Charlton County Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting Minutes
Commissioners Conference Room
68 Kingsland Drive, Suite B
Folkston, Georgia 31537
Thursday, July 17th, 2025
6:00 PM

7/17/2025 - Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Present was Chairwoman Alphya Benefield, Commissioner Jesse Crews, Commissioner James Everett, Commissioner Drew Jones, Commissioner Luke Gowen, County Administrator Glenn Hull, County Attorney John Adams, and County Clerk Nettles.

Guests as recorded hereafter.

Meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM.

The meeting was chaired by Vice Chairman Gowen.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

Invocation was led by Chairwoman Benefield.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Crews motioned to amend presentation item #1 to include Kenny Jones. Chairwoman Benefield seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

1. MOTION TO ADOPT THE JUNE 19TH REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

   Commissioner Jones motioned to adopt the minutes as presented. Commissioner Gowen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATIONS

1. PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING AND HONORING JUSTIN JONES

   The board played a video about Tropper Jones and the accident he was in.

   The board recognized Trooper Jones by proclamation.

   The board recognized Chief Deputy Kenny Jones by presenting him with the key to the county. Sheriff Phillips made remarks about Chief Deputy Jones and his career with the county.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. SECOND (2ND) PUBLIC HEARING FOR SECTION 1-21 OF THE GENERAL CODE OF ORDINANCES

   The second public reading started at 6:22 PM.

   County Clerk Nettles read the proposed ordinance amending Section 1-21 of the General Code of Ordinances.

   County Administrator Hull and County Attorney Adams recommended the board approve the ordinance amending Section 1-21.

   There was no second public reading of the proposed ordinance repealing Section 1-21.

   There were no public comments made.

   The public reading closed at 6:23 PM.

PETITIONS

1. VARIANCE PETITION FROM H. MURRAY

   Mr. Murray was not present.

   County Administrator Hull discussed the variance request and recommended approval.

   Commissioner Crews motioned to approve the variance request. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. PETITION TO WAIVE FEES AND INTEREST FROM C. BAILEY

   Mrs. Bailey was not present.

   Commissioner Crews discussed the petition and recommended denying the request.

   Commissioner Jones motioned to deny the petition. Chairwoman Benefield seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

PURCHASING ITEMS

1. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE SHERIFF PHILLIPS TO PURCHASE LAW ENFORCEMENT EQUIPMENT IN THE AMOUNT OF $71,399.00

   Sheriff Phillips discussed equipment needs including vests and firearms.

   Sheriff explained they recently had a deputy go down due to a heatstroke, agitated by the thick vest. The vest requested is cooler and has ceramic plates that will better protect the deputies. The Sheriff discussed reasons behind the need for new firearms.

   Commissioner Benefield motioned to authorize Sheriff Phillips to purchase the equipment. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. MOTION TO RATIFY THE EMERGENCY REPAIR OF AN SCBA COMPRESSOR SYSTEM

   Chief CL Lewis discussed the need to repair the SCBA compressor system which refills the air packs in Station 2 and Station 4.

   Commissioner Jones motioned to ratify the emergency repair. Commissioner Crews seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimosusly.

GRANTS AND SPLOST PROJECT

AGREEMENTS

1. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR HULL TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH RANDY TEW FOR EDUCATION REIMBURSEMENT

   County Administrator Hull explained the circumstances that led to Mr. Tew's need for reimbursement. The agreement outlines that Mr. Tew will be reimbursed for the hours he would have normally worked and stated that Mr. Tew must work for the county full-time for 2 years or return the reimbursement.

   This is a onetime reimbursement and does not set a county precedent for reimbursement, per County Administrator Hull and County Attorney Adams.

   Commissioner Crews motioned to authorize County Administrator Hull to execute an agreement with Randy Tew for education reimbursement. Chairwoman Benefield seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR HULL TO EXECUTE AN AMENDMENT TO THE AGREEMENT WITH MERIDIAN WASTE MANGEMENT FOR COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

   David Schuckler, the Area Manager for Meridian Waste Management, spoke on the item.

   Chairwoman Benefield shared that she was proud of Meridian's professional, kind and rapid response to complaints.

   Commissioner Jones asked Meridian to look into their holiday scheduling and the issue with the arm occasionally dropping residual trash.

   This agreement is an extension on the current agreement.

   Commissioner Everett motioned to authorize County Administrator Hull to execute an amendment to the agreement with Meridian Waste Management. Chairwoman Benefield seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR HULL TO AWARD A SOLE-SOURCE DESIGN-BUILD CONTRACT TO GARY TIPPINS CONSTRUCTION, INC IN THE AMOUNT OF $710,000 FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF FIRE STATION 4

   County Administrator Hull discussed the county's attempt to negotiate a state contract for the fire station and request for qualifications to start the bidding process. The county only received a response from Gary Tippins Construction, Inc.

Gary Tippins, Chuck Edwards, and Conner Edwards from Gary Tippins Construction, Inc. were present to answer questions.

Commissioner Crews motioned to authorize County Administrator Hull award the sole-source design-build contract to Gary Tippins Construction Inc. Commissioner Benefield seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Jones asked County Attorney Adams to clarify that the sole source bid was legal. County Attorney Adams confirmed.

Commissioner Jones asked if there were any additional requirements since the fire station will be used as a voting precinct. Mr. Edwards stated the building will be built to code and will be ADA compliant, which satisfies the requirements.

County Administrator Hull asked that the motion be amended to include the architect fees, which he and County Attorney Adams will negotiate with the architect.

Commissioner Crews amended his motion. Chairwoman Benefield seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR HULL TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH TRI SCAPES FOR ROW MOWING UP TO $53,000.00 ANNUALLY

Director of Infrastructure and Development Ronnie Pollock discussed the item.

Tri Scapes was the lowest bid. They will service the north end of the county. The road department will cover the industrial parks, Suwanee Canal, the airport, and the south end of the county.

Commissioner Jones motioned to authorize County Administrator Hull to execute an agreement with Tri Scapes for Rowing Mowing up to $53,000.00 annually. Commissioner Benefield seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE CHAIRWOMAN BENEFIELD TO EXECUTE AN ANNUAL AGREEMENT WITH UNISON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TO PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY, AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES LOCALLY IN THE AMOUNT OF $5,700.00

Commissioner Everett motioned to authorize Chairwoman Benefield to execute the annual agreement with Unison Behavioral Health. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR HULL TO EXECUTE AMENDMENT #2 TO THE 2016 OPERATING AGREEMENT WITH THE GEO GROUP

County Hull discussed the amendment to the agreement, which increases revenue to the county to $200,000 annually from the GEO Group.

Chairwoman Benefield motioned to authorize County Administrator Hull to execute amendment #2 to the 2016 operating agreement with the GEO Group. Commissioner Crews seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairwoman Benefield was excused from the meeting at 6:53 PM. Her absence is reflected in the remainder of these minutes.

ORDINANCES

1. MOTION TO ADOPT THE DRAFT ORDINANCE AMENDING OR REPEALING SECTION 1-21

   Commissioner Jones motioned to adopt the proposed ordinance amending Section 1-21 of the General Code of Ordinance. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTIONS

1. MOTION TO ADOPT A RESOLUTION FORMALLY ADOPTING THE 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

   Commissioner Jones motioned to adopt the resolution formally adopting the 2025 Comprehensive Plan, contingent that the Comprehensive Plan was amendable and an abstract document. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. MOTION TO ADOPT THE JUNE 2025 FINANCIAL REPORT

   Commissioner Crews motioned to adopt the June 2025 financial report. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S ACTION ITEMS

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Eduardo Delgado of Vidalia, Georgia voiced his opposition of the expansion of the ICE Facility. Mr. Delgado of the brought copies of the DHS report he previously spoke about and provided it the board. He highlighted specific sections that noted the conditions in the facility and the issues of not providing adequate medical care.

Savannah Pollock of Folkston, Georgia asked if the county should tie growth to something "so flighty" and talked about how growth in the prison system is dependent on the federal government. Ms. Pollock talked about Clinch County who has invested in different industries and applied for several grants to promote growth in their community and does not rely on the prison system. Ms. Pollock talked about the county diversifying industry to attract younger generations who want to stay here or come back here instead of them having to move away or commute.

Margaret Brunson of Folkston, Georgia asked about the old Bethune school. In a previous meeting, it was requested that the property be considered for preservation as a memorial. Mrs. Brunson asked for updates on the request, as she has a painting of Mary Bethune she would like to donate if the county is able to help preserve the building.

Melodey Martindale, the Executive Director of the Okefenokee Chamber of Commerce, provided updates. The Chamber Board is now full with seven members. The Chamber is getting a financial report together, which will be sent to County Administrator Hull once finalized. They are looking into to hiring a bookkeeper. They will be restructuring the chamber. The Chamber is still looking for a location to host the pageant this year.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR COMMENTS

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Jones stated that he appreciated the group coming to discuss the prison system. Commissioner Jones encourage them to speak with the representatives, as the county does not set immigration policies. Commissioner Jones talked about the county's need for revenue and the loss of revenue from the two mines.

Commissioner Crews addressed Joel Shivar, Director of Parks and Recreation, requesting that he develops a plan to have pickleball courts at Chatman Mobley and St. George parks. Commissioner Crews asked the Director Shivar present this plan at the next Board of Commissioners meeting.

Commissioner Crews recognized Kimbree Gowen for winning the state golf championship for 15 and under.

Commissioner Everett talked about the Bethune school and expressed that his feelings that the community should come together to preserve it.

Vice Chairman Gowen thanked everyone for attending, thanked everyone in their roles in the community, and thanked the local law enforcement officers for their service to the county.

Commissioner Crews asked for prayers for Chairwoman Benefield and her family.

Commissioner Crews asked Director Shivar to formally recognize Kimbree Gowen at the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING:

There will be a meeting on July 28th, 2025 at 10:00 AM to discuss SPLOST in the Board of Commissioners meeting room.

The next regular Board of Commissioners meeting is August 7th, 2025, at 6:00 PM.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Crews motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 PM.

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Alphya Benefield, Chairman

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Madeline Nettles, County Clerk