



**Columbia County Board of Commissioners Meeting
Minutes of Tuesday, August 18, 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:

Scott Sterling – Planning Services
Paul Scarbary - Development Services
Kyle Titus - Engineering Services
John Luton - Community Services
Chief Jeremy Wallen - Fire Services
Michael Blanchard - Technology Services
Steven Prather – Facility Services
County Staff

Members of the Media and Public

A. CALL TO ORDER

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

B. INVOCATION

Commissioner Carraway gave the invocation.

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

County Manager Johnson led the pledge to the American Flag.

D. ROLL CALL / QUORUM

Chair Duncan declared a quorum with five Commissioners present.

E. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(E1) August 04, 2026

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 04, 2026 Board of Commissioners meeting as presented. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

F. PRESENTATION AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

G. SPECIAL RECOGNITION, PRESENTATION, AND / OR DECLARATION

(G1) Special Recognition

(G1a) Awarding the Medal of Valor and Meritorious Service Award

Citizen Brian Folsom and Engineer Rick Thigpen were honored with the Meritorious Service Award for their extraordinary contributions to the community and heroic actions. Additionally, Lieutenant Kyle McClellan, Lieutenant Matthew Kennedy, and Engineer Julian Williams were awarded the Medal of Valor in recognition of their exceptional bravery and selflessness in protecting others, far exceeding the expectations of their duty.

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) Management and Internal Services Committee

(H1a) Retirement Bridge Program Spousal Coverage and Dental Option Revision

Approved an amendment to the Retirement Bridge Program to include the addition of a spousal coverage

clause and updates the qualification for the retiree dental plan to align with the current retiree bridge program standards.

(H1b) Reimbursement to GEMA/FEMA for Helene Project Number 806591

Approved the reimbursement of \$255,483.84 to GEMA/FEMA for Helene Project Number 806591; 2100301.433019.

(H1c) Independent Contractor Agreement with Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services, LLC. for Risk Management Consulting and Supplementary Services

Approved an Independent Contractor Agreement with Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services, LLC. for risk management consulting and supplementary services in the amount of \$48,000; 6116100.533035.

(H1d) ACCG Safety Incentive Discount Program: 2027 Policy Year

Approved verification that Columbia County complies with the requirements of the 2027 ACCG Safety Incentive Discount Program.

(H1e) Cisco Equipment Lifecycle Purchase from DISYS for Water Utility Sites

Approved the Cisco equipment lifecycle purchase from DISYS for Water Utility sites in the amount of \$184,433.32; 5115000.544007.

(H1f) Cisco Smartnet Renewal Payment Authorization 2026-2027

Approved the renewal of the Cisco Smartnet payment for 2026-2027 in the amount of \$232,514.51; 1011005.533035.

(H1g) Cisco Equipment Lifecycle Purchase from DISYS for Sheriff's Office

Approved the Cisco equipment lifecycle purchase from DISYS for Sheriff's Office in the amount of \$349,594.97; 3503550.601090.35518.

(H1h) Subscription Agreement with GovAI

Approved the Subscription Agreement with GovAI in the amount of \$39,950; 1011005.601081.

(H1i) Annual Maintenance Payment for Conga Software

Approved the annual maintenance payment for Conga Software in the amount of \$57,826.60; 1011005.533035.

(H1j) Award Bid #2026011-BID3289 Rebid and Contract to S.D. Clifton Construction for the Pollard House Renovation

Approved awarding the bid and contract to S.D. Clifton Construction for the Pollard House Renovation in the amount of \$3,588,401; 24185.34.015.

(H1k) Independent Contractor Agreement with Verge Erosion Control, LLC for the Pollard House NPDES Sampling and Reporting

Approved an Independent Contractor Agreement with Verge Erosion Control, LLC. for the Pollard House NPDES sampling and reporting in a monthly amount of \$440; 24185.34.090.

(H1l) Independent Contractor Agreement with CSRA Testing & Engineering Co., Inc for Special Inspections and Material Testing Services at the Pollard House

Approved an Independent Contractor Agreement with CSRA Testing & Engineering Co., Inc. for Special Inspections and Material Testing Services at the Pollard House in the amount of \$8,000; 24185.34.090.

(H2) Development and Planning Services Committee

(H2a) Purchase of a Takeuchi Mini Excavator for Facility Maintenance

Approved the purchase of a Takeuchi mini excavator for facility maintenance in the amount of \$67,522.56; 6416400.601080.

(H2b) Position Reclassifications in Building Standards

Approved the reclassification of Position 1637 to Building Inspector I, Grade 23, at a rate of \$22.14 per hour, Position 2022 to Building Plan Review Specialist, Grade 22, at a rate of \$21.49 per hour, both

effective August 23, 2026 and Position 1639 is to be reclassified to Manager II Exempt, Grade 31, at an annual salary of \$60,611.20, retroactively effective June 28, 2026.

(H2c) Easement Encroachment Agreement 882 Lillian Park Drive, Tax Map 067 Parcel 2563
Approved an Easement Encroachment Agreement for Tax Map 067 Parcel 2563.

(H2d) Easement Encroachment Agreement for 1222 Arcilla Pointe, Tax Map 082 Parcel 444.
Approved an Easement Encroachment Agreement for Tax Map 082 Parcel 444.

I. DEBATE AGENDA

(I1) New Business

(I1a) Management and Internal Services Committee

(I1a1) Resolution 26-17 to Establish a Millage Rate for Purposes of Computing Ad Valorem Taxes on Property in Columbia County, Georgia for Calendar Year 2026

Vice Chair Couch made a motion to approve Resolution 26-17 as presented and authorize the Chairman to sign all required forms and documents. Commissioner Melear seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b) Development and Planning Services Committee

(I1b1) RZ26-08-01, Conditional Use for Therapeutic Massage, 4490 Washington Road, Tax Map 072 Parcel 060N, 2.82 +/- acres, and currently zoned C-2 (General Commercial).

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for the conditional use for therapeutic massage for property located at tax map 072 parcel 060N. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b2) VA26-08-01, Variance to Section 90-53 List of Lot and Structure Requirements, 113 Glenora Drive, Tax Map 073C Parcel 163, 0.30 +/- acres, and currently zoned R-2 (Single Family Residential) and Easement Encroachment Agreement.

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for the variance to section 90-53 for property located at tax map 073C parcel 163 to reduce the side setback to 2 feet for a proposed addition and the associated encroachment agreement. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b3) VA26-08-02, Variance to Section 90-55 RCO Residential Cluster Overlay District, 509 Ernestine Falls, Tax Map 061 Parcel 1434, 0.3 +/- acres, and currently zoned R-2 (Single Family Residential)/RCO (Residential Cluster Overlay) and Easement Encroachment Agreement.

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for the variance to section 90-55 for property located at tax map 061 parcel 1434 to reduce the side setbacks to 1 foot for accessory structures and the associated encroachment agreement. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b4) VA26-08-03, Variance to Section 90-53 List of Lot and Structure Requirements, 711 Campana Drive, Tax Map 071 Parcel 082, 0.29 +/- acres, and currently zoned R-2 (Single Family Residential) and Easement Encroachment Agreement.

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for the variance to section 90-53 for property located at tax map 071 parcel 082 to reduce the side and rear setbacks for a proposed retaining wall and pool and the associated encroachment agreement. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b5) VA26-08-04, Variance to Sections 90-139 Buffers & Screening and 90-98 List of Lot and Structure Requirements, 4546 Washington Road, Tax Map 072 Parcel 073Q, 0.84 +/- acres, and currently zoned C-2 (General Commercial).

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for the variance to sections 90-139 & 90-98 for property located at tax map 072 parcel 073Q to reduce building setbacks and buffers subject to the following conditions:

Fire Department: The proposed building shall be a minimum of 10' from the existing retaining wall due to collapse concerns.

Planning:

- 1. The building setbacks are reduced per the fire department's condition.*
- 2. The setback for the retaining wall is reduced to 9 feet for the existing retaining wall only.*
- 3. The structural buffer is reduced to 10 feet.*

Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b6) RZ26-08-02, Rezoning from R-2 (Single Family Residential) to S-1 (Special), 250 Legion Drive, Tax Map 079 Parcel 122A, 2.5 +/- acres, and currently zoned R-2 (Single Family Residential). - tabled to September 01, 2026

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for the rezoning from R-2 to S-1 for property located at tax map 079 parcel 122A subject to the condition enumerated in the August 6, 2026 Planning Commission Report for a proposed glamping campground. Chair Doug Duncan seconded the motion. Robert Titus and Frank Harris answered questions.

Commissioner Melear made a motion to amend her motion to postpone this item until the September 01, 2026 meeting. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b7) RZ26-08-03, Rezoning from R-3 (Single Family Residential) to P-1 (Professional) 106 Bellewood Drive, Tax Map 082A Parcel 100, 0.45 +/- acres, and currently zoned R-3 (Single Family Residential).

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for the rezoning from R-3 to P-1 for property located at tax map 082A parcel 100 for a proposed professional office subject to the following condition: Health Department: The property is served by a septic system. The system cannot be parked on or driven over. The system must be pumped and a letter provided stating the septic tank is in good condition. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b8) VA26-08-05, Variance to Section 90-139 Buffers & Screening, 106 Bellewood Drive, Tax Map 082A Parcel 100, 0.45 +/- acres, and currently zoned R-3 (Single Family Residential).

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request for the variance to section 90-139 for property located at tax map 082A parcel 100 to remove the structural buffer requirement from the Bellewood Drive right of way to the back right corner of the existing primary structure subject to the following condition:

Planning: All lighting shall be shielded and directed away from adjacent residential property.

Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I1b9) RZ26-08-04, Rezoning from R-3 (Single Family Residential) to PRD (Planned Residential Development), 325 McCormick Road, Tax Map 077B Parcel 114, 14.1 +/- acres, and currently zoned R-3 (Single Family Residential) -tabled to September 01, 2026

Commissioner Melear made a motion to approve the request to postpone RZ26-08-04 until September 01, 2026. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(I2) Items Added at the Meeting

J. LEGAL MATTERS

K. REQUESTS FOR REVIEW BY COMMITTEE

L. PUBLIC COMMENTS

(L1) Lee Muns, Cambrey Wood and Susan Warren

Lee Muns stated his concerns about the data centers.

Cambrey Wood requested a moratorium on data center development.

Susan Warren stated her concerns about the data centers.

M. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Commissioner Melear made a motion to go into executive session at 6:48 p.m. Commissioner Steed seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chair Couch made a motion to adjourn from executive session at 8:10 p.m. Chair Duncan seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Duncan called the meeting back to order at 8:11 p.m. County Manager Johnson stated two personnel matters were discussed; no action was taken.

(M1) Personnel

(M1a) Right of Way Specialist Employment Contract for Bryan Armstrong

Vice Chair Couch made a motion to approve the Right of Way Specialist Employment Contract for Bryan Armstrong. Commissioner Carraway seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(M1b) Personnel B

No action taken.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Couch made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m. Commissioner Carraway seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.



Douglas R. Duncan, Jr., Chairman



Patrice R. Crawley, County Clerk