

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Lee Hearn, Chairman
Edward Gibbons, Vice Chairman
Eric K. Maxwell
Charles D. Rousseau
Charles W. Oddo



FAYETTE COUNTY, GEORGIA

Steve Rapson, County Administrator
Dennis A. Davenport, County Attorney
Tameca P. Smith, County Clerk
Marlena Edwards, Chief Deputy County Clerk

140 Stonewall Avenue West
Public Meeting Room
Fayetteville, GA 30214

MINUTES

January 8, 2026
5:00 p.m.

Welcome to the meeting of your Fayette County Board of Commissioners. Your participation in County government is appreciated. All regularly scheduled Board meetings are open to the public and are held on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month at 5:00 p.m.

ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION:

Call to Order by County Attorney Dennis Davenport

County Attorney Dennis Davenport called the January 8, 2026, Board of Commissioners meeting to order. He stated that in accordance with Section 252 of the Fayette County Code of Ordinance, he had the duty and responsibility to open the first meeting of the year.

Election of Board Chairman for the year 2026

Mr. Davenport outlined the process for election of the Chair of the Board of Commissioners. He opened the floor for nominations:

Commissioner Edward Gibbons nominated Commissioner Lee Hearn as Chairman.

Commissioner Eric Maxwell moved to close the nominations for Chair. Commissioner Gibbons seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Commissioner Gibbons moved to elect Lee Hearn as Chairman. Commissioner Maxwell seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Davenport turned the meeting over to Chairman Hearn.

Election of Board Vice Chairman for the year 2026

Commissioner Hearn opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chairman.

Commissioner Maxwell nominated Edward Gibbons as Vice Chair.

Commissioner Maxwell moved to close the nominations for Vice Chair. Chairman Hearn seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Chairman Hearn moved to elect Edward Gibbons as Vice Chairman. Commissioner Maxwell seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

OFFICIAL SESSION:

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance by Commissioner Eric Maxwell

Commissioner Maxwell acknowledged the recent passing of former Chief Information Officer Phil Frieder, noting his intellect and emphatic personality. Commissioner Maxwell extended his thoughts to Mr. Frieder's family and asked to take a moment of silence in his honor. Commissioner Maxwell gave the Invocation and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Acceptance of Agenda

Vice Chairman Gibbons moved to approve the agenda as written. Commissioner Maxwell seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

PROCLAMATION/RECOGNITION:

1. **Recognition of the Fayette County Annual Merry Wreath Decorating Contest winners.**

County Administrator Steve Rapson recognized the winners of the Merry Wreath Decorating Contest. Third Place - Finance; Second Place – Building Safety; First Place – Assessor’s Office

PUBLIC HEARING:

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Williams of Fayetteville expressed her concerned with consent items 2- 4, regarding the check authorization amount increase noting these were tax payer funds and the need for transparency.

Mr. Rapson explained what this change consisted of outlining the checks and balances in place ensuring fiduciary responsibility.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Vice Chairman Gibbons moved to approve the Consent Agenda expect item #8. Commissioner Oddo seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

2. **Approval of authorization for the Chairman, Vice Chairman and County Administrator, in any combination of two, to sign checks, and to increase the check amount requiring second signature from \$5,000 and higher to \$20,000 and higher.**
3. **Approval of authorization to sign checks for transactions in the amount of \$19,999.99 or less: Chairman, Vice Chairman, County Administrator.**
4. **Approval of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and the County Administrator to execute contracts, resolutions, agreements, or other documents approved by and on behalf of the Board of Commissioners.**
5. **Approval to accept a State funded supplemental grant award for the DUI Accountability Court in the amount of \$8,400 with a match of \$1,260 for enhancement and innovation of treatment.**
6. **Approval for Fayette County Fire and Emergency Services to accept the FY2026 Firefighter Cancer Reduction Awareness Program Reimbursement Grant from ACCG-LGRMS (Local Government Risk Management) in the amount of \$4,913.39.**
7. **Approval for Fayette County Fire and Emergency Services to accept the FY2026 Trauma Equipment Reimbursement Grant from the Georgia Trauma Commission in the amount of \$10,662.66.**
8. **Ratification of revisions to three (3) previously approved permanent easements for Georgia Power's Ashley Park - Creola 230 kV Transmission Line.**

Commissioner Rousseau stated that he pulled this item to maintain consistency with his vote. He noted that he understood the revisions but when originally presented he voted against this project and wanted to maintain consistency. Commissioner Oddo stated that he would be voting against this item as well to maintain his original vote.

