

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for its Regular Monthly Meeting on Monday, March 3, 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

II. CALL TO ORDER

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

Amend Agenda – Mrs. Exum made the motion to amend the agenda to add under Formal Action Requests, FA018-2025 IGA; and add Item B, Personnel, under Executive Session, Mr. Larko seconded. Vote carried.

III. COMMISSIONER BUSINESS PRESENTATION – (5 MINUTES)

A. Paul Smith – ACCG Retirement Services – Mr. Paul Smith, representing ACCG Retirement Services, presented enhancements to the county’s retirement plan. He stated there would be no enhancement needed for the current Defined Benefit Plan; but presented options for the 457(b) to add the Roth option at no cost; and the 401(a) with the cost based on participation, finite amount to budget annually; and recommended a 3% match for the employee and the county. The proposal provides an enhanced benefit to all employees without incurring any long-term liability to the County. The annual cost of 401(a) can be budgeted based on adopted payroll. All current employees’ time will count towards vesting so there is no negative impact on employees. The proposal provides an income replacement over a 30-year working period with a 3% match of 59.5%.

B. Michael Smith – United Way – Mr. Michael Smith, Executive Director, Greater Valdosta United Way, stated he continues to work with state and federal legislators to secure funding to extend the 211 system into South Georgia. Georgia is not at 100% coverage. It is a United Way priority and greatly needed, especially in rural communities. In the aftermath of Hurricane Idalia, Greater Valdosta United Way and partner nonprofits collaborated with city and county officials to establish strategic locations across affected areas for food distribution and coordinated multiple state and national agencies that arrived to provide disaster relief. The Greater Valdosta United Way provided \$802,200 to 22 impact partner nonprofits to fund various programs and services that address health, education, financial stability, and basic needs. Mr. Smith further stated there are 80 counties available for DCA HUD funding. He stated to the Board that GVUW is here to help; and to let him know how United Way can assist Brooks County communities.

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

A) Approval of prior meeting minutes

On the motion by Mr. Maxwell, seconded by Mr. Larko, the Board unanimously approved all the following:

- 1) **CA013-2025** – Regular Business Meeting – February 3, 2025
- 2) **CA014-2025** - Special Called/Work Session – February 21, 2025
- 3) **CA015-2025** – Executive Session – December 30, 2024
- 4) **CA016-2025** – Abandonment Process – Marlo Road

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

A. Approve/Disapprove/Other Official Actions

1) FA014-2025 – Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) – The Board approved the Resolution Adopting a Temporary Moratorium on Battery Energy Storage Systems to Promote Public Health, Safety, and Welfare for six months until they get more detailed information on a motion by Mr. Larko, seconded by Mr. Maxwell. Vote was unanimous.

2) FA015-2025 – Alcohol License Application & Fees – County Attorney provided an amendment to the Ordinance to supplement Section 6, Article II, of the Brooks County Code related to the sale of distilled spirits in Brooks County. The purpose and intent of the Ordinance is to regulate the sale of distilled spirits in Brooks County. The title of Article II of Section 6 shall be amended to read, “Malt Beverages, Wine, and Distilled Spirits”. Section 6-45 is amended to include an annual license fee for distilled spirits in the amount of \$300 for packaging only and \$400 for consumption on premises. This fee is required in addition to the annual license fee for malt beverages and/or wine. The Ordinance will be placed at the Courthouse for 30 days, and an ad will be published in the newspaper for review. On the motion by Mr. Larko, the Board unanimously approved moving forward with the Ordinance update, including regulations for distilled spirits in Brooks County, Mr. Cody seconded.

3) FA016-2025 – FY2023-2024 Auditor Engagement Letter – The Board approved moving forward and engage with CKH CPAs & Advisors for the FY2023-2024 Audit on the motion by Mrs. Exum, seconded by Mr. Maxwell.

4) FA017-2025 – Opioid Funding Consideration – The Board tabled this item until after the March 14, 2025, submission date for all qualified applicants who wish to obtain a portion of the Opioid Settlement Funding, Mr. Larko made the motion, Mrs. Exum seconded.

