

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of August 19, 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

Kelsey Fortner, Community Development Manager

Welcome

Chairman Gibbs welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Chairman Gibbs 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.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Gibbs presented the agenda for approval removing item C, adding executive session for legal and personnel, adding donated land, and adding new business discussion/vote.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the agenda with said changes.

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

Approve Minutes-August 05, 2025

Chairman Gibbs presented the minutes of the August 05, 2025, Regular meeting for approval.

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

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

Public Works Equipment Purchases

Kim Stokes presented recommendations to purchase two 30 cubic yard compactors with power units and five open top containers for the Recycling Centers with funding from the 2025 Capital Budget and the purchase of a bulldozer and a dump truck with funding from TSPLOST.

Department		Equipment		Cost		Funding Source
Solid Waste Centers		Compactors/Power Units		\$107,388.00		2025 Capital Budget
Solid Waste Centers		Open Top Containers		\$23,225.00		2025 Capital Budget
Public Works		Bulldozer		\$250,888.61		2025 Capital Budget
Public Works		Dump Truck		\$215,157.84		TSPLOST

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the purchase of the 2025 John Deere 700 P Tier with the landfill package from Dobbs Equipment in the amount of \$250,888.61.

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

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to purchase the 2025 Peterbilt 567 for the Public Works Department from Peterbilt Atlanta in the amount of \$215,157.84.

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

Chairman Gibbs motioned to purchase Two 30 CY single cylinder compactors for both the Pea Ridge Recycle Center and the Smarr Recycle Center (two for each center, four total) from Rudco Products in the amount of \$118,704.00.

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

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to purchase five (5) Open Top Roll-Off Containers from Rudco in the amount of \$23,225.00.

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

Commissioner Rowland thanked Recycling Coordinator Nathan Dumas for putting the signs up at the centers.

2025 Budget Amendment

Deputy County Manager/Finance Director Lorri Robinson presented a budget amendment in the amount of \$644,442.00 to the Board for approval for the following:

Adopted vs Amended Budget Report

- **Taxes**
 - Adopted: \$27,538,548
 - Amended: \$27,542,863
 - Amount: \$4,315
 - Notes: Tax Commissioner – Advertising property sales
- **Licenses and Permits**
 - Adopted: \$685,000
 - Amended: \$685,000
- **Intergovernmental - Grants**
 - Adopted: \$1,162,070
 - Amended: \$1,260,831
 - Amounts & Notes:
 - \$52,950: Family Connections
 - \$30,253: EMS Fireworks Grant & Safety Grant
 - \$15,558: IGA between Monroe County & Hospital for Demo
- **Charges for Services**
 - Adopted: \$2,758,100
 - Amended: \$2,804,815
 - Amount: \$46,715
 - Notes: Ground Ambulance & Fire Recovery & Fire Training
- **Fines and Forfeitures**
 - Adopted: \$2,466,000
 - Amended: \$2,466,000
- **Interest Earned**
 - Adopted: \$250,000
 - Amended: \$250,000
- **Miscellaneous Income**
 - Adopted: \$175,000
 - Amended: \$482,567
 - Amounts & Notes:
 - \$123,825: Property Insurance Claims – totaled ambulance
 - \$3,131: Property Insurance Claims – road department equipment

- \$120,269: Property Insurance Claims – Sheriff’s Office
- \$2,160: Restitution – Animal Control Services
- \$567: P&Z Dirt Class NPDES
- \$6,371: Recreation Sponsors for Monroe Champs
- \$8,450: Donation from Oglethorpe Power
- \$24,769: Donations from MC Law Enforcement
- \$18,025: COF – Senior Center Van
- **Other Financing Sources**
 - Adopted: \$7,854,079
 - Amended: \$8,041,163
 - Amounts & Notes:
 - \$91,268: Discretionary Funds
 - \$21,800: Landfill 2 groundwater monitoring wells
 - \$59,016: Energy Efficiency Program
 - \$15,000: PY Encumbrance – CPF for Animal Services Site Improvement
- **Revenue Totals**
 - Adopted: \$42,888,797
 - Amended: \$43,533,239
 - Total Adjustment: \$644,442

Deputy County Manager Lorri Robinson stated these numbers are through July 31st.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the budget amendment in the amount of \$644,442.

