

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of May 20, 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-Not present

Staff:

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Ben Vaughn, County Attorney

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Kelsey Fortner, Community Development Manager

Welcome

Chairman Gibbs welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Nathan Jackson Pastor of New Providence Baptist 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.

EMS Week Proclamation

Chairman Gibbs presented on behalf of the Board of Commissioners a Proclamation to members of Monroe County EMS recognizing the week of May 18-24 as Emergency Medical Services Week.

EMS Chief Matt Jackson as well as other members of Monroe County EMS were present to accept the Proclamation.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Gibbs presented the agenda for approval with the addition of executive session for personnel.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the agenda with said changes.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Approve Minutes-May 6, 2026

Chairman Gibbs presented the minutes of the May 6, 2025, Regular meeting for approval.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve with the normal 30 days for changes.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Booster Pump Change Order

Joe Wood, Carter Engineering, presented stating the booster pump project, connecting the north customers to the Forsyth water supply, requires a change order. Initially county mapping indicated an existing 2-inch water main on Towaliga South Road where the proposed pressure-reducing valve was to be installed. Once excavated, it was found to be a 6-inch water main. This discovery means the 2-inch pressure reducing valve in the original Contract will not work for this location. We will need to purchase a 6-inch pressure reducing valve and vault. The total cost of the Change Order will be \$48,900 with funding from TSPLOST.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the change order.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Amy Stapleton-Property Tax Refund

County Manager Jim Hedges presented a property tax penalty refund request from Amy Stapleton in the amount of \$191.98. Ms. Stapleton stated the property tax notice was sent to the prior owner and she never received the bill. The property is located at 8293 Rivoli Road.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to deny.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Charlene Frame-Water Bill appeal

County Manager Jim Hedges stated Ms. Charlene Frame, 109 Loraine Woods Drive, is appealing her water bill for February. Ms. Frame's bill is \$1,573.22 with 152,670 gallons of usage, and for March, \$1,517.88 with 130,550 gallons of usage. Water usage at this rate is indicative of a running garden hose or an irrigation system with a leaking valve.

Emilio Chaves, the inspector engaged by Ms. Frame is not listed by the Secretary of State as a licensed plumber in Georgia, nor is the company, EC Remodeling a registered company in Georgia.

Additionally, the address given for EC Remodeling at 780 Orange Terrace in Macon does not exist in QPublic.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to deny.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

2025 LMIG Bids

Public Works Director Kim Stokes presented the 2025 LMIG & LRA bids.

Monroe County					
2025 Paving Program					
District	Road	Begin	End	Length	Length
				LF	Miles
1	Town Creek	SR-83N	20+00	2,000	0.38
2	Old Macon	Rumble	Industry	7,100	1.34
2	Maynards Mill	Hopewell	SR-42	10,540	2.00
3	Pea Ridge	I-75 Bridge	Sta 151+65	15,165	2.87
3	Taylor	SR-87	Pea Ridge	14,390	2.73
3	Whittle	Estes	Macon/Bibb	11,225	2.13
4	Lassiter	Freeman	SR-83	26,200	4.96
		Total			16.41

Monroe County 2025 Road Program								
Bid Tabulation								
Item #	Item Description	Qty	Unit	Estimate	Blount Construction		E.R. Snell Contractor	
					Unit	Total	Unit	Total

					Price	Price		Price	Price
150-1000	Mobilization Monroe	1	LS		\$120,105.91	\$120,105.91		\$389,000	\$389,000
150-000	Roadway Mobilizations	5	Each		\$14,315.37	\$71,576.85		\$1,000	\$5,000
315-1060	Full Depth Reclamation	215,000	SY		\$4.20	\$903,000.00		\$5.00	\$1,075,000
315-1000	Portland Cement	5500	TN		\$227.42	\$1,250,810		\$240.00	\$1,320,000
	Total				\$3,499,935				\$2,789,000
	Underestimate					\$1,154,442.24			\$710,935
	Average Unit Cost				\$16.28				\$12.97

Funding

- LMIG \$752,850.88
- LRA \$978,706.14
- TSPLOST \$613,935.74
- Total Estimated Project Costs (Prior Approved) \$5,697,388
- Low Bid Adjustment (\$1,154,442)
- Net 2025 Road Program \$4,542,946
- Total TSPLOST Funding \$2,811,389

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the way forward is to authorize awarding the Full Depth Reclamation Contract to the low bidder, Blount Construction Co., Marietta, Georgia, in the amount of \$2,345,492.76.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to award the Full Depth Reclamation Contract to Blount Construction, Co. out of Marietta, Georgia in the amount of \$2,345,492.76.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Montpelier/Thornton/Rumble Road Upgrades

Public Works Director Kim Stokes discussed improvements to Montpelier Road and Thornton Road with the Board.

