Monroe County Board of Commissioners
Minutes of the September 9, 2025
Regular Commissioners' Meeting
6:00 p.m. Meeting

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
Christian Henry, County Attorney
Brandon Bowen, County Attorney
Kelsey Fortner, Community Development Manager
Lorri Robinson-Byrd, Finance Director/Assistant County Manager
Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Welcome
Chairman Gibbs welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer
Chairman Gibbs called for Preacher Cody Fountain to lead the invocation.

Pledge
Chairman Gibbs led the Pledge.

Roll Call
Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner called roll. All Present.

Call to Order
Chairman Gibbs called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

New Business
Approve Agenda
Vice Chairman John Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda with the addition of Item H and Item I, seconded by Commissioner Davis and passed 5-0.

Approve Minutes-BOC Meetings-8/19/2025, 8/28/2025 8 a.m., 8/28/2025 6 p.m.
Vice Chairman Ambrose motioned to approve and seconded by Commissioner Turner and approved 5-0 with the usual 30 days for changes.

Item C: Public Works Trench Roller Purchase

Public Works Director, Kim Stokes spoke about requesting purchase a trench roller. Mr. Stokes advises that due to the major storm drain repair and other ongoing culvert replacements, Public Works needs a trench roller to compact the backfill around the replaced culverts. A trench roller will allow better compaction from the bottom up and parallel to the pipe. Funding will be from TSPLOST and the recommended type is the Dynapac D One at the cost of $38,580, weighing 3,516 pounds and is remote controlled allowing a safer operation. Yancey quote came in at $39,675, however; Mr. Stokes recommends the Dynapac and request authorization from the Board. Vice Chairman Ambrose motions to approve this purchase at Kim Stokes recommendation, seconded by Commissioner Davis, approved 5-0.

Item D: Planning and Zoning—Public Hearing for Application 2025-14/Rezoning on HWY 41 South

Vice Chairman Ambrose opened the public hearing, seconded Commissioner Turner and approved 5-0. Comm. Dev. Mgr. Kelsey Fortner presented the power point for this application. The application is requesting that 3.85 +/- acres are zoned R-1 and the adjacent property of 57.53 +/- acres is zoned C-1. The property owner Bolingbroke Business Park II, LLC and applicant Steven Rowland, PE with Rowland Engineering requesting to be zoned to C-1 to match the adjacent lot. The map/parcel is 092 004, located on HWY 41 South.

Steven Rowland, PE stated that this lot was a remanent of property left over when the interstate was created and is landlocked. In 2021, when the adjacent property was zoned C-1, they didn't own this residual piece, so it was not included in the rezoning.

Mrs. Fortner stated that Mr. Rowland will be presenting a plat for the creation of a business park commercially subdivided but will not be brought before the board until the moratorium is lifted.

Commissioner Ambrose asked that the restrictions placed on the adjoining tract in 2021, carry over to the future plat that will be presented. Commissioner Davis wanted further explanation on the future idea of this tract and the adjoining. Mr. Rowland stated that they are looking to create small business offices, small trade offices and will be like the Willingham property across the railroad tracts and HWY 41 South.

Chairman Gibbs asked if anyone was in opposition, and no one was in opposed, however; Terry Campbell, resident of Bolingbroke had a few questions. Mrs. Campbell stressed that she hopes all restrictions on this property stay in place and that the egress/ingress is planned well.

Vice Chairman Ambrose voted to close the public hearing, seconded by Commissioner Davis and approved 5-0. Commissioner Ambrose voted to approve the application with the conditions from 2021 (application 2021-03) seconded by Commissioner Rowland and approved 5-0.

Item E: Planning and Zoning—Public Hearing for Application 2025-16/Rezoning on Rumble Road

Commissioner Davis motioned to open the public hearing, seconded by Commissioner Rowland and passed 4-0. Vice Chairman Ambrose stated he was recusing himself and Attorney Benjamin Vaughn recused himself as well. Attorney Brandon Bowen from Cartersville, GA, representing the Board of Commissioners for this application. Comm. Dev. Mgr. Kelsey Fortner presented the PowerPoint for Application 2025-016, explaining the request. The property is located on Rumble Road, map/parcels (091 007,091 007B,091 008,091 009,091 010,091 010A) owned by JVA Acquisitions, LLC, applicants Rum Creek DevCo, LLC. Requested to be rezoned from A-R to C-1, 328 +/- acres. This will be combined with the 900 +/- acres rezoned in 2024 for a Data Center. All the parcels being considered are on the South Side of Rumble Road. Portions of the North side parcels are surveyed off to only include the south portion of those parcels. The addition of the 328 +/- acres are being requested to better serve the environment. The project will minimize disruption to both wetlands and upland terrain and for more efficient development, reducing the need for major grading or filling. This will also expedite progress when it’s time to pull permits. Kyler Wise, Attorney representative for Cloverleaf (Data Center) spoke on everything remaining the same from the Data Center as they were instructed per the ordinance in November of 2024. They would change the positions of the data centers, but the size will not be adjusted. The total acreage they will have should be approved will be 1,276 and following all of zonings restrictions. Aaron Bioylou spoke on behalf of Cloverleaf stating they intend to be good neighbors and good to the community and will not stray from that. No opposition.
Commissioner Rowland made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Commissioner Davis and approved 4.0. Chairman Gibbs made a motion to approve the application of rezoning, seconded by Commissioners Davis and motion passed for approval 3-1, with Commissioner Turner against.

Item F: County Manager Announcement
County Manager Jim Hedges stated the following:

“Mr. Chairman, Monroe County Board of Commissioners, it is my great honor and privilege to recommend Mrs. Lorri Robinson-Byrd as my replacement as the next Monroe County Manager to be effective February 1, 2026. All will agree that Lorri brings extensive experience in public administration, fiscal management, and operational leadership. Lorri has been instrumental in guiding the County’s financial stability, improving departmental coordination, and implementing strategic initiatives that support Monroe County’s long-term growth. When this Board selected Lorri in 2018 as your Financial Director, you made an outstanding selection and with appointing Lorri as the next County Manager, you again will make another outstanding choice.”
Vice Chair Ambrose motioned to approve accepting Lorri Robinson-Byrd as County Manager effective February 1, 2026, seconded by Commissioner Davis for discussion. Davis and Ambrose spoke about how she was best for the job, and they are happy to have her on board as County Manager. Motion passed 5-0.

Item G: 2025 Millage Rate

Commissioner Davis made a motion to go into the Public Hearing, seconded by Commissioner Turner and approved 5-0. Public Hearing Opens.
County Manager Jim Hedges presented a PowerPoint regarding the 2025 Millage Rate. Mr. Hedges stated that as we approach the collection of property taxes in late 2025, which will be based on the setting of the millage rate by the Board of Commissioners, it is appropriate to reflect on where the county stands financially. Some key points are as follows:

- Inflation has increased by 27% over the past 8 years
- The millage rate has decreased by 19% over the same time-period.
- The county lost $11.8 million in reduced property tax due to the lowering of the millage rate coupled with the loss of property tax from Plant Scherer as well as lost revenue from the sale of water by the implementation of seasonal water rates.
- And, during the past three years, income was short by 13.5%, or $7.4 million compared to expenses. That shortfall required the 2025 budget to be supplemented with funds from unrestricted reserves.
- As we approach the preparation of the 2026 budget, $7.7 million remains in unrestricted reserves.
- And, as a reminder, the Board of Commissioners lowered the current millage rate by 1.2 mils to offset the collection of excess SPLOST funds, as required by law. This reduction was a one-time event and should be added back to the millage rate for 2025.

Mr. Hedges continued with saying the future is financially bright for Monroe County with the additional property taxes from Buc-ee's, Oglethorpe Power, and Proligis coupled with the additional LOST tax from Buc-ee's and Oglethorpe Power; however, realization of those additional revenue streams will not be realized until 2027. And there is an unknown revenue stream from the Rumble Technology Campus, and when Georgia Power will return Plant Scherer Unit Four to the tax digest.
Mr. Hedges asks them for a vote on one of the two options.

- The calculated "rollback" rate of 10.776 mils; the millage rate designed to ensure that the total property tax revenue collected by Monroe County from existing properties remains the same as the previous year, despite increases in property valuations due to reassessments.
- The calculated "rollback rate" plus adding back the 1.2 mills associated with the excess SPLOST collections from the 2024 millage rate totals 11.976 mils, which was a one-time reduction. If this option is selected, it would be considered a tax increase. Public Hearings have already been assembled and completed previously.

Commissioner Ambrose stated that ten years ago, we didn't have anything and now we have reserves. We all stated that the rollback last year was a one-time thing, and we need to increase the Mil at this time until all the funds come in from this coming projects Mr. Hedges presented. Commissioner Rowland mentioned that additional funds from SPLOST will be available in 2031. Chairman Gibbs stated at the end of the day, we do not want to place a hiring freeze. Chairman Gibbs asked would the public like to speak.

Citizen Russ Edge spoke and stated that he feels the county should stop spending money and use better budgeting. Mr. Edge said departments should be made to use less money. Mr. Edge also wanted to know why Planning and Zoning needed a four-door truck with 4-wheel drive. He also stated that if departments have done it over half the year with vacant positions, then they should be okay.
Citizen Rob Law stated the Mil increase should happen.
Vice Chairman Ambrose stated that they need to keep money in reserves for emergencies.
Commissioner Davis reminded the public that the Board isn't exempt from paying taxes. He also stated that vehicles are shifted throughout the county and the truck purchased through Planning and Zoning comes from Building Permits and cannot be used for anything else. Also, we must buy equipment for our departments to operate.
Chairman Gibbs stated the county has tried to hire people for those vacant positions.
Commissioner Rowland said Monroe County did lose #4 of GA Power, but Buc-ee's is breaking ground, Oglethorpe is getting ready, and we're working as a Brecc Team. The Brecc Team went to D.C. two years ago and Commissioner Davis got us a $5 million Grant because of Buc-ee's, Oglethorpe, Data Centers, Stellantis and don't have to have all our eggs in one basket.
Citizen Ronald Keller of Country Creek stated maybe try cutting down hours for employees to work. Allowing them to work four-tens instead of our current hours. Mr. Keller stated that Union Camps will be shutting down soon and Monroe County's speed traps kill business.
Chairman Gibbs asked were there any other comments, and no.
Vice Chair Ambrose made a motion to come out of the public hearing, seconded by Commissioners Davis and approved 5-0.
Vice Chair Ambrose made a motion to approved option 2 with a 1.2 Mil increase, seconded by Chairman Gibbs and with Rowland stating that voting for HB 581 next spring, this will reduce property taxes by 3 Mils if you vote for FLOST, all in favor for a 1.2 Mil increase 5-0.

Item H: Annexation Request

Attorney Benjamin Vaughn read an annexation request from the City of Forsyth that the County received. Starting the city is requesting to annex 041 013, the land consists of two parcels with a total of approximately 25-acres which are contiguous to the city and are located at the intersection of Collier Road and Ensign Road. Vice Chair Ambrose motion to approve Mr Vaughn to respond and allow the annexation, seconded by Commissioner Davis, and all in favor 5-0.

Item I: Surplus Vehicles

County Manager Jim Hedges said the D.A.'s office has 4 vehicles. The D.A. would like to trade in explorers to receive new ones at no cost to the county. This funding comes from forfeiture funds.
Ambrose motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Turner and approved 5-0.

Public Comments

Russ Edge spoke again and stated he didn't see the vehicle items on the agenda and doesn't understand why we are spending money even if funds are allocated for something else.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Davis extended his congratulations to Lorri Robinson-Byrd. The Road Department is great!
Commissioner Rowland—No comment.
Vice Chairman Ambrose said he would like to see a stop to these trucks driving on No Thru Truck Roads and would like their fees increased from $500 to $1,000. Hats off to Public Works Director Kim Stokes, the roads are great, and his guys are saving the county money.
Commissioner Turner said "Thank you for coming out tonight. He appreciates the community and participation in the Board of Commissioners Meetings.
Chairman Gibbs said the last thing he wanted to do was raise taxes. He said you can always save $500 here or there, but until our tax base starts coming in, we must be patient.

Executive Session (Litigation, Personnel)

At 7:33 pm, V. Chair Ambrose made a motion to go into Executive Session, seconded by Commissioner Davis and approved of 5-0. Chairman Gibbs invited Kelsey Fortner, Christian Henry and Brandon Bowen and Lorri Robinson-Byrd into E.S.

Action from Executive Session

At 8:18pm, Board reconvenes in the Board meeting room after executive session. Chairman Gibbs stated they have nothing to report back on with litigation. County Manager Hedges stated he's happy to present the decision that Chief Matt Jackson will be Assistant County Manager as well as serving as EMA and EMS Director.

Commissioner Ambrose made a motion to approve Chief Matt Jackson as Assistant County Manager, seconded by Commissioner Rowland, and approved 5-0.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Davis seconded that motion and passed 5-0. Meeting ended at 8:21 pm.