs, used rock/clay/sand on 40 projects, and 5
- 0 other projects completed.

**C. Brooks County 911/EMA – Director LaToya Hampton** – Ms. Hampton provided an update for December 2023:

- Year to date there were 23,628 calls received for 2023, 2022 there were 22,320 a difference of 1,171 calls than last year.
- All Dispatchers including herself, through GCIC, security and integrity.
- 10 hours required hours by the State as of Jan. 2024: LaToya and 3 to get training out of town and get an instructor to come to the center for others.
- Interviews began in December for FT and PT.

- EMA Updates: FEMA deadline was December 25, 2023, all was submitted for the County on December 20, 2023.
- Continue to gather information for Bethlehem Church so FEMA can repair it.
- American Red Cross is on standby to help citizens if they have storm damage or tree clean up due to the weather on January 9, 2024.
- Brooks County Offices, City of Morven, and City of Quitman as well as schools are closed due to the weather on January 9, 2024.
- Weather is expected to occur between 11:00 am-4:00 pm with tornado possibilities, hail, and winds of 30-70 mph in comparison to an EF2 hurricane.
- EOC will not be open at this time, but I will closely monitor the issue and open it if needed.
- Department Heads, hospital, DOT, Road Department, City of Morven and Quitman, and School system will be updated as needed.
- Will continue to monitor the issue through the night.

**D. Brooks County Extension – Brooks County CEC/ANR Agent – Michasia Dowdy –**

Mrs. Dowdy requested to appear to update the Board for the New Year:

- Production meeting season has started.
- Attended one agent training session in person, which was the weed science meeting in Tifton.
- Attended last workday in Irwinville for HERD until the sale of heifers in April.
- Received visit from Ethan Howell, Precision Ag Specialist in our area for Quail Forever, a charitable wildlife conservation organization.
- Will Brown, ANR Agent, attended a few UGA ANR agent updates this month as well, including peanut production update, vegetable production update, and a weed management update.
- Haley Clark, 4-H Agent, had a busy month for 4-H program in December. It kicked off the month in Tifton at the Southwest District 4-H Update.
- Several successful 4-H meetings were conducted in December.
- Fourth grade students engaged in STEM activity about weather instruments.

**E. Brooks County Magistrate Court – Judge David Crosby** – on the motion by Mr. Maxwell, seconded by Mr. Larko, the Board unanimously tabled this item due to Judge Crosby not being present.

**7. CONSENT AGENDA – NONE**

**8. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Funding – Pavo Downtown Development Authority** – During the December meeting, Mr. Larko requested this topic to be placed on the agenda. Mr. Larko stated that Pavo Downtown Development Authority is recognized by the State; and has been given \$3,500.00 to revamp and rebuild downtown Pavo. He advised that Pavo is 30% in Brooks County; and is asking consideration to provide seed money to start the fund. The County Attorney commented that the Charter from the State needs to be looked at. If it is for citizens of Brooks County, it is ok, but not for outside of the County. Pavo was

asked to attend the next regular meeting on January 8, 2024, for further discussion and additional information. Mrs. Pat Hall, from Pavo, was present to provide information to the Board. The board inquired what will the funds be used for. Mrs. Hall stated that she has thought of ways to use funds but nothing definite. One suggestion she stated is redoing the entry into Pavo with signage to highlight the Brooks County side and installing 12 streetlights. Chairman commented that Brooks County funds the Brooks County Development Authority, what are they not doing for Pavo as a whole? How can Brooks County do it? Can we give starter funds? County Attorney responded stating that Brooks County cannot donate funds to anyone. The County cannot hand over funds; it must serve a purpose and benefit the Pavo citizens. Mr. Larko suggested a Referendum for voters for Brooks County and Thomasville. No action was taken.

**B. Board Appointments**

**a. Brooks County Board of Health** - Mr. Maxwell made a motion to appoint Mr. Shawn Tatham to the Board of Health, replacing Mrs. June Furney, for a six-year term, expiring December 31, 2029.

**b. Brooks County Board of Elections** - Mr. Maxwell made the motion to re-appoint Ms. Karen Murray to the Elections Board for another three-year term, Mr. Cody seconded. Mrs. Exum commented that we appoint to Boards to give others an opportunity when they are willing to serve, not because someone is already trained and certified. Chairman called for the vote. Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Cody, and Mr. Folsom voted yes. Mrs. Exum, and Mr. Larko opposed. The vote was 3 to 2.

**c. Brooks County Development Authority** - Discussion began regarding the Brooks County Development Authority appointments. No one that applied is in the district to be filled. Mr. Jack Harrell's district (District 2) needs to be filled. Mr. Harrell provided the Board with a letter stating he does not seek re-appointment to the Development Authority Board. The Board discussed re-advertising and include a map of the district to be filled. Mr. Larko made a motion to re-appoint Dr. Marie Horne (District 6) to the Development Authority Board for another three-year term, expiring December 31, 2026, Mr. Cody seconded.