5) FA018-2025 – Intergovernmental Agreement Between Brooks County and Thomas County Relative to the Establishment of a Regional Board of Equalization in Accord with O.C.G.A. 48-5-311(a)(4) – Chief Tax Appraiser, Wayne Waldron, presented a copy of the IGA between Brooks County and Thomas County to establish a Regional Board of Equalization with respect to ad valorem tax appeals; both parties deem this contract is in the best interest of the parties and their respective citizens. Mr. Larko motioned to move forward with partnering with Thomas County to establish a Regional Board of Equalization, seconded by Mrs. Exum. The motion carried.

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

A. Brooks County Finance Director Report – Janice Jarvis – Finance Director, Ms. Janice Jarvis, presented a copy of the finance report of budget vs. expenditure for the period ending February 28, 2025:

- Reporting the normal percentage for this portion of the fiscal year is 66.64%.
- Currently in the process of completing a detailed review of this year's trial balance to determine any posting errors and needed budget transfers.
- The Finance Staff will be moving to the new location at 115 East Screven Street during the next couple of weeks. Extremely appreciative of the opportunity to relocate to the new facility.
- Per the budget calendar, the budget process will begin this week with budget reports and worksheets being sent out to all department heads and constitutional officers.
- Upon the Board's approval of the CKH engagement letter, the group will be notified and process to complete the FY2023-2024 audit.
- Has touched base with the DOAA and have been informed that Brooks County does not qualify for further extension consideration.

B. Brooks County 911/EMA Department Report – Director LaToya Hampton

Brooks County 911

- 1945 calls for service received February 2025.
- 24 new addresses added to the County
- Leaving Sunday for GECC Conference in Columbus and return Thursday, available by phone

Brooks County EMA

- Debris cleanup is complete for the County on February 24, 2025. Signed the final paperwork with FEMA and Ashbritt.
- Citizens are asking for debris pickup, advised them debris pickup is complete. They want to know if they can burn; advised them to call GA Forestry 229-775-4948.
- Special thanks to Mr. Buddy and Mr. Folsom for the debris removal.
- Thanks to Mr. Buddy, Sheriff Dewey, City of Quitman, Morven, School System, along with no profits for helping to get rid of MREs.
- Brooks County has been approved for Direct housing from FEMA. There will be a meeting on March 5, 2025 by phone or virtual via Zoom with Kim Daniels and James Horton.
- 15,372 meals were removed from Brooks County Annex before the hog show. Pallets were picked up by different counties, North Carolina and Churches.
- The Church of Christ on Courtland Avenue, Quitman, GA, has agreed to be our Red Cross shelter in the event of a disaster.
- A Hazard Mitigation meeting will be held on March 19, 2025 in Thomas County.

C. Brooks County Fire Department Report – Chief Weeks – Chief Weeks provided an update on activities for the Fire Department for February 2025:

- Brooks County Fire Department received 81 calls for service.
- Calls included no structure fires, two vehicle fires, 12 brush fires, 5 fire alarms, eight controlled burns, 4 electrical equipment fires, a total of 23 medical calls, vehicle accidents

were 9, no extrications; 16 canceled/nothing found, no trees were down and had two other calls.

- **Structure Fires: None**
- **Training:** EMT-B Class is still on going. Trained on 1410 drills (hose deployment, search and rescue).
- **New:** We have our new brush truck chassis and have ordered the new tank, pump, reel and hose needed to get it in service.
- **Updates:** Completed servicing the hydrants.
- **Morven:** As of March 1, 2025, Morven is no longer a part of Brooks County's Fire Department.
- **East Brooks** – Nothing new.
- **Employee Update:** Except for one Firefighter all personnel are at least NPQ Firefighter II currently. We have one Firefighter that must test on Hazmat Ops to complete his Firefighter II certification.

