

Charlton County Board of Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
Commissioners Conference Room
68 Kingsland Drive, Suite B
Folkston, Georgia 31537
Thursday, August 21st, 2025
6:00 PM

8/21/2025 - 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, and County Clerk Madeline Nettles.

County Attorney John Adams was absent.

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

The invocation was led by Commissioner Gowen.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Gowen motioned to adopt the agenda. Commissioner Crews seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

1. MOTION TO ADOPT THE AUGUST 7TH 2025 WORKSHOP AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Crews motioned to adopt the minutes as presented. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATIONS

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. SECOND (2ND) PUBLIC READING OF DRAFT ANIMAL ORDINANCE

County Clerk Nettles read a portion of the draft ordinance.

No comments were made by the public or the board at this time.

PETITIONS

1. PETITION FOR ALLEYWAY ABANDONMENT FROM C. EDWARDS

Commissioner Crews discussed the petition on behalf of the petitioner.

Commissioner Crews motioned to abandon a portion of the alleyway and sale the abandoned portion to Mr. Edwards. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. PETITION FOR ALLEYWAY ABANDONMENT FROM C. CRAWFORD

Commissioner Crews discussed the petition on behalf of the petitioner.

Commissioner Crews motioned to abandon a portion of the alleyway and sale the abandoned portion to Mr. Crawford. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

PURCHASING ITEMS

1. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE SHERIFF PHILLIPS TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH FLOCK SAFETY FOR ALPR CAMERAS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$15,000.00 ANNUALLY

Sheriff Robert Phillips presented the item and discussed the benefits to the cameras would bring to the community.

The cameras are non-moveable and maintained by Flock Cameras. The cameras will cover mostly south bound lanes, including portions of Highway 121, Highway 40, and US-1.

The agreement term is 12 months, with the cameras being installed in the beginning of November.

Commissioner Gowen motioned to authorize Sheriff Phillips to enter into an agreement with FLOCK Safety for ALPR Cameras. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR HULL TO PURCHASE SOLUNA ROLLER SHADES FROM BLOOMIN' BLINDS OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FL IN THE AMOUNT OF \$34,603.13

Rebecca Harden, Director of Administrative Services, presented on the item, discussing the need for blinds in the Annex Building offices due to the recently renovated windows.

Commissioner Gowen referenced the presentation from ABM during the August 21st, 2025, workshop meeting about future renovations and cost saving efforts. Commissioner Gowen expressed his discomfort with spending over \$34,000 on blinds, while recognizing the difficulty staff face due to the sun glare from the windows.

Commissioner Crews motioned to authorize the purchase of blinds only in the areas that were most necessary. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion received 2 votes in favor from Commissioner Crews, Commissioner Everett, and 2 votes against from Commissioner Jones and Commissioner Gowen. Chairwoman Benefield was the tiebreaker, voting in favor of the motion. The motion carried 3-2.

GRANTS AND SPLOST PROJECT

AGREEMENTS

1. MOTION TO AUTHORIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR HULL TO EXECUTE A SUBSCRIPTION AGREEMENT WITH TURF TANK FOR AN AUTONOMOUS LINE-MARKING ROBOT

Joel Shivar, Director of Parks and Recreation, presented the item.

The agreement is a 3-year contract for an autonomous line-marking robot that is controlled remotely.

Commissioner Gowen discussed the financial savings on paint being substantial according to the proposal.

Commissioner Jones asked if the device was user friendly and seemed durable.

Commissioner Gowen made a motion to authorize County Administrator Hull to execute a subscription agreement with Turf Tank for the Autonomous Line-Marking Robot for \$7,000 annually. Commissioner Everett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

ORDINANCES

1. MOTION TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED ANIMAL ORDINANCE

County Administrator Hull discussed the changes that were made to the ordinance based on the recommendations made during the first public reading from the board, County Attorney Adams, and Sheriff Phillips.

County Administrator Hull recommends having another public hearing for this draft version, as it differs than the version read during the first two public readings, and then vote on the ordinance at the next meeting, unless the board does not believe it to be a substantial change.

Commissioner Jones questioned state law requirements and asked the Sheriff about his opinion on the changes. The Sheriff was amenable to the changes.

Commissioner Jones motioned to adopt the animal ordinance with the recommended changes. Commissioner Gowen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTIONS

MISCELLANEOUS

1. MOTION TO ADOPT THE JULY 2025 FINANCIAL REPORT

Commissioner Jones would like to explore sending out an RFP for EMS billing services again. Director Harden and County Administrator Hull stated an RFP process was discussed today.

Commissioner Gowen motioned to adopt the July 2025 Financial Report. Commissioner Crews seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. MOTION TO APPOINT THE VOTING DELEGATE FOR 2025 LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Commissioner Everett motioned to appoint Chairwoman Benefield as the voting delegate for the 2025 ACCG Legislative Leadership Conference. Commissioner Gowen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S ACTION ITEMS

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Paul Kulwik, owner of the Charlton County Herald, discussing the herald's plan to bring on a new printing company in September. They will be able to offer several printing services through their office as well.

Gary Tippins, member of the Board of Assessors, requested to have a joint workshop meeting with the Board of Commissioners, Board of Assessors and GMASS to discuss the Tax Assessors office. The Board of Commissioners agreed to schedule a joint workshop meeting.

Antwon Nixon commented on the camera system Sheriff Phillips had presented. Mr. Nixon feels some areas of the community could benefit from cameras to deter nuisances and illegal activity, such as speeding in high traffic areas and near where children are playing. Commissioner Gowen clarified that the cameras Sheriff Phillips discussed were specifically tag readers. Sheriff Phillips agreed with Mr. Nixon about potential benefits to the community surveillance cameras could bring.

Sheriff Phillips discussed a desire to prioritize education on SPLOST before the 2026 SPLOST referendum. Sheriff Phillips has had several conversations with citizen who do not understand what SPLOST is and how SPLOST money is spent.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR COMMENTS

County Administrator Hull discussed money to be budgeted for the Historical Society. County Administrator Hull discussed the budget meeting he and Director Harden had with the Chamber of Commerce during the previous day. County Administrator Hull would like to move forward with a contract with the Chamber of Commerce to reallocate \$12,000 budgeted for the Chamber of Commerce in 2026.

Commissioner Crews be fine with moving forward with a contract as long as the Chamber is performing and promoting the county.

Commissioner Jones asked about the financial audit. County Administrator Hull confirmed the Chamber is back in compliance and is working through the audit process currently. The contract would be brought to the Board for approval, but County Administrator Hull has asked for certain deliverables before the contract will be executed. Commissioner Gowen asked Melodey Martindale, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, about Rail Watch Weekend. Mrs. Martindale stated that she will be providing financial reports to County Administrator Hull by Tuesday morning. In regard to Rail Watch Weekend, the Chamber has partnered with local businesses and the American Legion to get the event back on track. The Okefenokee Festival is set for October 11th, with registration for the car show and parade currently being open.

Commissioner Jones stressed diversifying the county's tourism.

County Administrator Hull talked about the EMS overtime budget. The county has been attempting to manage staffing in order to reduce the overtime spending. County Administrator Hull asked for guidance on how to move forward, whether that be cutting one of the ambulances on Sunday or continuing to staff EMS based on overtime and further overspend the allotted budget.

Commissioner Crews said the county should not cut an ambulance.

Commissioner Jones asked if there was a potential staffing solution. County Administrator Hull stated part time staff have been instructed to cover Sundays and there is one full-time paramedic hired specifically for Sundays.

Chief Lewis talked about staffing issues and the county's attempt to hire for open positions.

The board is in agreeance with having Sunday covered by all ambulances.

Commissioner Crews asked who handled the scheduling for EMS and suggested that it be looked into further.

Chairwoman Benefield also suggested revising the EMS attendance policy to ensure that coverage is adequately provided on weekends.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Jones asked about the EMS Transport Protocol and how to convey it to the public better.

Commissioner Gowen thanked the members from various county boards, including the Board of Assessors and the Chamber of Commerce, for being present at the meeting and for serving the county in their respective roles.

Commissioner Gowen thanked Mr. Paul Kulwik for taking over the paper and doing a good job. Commissioner Gowen thanked everyone for taking pride in the county.

Commissioner Crews talked about SPLOST and how revenue from tourism in the county benefits the area.

Commissioner Everett talked about how the county previously had the highest millage rate in the state when he first took office and now the county has one of the lowest millage rates.

Commissioner Everett asked for updates from the Road Department. Ronnie Pollock, Director of Infrastructure and Development, updated the board on the Easton Prescott Road and Newell Road projects.

County Administrator Hull talked about the public interview on 8/25/2025 for the EMA Director Position. There are two qualified candidates that will be interviewed. County Administrator Hull encouraged the board to attend the interviews.

Chairwoman Benefield asked Mr. Kulwik about the feasibility of an educational cartoon being placed in the newspaper. Commissioner Jones recommended compiling a list of projects and purchases made with previous SPLOST funds for public information.

Gary Tippins, of the Board of Assessors, discussed the sales ratio score the county received, which is within the state guidelines.

Chairwoman Benefield asked the board to support her in recognizing Robert John Atwater via proclamation at the next meeting. The board agreed to support her.

Chairwoman Benefield asked the public for prayers for health issues of staff and commissioners' family members. Chairwoman Benefield thanked everyone for the prayers during her time of bereavement.

Chairwoman Benefield shared sentiments of celebration towards Mr. Kulwik and his wife for purchasing the newspaper.

Chairwoman Benefield asked Sheriff Phillips to look into community cameras.

Chairwoman Benefield asked to speak with the representatives from ABM Solutions to see her before they leave.

NEXT MEETING:

1. NEXT REGULAR MEETING IS SEPTEMBER 4TH, 2025, AT 6:00 PM IN THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROOM

ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Alphya Benefield, Chairman

Madeline Nettles, County Clerk