Vice Chairman Gibbons moved to approve ratification of revisions to three (3) previously approved permanent easements for Georgia Power's Ashley Park - Creola 230 kV Transmission Line. Commissioner Maxwell seconded. The motion passed 3-2, with Commissioner Oddo and Commissioner Rousseau voting in opposition.

9. **Approval of a recommendation from the Selection Committee, comprised of Chairman Lee Hearn and Vice Chairman Edward Gibbons to appoint Philip Crane to the Fayette County Board of Health to an unexpired term beginning January 1, 2022 and expiring December 31, 2027.**
10. **Approval of a recommendation from the Selection Committee, comprised of Fayette County Staff, to reappoint Jim Poff to the Fayette County Water Committee for a term beginning January 1, 2026 and expiring December 31, 2029.**
11. **Approval of Board of Assessors' recommendation to approve a disposition of tax refund, as requested by Mike Gassman, President of Flat Creek Villas HOA, in the amount of \$1,533.27 for tax year(s) 2023 and 2024.**
12. **Approval of Board of Assessors' recommendation to approve a disposition of tax refund, as requested by Bryan Hallock, as agent for Daniel M Boglioli, trustee of the Dorothy Reinecke estate, in the amount of \$584.47 for tax year(s) 2022, 2023, and 2024.**
13. **Approval of December 8, 2025, Special Called Millage Rate Hearing Minutes.**
14. **Approval of December 11, 2025, Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes.**

OLD BUSINESS:

15. **Discussion, at the request of Chief Judge Scott Ballard, of the Superior Court Judges' compensation, pursuant to House Bill 85, and the request for a merit-based increase for Superior Court Judges' staff members.**

Chief Judge Scott Ballard of the Griffin Judicial Circuit stated that he was accompanied by all five Superior Court Judges and the 6th District County Administrator Will Simmons. Judge Ballard outlined who the 6th District Judicial Court Circuit covered and the expansiveness of its services. He stated that he was here to discuss with the Board, House Bill 85, and the request for a merit-based increase for Superior Court Judges' staff members. He noted that throughout the years the state set the salary for superior court judges, and the circuits willing to supplement them. This led to inconsistency in compensation statewide. Judge Ballard thanked the Board and the entire Griffin Judicial Circuit for their generosity in supporting supplemental pay. In an effort to equalize superior court judges pay, the State gave everyone a "raise" and for a limited period, they left open the opportunity to have what was deemed "locality" pay. He explained that in order to receive the locality pay the circuit would have to opt-in to the new pay structure and forfeit the supplemental pay, which they have all done. He stated that he and the others were before the Board asking for supplemental pay. He noted that it was significantly less than what it would have been. Judge Ballard stated that the locality pay was about \$20k per judge and the supplemental pay was about \$50k per judge, which would be a savings to the County by doing so. He noted that this amount would be a shared cost of the circuit. Judge Ballard stated that from his understanding, every other circuit in the district approved the locality pay for their judges. In this circuit, two of the four counties have approved it, awaiting decisions from Fayette County and Spalding County. Judge Ballard expressed his concern regarding the reason why this item had been tabled initially and stated that the agenda noted that it had been tabled so that intergovernmental agreements could be established between the counties. He stated that while intergovernmental agreements are necessary, in this case it would not be appropriate. Judge Ballard did acknowledge that there was a need for an actual agreement that outlined expenses, contributions amounts, budget allocations etc. However, he did not agree with having the locality pay associated or coupled with said agreement. Judge Ballard asked the Board for a decision either to approve or deny the request separate from any type of intergovernmental agreement. Judge Ballard outlined a few reasons why he felt locality pay should be approved. From an equitable standpoint they felt they should not be some of the lowest paid judges in the circuit. Also, he noted the senior judges' "program" that availed retired judges the opportunity to serve in "substitute" judge capacity. This was an amazing incentive and one they had not had the opportunity to participate in, in the past but with the recent announcement of

Judge Fletcher's retirement at the end of January. He noted that the real benefit for the participants was that they would continue to receive two-thirds of their supplement as retirement. And they were asking for the Board approval to make that same provision with locality pay. He noted that they circuit based on the numbers qualified for a sixth superior court judge but had not asked for one, and while majority of the cost of that position would be the responsibility of the state, there would be local costs.

