



**Columbia County Board of Commissioners Meeting
Minutes of Tuesday, February 3, 2026 at 6:00 PM
Evans Government Center Auditorium, Evans, Georgia**

Present at the meeting included:

Chairman Douglas R. Duncan, Jr.
Vice Chairman Alison G. Couch
Commissioner Connie M. Melear
Commissioner Jim M. Steed
Commissioner Michael W. Carraway
County Manager Scott Johnson
Deputy County Manager Matt Schlachter
Deputy County Manager Glenn Kennedy
County Attorney Chris Driver
County Clerk Patrice R. Crawley

Division Directors:

Kyle Titus - Engineering Services
John Luton - Community Services
Chief Jeremy Wallen - Fire Services
Michael Blanchard - Technology Services
Stacey Gordon - Water Utility Services
Steven Prather – Facility Services
County Staff

Members of the Media and Public

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Duncan called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

B. INVOCATION

Commissioner Melear gave the invocation.

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

County Manager Johnson led the pledge to the American Flag.

D. ROLL CALL / QUORUM

Chairman Duncan declared a quorum with five Commissioners present.

E. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(E1) January 20, 2026

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the January 20, 2026 minutes of the Board of Commissioners meeting as presented. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

F. PRESENTATION AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chairman Duncan presented the agenda.

G. SPECIAL RECOGNITION, PRESENTATION, AND / OR DECLARATION

H. CONSENT AGENDA

In accordance with Columbia County Code of Ordinance Section 2-81(6), the following items were voted on collectively. Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(H1) Community and Emergency Services Committee

(H1a) Cell Phone Allowance for Animal Services Manager

Approved an annual cell phone allowance in the amount of \$1,440 for the Animal Services Manager position to be retroactive to the pay period beginning December 14, 2025.

(H1b) Tennis Contractor Agreement with Petersburg Tennis Academy, LLC.

Approved The Tennis Contractor Agreement with Petersburg Tennis Academy, LLC.

(H1c) Animal Services Donations

Approved the acceptance of Animal Services donations in the amount of \$2,750 for the medical care of shelter animals.

(H1d) Senior Center Donation

Approved the acceptance of the Senior Center donation in the amount of \$375.

(H1e) Perfect Game Baseball 2026 Tournament Hosting Services Agreement with Gameday JJ, LLC.

Approved the Perfect Game Baseball 2026 Tournament Hosting Services agreement with Gameday JJ, LLC.

(H1f) Merchants Association of Columbia County Donation to FLY Scholarship

Approved the acceptance of a donation in the amount of \$2,000 from the Merchants Association of Columbia County for the FLY Scholarship.

(H1g) Acceptance of Bid 2025038-BID2510 for (30) Scott XD Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) from American Safety and Firehouse

Approved the acceptance of a bid for 30 Scott XD self-contained breathing apparatus from American Safety and Firehouse in the amount of \$205,310; 2322510.601081.

(H2) Public Works and Engineering Services Committee

(H2a) Purchase of Two 4wd Trucks for Sheriff's Office

Approved the additional amount of \$9,122.50 to purchase two 4wd trucks for the Sheriff's Office; 6416400.601080.

(H2b) Ancillary Dwelling Variance for 140 Wild Turkey Trail, Tax Map 017 Parcel 065

Approved an Ancillary Dwelling Variance for parcel 017065.

(H2c) Change Order #2 with Strack, Inc. for the Harlem Euchee Creek Interceptor Project.

Approved Change Order Number 2 with Strack, Inc. for the Harlem Euchee Creek Interceptor project in the amount of \$100,850.50; 58037.39.015.687.

(H2d) Award 2025037-BID5100 and Contract to Reeves Construction Company for the Jim Blanchard WTP Loop Access Road Improvements

Approved awarding the bid and contract to Reeves Construction Company for the Jim Blanchard WTP loop access road improvements project in the amount of \$1,157,146.45; 57037.25.015.691.

(H2e) Purchase of Smartpoints from Sensus, Inc.

Approved the purchase of smartpoints from Sensus, Inc. in the amount of \$162,345; 511.5120.601090.

(H2f) Independent Contractor Agreement with RCM Utilities to rehab 14 manholes

Approved an Independent Contractor Agreement with RCM Utilities to rehab 14 manholes in the amount of \$99,162; 511.5130.601100.

(H2g) A Maintenance Agreement with Yancey Power Systems for Eight Generators

Approved a Maintenance Agreement with Yancey Power Systems for eight generators in the amount of \$132,338.15; 511.5000.533035, 511.5105.533035 and 511.5115.533035.

(H2h) Easement Agreement with Georgia Power at 490 Carole Dr (Parcel # 039 136)

Approved an Easement Agreement with Georgia Power for parcel 039136.

(H2i) Equipment Purchase and Installation of Traffic Cameras at the Intersection of Appling Harlem Rd (US 221/SR 47) and I-20 (SR 402)

Approved the equipment purchases and installation of traffic cameras at the intersection of Appling Harlem Road and I-20 in the amount of \$35,000.

(H2j) Acceptance of Easements for Elite Learning Academy

Approved the acceptance of easements for Elite Learning Academy.

(H2k) Acceptance of Remnant Parcel Improvements as Right-of-Way in Whispering Pines Subdivision

Approved the acceptance of the remnant parcel improvements as right of way in Whispering Pines Subdivision.

(H2l) Acceptance of Improvements for Tillery Park Area 7

Approved the acceptance of improvements for Tillery Park area 7.

I. DEBATE AGENDA

(I1) New Business

(I1a) Community and Emergency Services Committee

(I1a1) Ordinance Number 26-01 Amendment to the Code of Ordinance of Columbia County Chapter 14 Animals Section 14-1, 14-4, 14-5 and 14-14 - *First Reading*

Commissioner Steed made a motion to approve the First Reading of Ordinance Number 26-01. Vice Chair Couch seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b) Development and Planning Services Committee

(I1b1) VA26-01-01, Variance to Section 90-53 List of lot and structure requirements, 5359 Magnolia Court, Tax Map 060 Parcel 087A, 4.87 +/- acres, and currently zoned R-A (Residential Agricultural).

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for a variance to Section 90-53 for property located at tax map 060 parcel 087A to reduce the rear setback to 10 feet for a proposed storage structure. Chairman Duncan seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b2) VA26-01-02, Variance to Section 90-144 Placement of buildings and structures, 3510 Gloucester Court, Tax Map 082I Parcel 089, 0.41 +/- acres, and currently zoned R-3 (Single Family Residential) and Easement Encroachment Agreement

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve an easement encroachment agreement and the request for a variance to Section 90-144 Placement of buildings and structures for property located at tax map 082I Parcel 089 subject to the following conditions:

Planning:

- 1. The reduction in the side and rear setbacks only applies to the existing shed.*
- 2. The shed cannot be expanded further into the setbacks, and, if damaged and has to be rebuilt, it will need to be relocated outside of the setbacks.*

Stormwater: An Easement Encroachment Agreement will be required.
Commissioner Carraway seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b3) VA26-01-03, Variance to Sections 90-98 list of lot and structure requirements and 90-139 buffers and screening, portion of 348 Furrys Ferry Road, Tax Map 082B Parcel 115, a 0.98 +/- acre portion of a 4.71 +/- acre total, and currently zoned C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial).

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for variances to Sections 90-98 List of lot and structure requirements and 90-139 Buffers & Screening for a 0.98 +/- acre portion of property located at tax map 082B parcel 115 subject to the following conditions:

Planning:

- 1. Prior to issuance of an Occupational Tax for the subject property, a subdivision plat shall be recorded and a copy provided to Columbia County Planning.*
- 2. Buffer and setback reductions shall only apply to the existing building. If the building is demolished or destroyed, any new structure shall meet current buffers and setback standards.*

Commissioner Carraway seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b4) RZ26-01-03, Rezoning from S-1 (Special), M-2 (General Industrial), R-A (Residential Agricultural), and split zoned R-A and M-1 (Light Industrial) to D-C (Data Center), property located at 5140, 5145 and 5150 and off Catalyst Drive, 820, 825, 845, 865, and 870 Progress Drive, 1668, 1670, 1672, and off Applling Harlem Road, 2050 and off Morris Calloway Road, and off I-20, Tax Map 018 Parcel 006, Tax Map 019 Parcels 001, 002, 002A, 002B, and 003, Tax Map 028 Parcels 026, 026B, 026C, 026E, 027, 027F, 027H, 027I, 027J, 027K, 027L, 027M, 027N, 027O, and 027Q , 3,140 +/- acres combined, and currently zoned S-1 (Special), M-2 (General Industrial), R-A (Residential Agricultural) and split zoned R-A and M-1 (Light Industrial).

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for a rezoning from S-1 , M-2 , R-A and split zoned R-A and M-1 to D-C for property located at Tax Map 018 006, Tax Map 019001, 019002, 019002A, 019002B, and 019003, Tax Map 028026, 028026B, 028026C, 028026E, 028027, 028027F, 028027H, 028027I, 028027J, 028027K, 028027L, 028027M, 028027N, 028027O, and 028027Q, to remand tax map parcel 019002C to the Planning Commission and to readvertise for its public hearing, said approval to be subject to the following conditions:

Water & Sewer:

- 1. The developer will fund all necessary water and sewer upgrades for the proposed project.*
- 2. Prior to approval of a building permit for any structure on the site, provide a 5-year projection to include water projections and sanitary sewer projections. This will be updated, at a minimum, annually and will be required until full-scale project development is complete and/or when major technological changes or site infrastructure changes affect water usage.*
- 3. A water and sewer usage agreement and/or drought management plan may be required. This will be assessed during site plan review or with the 5-year projection noted above. Traffic Engineering: The narrative does not address the roadway improvements recommended to accommodate development-related traffic, as identified in the June 2025 Traffic Impact Study prepared by Kimley-Horn. All improvements shall be designed and constructed by the developer.*

Planning: Any access point to Morris Calloway Road or Bill Dorn Road shall be for emergency access only and designed as such.

Commission: Sound from the project shall not exceed 65 decibels at the property line.

Citizens Vin Muller, Daniel Lanning, Ian Martin, Gregory Guido, Jr., Rachel Dickson, Susan Warren and Greg Schleyer spoke against the rezoning.

Chairman Duncan seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b5) RZ26-01-01, Rezoning from PUD (Planned Unit Development) to D-C (Data Center), 1382 Applling Harlem Road, 6423 Wrightsboro Road, 6367 Wrightsboro Road, and off Interstate 20, Tax map 029 parcels 036, 037B, 038, and 057, 417.9 +/- acres, and currently zoned PUD (Planned Unit Development).

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for a rezoning from PUD to D-C for property located at Tax map 029036, 029037B, 029038, and 029057 subject to the following conditions:

Water & Sewer:

- 1. The developer will fund all necessary water and sewer upgrades for the proposed project.*
- 2. Prior to approval of a building permit for any structure on the site, provide a 5-year projection to include water projections and sanitary sewer projections. This will be updated, at a minimum, annually and will be required until full-scale project development is complete and/or when major technological changes or site infrastructure changes affect water usage.*
- 3. A water and sewer usage agreement and/or drought management plan may be required. This will be assessed during site plan review or with the 5-year projection noted above.*

Commission:

- 1. A minimum 500 ft natural buffer along Hwy 221 and Wrightsboro Road to include a minimum 12 ft tall berm inside the buffer that shall be planted with evergreen shrubs. The buffer shall be undisturbed except that the owner may install utilities and driveways within the 12 ft berm and as allowed by code.*
- 2. Owners shall submit a PUD amendment for the east side of Hwy 221 to remove all residential uses. The new uses will be commercial, parks, greenspace and mixed use not including residential.*
- 3. Sound from the project shall not exceed 65 decibels at the property line.*

Representative for Clover Leaf Aaron Bilyeu went over the rezoning and answered questions from Commissioners.

Citizens Moira Nonnweiler, Ryan Roney, Alexandria Roney, Joanne Murdock, Guy Feibiger, Blaine Carter, Beverly Hill and Lee Muns explained why the rezoning should not be approved.

County Manager Johnson gave an overview of Georgia House Bill 1156 and 1178 which will help local homeowners with property tax relief.

Stephen King with Georgia Power explained the vetting of projects requesting power and associated cost. Chairman Duncan seconded the motion. Vice Chair Couch voted against the motion. Chairman Duncan and Commissioners Melear, Steed and Carraway voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

(11b6) RZ26-01-02, Rezoning from a split zoned R-A (Residential Agricultural) & M-1 (Light Industrial) and R-A (Residential Agricultural) to D-C (Data Center), located at 1769 Lonergan Hulme Road, 6215 Natures Way, 1843 Lonergan Hulme Road, 1837 Lonergan Hulme Road, 1781 Lonergan Hulme Road, off Lonergan Hulme Road, 1803 Lonergan Hulme Road, 1805 Lonergan Hulme Road, 1807 Lonergan Hulme Road, and 6201 Gavin Road, Tax Map 029 Parcels 011, 011A, 006, 005, 006B, 010A, 010B, 009, 008A, 008 and Tax Map 040 Parcel 142, 944.27 +/- acres combined, and currently split zoned R-A (Residential Agricultural) & M-1 (Light Industrial) and R-A (Residential Agricultural). *Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for a rezoning from a split zoned R-A & M-1 and R-A to D-C on property located at Tax Map 029011, 029011A, 029006, 029005, 029006B, 029010A, 029010B, 029009, 029008A, 029008 and Tax Map 040142 subject to the following conditions:*

Water & Sewer:

- 1. The developer will fund all necessary water and sewer upgrades for the proposed project.*
- 2. Prior to approval of a building permit for any structure on the site, provide a 5-year projection to include water projections and sanitary sewer projections. This will be updated, at a minimum, annually and will be required until full-scale project development is complete and/or when major technological changes or site infrastructure changes affect water usage.*
- 3. A water and sewer usage agreement and/or drought management plan may be required. This will be assessed during site plan review or with the 5-year projection noted above. Traffic Engineering: A Traffic Impact Study is required for the project. The primary focus of the study is to evaluate the intersection capacity at Nature's Way and State Route 47 (Appling Harlem Road), as well as at Nature's Way and Louisville Road, in accordance with Checklist A 2 of the Project Access Improvement Policy. The study must include applicable ITE land uses and codes, traffic counts, and trip distribution based on existing conditions and project generated trips. The impact analysis must include existing conditions (current year), no build (opening year), and build (opening year) capacity evaluations. The study must also provide recommendations for lane assignments and turn lane storage lengths at each intersection and all proposed driveways. Any costs associated with signalization, intersection modifications, utility relocation, or other related improvements shall be the responsibility of the developer. The study shall also evaluate anticipated construction phase traffic volumes and ensure that haul route impacts are fully assessed, including operational and safety considerations. In addition, the study shall document existing roadway conditions*

along all designated construction haul routes prior to construction and provide a post construction evaluation identifying any damage attributable to construction traffic, ensuring that existing county roads are maintained in good condition.

Planning:

- 1. No access to Louisville Road is permitted.*
- 2. Access to Loneragan Hulme Road shall be for Georgia Power maintenance access only.*

Commission:

- 1. A minimum 500 ft natural buffer along all exterior property lines to include a minimum 12 ft tall berm inside the buffer that shall be planted with evergreen shrubs. The buffer shall be undisturbed except that the owner may install utilities and driveways within the 12 ft berm and as allowed by code.*
- 2. The Loneragan Hulme Road name shall not be changed.*
- 3. Sound from the project shall not exceed 65 decibels at the property line.*

There was no second. The motion died.

Vice Chair Couch made a motion to deny the rezoning request number RZ26-01-02. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion.

Applicant Keith Lawrence explained the rezoning request.

Citizen Jonathan Klink stated why he is in favor of the rezoning.

Citizen Robert Anderson stated why he was against the rezoning.

Commissioner Melear voted against the motion. Chairman Duncan, Vice Chair Couch and Commissioners Steed and Carraway voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

(I2) Items Added at the Meeting

J. LEGAL MATTERS

K. REQUESTS FOR REVIEW BY COMMITTEE

L. PUBLIC COMMENTS

M. EXECUTIVE SESSION

(M1) Property

(M1a) Corrective permanent and temporary easement to change the legal description on parcel 050045.

Commissioner Carraway made a motion to approve a corrective permanent and temporary easement to change the legal description on parcel 050045. Vice Chair Couch seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(M1b) Permanent sanitary easement from Branch Springs Development, LLC parcel 062085S for the Horizon South Parkway and Chamblin Road connector project.

Commissioner Carraway made a motion to accept the donation of a permanent sanitary easement from Branch Springs Development, LLC parcel 062085S for the Horizon South Parkway and Chamblin Road connector project. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(M1c) Donation of the temporary construction easement from Mark Niel Hofilena parcel 062041K for the Horizon South Parkway and Chamblin Road connector project.

Commissioner Carraway made a motion to accept the donation of the temporary construction easement from Mark Niel Hofilena parcel 062041K for the Horizon South Parkway and Chamblin Road connector project. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(M1d) WEC 98H-28 LLC parcel 072A060, Jacquelyn Brantley parcel 072A055 and Kay Allen parcel 067020A to obtain right of way and/or easements for the Hereford Farm Road widening project.

Commissioner Carraway made a motion to approve \$20,000 to WEC 98H-28 LLC parcel 072A060, \$1,100 to Jacquelyn Brantley parcel 072A055 and \$98,500 to Kay Allen parcel 067020A to obtain right of way and/or easements for the Hereford Farm Road widening project. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(M1e) Temporary easement donations from J. Carlisle Overstreet parcel 052039 and David & Kelly Butler parcel 052001B for the Wrightsboro Road at Louisville Road right turn lane project.

Commissioner Carraway made a motion to accept the temporary easement donations from J. Carlisle Overstreet parcel 052039 and David & Kelly Butler parcel 052001B for the Wrightsboro Road at Louisville Road right turn lane project. Vice Chair Couch seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(M1f) The Sanctuary of Augusta, Inc. Parcels 073016, 072D037 and 072D038 for rent supplement payment and relocation moving expense for the Hereford Farm Road widening project.

Commissioner Carraway made a motion to approve \$250,700 to The Sanctuary of Augusta, Inc. Parcels 073016, 072D037 and 072D038 for rent supplement payment and relocation moving expense for the Hereford Farm Road widening project. Vice Chair Couch seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Couch made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 p.m. Commissioner Carraway seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.



Douglas R. Duncan, Jr., Chairman



Patrice R. Crawley, County Clerk