Summary of Projected Costs:

- Rumble Road from US 41/SR 19 to Pea Ridge Road \$6,272,000

• Montpelier Road Rehabilitation from Forsyth City Limits To US 41/SR 9	\$4,067,000
• Thornton Road at Montpelier Road Intersection Improvement	\$907,000
• Thornton Road Turning Lanes at School Entrance	\$225,000
• Estes Road Re-alignment from Whittle Road to Mile log 0.68	\$3,318,000
• Estes Road Rehabilitation from Mile Log 0.68 to US 41/SR 19	\$1,817,000
• Total	\$16,606,000

Recommendations:

Based on the findings from the study, the recommendations for the intersection of Montpelier Road and Thornton Road are as follows:

- Construct a westbound right turn lane with 100 feet full width storage.
- Construct a southbound left turn lane with 160 feet full width storage.
- Construct a northbound right turn lane with 100 feet full width storage.

Although the daily volume on Thornton Road does not constitute the construction of a three-section roadway, this widening may be considered due to the high peak hour volume experienced as a result of the school traffic and potential future developments in the area.

Montpelier & Thornton Road Improvements

• Intersection Improvements	\$907,000
• Thornton Road, T.G. Scott New Entrance & Turn Lane	\$225,000
• Montpelier Road Rehab & Pave	\$4,067,000
• Total Cost	\$5,199,000
• 2020 SPLOST Funding	\$3,995,946
• TSPLOST Funding	\$1,203,054

The way forward is to authorize to proceed with the Construction Planning, R/W Acquisition, Utility Relocation, and Advertising for Bids for Montpelier & Thornton Road Improvements.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to authorize to proceed with the Construction Planning, R/W Acquisition, Utility Relocation, and Advertising for Bids for Montpelier & Thornton Road Improvements.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Rumble Road Improvements and Reconstruction:

Public Works Director Kim Stokes gave the Board an overview of the plans for improvements needed on Rumble Road.

Mr. Stokes stated the project will include full-depth reclamation of two miles of Rumble Road west of I-75 from the intersection of Evans Road to the future Buc-ee's entrance. Mr. Stokes stated Buc-ee's is paying to have a roundabout installed at the entrance of the new site. Mr. Stokes stated the improvements will continue on the east side of Rumble Road to the intersection with Jenkins Road and for 3.5 miles until it intersects Pea Ridge Road. Mr. Stokes stated there will also be widening of the shoulders as well as a realignment of a curve between Jenkins and Pea Ridge Roads. Mr. Stokes stated Carter Engineering has estimated the total cost of the Rumble Road improvements at just under \$6.3 million.

Mr. Stokes stated Monroe County anticipates receiving \$5 million in Local Road Assistance (LRA) funds this year and that will almost entirely cover the cost of the project. The remaining cost, which is approximately \$1.3 million, would be paid using TSPLOST funds.

Following a board discussion, Commissioner Davis motioned to authorize moving forward with the construction planning, right-of-way acquisition, utility relocation, and advertising for bids for the Rumble Road project.

Commissioner Rowland seconded for discussion.

Commissioner Rowland asked Mr. Stokes if any improvements were planned for the I-75 Bridge on Rumble Road.

Mr. Stokes replied nothing was being done to the bridge.

Following additional discussion, the motion carried 4-0.

Landfill Skid Steer Purchase

The 2025 Capital Budget included the purchase of skid steer and cutter for the landfill with a budget estimate of \$125,000. Proposals for the purchase of the skid steer and cutter, along with a bulk seed/fertilizer spreader were added to reduce outside contractor usage. This piece of equipment is to maintain the slopes, improve material handling, and perform miscellaneous projects.