D. Brooks County Public Works Department Report – Project Manager -Kyle Christian - Kyle Christian, Project Manager, reported for February 2025:

- During February, the Road Department received 89 work orders and completed 64 work orders. We had quite a bit of rain in February that played havoc with the roads. We have numerous pipe installations to be done all over the county.
- **District 1:** Graded roads, added material where it was needed to fix washouts, cleaned ditches and culverts, filled in potholes, busted beaver dams, and installed new road signs. We spent most of the month grading the roads and cleaning out ditches.
- **District 2:** Built up roads, graded, cleaned ditches and culverts, repaired potholes, installed new signs. Performed various clean ups on roads and busted beaver dams. We installed new pipes on Knights Ferry Road, Beulah Church Road, and Union Church Road. We have harvested sand from McCarty Road to use on other projects.
- **District 3:** Built up roads, graded cleaned ditches and culverts, and repaired potholes. Material was spread where needed for washouts.
- **District 4:** We continued to grade roads, clean ditches and culverts, install road signs, and add materials where needed for washouts. Prepared potholes on numerous roads. Repaired potholes on numerous roads. Worked on Mt. Zion Road, Fodie Road, Peacock Road, and Candleglow. Hauled away nine loads of dirt from Williams Road from ditch cleanouts. Installed pipes on Clower Road, Jones Creek at Clower Road, Troupeville Road, and Jamar Trail. We have completed filling all the potholes on Crosbytown Road.
- **District 5:** Graded roads, repaired signs, beaver dam removals, ditch work, and added materials. Worked on building up Collins Road. Hauled nine loads of sand from White Road.
- We continue to clean out ditches on all roads and help water to flow when it rains. Performing more pipe installs to correct any problems from the past. Despite problems with the weather, we are making progress. We will continue to keep Brooks County beautiful one road at a time.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – NONE

VIII. NEW BUSINESS – (Johnson)

1) **NB003-2025- Highway 84 Property Issue – Jack Langdale, Attorney** – Attorney Langdale presented on behalf of his client, Mr. Jon O. Johnson, property owner, three parcels of land with corresponding plats. For each parcel, the highlighted portion on the plats represent where the parcel of land is as of today, except there are no roads dividing the parcels. The plats are over 100 years old, and after speaking with Chief Tax Appraiser, Wayne Waldron, some of the roads on the plats were never opened by Brooks County. Mr. Johnson’s family has owned and been in possession of these properties since at least 1952, and the roads have never been opened or used through these parcels. Attorney Langdale is requesting a quit claim deed from Brooks County for the roads that are located on the parcels. County Attorney, Jason Kemp stated it is lawful for the County to do a quit claim deed, which is most efficient. Mr. Larko motioned to proceed with the quit claim deed for the three properties, subject to a visible inspection, Mr. Cody seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS – (2 MINUTES) – (Requests must be prior to the work session)

A. Carol Williams – Fire Protection Fees – No Structure on Property – Ms. Williams was not present.

B. Chris Godfrey – Questions – Mr. Godfrey appeared again regarding the issue with adjacent property owner about the ROW on Williams Lane in Barney, GA. He was advised, as he had been previously advised by the Board and County Attorney, that the issue is a civil matter, and he needs to retain an attorney. There is nothing Brooks County can do, with due respect, and an understanding of his problem.

X. ADMINISTRATION/ELECTED OFFICIALS UPDATES

A. County Administration Updates – Administration Johnson asked the Board to consider moving the section Reports From Committees & Departments to the work session agenda.

B. Commissioners Notes/Comments

- **Lee Larko (District 1)** – Suggested putting the minutes of Committees and any Board that is seated by the County on the County’s website.
- **Patrick Folsom, Chairman (District 2)** – Complimented Mr. Robert Vann, Brooks County Roadside Mowing, on doing a really good job. A total of 138 roads have been completed.
- **Willie Cody (District 3)** – No comment.
- **Myra Exum (District 4)** – No comment.
- **James Maxwell, Vice (District 5)** – Suggested putting a hyperlink on the website for Committees/Boards to access minutes.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Litigation – County Attorney updated the Board on pending litigation.

B. Personnel – No action taken.

The Board went out of executive session and returned to the regular business meeting on the motion by Mrs. Exum, seconded by Mr. Larko

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Maxwell moved to adjourn the regular meeting at 6:51 pm; Mr. Larko seconded.

Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman

Mr. James (Buddy) Johnson, County Administrator

Patricia A. Williams, County Clerk