

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for its Regular Business Meeting on Monday, July 7, 2025 at 5:00 p.m., in the Commissioners Meeting Room, located at the Brooks County Administration Building, located at 610 South Highland Road, Quitman, GA. Commissioners present were: Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman, Mr. James Maxwell, Vice Chairman; Mrs. Myra Exum; Mr. Willie Cody; and Mr. Lee Larko. Others present were Mr. Buddy Johnson, County Administrator; Ms. Patricia Williams, County Clerk; Ms. Kim Daniels, Human Resources; Ms. Janice Jarvis, Finance Director; Mr. Jason Kemp, County Attorney, and various residents.

I. PUBLIC HEARING – NONE

A. Chairman called for a moment of silence for former employee, Mr. Melvin Austin, who passed; and for the victims in Texas who has suffered damage from the storm.

II. CALL TO ORDER

A. Prayer & Pledge – Pastor Jim Pitt, Brooks County Ministerial Association, led all in attendance in prayer and pledge of allegiance.

III. COMMISSIONER BUSINESS PRESENTATION – (5 MINUTES)

A. Recognition of Award – Haley Clark – 4-H Agent – Mrs. Exum stated the Board and Brooks County wanted to take this opportunity to recognize Mrs. Clark for her award received during the 2025 Georgia Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals state meeting; and for being the recipient of the Outstanding New Extension Professional award for the Southwest District. She was also elected to serve as the GAE4-HYDP Southwest District Junior Director for the upcoming program year. Mrs. Clark had an opportunity to present a poster she created to showcase the growth and accomplishments of the Brooks County 4-H Program. Mrs. Clark stated that when she started with the 4-H Cloverleaf Program, there were less than 10 participants. Currently, there are over 40 participants outside of school, and the program has grown. Mrs. Exum and the Board thanked her and wished her continuous success. Mrs. Clark thanked the Board for their recognition.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA – One Motion for Approval on all Items – (Johnson)

A. Approval of prior meeting minutes

On the motion by Mr. Larko, seconded by Mrs. Exum, the Board unanimously approved all the following minutes for June 2025:

- 1) CA019-2025** – Regular Business Meeting – June 2, 2025
- 2) CA020-2025** - Special Called – June 18, 2025
- 3) CA021-2025** – Special Called/Work Session – June 30, 2025

V. FORMAL ACTION REQUESTS–Commissioners Discussion with Action (Johnson)

A. Approve/Disapprove/Other Official Actions

1) FA040-2025 – Bid Awards

- 2025 LMIG – Barwick – Two bids received: Reames & Son Construction \$4,168,795.00 and Scruggs Company \$3,998,122.85. Will be funded with LMIG funds.
- Hickory Head Road Bridge Repair – One bid received: Southern Concrete Construction \$303,820.00. This project will be funded with the 2025 LMIG supplement funds (LRA).
- Jail Renovations/Painting – Two Bids received: Barber Contracting Company \$310,335.50 and Southeastern Tank & Tower \$552,840.00. This will be funded as a capital purchase from the

General Fund. Mr. Maxwell made the motion to accept and award the following bids; Mr. Larko seconded. The vote was unanimous:

- 2025 LMIG – Scruggs Company for \$3,998,122.85
- Hickory Head Road Bridge Repair – Southern Concrete Construction for \$303,820.00
- Jail Renovations/Painting – Barber Contracting Company for \$310,335.50

2) FA041-2025 – Modifications to the Employee Health Benefit Plan – Ms. Kim Daniels, HR Coordinator, presented the modifications from Taylor Benefit Resource (TBR) to the Board. After a thorough review and analysis by Brooks County, it was determined that modifications needed to be made to the Employee Health Benefit Plan. Effective January 1, 2026, the buy-up and regular plan will be combined into one plan as well as implementing a Wellness Program. The new plan will have a \$2,000.00 deductible. If the County chooses to participate in the Wellness Program, we will have the ability to earn credits toward the new deductible when meeting specified criteria for any or all of the identified conditions: Tobacco/Nicotine Use, Blood Pressure, Blood Glucose, and LDL Cholesterol. Starting January 1, 2027, a \$25.00 surcharge will be added per pay period for any use of tobacco products.

3) FA042-2025 – Coastal Plains Co-Op – Proposal for Fuel Supply – Administrator Johnson stated that no action is needed and requested the Board table this item until the work session. He will reach out to the current provider. Mr. Larko made the motion to table until the work session, Mr. Cody seconded.

4) FA043-2025 – Bridges of Hope – Administrator Johnson stated that all the requirements have been met. Bridges of Hope is requesting Opioid funds in the amount of \$34,394.80, \$32,400.00 for Scholarships for the program and \$1,994.80 for purchase of additional materials related to the Narcotics Anonymous Program. The Board unanimously approved the funding from the Opioid Litigation Settlement fund (\$34,394.80) on the motion by Mrs. Exum, seconded by Mr. Maxwell, and will provide quarterly updates to the Finance Department.

VI. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES & DEPARTMENTS – (5 MINUTES)

A. Brooks County Ag Extension – Michasia Dowdy, CEC/ANR Agent – Introduction of New 2nd Ag Agent – Mrs. Michasia Dowdy, requested to be on the agenda to introduce the new second Ag Agent, Jacob for the Extension Office to the Board and Brooks County. He started July 1 and is getting familiar with the area. Mr. Jacob introduced himself stating, he is from Griffin, GA, joined the Marine Corps, attended ABAC, UGA. He discovered that he had a love for agriculture and got a master's degree. He is looking forward to working with Brooks County and the community.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Fire Fee Settlement – Discussion – Attorney Kemp provided a summary of the fire fee litigation settlement. The Board voted/approved the settlement of \$1 million during the special called meeting on June 18, 2025. County Attorney Kemp stated that the meeting date was moved up so the court would have time to preview. He began by informing those present that it is a class action claim stating the fire fee was illegally passed. There is a difference between a fire tax and fire fee. It should go through tax procedures because it is not a fee. The Board approved an Ordinance in 2014 to set fees for fire protection services for unincorporated Brooks County to streamline easy collection for fire protection. Plenty of Georgia counties uses this and have adopted an ordinance. Brooks County is not

the only county that has gotten sued. There is a four-part test; the fee is related to the benefit received; there is a charge for a particular service; the Payor of the fee receives benefit, and the non-fee payor does not receive benefit. The plaintiff in the case addressed the issue of non-fee payors still getting fire protection as well as the payors of the fee. The fee is set on the type of property; there is no uniformity on the size of the property; the fee is the same whether the property is large or small. The Board was advised to try and settle the case due to the scope of liability if Brooks County is found liable for unintentional unlawful tax. The settlement was negotiated for \$1million. If it had gone to trial; it would likely have ended up with an \$8 Million judgment; it could have gone down to \$4 Million if litigation counsel was successful in attacking the class certification. The funds will go to the Class Action account, if all funds are not disbursed, funds will come back to the County. The County Attorney wanted to provide information so that the citizens in attendance could understand that the Board did what they thought was in the best interest of Brooks County. But the settlement had to be approved before July 1 and then go to the Judge for signature. This was not the choice of the Board; this is not what they wanted to do; but it could have been a larger windfall if the case went to court.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS – (JOHNSON)

- 1) NB007-2025 – Dr. Marie Horne – Philanthropic Public Advocacy Programs, Inc. – Opioid Litigation Settlement Funding** – This item rescheduled by Dr. Horne and was stricken from the agenda.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS – (2 MINUTES) – (Requests must be prior to the work session) - NONE

X. ADMINISTRATION/ELECTED OFFICIALS UPDATES

A. Administration Updates

- Received 2026 LMIG Formula Amount for Fiscal Year 2026 - \$919,205.73. These funds will be dedicated to the Barwick Road project.
- Introduced the newly hired employee for Zoning Administrator/Code Enforcement, Justin Gibbs.
- Provided a copy of the Development Authority's 2024-2025 Budget for Board review. Will be discussed at the work session.

B. Commissioners Notes/Comments

- **Lee Larko (District 1)** – Suggested created a contest with the schools for students to create art to go on t-shirts for the 250th year celebration.
- **Patrick Folsom, Chairman (District 2)** – Agreed with Mr. Larko and stated let's make it happen. Commented on the great participation on the 4th of July event.
- **Willie Cody (District 3)** – Commented on a wonderful job by the Chairman and Kim Daniels; everything was great.
- **Myra Exum (District 4)** – Recognized the Chairman and everyone that helped with the 4th of July event, and thanks for the community.
- **James Maxwell, Vice (District 5)** – Thanked the Chairman and Kim Daniels for a great job on the 4th of July event; it was superb and the best in the area.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Personnel

The Board closed the regular meeting to go into executive session on a motion by Mr. Larko, seconded by Mr. Larko. No action was taken when the Board returned to the regular meeting.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Exum motioned to adjourn the regular business meeting at 6:32 pm, Mr. Larko seconded.

Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman

Mr. James (Buddy) Johnson, County Administrator

Ms. Patricia A. Williams, County Clerk