**d. Brooks County Historical Board** – Mr. Cody motioned to re-appoint Mr. Maxwell to the Historical Board for another one-year term, Mr. Maxwell second. Chairman called for the vote. Mr. Cody, Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Larko, and Mr. Folsom voted yes. Mrs. Exum opposed. The vote was 4 to 1.

**e. Brooks County Airport Authority** - Mrs. Exum made the motion to accept the current Airport Authority Board member appointments until additional information is received regarding all the terms expiring in July, Mr. Larko seconded. The Board voted unanimously.

## **FY2024 Annual Appointments**

The Board made the following Board/Committee appointments for FY2024:

### **Boards/Committees**

Brooks County Library Board	Mr. Willie Cody
Brooks County Airport Authority	Mr. Lee Larko
Brooks County Board of Health	Mr. James Maxwell
Council on Aging	Ms. Myra Exum
Coastal Plain Area, E.O. A.	Mr. James Maxwell
Chamber of Commerce	Mr. Patrick Folsom
Regional Commission Board	Mr. Patrick Folsom
Dept. of Family & Children Services	Ms. Myra Exum
Mid South RC & D Council	Mr. Lee Larko
Lowndes-Valdosta MPO	Mr. Patrick Folsom
Recreation Department	Mr. Willie Cody
South Regional Joint Development Authority Board	Ms. Myra Exum
ACCG Appointment	Mr. Patrick Folsom
Seven Rivers RC & D	Administrator

Mrs. Exum made the motion to accept the previous Board/Committee appointments from FY2023, Mr. Cody seconded. The Board voted unanimously.

### **FY2024 Building Assignments**

County Admin Building	Mr. James Maxwell
Agriculture Building & Annex	Mr. Patrick Folsom
Courthouse	Mr. Lee Larko
Sheriff's Department (Jail & C.I.D.)	Ms. Myra Exum
Public Works	Mr. Willie Cody
Voting Precincts	Mr. Lee Larko
E-911 Center	Mr. Willie Cody
Multi-Purpose Building (Head Start & Senior Center)	Mr. James Maxwell
Fire Departments	Ms. Myra Exum
Washington Street Gym	Mr. Willie Cody/Mr. James Maxwell
Boys and Girls Club	Mr. Cody

The motion was made by Mr. Maxwell and unanimously accepted that the FY2023 Building Assignments will remain the same for FY2024, seconded by Mr. Larko.

### **FY2024 Other Appointments**

On the motion by Mrs. Exum, seconded by Mr. Cody, the Board voted unanimously to approve the FY2024 Other Appointments to remain the same as FY2023 appointments, changing the ADA Coordinator from Melissa Smith to Ms. Sherry Davidson and Safety Coordinator from Chief Ralph Catlett to Fire Chief Ricky Weeks:

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County Attorney	Burchett & Kemp, LLC
County Auditor	Mr. Gary Zeigler
County Clerk	Ms. Patricia Williams
ADA Coordinator	Ms. Sherry Davidson
Safety Coordinator	Fire Chief Ricky Weeks

On the motion by Mr. Maxwell, seconded by Mr. Cody, the Board unanimously approved the current DFACS Board members.

DFACS Board – District 1	Mr. Nick Hampton (June 30, 2026)
DFACS Board – District 2	Ms. Molly Radford (June 2025)
DFACS Board – District 3	Ms. Pinky Brown (June 2025)
DFACS Board – District 4	Ms. Ann Guess (June 2027)
DFACS Board – District 5	Ms. Mary Thomas (June 2025)

Board of Health (6 yr. term)	Ms. Toni Brinson (Dec. 2028)
	Ms. Shelley Kirkendoll (Dec 2027)
	Mr. Shawn Tatham (Dec 2029)

Library Board Appointments (3-year terms)	Ms. Julie Swann (July 2025)
	Mr. Willie Cody (July 2025)
	Ms. Patty Hancock (July 2025)
	Ms. Mary Henley (July 2025)

South Regional Joint Dev. Auth. (4 years)	Mr. Jason Shaw (Mar. 1, 2019-2023)
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Joint Development Auth.	Mr. Jack Harrell (Dec 2022)
	Mrs. Stephanie Williams (Dec 2023)

Tax Assessor’s Board	Mr. Brewer Bentley (Dec 2024)
	Mr. Ralph Manning (Dec 2026)
	Mr. Melvin DeShazor (Dec 2025)

Elections Board	Mr. Karl Britton (Dec 2025)
	Ms. Karen Murray (Dec 2026)
	Mr. Don DiStefano (Dec 2024)

South Georgia Community Service Board	Ms. Gerry Folsom (Sept 2024)
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Brooks County Development Authority 3-year terms	Mr. Tyler Hart (Dec 2025) D1
	Vacant (Dec 2023) D2
	Mr. Ulysses Marable (Dec 2025) D3
	Mr. Derren Yearby (Dec 2024) D4