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

Purchase Ordinance Amendment

During the 2025 General Assembly, House Bill 137 was introduced which changed the minimum bidding requirements for Public Works construction projects \$100,000 or more and budgeted to \$250,000. House Bill 137 was approved by the Governor on May 12, 2025, and became effective July 1, 2025. It is recommended Monroe County’s policy be amended to reflect the change to coincide with state law.

Chairman Gibbs motioned to approve to amend the county’s Purchasing Ordinance to coincide with state law.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion and the motion

Subdivision Moratorium Resolution

County Attorney Ben Vaughn presented a resolution to the Board for the purpose of enacting an emergency temporary moratorium on major subdivisions including the acceptance or processing of zoning applications including variance and special use applications.

Following an extensive Board discussion on modifications to the Moratorium resolution, Chairman Gibbs motioned to approve the resolution with the condition that the subdivision lot size requirements be removed entirely and determined later.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, the motion failed 2-3 with Chairman Gibbs and Commissioner Ambrose in favor and Commissioner Rowland, Commissioner Davis and Commissioner Turner opposed.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn explained to the board that by not passing the resolution the current major subdivision moratorium without the proposed revision prohibiting the acceptance of zoning applications for the purpose of a future subdivision will remain in place through January 1, 2026. Mr. Vaughn stated any major subdivisions approved after conclusion of the moratorium would be subject to any subdivision requirement changes made to the UDO during the moratorium period.

Community Development Truck Purchase

Fees collected by the Community Development Department are by statute referred to as “regulatory fees” and can only be utilized within the Community Development Department. The purchase of a Ford F-150 Super cab XLT is recommended at a cost of \$46,169 from Hutchinson Ford with funding from the Regulatory Fund.

The purchase will facilitate the transfer of a 2023 Chevrolet from the Community Development Department to the Coroner, and the coroners 2019 Ford Explorer will be transferred to the Care Cottage. Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the purchase of a Ford F-150 at a cost of \$46,169 from Hutchinson Ford with funding to come from the Regulatory Fund.

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

UGA Extension MOU Renewal

Every five-years, Monroe County and the University of Georgia on behalf of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in order to maintain and operate the Extension program in Monroe County.

The current MOU expires on December 31, 2025, and the local Extension Office has requested this agreement be renewed. The terms and conditions remain the same with the exception that Addendum D has been added, which outlines IT Systems and Support. Specifically, Monroe County will provide internet connectivity and wired data connections within the Extension Office, which is currently being provided by the county.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the MOU with the University of Georgia to maintain and operate the Monroe County Extension program.

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

County Salary Survey

The last salary survey for employees of Monroe County was conducted in 2019 by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. That survey was implemented in January 2020 and included job descriptions, salary grades, recommended salaries, and step increases based on length of service in grade.

In the past six years, salaries for specific jobs have been adjusted based on market-based pay, while other positions have seen salary adjustments based on length of service in grade coupled with annual salary adjustments based on the consumer price index changes.

A new Compensation Study for Monroe County is recommended to be conducted by Evergreen Solutions, LLC who specialize in consulting for the public sector, counties, and cities across the United States in 47 states. Evergreen Solutions are known for classification and compensation studies, and wage studies. The Compensation Study will take three months to complete at a cost of \$28,500 and will compare Monroe County Compensation with twenty peer organizations. Funds are available in the Administration budget, and implementation of the Compensation Study will be determined at a later date.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the compensation to be completed by Evergreen Solutions LLC at a cost of \$28,500.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion for discussion.

Commissioner Rowland asked why not use Carl Vinson like we had done in the past.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated Evergreen has a very large data base of counties in Georgia.

The motion carried 5-0.

Butts County Water Intergovernmental Agreement

Our Intergovernmental Agreement with Butt's County for the Purchase and Sale of Water expired on August 19, 2024, catching both Butt's County and us by surprise. Butt's County has agreed to renew the IGA for a period of three-years with extensions in one-year terms for not more than three total years at a price of \$6.00/1000 gallons, an increase of \$1.710/1000 gallons. AS information, Butt's County Water \$7.25/1000; so, we will still be purchasing water from Butt's County at a discount.

Commissioners are reminded that our Local Option Sales Tax Agreement with the City of Forsyth, effective January 1, 2023, provides that the City of Forsyth will sell water to Monroe County via a

maste3r meter for the County's North System/customers at a rate of \$3.00/1000 gallons for a period of years equal to the LOST which this agreement relates to, and the County will and must complete all the engineering bidding and construction for the north system for connection to the Forsyth system within three-years, and not later than December 31, 2025. Savings in purchasing Forsyth water at \$3.00/1,000 gallons instead of purchasing Butt's County water at their current rate of \$4.71/1,000 gallons.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement with Butts County for the purchase and sale of water for a period of three-years with extensions in one-year terms for not more than three years total at a price of \$6.00 per 1000 gallons.