Judge Fletcher Sams humbly thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak this evening and briefly outlined his tenure in Fayette County and the years of support received through Fayette County Board of Commissioners. He noted that while the numbers discussed looked like a considerable increase in salary it was not a raise in the actual sense of a raise being a reward for performance. He noted that this would not affect their judicial discretion or work ethic regardless of the decision. He added that his dedication in serving a senior judge would not be affected by the decision either. Judge Sams concluded, stating that he did not agree with having the locality pay associated or coupled with an intergovernmental agreement they should remain separate.

Judge Ben Coker briefly explained the rationale behind House Bill 85 and why locality pay was important and should be approved. He noted that the HB85 was intended to establish consistency and uniformity throughout the state amongst superior court judges' compensation, as highlighted by Judge Ballard. He noted that HB85 recognized superior judges as the workhorses of the judiciary and this was an attempt to provide compensation accordingly. Judge Coker continued breaking down how HB85 compensation would work as it related to supplemental and locality pay. He noted that the requested compensation costs could be covered in the current budget. He stated that they were not asking for additional money for FY26 but was seeking the approval of a resolution supporting locality pay for this year and future years. He provided a few first-hand experiences of what life as a judge looked like. He noted that he and fellow colleagues had had their life threatened, been followed, harassed, and accosted as a result of presiding over the bench. He relayed these experiences to show the effect their jobs had on their day-to-day operations and added that they were still typically the lowest paid attorneys in the room, which was not balanced. He concluded by asking for approval for locality pay.

Commissioner Maxwell moved to approve supporting locality pay in the full amount for Superior Court Judges'. Chairman Hearn seconded.

Commissioner Maxwell stated that he understood some of the experiences outlined by Judge Coker, from his tenure as a judge and it can be scary. He continued outlining the types of cases being handled by these judges and the weight of the decisions they had to make. He noted that the Commission always maintained a great relationship with Superior Court Judges and wanted to continue to do so. Commissioner Maxwell relayed his experiences with Judge Sams and the wealth of knowledge and insight he gained over the years through him and expressed how valuable he was to the bench and in service to the citizens of Fayette County. He stated that this request was a no-brainer in his opinion and stated that it should be a separate decision not coupled with anything else. He noted that approving this request was cheaper because of the help from the state and was a relatively small amount considering Fayette County's portion. He concluded by asking for Board support.

Commissioner Oddo stated that he had the utmost respect for our superior court judges. He noted that he had no desire to couple anything as it related to this request. He also expressed his respect for the taxpayers of Fayette County. Commissioner Oddo also noted that he heard and listened to complaints and concerns of citizens regarding taxes and difficulties making ends meet. So, it was his goal to take a holistic approach in analyzing this request. He continued stating that it was rare for the state to issue a mandate without requiring the local government to pay for it. With the state taking on the burden of supplemental pay it free-up those funds to be used for other countries' needs. Commissioner Oddo stated that he appreciated all the comments and truly appreciated the work the superior court judges did.

Commissioner Maxwell moved to approve supporting locality pay in the full amount for Superior Court Judges'. Chairman Hearn seconded. The motion failed 2-3, with Vice Chairman Gibbons, Commissioner Oddo and Commissioner Rousseau voting in opposition.

County Attorney Dennis Davenport stated that in order to perfect the record of clear action taken by the Board regarding this issue, he would ask for an affirmative vote to move forward at the Board's discretion.

Commissioner Maxwell expressed his frustration at comments made regarding providing locality pay to the superior court judges he noted that in the judiciary world looking at what other judges throughout the state made, this compensation was equitable, it was earned and well deserved.

Commissioner Oddo reiterated that his comments were not a reflection of his respect and appreciation for the work provided by the superior court judges. However, he felt these funds could be used in other ways throughout the County.

Commissioner Oddo moved to deny the request for Superior Court Judges' locality pay. Vice Chairman Gibbons seconded. The motion passed 3-2, with Chairman Hearn and Commissioner Maxwell voting in opposition.

NEW BUSINESS:

16. Request to approve \$100,000 donation from Georgia Power Company to use for Kenwood Park enhancements.

Parks and Recreation Director Anita Godbee stated that this request was seeking approval of a \$100,000 donation from Georgia Power Company to use for Kenwood Park enhancements. She stated that Georgia Power understood the role public parks played in the success and well-being of the community and the residents who lived there. She noted that as a proud service provider to Kenwood Park, they recognized that the park served as an important community amenity, and they wish to further contribute to the well-being of the park and its surrounding community by donating \$100,000 to Fayette County for enhancements to Kenwood Park. She stated that under consideration were for upgrading existing park elements: 1. refurbish sand volleyball barrier netting and volleyball net post, 2. improve some erosion control around existing amenities 3. replace picnic tables at the north pavilion, and/or 4. install new park entrance/exit signs. Ms. Godbee stated that they were also considering new enhancements: 1. install swing sets, 2. install work out stations, 3. install pump track with some additional parking spaces to account for new users at the park, 4. install mountain biking trails. She stated that the donation would split the donation with \$50k designated to project that would upgrade existing elements of the park and the remaining \$50k would go towards new enhancements. She concluded asking for Board approval to accept 100,000 donation from Georgia Power Company to use for Kenwood Park enhancements.