Mr. John LaHood (Dec 2024) D5  
Dr. Marie Horne (Dec 2026) D6  
Ms. Erin McKenzie (Dec 2025) D6

Appointment to Behavioral Health Board  
(3-year terms)

Mr. Donnie Ware (Dec 2024)

Quitman – Brooks Co. Airport Authority  
(4 Yr. Terms)

Rep. John LaHood (July 2027)  
Mr. Robin McDaniel (July 2027)  
Mr. Lee Larko (July 2027)  
Mr. Kenny Marshall (July 2027)  
Mr. Timmy Hiers (July 2027)

Brooks County Historical Society  
Est. June 2022

Ms. Jennifer Edwards (Dec 2025) 3 yrs.  
Ms. Jacquelyn Harper (Dec 2024) 2 yrs.  
Ms. Cynthia Huewitt (Dec 2024) 2 yrs.  
Dr. Marie Horne (Dec 2025) 3 yrs.  
Mr. James Maxwell (Dec 2024) 1 yr.

## **9. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Special Exception – Keith & Jacquelyne Sirmans – Transfer Venue into their Name**

The Board unanimously approved the request for a special exception from Mr. & Mrs. Sirmans to transfer the community venue into their name on the motion by Mrs. Exum, Mr. Cody seconded. Mr. Larko emphasized that the owner/manager be at the venue during events.

**B. 2024 Property & Liability Insurance & Workers' Compensation Renewal** – Mr. Larko made the motion to approve the renewal of the 2024 Property & Liability Insurance & Workers' Compensation, Mr. Cody seconded. The vote passed unanimously.

**C. Magistrate Court – Approve Full time Position** – This item was tabled.

**D. CAT Financial – Resolution to Lease, Purchase, and/or Finance – 2023 Cat Hydraulic Excavator** – this item was deleted from the agenda.

**E. Public Defender Office – Renewal – Indigent Defense Services Agreement** – This item was approved for renewal on the motion by Mr. Maxwell, seconded by Mr. Larko.

**F. Set Qualifying Fees for 2024 Elections & Authorize Publication of Same – Resolution**  
The Resolution to Set Qualifying Fees for the 2024 Election and Authorizing Publication of Same (24-R-01) was unanimously approved on the motion by Mrs. Exum and seconded by Mr. Larko.



**G. Possible Change to Board of Commissioners Meeting Location** – The motion was made by Mr. Maxwell to move the Commissioners meetings back to the Administration Building in the Commissioners Meeting Room located at 610 South Highland Road, Quitman, GA, but if a large attendance is expected, the meetings will be held at the Courthouse in the Courtroom, Mr. Larko seconded. The Board voted unanimously.

**10. PUBLIC COMMENTS – (5 MINUTES)**

**A. Edward Lamons – Beulah Hill Missionary Baptist Church** – Mr. Lamons requested to appear on behalf of Beulah Hill Missionary Baptist Church to discuss the paving of Hodges Road that leads to Beulah Hill Missionary Baptist Church. He stated that there is difficulty leaving and entering the church. The road is difficult to drive on when it is wet or dry. The community does not feel safe driving on the road. It has been 20+ years and there has been no change, Hodges Road has not been paved, and the discussion seems to go back and forth, Mr. Lamons stated. Mr. Lamons would like to speak/meet with the County Administrator to discuss. He further stated that he will not give up and will take to the Governor's office. Mr. Maxwell explained that years ago one resident would not give up ROW. Mr. Lamons was advised that Hodges Road is on the Second Round TIA project list.

**B. David Grimm – Septic Tank Problem – Ditches not Being Cleaned Properly** - Mr. Grimm requested to address his concerns with the septic tank problem when it rains, due to the ditches not being properly cleaned; and states it is now affecting his health. He stated the ditches need to be cleaned to let the water flow through away from his house. The property is in Fawn Heights, and all the residents are experiencing problems. Mr. Grimm inquired if the County could help figure out the problem. The Board advised that the Engineer would go look at and assess the problem.

County Administrator introduced the new Road Superintendent, Mr. David Kress. Mr. Kress stated that he is looking forward to working with the County and getting back on track.

**11. ADMINISTRATION/ELECTED OFFICIALS UPDATES**

**A. County Administrator Updates**

**B. Commissioners Notes/Comments**

- **Lee Larko (District 1)**
- **Patrick Folsom, Chairman (District 2)**
- **Willie Cody (District 3)**
- **Myra Exum (District 4)** – Advised everyone to be safe.
- **James Maxwell, Vice (District 5)**

**12. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**A. Pending Litigation** – County Attorney updated the Board on pending litigations.

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Maxwell made the motion to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:01 p.m.; Mr. Larko seconded.

Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman

Mrs. Jessica J. McKinney, County Administrator

Ms. Patricia A. Williams, Clerk