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

2025 Millage Rate

Overview

County Manager Jim Hedges focused on the financial challenges facing Monroe County, particularly the setting of the 2025 millage rate, the county's revenue shortfall, and the depletion of reserves. Two millage rate options were presented for consideration, along with a discussion of future revenue streams and the county's financial outlook.

Key Points Discussed

1. Historical Context

- **Millage Rate:** The millage rate has decreased by 19% over the past 8 years.
- **Inflation:** Inflation has risen by 27% during the same period, increasing financial strain.
- **Revenue Loss:** The county has lost \$11.8 million in revenue due to:
 - Lower millage rates.
 - Property tax loss from Plant Scherer.
 - Reduced water revenue from seasonal water rates.

2. Current Financial Status

- **Unassigned Reserves:**
 - \$18.6 million of unrestricted reserves were used to balance the budget over the past three years.
 - Only \$7.7 million remains in reserves, which are projected to bottom out in 2026.
- **2025 Budget Shortfall:**
 - Income was short by \$7.4 million (13.5%) compared to expenses, requiring reserves to supplement the budget.

3. Future Revenue Streams

- **Buc-ee's:**
 - Property tax (5% of value) starts in 2027, with a 12-year abatement.
 - Sales tax revenue expected in late 2026.
- **Oglethorpe Power:**
 - Property tax begins in 2030, with a 12-year abatement.
 - Sales tax revenue is expected mid-to-late 2029.
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- **Prologic and Rumble Technology Campus:**
 - Revenue potential remains uncertain.
- **Plant Scherer Unit Four:**
 - Awaiting Georgia Power's decision to return it to the tax digest.

4. Millage Rate Options for 2025

Two options were presented for the 2025 millage rate:

- **Option 1: Rollback Rate (10.763 mils):**
 - Designed to maintain property tax revenue at the previous year's level despite reassessments.
 - Generates \$643,927 in additional revenue.
 - Leaves a deficit of \$7,354,079, requiring cuts to capital expenditures, contingencies, and reserves.
- **Option 2: Rollback Rate Plus 1.2 Mils SPLOST Adjustment (11.963 mils):**
 - Adds back the 1.2 mils reduction from 2024 due to excess SPLOST collections.
 - Generates \$2,750,811 in additional revenue.
 - Reduces the deficit but still requires adjustments to reserves and expenditures.
 - Considered a tax increase, requiring three public hearings.

5. Sales Ratio Study Concerns

- The county's sales ratio may fall below 38%, which could result in financial penalties and adjustments to the tax digest. This issue will be monitored closely.

6. Future Financial Outlook

- **Revenue Growth:**
 - Significant revenue expected from Buc-ee's, Oglethorpe Power, and Prologic starting in 2027.
 - General fund revenue is projected to grow steadily through 2035.
- **Challenges:**
 - Managing the transition from 2026 to 2027 without depleting reserves.
 - Addressing immediate budget deficits while awaiting future revenue streams.

Action Items

1. Finalize the 2025 millage rate during August 19, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting.
2. Conduct public hearings if the rollback plus 1.2 mils SPLOST option is selected.
3. Monitor the Sales Ratio Study results and address any potential consequences.
4. Develop strategies to bridge the financial gap until new revenue streams are realized.

Rumble Road Rezone/Land Donation

Commissioner Rowland stated several months ago the Board was approached by the Rumble Road Data Center developers stating the County has a piece of property the data center has an easement on that is the right of way for the utilities. The data center developers have asked the board to donate the property to the data center, and they would give the county an easement. Commissioner Rowland stated the board agreed publicly to do that, but the transfer has not happened yet. The property the data center owns is zoned commercial and the donated property would need to be zoned commercial to match the rest of the property.

Chairman Gibbs asked what the process was to do that.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated the county can own its own initiative rezone property, but Ms. Fortner still has to take it through the zoning process.

Commissioner Rowland motioned for Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner to place the Rumble Road property referred to on the Planning and Zoning agenda.

Chairman Gibbs seconded the motion, and the motion passed 4-0-1 with Commissioner Ambrose recusing himself due to possible conflict.