Quotes were received from Dobbs Equipment for a John Deere at \$104,899.70; and from Yancey for a Caterpillar at \$117,300, a smaller machine and does not include the seed spreader. The recommendation is to approve the Dobbs Equipment proposal for a John Deere at \$104,899.70.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the purchase of the John Deere Skid Steer from Dobbs Equipment in the amount of \$104,899.70 with funding to come from the 2025 Capital Budget.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Surplus-Animal Control Vehicle

The Subaru SUV previously driven by the County Manager was transferred to Animal Control in June 2024 with 150,000 miles. The vehicle now has 175,231 miles and is experiencing transmission issues. The 2025 Capital Budget includes \$45,000 for the purchase of a new vehicle for Animal Control.

It is recommended that the Subaru SUV be declared surplus and authorize Animal Control to use this vehicle as a trade-in on the purchase of a replacement vehicle.

Commissioner Rowland motioned to approve the Animal Control Subaru SUV be declared surplus and authorize Animal Control to use the vehicle as a trade-in on the purchase of a replacement vehicle.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Juror Compensation

On May 12, 2025, the Grand Jury of the Monroe County Superior Court recommended to the Superior Court Judge William A. Fears an increase in jury pay for trial and Grand juries from \$25 to \$50, the maximum compensation allowed under O.C.G.A. 15-12-7.

The District Attorney recommends the compensation be increased to \$35 per day. The 2025 budget includes a provision of \$25,000 for jury compensation and an increase to \$35 per day will increase the budget provision to \$35,000. The additional \$10,000 will come from the contingency fund.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve to increase juror compensation to \$35 per day with the increase to the budget of \$10,000 with funding to come from contingency.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Gymnasium Change Order

The original floorplan for the new gymnasium had two offices inside the reception area; however, the final floorplan eliminated those offices which would significantly reduce the access in and out of the gymnasium. Those offices are needed for staff, and the proposal is to build offices outside of the reception area which are resulting in no reduction with access in or out of the gymnasium.

A change order for \$81,450.72 is recommended to be issued to Proform Construction with funds available in the 2020 Bond.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the change order.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Solid Waste Focus Group Recommendations

During the period 2018 through the 2025 budget, the cost of disposing of solid waste in Monroe County will be \$20.9 million. From time-to-time, the Board of Commissioners have entertained several options to reduce costs, but in the end, they have decided to “put the rock they lifted up back in place”. In August 2024, each Commissioner appointed two Monroe County citizens, some with solid waste backgrounds, to a Solid Waste Focus Group and authorized the expenditure for a moderator from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia.

The Focus Group evaluated 13 options and reduced the alternatives to 2 options. Documentation from the Focus Group meetings have been provided to each Commissioners on two occasions.

Focus Group members:

- Will Davis-Davis Plumbing
- Jeff Morgan-Georgia Transmission Corp.
- David Prim-Prim Industrial Contractors
- Houston Johnson-Business Owner
- Mike Leverett-Energy Economics Consulting
- Kelly VanDeVusse-Amwaste
- Kevin VanDeVuss-Dakota Technologies
- Dan Wallace-Triple Point Engineering
- Hardin Watkins-UGA/CVIOG
- Kim Stokes-Monroe County
- Jim Hedges-Monroe County

Key Issues Presented:

- The county’s solid waste operation is becoming expensive to operate.
- EPD mandates are costly, and frequent
- Losing 50% of past revenue from the new City of Forsyth solid waste approach.
- Huge drain on the General Fund.

Focus Group Reaction:

- Residents are oblivious to the cost to the county associated with solid waste
- Focus Group “shocked” at the cost of operations.
- Focus Group “hopeful” their work will lead to positive changes by the Board of Commissioners.

Focus Group Options

- Initially, the Focus Group identified 13 potential action items, reduced to 8 options.
 - Do nothing-not supported.
 - Close all recycling centers-not supported
 - Charge a fee-add line item to property tax bill or add millage rate to property tax-supported.
 - Increase tipping fees-supported.
 - Close landfill and recycling centers, privatize collections, sell all equipment, and add line-item billing on tax forms-favored action.
 - Closure of landfill, closure of recycling centers, and closure of recycling centers and landfill-no support.