Commissioner Rousseau moved to approve the \$100,000 donation from Georgia Power Company to use for Kenwood Park enhancements, with input being garnered via the community (i.e. surveys) regarding what enhancements the community would like at the park. Vice Chairman Gibbons seconded.

Commissioner Oddo asked if the County had a donation policy.

County Administrator Steve Rapson stated that there was a county donation policy. He noted that donation received under \$200,000 the County Administrator and the CFO could approve and would then come before the Board for ratification.

Commissioner Rousseau moved to approve the \$100,000 donation from Georgia Power Company to use for Kenwood Park enhancements, with input being garnered via the community (i.e. surveys) regarding what enhancements the community would like at the park. Vice Chairman Gibbons seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

17. Consideration of staff's recommendation to submit up to seven (7) grant applications to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) in response to the 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) solicitation.

Transportation Engineer, Paola Kimball, provided the Board with a brief overview of the grant applications to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) in response to the 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) solicitation. Mrs. Kimball explained that the TIP program was an opportunity for communities to receive funding assistance for Transportation Projects, with 80/20 split. If a project was selected, assistance would be provided for FY 2027-2028.

She noted that they were recommending two types of applications supplemental funding projects and studies/non-capital projects. She outlined the projects being considered were 1. Realignment of SR 279 and Corinth Road project, Sandy Creek

Road and Eastin Road Roundabout, Kenwood Road Path project, and the Sandy Creek Road Path project; as well as 1. SR 54 & Coweta-Fayette Connectivity Study, and 2. Redwine Road Path Gap Closure Scoping Study. She outlined where these projects were located in the county and costs, including the 20% local match associated with each project.

Mr. Rapson stated that the PowerPoint that was included as backup for this item included a seventh project for Hood Road, that was included in error and would not be sent for consideration to ARC. Staff recommended six (6) grant applications, not seven, to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) in response to the 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) solicitation.

Vice Chairman Gibbons moved to approve staff's recommendation to submit up to seven (7) grant applications to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) in response to the 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) solicitation. Commissioner Oddo seconded.

Commissioner Maxwell asked if there was a priority list for these projects, because in his opinion the realignment of SR 279 and Corinth Road project was top priority.

Mrs. Kimball stated yes, they did have to note the priority of each project, and the realignment of SR 279 and Corinth Road was at the top of the list.

Vice Chairman Gibbons amended his motion and moved to approve staff's recommendation to submit up to six (6) grant applications to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) in response to the 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) solicitation. Commissioner Oddo amended his seconded.

Commissioner Rousseau extended his appreciation for developing this list and putting these applications together because we were always looking for additional funding.

Chairman Hearn stated that this was a good project list and noted that timing of the studies was important to ensure all the work was completed at the SR 54/ SR 74 project to ensure each project was evaluating appropriately. He also broke down what the TIP entailed.

Vice Chairman Gibbons reiterated Chairman Hearn's comments and emphasized the need to wait to for the new traffic patterns to settle out before the study was conduct if not all that funding would be in vain.

Mr. Rapson noted a change from the PowerPoint that was published regarding the SR 54 & Coweta-Fayette Connectivity Study stating that the total project cost would be \$700K.

Vice Chairman Gibbons amended his motion and moved to approve staff's recommendation to submit up to six (6) grant applications to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) in response to the 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) solicitation. Commissioner Oddo amended his seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

18. Request for Fayette County to serve as the official project sponsor for Peachtree City's application to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 2026 solicitation, contingent upon Peachtree City's final project selection and cost proposal.

Public Works Director Phil Mallon stated that this item was similar to the previous item but was a request for Fayette County to serve as the official project sponsor for Peachtree City's application to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 2026 solicitation, contingent upon Peachtree City's final project selection and cost proposal.

Mr. Mallon stated that Peachtree City was currently pursuing LAP certification; however, their certification was not expected to be finalized prior to ARC's submittal deadlines. Because Fayette County was a fully LAP-certified agency, Peachtree City has requested that Fayette County act as the project sponsor for the TIP application. This project provided a grade-separated crossing and path connections allowing multi-use path traffic to safely cross State Route 54 just south of Robinson Road without interacting with highway traffic.

Vice Chairman Gibbons moved to approve for Fayette County to serve as the official project sponsor for Peachtree City's application to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 2026 solicitation, contingent upon Peachtree City's final project selection and cost proposal. Commissioner Oddo seconded.

Commissioner Maxwell emphasized his desire for this to be an esthetically pleasing and well-designed bridge that would dignify Fayette County. He urged Peachtree City to please, not build an ugly bridge.

Vice Chairman Gibbons moved to approve for Fayette County to serve as the official project sponsor for Peachtree City's application to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 2026 solicitation, contingent upon Peachtree City's final project selection and cost proposal. Commissioner Oddo seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

19. Request to award Contract #26079-S to the U.S. Department of the Interior Geological Survey (USGS) for surface water monitoring in the amount of \$274,100.

Water System Director, Vanessa Tigert, stated that this request was seeking approval to award Contract #26079-S to the U.S. Department of the Interior Geological Survey (USGS) for surface water monitoring in the amount of \$274,100.

Vice Chairman Gibbons moved to award Contract #26079-S to the U.S. Department of the Interior Geological Survey (USGS) for surface water monitoring in the amount of \$274,100. Commissioner Oddo seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORTS:

A. Contract #2612-S GIS Professional Support; Change Order #1: Pathway Evaluation Model Development

Waterline Break

Mr. Rapson advised the Board of a major disruption of a 10" line that blew-out. He stated that Ms. Tigert and her staff were working on the issue, however it was still affecting that service area. He expected service restoration around 9 p.m.-10 p.m. this evening.

ATTORNEY'S REPORTS:

Notice of Executive Session: County Attorney Dennis Davenport stated that there were four items for Executive Session. Two items involving real estate acquisition, one item of threatened litigation and the review of the December 11, 2025 Executive Session Minutes.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS:

Vice Chairman Gibbons

Vice Chairman Gibbons stated that he received an email regarding an amazing partnership and opportunity and wanted to publicly acknowledge it. He stated that Fayette County along with the Town of Brooks received a grant approval for \$9.6M to advance roadway safety in Fayette County, he extended a job well done to the team.

Commissioner Rousseau

Commissioner Rousseau extended a Happy New Year to all in attendance the Fayette County team as well as to the citizens. He echoed the sentiments extended earlier regarding the loss of former Chief Information Officer Phil Frieder and extended his condolences to his family and friends. He reminded all in attendance about the King Day Parade encouraging community participation. He concluded extending his condolence to the family of the citizen who lost their life in Minnesota. Commissioner Rousseau asked Mr. Rapson for assistance with residents concerned about increased traffic on Booker Avenue because of the new Health facility.

Commissioner Oddo

Commissioner Oddo extended his condolences to the Frieder family and noted that he had recently spoken with Mr. Frieder before the holidays and was saddened hearing the news of his passing, noting that he would be missed.

Chairman Hearn

Chairman Hearn offered his condolences to the Frieder family as well noting that he was a good man always willing to help. He concluded extending his appreciation to county staff for their continued hard work and dedication to Fayette County.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

One item involving real estate acquisition and the review of the January 8, 2026 Executive Session Minutes. Vice Chairman Gibbons moved to go into Executive Session. Commissioner Oddo seconded. The motion passed 5-0. The Board recessed into Executive Session at 6:32 p.m. and returned to Official Session at 6:58 p.m.

Return to Official Session and Approval to Sign the Executive Session Affidavit: Commissioner Oddo moved to return to Official Session and for the Chairman to sign the Executive Session Affidavit. Vice Chairman Gibbons seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Approval of December 11, 2025 Executive Session Minutes: Commissioner Oddo moved to approve December 11, 2025 Executive Session Minutes. Vice Chairman Gibbons seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Oddo moved to adjourn the January 8, 2026 Board of Commissioners meeting. Vice Chairman Gibbons seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

The January 8, 2026 Board of Commissioners meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Marlena Edwards, Chief Deputy County Clerk

Lee Hearn, Chairman

The foregoing minutes were duly approved at an official meeting of the Board of Commissioners of Fayette County, Georgia, held on the 22nd day of January 2026. Attachments are available upon request at the County Clerk's Office.