Agenda modifications New Business/voting

Commissioner Ambrose stated there are times that Commissioners have things that come up after the agenda has been completed that was learned in the meeting and needs a vote and he would like to have new business added to the agenda.

Commissioner Rowland stated his opinion is government moves slowly but it moves slow for a reason. He stated sometimes there are only three commissioners at a meeting and if something comes up and is voted on the other two commissioners know nothing about it and that is concerning to him.

Commissioner Rowland stated he doesn't think there is anything that comes up the board can't wait two weeks to vote on.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to allow Commissioners to vote during Commissioner comments if there is a need.

Motioned failed for lack of a second.

Public Comments

Bronwen Morgan, resident of Towaliga Lake Drive, stated she appreciated the discussion regarding the subdivision moratorium, and she is equally frustrated with the UDO changes for Data Centers. Ms. Morgan stated the board blanketly adding data centers is a contradiction to the UDO. Ms. Morgan stated she has a petition with 186 signatures asking for a moratorium on data center developments.

Betty Eskew, resident of 514 Brushy Creek, stated she would like to reiterate her request asking the Board for and updated the flood study.

Kerri Swearingen, resident of Reedy Creek Road, stated she was part of the UDO development and lots of work went into trying to make some changes. A moratorium is time to get some stuff done and at the end of the moratorium she would like the community to feel like something was accomplished.

Rob Law, resident of Lassiter Road, stated he drove down Hwy 16 and there are lots of distribution centers there and it takes the rural tone out of the picture. He stated subsequently he drove down High Falls Road, and it has been forested, and it won't be long before the distribution centers come down High Falls Road. He stated he would like to recommend on all the commercial developments on public roads to have a 100-foot screening to maintain the rural tone. Mr. Law stated it's hard to get a big picture of what is going on throughout the county and he recommends a big picture be put together for Rumble Road illustrating the developments coming in and it be placed in the lobby of the administration building for the public. Mr. Law stated the property on Stokes Store Road has the potential for minor subdivisions to be put in and look like a major subdivision. Mr. Law thanked County Manager Jim Hedges for his presentation.

Carol Edge, resident of 1544 Stokes Store Road, stated the developers on Stokes Store Road have pulled out a portion of what was submitted as a subdivision and divided it into four three acre lots, so they didn't have to go through zoning. Ms. Edge stated when an application for a subdivision is made everything should remain inside that subdivision until it has been approved.

Commissioners' Comments

District 1 Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis stated a lot of work is going on behind the scenes regarding rules for data centers. He stated he thinks the new businesses coming in is great for our community. Commissioner Davis thanked the County Manager and Finance Director for the presentations today. Commissioner Davis stated he wanted to commend Mr. Stoves and the road department for the paving they are doing.

District 2 Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated he would like to recognize Firefighter Dawson Gunter who was injured in an accident on I-75. Commissioner Rowland stated Mr. Gunter's Battalion Chief stated when the wreck happened, he got out of the firetruck with the injuries he had and was hobbling over to the semi to render aid to the semi that had struck him from behind and had to be stopped. Commissioner Rowland stated that it is a true testament of the type of person he is.

District 3 John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated he isn't going to kick the can down the road anymore and a date needs to be set for the UDO discussion for the moratorium.

Commissioner Al Turner

Commissioner Turner stated a lot has been discussed but he would like for the meeting to be set up regarding the moratorium.

Chairman Alan Gibbs

Chairman Gibbs stated he likes Monroe County model 1997, and he is going to stick to it. He stated he is going to try to keep the county as rural as he can.

Chairman Gibbs thanked everyone for coming.

Executive Session-Real Estate, Personnel, and Litigation

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter executive session at 11:17 am for Real Estate, Personnel and Litigation.

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

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to come out of executive session at 12:05 pm.

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

Action from Executive Session

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated the county discuss a personnel matter regarding narrowing the applicants for the county manager job to three applicants and two of the three have withdrawn their applications. Mr. Vaughn stated the chairman needs a motion to consider Mrs. Lorri Robinson-Byrd's application for county manager on the September 9, 2025, meeting agenda.

Commissioner Turner motioned to consider Lorri Robinson-Byrd's application on the September 9, 2025, agenda.

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

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated a litigation and real estate matter was also discussed but no public action is needed at this time.

Adjourn

Commissioner Davis motioned to adjourn at 12:07 p.m.

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

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk