

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of April 15, 2025

Regular Meeting

9:00 A.M.

Present:

Alan Gibbs, Chairman

John Ambrose, Vice-Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, District 1

Eddie Rowland, District 2

Al Turner, District 4

Staff:

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Ben Vaughn, County Attorney

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Welcome

Chairman Gibbs welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Reverend Austin Walker of Parker's Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church gave the invocation.

Pledge

Chairman Gibbs led the Pledge.

Roll Call

County Clerk Janet Abbott called roll.

Call to Order

Chairman Gibbs called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Proclamation-Barry Lawson (Volunteer Firefighter)

Chairman Gibbs presented on behalf of the Board of Commissioners a Proclamation Commemorating April 15, 2025, as Barry Lawson appreciation Day in Monroe County. Tuesday, April 15, 2025, marks Barry Lawson's final day with Monroe County Emergency Services after 40 years as a loyal volunteer firefighter in Monroe County.

Proclamation-Pastor Austin Walker

Commissioner Eddie Rowland presented on behalf of the Board of Commissioners a Proclamation Commemorating April 6, 2025, as Rev. Austin J. Walker Day in Monroe County. Sunday, April 6, 2025, will mark Rev. Austin J. Walker's 1st pastoral anniversary at Parker's Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church on Hwy. 83 South in Culloden.

Extension Agent

Commissioner Rowland introduced the new Monroe County Extension Agent Luke Quick.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Gibbs presented the agenda for approval with the addition of item K-horse arena, item L-90-day moratorium for major subdivisions, item M-Joel Vinson, and Executive Session for real estate.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda with said changes.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion passed 5-0.

Approve Minutes-April 1, 2025, Regular Meeting

Moved to the next meeting.

Matthew Duffey-Water Bill Dispute

Mr. Matthew Duffey, 110 Lightwood Lane, is disputing a water bill which, from our review, indicates a water leak beginning October 27, 2024, and ending December 10, 2024. Currently, Mr. Duffey owes Monroe County \$1,936.92 and his last payment to the county was on October 21, 2024.

Once Mr. Duffey challenged the water bill, we pulled the water meter data log, attached, and sent the logs to Mr. Scott McCrary at Consolidated Pipe to professionally read the log results. Mr. McCrary's conclusion is that the recorded logs accurately indicated 150 gallons of water per hour were recorded in the data logs during the period in question. Mr. Duffey was provided with a copy of the data logs and Mr. McCrary's analysis, and still, Mr. Duffey disputes the water bill.

Finally, we removed the water meter and sent it to Reed & Shows Meter Solutions in Bowdon Junction, Georgia for an independent meter testing. The test results, attached, indicate the meter tested at low,

medium and high flow to overall be 100.23% accurate to standards established by the American Water Works Association.

Internally, we met with Mr. Duffey, deferred shutting off the water, communicated with Mr. Duffey, and his opinion is it is a matter of principle, not money. He is convinced he did not have a water leak, and our analysis of the data logs indicates he did have a leak, and we have confirmed our water meter is highly accurate. Still Mr. Duffey disputes the water bill and has requested to address the Monroe County Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Duffey addressed the Board regarding his concerns.

Jeff Dorough, H2O representative and Scott McCrary, Consolidated Pipe and Supply representative spoke in regard to the testing of Mr. Duffey's meter. Mr. McCrary stated the recorded logs indicate accurately that 150 gallons of water per hour were recorded in the data logs.

Commissioner Rowland stated it was common in the past for the Board to offer to reduce high water bills, but that practice was what caused the Monroe County Water System to lose \$1 million annually. Following an extensive discussion, Commissioner Davis motioned to reduce Mr. Duffey's water bill for the six-week period to an average adjustment rate between his normal bill amount and his \$1800 bill ensuring that the county will break even.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the Finance Director, Lorri Robinson will determine an average and Mr. Duffey will be charged the same amount the county is charged for water so that the county breaks even.

The motion carried 5-0.

DataCore R-O-W Agreements

Monroe County owns 3.63 acres within what will be the Rumble Road Technology Campus. The DataCore Innovations, LLC that obtained P&Z and Board of Commissioners' approval for the data center off of Rumble Road are requesting Monroe County to convey title to the land where the county water and sewer lines currently are located to DataCore, and they will grant a reciprocal easement back to the County for utilities. Further, the Right-of-Way Utility Easement also reserves the ability for DataCore and its successors, at their location and in such event, the parties would enter into an amended easement to define the boundaries of the new easement area. As information, the lead company stated that if the applicant could not obtain title to the property, that would be a deal killer for their company.

Commissioner Rowland stated they need an area to put a large water tank near Rumble Road and they agree up to swap 5-acres if the county deeds to them the acreage needed.

Commissioner Rowland motioned to deed 3.6-acres off Deer Creek to DataCore in exchange for allowing the county to continue to have the right-of-way access for its utilities and deed Monroe County up to 5-acres near Rumble Road for a future water tank, and if the exchange does not happen the deal is dead.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Ambulance Bid Authorization

Following the snowstorm earlier this year that resulted in the wreck of one of MCES ambulances, Frontier Adjusters have advised this ambulance is a total loss. Insurance proceeds will be \$141,909. Our last ambulance bid was for \$278,266 from Custom Works, without a stretcher and power load system, and a 14–18-month delivery time.

The 2026 SPLOST program projects the purchase of seven ambulances during the SPLOST cycle at a cost of \$350,000 for each ambulance. Chief Matt Jackson will recommend we go to bid for two ambulances with an anticipated delivery date in mid-2026. Funding will be from the 2026 SPLOST. Matt Jackson addressed the Board.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve to go to bid for two ambulances.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Strickland Loop Groundwater Monitoring Wells

Two groundwater monitoring wells at Strickland Loop Landfill have consistently failed to produce results. The Georgia EPD requires the replacement of these two groundwater monitoring wells that were installed in 2022.

Triple Point Engineering recommends they subcontract with Geo Lab, Inc., a bonded well driller, to advance soil borings adjacent to the existing wells to a depth of at least 10 feet below the current well depths, and to construct groundwater monitoring wells in accordance with the facility's approved Vertical Expansion Design and Operational Plan for construction of Phase 2 of the referenced facility. The estimated cost to complete these services is \$18,200 with a \$3,600 contingency bringing the total estimated cost to \$21,800. Funding will come from Contingency.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Surplus Equipment

We have accumulated a number of vehicles, road equipment, spare obsolete parts, and a building (old High Falls Fire Station) that need to be declared as surplus by the Board of Commissioners. Once declared as a surplus, authorization to utilize the auction firm of Hudson & Marshall will be requested. As a reminder, Hudson & Marshall will fund all advertisements, and their fee is 10% to the buyer and 10% to the seller.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the way forward is to declare equipment, material, and building as surplus and authorize the sale by auction utilizing the firm Hudson & Marshall.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to declare the 17 county vehicles, various Public Works equipment, material, and the old High Falls Fire Station (list attached) as surplus and authorize the sale by auction utilizing the firm Hudson & Marshall.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

H2O Contract Amendment

The Consumer Price Index rose 2.7 percent from November 2023 to November 2024. H2o's contract provides for an annual CPI adjustment which results in the annual contractual fee rising from \$528,538 to \$542,808, or \$45,234 monthly.

Commissioner Rowland motioned to approve.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

See-Click-Fix Contract

The annual contract renewal with CivicPlus for the "See-Click-Fix" software is \$19,232.78 for the period May 25, 2025, to May 24, 2026. Currently, we have 71 registered users and quite a few anonymous users. The most notifications, 240, were to Public Works and this equates to \$80/notification. Kim Stokes states this equates to \$80 per notification and to be cost-effective we would need to receive 950 notifications annually. Kim Stokes recommends termination of the "See-Click-Fix" contract. Richard Dumas agrees with Kim's recommendation and will look for a different notification option.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to cancel the See-Click-Fix contract.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Dames Ferry Road-Rezoning-Special Use

At the April 1, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting a public hearing was held for an application from Scott and Amy Edwards to rezone with a special use property located at Map 078 Parcel 026F on Dames Ferry Road. At the meeting the Board decided to defer the decision until the next meeting. Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented the following Memorandum for Record: Regarding a Diesel Mechanic Repair Shop

- The business being operated on Dames Ferry Road/Hwy 18 consists of a prefab-steel building with 3 bays. The business has diesel mechanics repairing the business trucks for AAS Transport. The trucks themselves are parked at the hatchery/mill and a parking lot in Forsyth. They do not park the trucks overnight on the lot unless the repair work that doesn't get completed that day.
- The business does haul agricultural loads. The business on site inside the prefabricated building is not agricultural operations. Inside the building they provide maintenance for their trucks for their business. Diesel mechanics repairs 18-wheeler trucks.
- The agricultural definition of the Unified Development Ordinance specifically states crop production and raising livestock or forestry.
- A diesel mechanic repair shop is a commercial operation. The upkeep and maintenance for the trucks is a requirement for the business to continue being successful.
- Home Occupations with our UDO have specific requirements that must be met to comply. 5.01.03-Standards for Home Occupations, Tpe II have a list of occupations that must be special uses in Agricultural Zoning. Letter J, item number one states Automotive repair is not allowed due to the incompatibility of the trade.
- According to the Table of Permitted Uses in Chapter 2, Repair Garage is listed under the zoning district of C-2. Within the chart you must rezone if the zoning district does not list a "P" for permitted uses or a "SU" for a special use.
- The lot being referred to (078 026F) does not have a dwelling on it. It was parceled out of a larger lot that is in conservation for tax purposes. Breaching that contracting of combining could have penalties.
- The way forward is to approve the rezoning to C-2 with the use of the diesel mechanic repair shop or deny.
- If the Board would like to amend this in the UDO, as a special use or permitted use in A-G, I can start the process.

Commissioner Rowland motioned to start the process of amending the UDO to allow repair garages to operate as a special use in A-R as long as the only vehicles being serviced at the garage are owned by the property owner.

Commissioner Turner seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Horse Arena Cover

Commissioner Rowland stated he has been working on the budget for improvements to the horse arena at the Monroe County Recreation Department and is now to the point where it needs approval.

Commissioner Rowland motioned to contract with Proform Construction on improvements to the horse arena located at the Monroe County Recreation Department in the amount of \$1,067,711 with funding to come from the 2026 SPLOST.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

90-Day Moratorium on Major Subdivisions

County Attorney Ben Vaughn presented a resolution for approval extending the county's current 90-day moratorium on major subdivisions until July 1, 2025. Mr. Vaughn stated this will allow the Board time to hold a workshop and the required public hearings.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the resolution extending the date until July 1st.

Commissioner Turner seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Joel Vinson

Mr. Joel Vinson thanked the Board and stated he was just here to get clarification on the Moratorium. He stated he has a small subdivision in the works and wanted to make sure the moratorium didn't apply to his application.

Public Comments

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner publicly thanked Public Works Director Kim Stokes and County Engineer Dan Wallace for their assistance in her office.

Commissioners' Comments

District 1 Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis stated we have a great team, and we continue to make improvements.

Commissioner Davis stated City Councilman Charles Wilder and himself are holding a townhall meeting on May 3rd at 10:00 am at Kynette Church.

Commissioner Davis publicly thanked Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner stating a county to the south of us was having a hard time with the soil erosion permitting process and the EPD recommended calling Kelsey.

District 2 Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated for the last year and a half Kelsey has had the hardest job and he is happy to see Kelsey with a smiling face. Commissioner Rowland stated he is thankful that Dan Wallace and Kim Stokes have stepped in to assist.

District 3 John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated he appreciates the County Attorney for all that he does. Commissioner Ambrose stated Chairman Gibbs and Commissioner Turner are doing a great job. Commissioner Ambrose stated a new restaurant is opening in Bolingbroke named the Iron Rail and encouraged everyone to check them out. Commissioner Ambrose stated he would like to point out he has never seen as much opposition as coming from the data center.

District 4 Al Turner

Commissioner Turner publicly thanked County Manager Jim Hedges and Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner for working with him and having patience with him.

Chairman Alan Gibbs

Chairman Gibbs stated he enjoys talking to people and encouraged the public to call, he stated I may not answer but I will return your call. Chairman Gibbs thanked the County Attorney stating we talk on a regular basis since the election.

Executive Session-Litigation & Real Estate

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter executive session for litigation and real estate at 10:48 a.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Chairman Gibbs motioned to come out of executive session at 11:23 a.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Action from Executive Session

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated the Board discussed a real estate matter and litigation and no action was needed at this time.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 11:25 a.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion was carried 5-0

MCBOC draft Minutes of April 15, 2025, meeting
MCBOC approved.

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk