Charlton County Board of Commissioners
Planning Retreat Day 1 Minutes
Commissioners Conference Room
68 Kingsland Drive, Suite B
Folkston, GA 31537
Tuesday, April 28, 2026
9:00 AM

4/28/2026 - Minutes

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM.

Present was Commissioner Jesse Crews, Chairwoman Alphya Benefield, Vice Chairman Luke Gowen, Commissioner Drew Jones, Commissioner James Everett, Interim County Administrator Rebecca Harden, Director of Administrative Services Joanna Powell, and County Clerk Madeline Nettles.

Invocation and Pledge to the Flag

The invocation was led by Vice Chairman Gowen.

Adoption of the Agenda

Ordinances

1. Discuss Tiny Homes

    The Board and staff discussed options for tiny home ordinances and permit processes.
    Commissioner Jones stated that his opinion is to treat them like regular homes and ensure that they are meeting all set backs and requirements.
    Director Powell talked about the 4 different types of tiny homes.
    Vice Chairman Gowen agreed with Commissioner Jones' stance.

    The Board and staff discussed the case load in their building inspection and code enforcement office.
    Vice Chairman Gowen recommended getting a contract service in to help Mr. Donald Glover manage the case load until the office was caught back up.
    The Board's consensus is to get the contract services in and get an agreement to a meeting for approval. Board and staff discussed speaking with the City of Folkston about the agreement as well, since the county handles the city's inspection and enforcement.

    The Board's consensus is for staff to start getting a draft together for a tiny house ordinance. The Board would like staff to include Debra Mizell, Tax Commissioner, Donald Glover, Building Inspector and Code Enforcer, and Cheryl McMillan, Magistrate/Probate Judge, in the draft writing process.

2. Discuss Data Centers

    The Board and staff discussed data centers.
    Commissioner Jones recommended that staff speak to Representative John Corbitt and Brantley

County's Manager, Joey Cason.
Vice Chairman Gowen recommended prioritizing adopting an ordinance sooner rather than later.
The Board is in agreement with furthering researching and building out an ordinance and permit/ inspection process.

3. Discuss Building Code Updates

The Board and staff discussed various ordinances pertaining to building codes in need of updates. Director Powell provided instances where issues with these codes being outdated are being seen.

Commissioner Jones is in favor of adopting the updated ordinances based on staff recommendations.
The Board is in agreement with Commissioner Jones. Staff will coordinate with Mr. Glover, Judge McMillan, and County Attorney East to draft updated ordinances.

4. Discuss Code Book Updates

The Board and staff discussed several ordinances that need to be reviewed and updated.
Vice Chairman Gowen is in favor of the Staff Review option. The Board is in agreement with Vice Chairman Gowen.

The Board and staff discussed the EMS services provided to the GEO Group. The Board would like to review the number of calls, amount being paid to EMS for services rendered, and whether calls are emergency or non-emergency.
The Board and staff talked about upcoming contract negotiations.

The Board took a temporary recess for lunch at 11:21 PM
The Board returned from recess at 12:03 PM

Vice Chairman Gowen motioned to enter executive session to discuss personnel. Commissioner Crews seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The Board and staff entered executive session at 12:04 PM.
Commissioner Everett left executive session at 2:00 PM and was excused from the meeting.
The Board and staff exited executive session at 2:15 PM. No action was taken.

Policies

5. Discuss Comprehensive Plan

The Board reviewed the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Work Plan and made suggested edits. Staff will compile Board suggestions and present them at a later date.

6. Discuss Variance Request Policy

The Board and staff discussed building a policy around the current variance request process and clarifying certain points in the process.
Commissioner Jones would like staff to bring back a few bullet points on this policy for further

review. The Board is in agreement with Commissioner Jones.

7. Discuss Alleyway Abandonment Policy

The Board and staff discussed the current alleyway abandonment policy.

The Board is okay with amending the policy to clarify the proof of neighbor consent section and updating process to cover whole county, not just the St. George area.
The Board would like the policy to include the abandonment of dead-end roads surrounded on all three sides by the property owner.
The Board would like to amend the policy, putting responsibility back on board to approve or deny any abandonments.
The Board would like to amend the policy to include a section clarifying the responsibility of survey fees costs.

Staff will revise the policy and bring it back to the Board during a future meeting.

8. Discuss Travel, Per Diem, Mileage Reimbursement Rate, and Credit Card Usage Policies

The Board and staff discussed the need to expand upon current polices regarding travel, credit card usage, and meal rate per diem. The Board is in agreement with researching and building out the policies further.
The Board wants it to be broad but reasonable.

The Board and staff discussed the mileage reimbursement rate. Commissioner Crews and Vice Chairman Gowen recommended increasing the rate to $0.56.

9. Discuss Social Media Policy

The Board and staff discussed creating a social media policy and the potential of creating an official Facebook for the Commissioners' office.

The Board is not in favor of creating an official Facebook page for the Commissioners' office.

The Board is in favor of building out a policy regarding official county social media pages.

10. Discuss Facilities Reservation Policy

The Board and staff discussed the current facilities reservation policy.

The Board is in agreement with staff drafting recommended changes including looking into updating the fees for Deuce Lloyd and the Old School Gym and replace the refundable deposit with a mandatory non-refundable deposit.

The Board is in agreement for staff to research possibilities for a special event policy and for a policy on staffing during reservations.

Adjourn

County Administrator Harden discussed the need for a contract for elections support. County Administrator Harden discussed the possibility of moving the elections office to another building to provide them with more space. The Board will consider these at another time after more information is gathered.

The Board discussed the planning retreat day 2 agenda. The Board in agreement to push the start time

back to 10:30 AM.
Vice Chairman Gowen motioned to recess until 10:30 AM on April 29th. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board recessed at 3:59 PM

Alphya Benefield, Chairman

Madeline Nettles, County Clerk