Next Steps:

- BOC agrees on Option 1 to be effective January 1, 2026
- Conduct a number of public hearings.
- Determine location of 4 bulk recycling centers will be out-source or handled in house.
- Conduct meetings with 3rd party solid waste providers.
- Determine the billing process, via the County or direct billing from the service provider.
- Small internal Focus Group to include
 - County Manager
 - Finance Manager/Deputy County Manager
 - Public Works Director
 - 2 County Commissioners

No action needed.

The Board discussed the agenda item extensively, but no action was taken.

Convention Center Rates

Finance Director Lorri Robinson and Conference Center Manager Candice Baswell have developed new lease rates and contract terms for the High Falls American Legion and the Monroe County Conference Center.

Rental Rates amend for the following:

- Peach Room increase to \$750 (deposit increase to \$375)
- High Falls American Legion increase to \$500 (deposit increase to \$100)

- Employee Discount-Currently 35%

Contract Agreement Amendments:

- Alcoholic Beverages Current contract states the following:
 - Alcoholic beverages are allowed by only the person contracted to host the event. Persons attending the event are not permitted to bring in any alcohol of any kind. Individuals attending the event fail to adhere to this request, will be asked to leave or the event can be stopped without a refund.
- Amend this section of the contract to add:
 - Anytime alcohol is being provided for an event, the person contracted to host the event must hire an off duty certified law enforcement officer to be present during the entire event.

The way forward is to approve rates and contract amendments.

Following a board discussion, Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the new rental rates as presented for the High Falls Legion Hall and the Peach Room at the Monroe County Conference Room. Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Chairman Gibbs motioned to eliminate employee discounts for the of the High Falls Legion Hall and the Monroe County Conference Center.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to amend the rental contract agreement to state anytime alcohol is being provided for an event, the person contracted to host the event must hire an off duty certified law enforcement officer to be present during party hours from 8:00 p.m. until the event is over.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Public Comments

Nathan Jackson, resident of 2075 Hwy 41 South, stated he enjoyed being at the meeting and it ran very efficient, and he appreciates the Board. Mr. Jackson stated the county should consider merging with the City of Forsyth, stating their meetings are not run as efficient.

Rob Law, resident of Lassiter Road, addressed the Board stating the Board needed to get communications out to the communities to educate the people prior to making changes to the UDO.

Commissioners' Comments

District 1 Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis thanked the Board for the work that has been done since the beginning of the year. Commissioner Davis thanked the County Manager Jim Hedges, County Clerk/HR Director Janet Abbott, County Attorney Ben Vaughn and Public Works Director Kim Stokes.

District 2 Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated the work on the railroad crossing at Rumble Road and Hwy 41 will start soon and should be complete by April 2026. He stated Buc-ee's should be starting soon, Oglethorpe Power is meeting with their equipment supplier, and Jeff Dorough is working on a more efficient way to let people know they have leaks. He also stated Chrysler Fiat is coming to the Rumble Road area and will be increasing construction on the same road as Five Below warehouse.

District 3 John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated he got an email stating he had a high leakage alert, and he realized he had a broken water pipe. He stated over the years tons of people complain about their high-water bills, and it turns out to be a leaky toilet. Commissioner Ambrose urged everyone to be alert. Commissioner Ambrose thanked Commissioner Davis and Commissioner Rowland for their work on the LRA and thanked all county employees.

Chairman Alan Gibbs

Chairman Gibbs stated the landfill is a big deal and he has strong feelings about it because it is a service to the community. He stated he knows that it is a cost to the county to operate but the County Attorney is working on a solution for this. Chairman Gibbs stated he was in a meeting with Kim Stokes, and he can't brag on him enough, he stated he knows the road stuff on state levels that most people don't know. Chairman Gibbs stated he has learned a lot since being here and this is truly a great county. He stated he recently attended meetings in Savannah and was able to talk to other commissioners from other counties and a lot of them are in trouble and it made him realize we are doing great and going in the right direction.

Executive Session

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter executive session for personnel at 10:45 a.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to come out of executive session at 11:00 a.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Chairman Gibbs left the meeting at 10:58 a.m.

Action from Executive Session

Commissioner Ambrose stated two personnel items were discussed during executive session and no action was needed on either item.

Adjourn

Commissioner Rowland motioned to adjourn at 11:02 a.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion was carried 3-0

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk