

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of November 18, 2025

Regular Meeting

9:00 AM

Present:

Alan Gibbs, Chairman

John Ambrose, Vice-Chairman-present by phone

Lamarcus Davis, District 1

Eddie Rowland, District 2

Al Turner, District 4

Staff:

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Lorri Robinson, Finance Director/Deputy 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 am

Proclamation-Monroe County Historical Society Golden Jubilee

Chairman Gibbs read a Proclamation Commemorating the Golden Jubilee of the Monroe County Historical Society. The Monroe County Historical Society celebrates its 50th Anniversary in December 2025. Chairman Gibbs presented on behalf of the Board of Commissioners.

The proclamation was presented to Nolan Howard and members of the Historical Society.

Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Gibbs presented the agenda for approval

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the agenda.

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

Minutes-October 21, 2025, 9 a.m. Regular meeting, October 21, 2025, Called Meeting,

Chairman Gibbs presented the minutes of the October 21, 2025, Regular meeting, October 21, 2025, Called Meeting for approval.

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

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

Landfill Protective Cover

Dan Wallace, principal engineer for Triple Point Engineering, provides oversight for the Strickland Loop landfill notified the board that the protective soil cover has eroded off the previously constructed liner. EPD requires the protective cover to be restored and recertified before waste can be placed on the remaining lined area, about 5 acres. The cost of restoring the protective soil cover is estimated at \$250,000, and his work has not been included in the 2026 budget.

Public Works Director Kim Stokes stated a screen deck price rental is coming and a GPS unit for the dozier and a tower homing unit. Mr. Stokes stated he believes it can be done in-house economically once volume and pricing are confirmed.

Commissioner Rowland asked Dan Wallace would this work for him if we do it in house.

Mr. Wallace replied to Commissioner Rowland, it does and can be done in the spring early summer, but steps need to be taken prior. A layer of fluff needs to go on top of the liner (household garbage).

Chairman Gibbs stated he would like to hear Mr. Stokes numbers prior to making a decision.

Commissioner Rowland stated it has to be put in the budget regardless of which direction.

Mr. Stokes stated we are only asking for authorization to proceed.

County Manager Jim Hedges stated the amount will be discussed during the budget discussion.

Chairman Gibbs motioned to move forward to determine cost and include it in the budget.

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

Macon Water Authority Capacity Representative

The Board of Commissioners agreement with the Macon Water Authority provides for a limitation on daily quantity withdrawals. While those quantity limitations are still viable, it is appropriate to designate representatives, along with Don Carter of Carter Engineering, to begin discussions on both short and long-term capacity needs for Monroe County. Both Commissioners Eddie Rowland and Lamarcus Davis have expressed interest in participating in these discussions. It is strongly recommended that the incoming County Manager, Lorri Robinson-Byrd, be included in the Monroe County list of representatives. The action item is to appoint two commissioners and Lorri Robinson-Byrd to participate in capacity discussions with the Macon Water Authority.

Chairman Gibbs motioned to nominate Commissioner Davis and Commissioner Rowland as Macon Water Authority Representatives.

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

Legislative Representatives

The current legislative representative for Monroe County includes Commissioner Eddie Rowland, former Chairman Greg Tapley, and County Clerk Janet Abbott. These appointments need to be revised. Commissioner Rowland and Commissioner Lamarcus Davis have stated they would like to be appointed as legislative representative to be effective immediately and for the calendar year 2026.

Chairman Gibbs motioned to nominate Commissioner Davis and Commissioner Rowland as Legislative Representatives.

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

MCES Retention/Recruiting

During the past few weeks, and the results of numerous posts on social media, the issue of retention and recruiting issues at MCES, as well as Commissioners' emails, has become an issue that needs to be addressed.

County Manager Jim Hedges and EMS Chief Matt Jackson have engaged his command staff and will be discussing with the department's rank and file. There are two issues, working schedule and pay. Chief Jackson will propose going from a 24 hour on, 48 hours off schedule to a "Portland schedule" which is a 1/3/2/3 shift; in layman's terms, this is work 24 hours, off 72 hours, work 48 hours, off 72 hours. This schedule was adopted by Portland Fire & Rescue in March 2022 to improve work-life balance. Next is

salary, and Mast has learned that Butts County recently implemented a stipend supplement for paramedics, \$150 per shift for EMT1s, and \$100 per shift for EMT2s. Matt is working up numbers, discussing with the command staff and employees; if approved this will need to be incorporated into the 2026 budget.

EMS/Fire Chief Matt Jackson gave the following statistics:

- Nationwide EMS & Fire shortages
- EMT/paramedic turnover 20–30% annually.
- 2022 American Ambulance Association:
 - 39% of EMT positions and 55% of paramedic positions are unfilled nationally.
- Volunteer firefighters have dropped $\approx$ 20% over 40 years.
- Emergency calls have more than doubled.

Georgia & local:

- Georgia facing significant EMT/paramedic shortages (e.g., Fox5 Atlanta reporting).
- Monroe County is not immune; struggles with staffing and retention.

Current Efforts

- Working with state workforce programs:
- Sending personnel to paramedic school:
- 2 graduated earlier in year.
- 2 more on track to finish later in the year.
- Agreement with a local college/tech school for 2 paramedic student slots next year.

Internal training & career progression:

- All firefighters must be at minimum EMT-B.
- Opportunities to advance to EMT-A and Paramedic with county support.

Shift Schedule Options

- Current schedule: 24/48 (24 hours on, 48 off).
- Objectives:
 - Improve work–family balance.
 - Maintain or improve coverage.
 - Avoid increasing staffing levels.

- Schedules evaluated:
 - 24/72 – Rejected (would require creating a fourth shift; not financially feasible).
 - 48/96 – Concerns about safety with long continuous duty; not preferred.
 - “One on/one off” with rotating pattern and 5 days off (similar to Macon).
 - “Portland schedule”:
 - 1 day on / 3 off; then 2 days on / 3 off (rotating).
 - Very popular among staff survey; about 50/50 split with staying on current schedule.
 - Slight reduction in overtime (from 84 to ~70 hours per 16-week cycle).

Plan:

- Survey sent via SurveyMonkey to all three shifts.
- Considering a 6-month trial of a new schedule starting early next year.
- Final specific schedule to be chosen based on employee feedback and operational analysis.

EMS Stipend Proposal

- Rationale:
 - Neighboring agencies offering:
 - Substantial recruitment bonuses (e.g., \$15,000 signing + \$15,000 referral).
 - EMS-specific stipends for ambulance duty.
- Chief Jackson expressed concerns about bonus-only models (favoring new hires over long-term staff).
- Proposed per-shift stipends for those assigned to ambulances (24-hour shift):
 - Paramedics: \$200/shift
 - EMT-A \$150/shift
 - EMT-B \$100/shift
 - Estimated annual cost: \$450,000
- Not currently in the adopted budget.

The Board expressed the following concerns:

- Chairman and board acknowledged:
 - Cost is significant but issue is critical.
 - EMS/fire retention and recruitment are statewide problems.
 - Employment patterns

- Many firefighters/EMTs work second jobs due to pay, affecting retention.
- EMS vs. Fire Separation
- Question raised about splitting EMS and Fire into separate departments:
- Chief Jackson advised against stating:
 - Currently about half of full-time staff are assigned to ambulances.
 - Splitting would require additional hires to maintain adequate fire coverage.
 - EMS generates \$1.1+ million in annual billing revenue.
 - Contracting EMS out could:
 - Cost \$200,000–\$800,000/year depending on call volume.
 - Reduce county control and reliability (examples of 1.5-hour response times elsewhere).
- Monroe County's Response times
 - Average response time: just over 10 minutes (longer in outlying areas).

Board Action and discussion:

Commissioner Davis expressed desire to see survey results before deciding on schedule changes.

County Manager Jim Hedges clarified the Board should decide what dollar amount to budget during the budget discussion, but the specific schedule should be set by the Chief and Command staff not by the Board. Mr. Hedges stated the recommendation is to consider adding \$450,000 to the EMS budget for 2026 for ambulance stipend.

Chairman Gibbs motioned to table until the budget discussion.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0 with Commissioner Ambrose voting by phone.

Library Board Appointments

Four of the eleven Library Board members' office terms will expire on December 31, 2025. The Board of Commissioners need to appoint two Library Board members, and the current Library Board Chairperson suggests Joe Reed, Joan Whitehead-Freeman, Chelsia Ogletree, Valerie Grier, Amanda Bernard, Jennie Ridley, or Tamarkis Taylor.

Commissioner Davis motioned to appoint Joan Whitehead Freeman to the Library Board.

Chairman Gibbs seconded the motion, the motion failed 2-2 with lack of majority vote. Chairman Gibbs and Commissioner Davis voted in favor and Commissioner Rowland and Commissioner Turner against. Commissioner Rowland motioned to appoint Jennie Ridley.

The motion failed for lack of a second.

Commissioner Davis motioned to appoint Valerie Grier.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion failed 2-2. Commissioner Rowland and Commissioner Davis voted in favor and Commissioner Turner and Chairman Gibbs against.

Commissioner Turner motioned to appoint Ashley Whitehead.

The motion failed for a lack of a second.

Commissioner Rowland motioned to appoint Richard Holden.

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

Chairman Gibbs motioned to appoint Amy Steele and the motion failed for lack of a second.

Chairman Gibbs motioned to appoint Tabitha Floyd.

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

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to table the appointments until the next meeting to allow for further review.

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

Alcohol Ordinance Amendment

An Ordinance of the Monroe County Board of Commissioners to amend Article VII- “Revocation or Suspension” of Chapter 3- “Alcoholic Beverages” of the Code of Ordinances of Monroe County regarding the penalties for violations and suspension or revocation procedures; to authorize the chairman to sign the resolution; to authorize the clerk to attest all documents and to arrange for codification.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn presented stating the following:

Purpose:

- Implement board direction from prior meeting to standardize penalties for alcohol ordinance violations.

Amendment details (subsection C, page 3):

- First offense (within 3 years):
 - Fine: \$500
 - License suspension: up to 30 days

- Second offense (within 3 years):
 - Fine: \$1,000
 - License suspension: up to 60 days
- Third offense (within 3 years):
 - Fine: \$1,500
 - License suspension: up to 1 year

Chairman Gibbs motioned to approve/accept the ordinance amendment.

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

Google Non-Disclosure Agreement

County Attorney Ben Vaughn has been contacted by the legal department of Google LLC requesting Monroe County execute a Non-Disclosure Agreement in relationship to Project Rumble Road.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn presented a Google Non-Disclosure Agreement to the Board outlining the following:

- Background:
 - Google’s attorneys requested the county enter into a “Non-Disclosure Agreement” related to their operations.
 - Attorney Vaughn noted it is poorly named; functions more as a notification agreement.
- Key points:
 - County’s obligations are governed by the Georgia Open Records Act (OCGA 50-18-70 et seq.).
 - There is no statutory exemption allowing the county to modify Open Records obligations via private contract.
- Agreement would require:
 - County to notify Google within 2 business days of any open records request.
 - Google could then argue which documents are or are not disclosable.
- County already:
 - Reviews requests.
 - Applies exemptions.
 - Responds through an Open Records Officer.
- Concerns:
 - County lacks internal procedures to reliably meet the 2-day notification requirement.

- Risk of non-compliance with the NDA and perception of eroding public transparency.
- County Attorney Ben Vaughn's recommendation: Do NOT sign the agreement.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to not enter into the NDA agreement.

Commissioner Davis seconded for discussion.

Commissioner Davis stated it is sad that when something is on the agenda, people in the community assume the Board is doing something underhanded and automatically drag us through the mud on social media. Commissioner Davis stated if anyone has any questions, they should reach out to one of the Board members or the County Attorney. Commissioner Davis stated it is sickening and sad that it has gotten to this point. Commissioner Davis stated every decision the Board makes affects us as well; y'all elected us so trust us to do our jobs. Commissioner Davis stated its sad people think we are constantly doing something underhanded and should stop assuming.

The motion passed 5-0.

Building Purchase

Attorney Ben Vaughn stated he was authorized to negotiate on behalf of the Monroe County Board of Commissioners to purchase the building adjacent to the Conference Center. Those negotiations were successful, and the action item is to announce in public the confirmation of the sale of the building to the Monroe County Board of Commissioners.

Chairman Gibbs motioned to approve and ratify the purchase of the building at 479 Holiday Circle.

Commissioner Turner seconded the motion, and the motion was approved 5-0.

Department of Natural Resources Grant Resolution

County Manager Jim Hedges presented stating Monroe County has been awarded a \$212,500 grant from the Department of Natural Resources for the construction of basketball/multiuse outdoor courts, fencing, lighting and pathways at the Recreation Department. Total cost of this project is \$425,000 and the county's share will be paid with 2026 SPLOST.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve.

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

Service Delivery Strategy

The City of Forsyth has requested amending the Service Delivery Strategy, specifically, they want to provide building permitting, plan review, and inspections for all projects within the City's jurisdictional limits, which are currently handled county-wide by the Monroe County Community Development Department.

Background:

- Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) agreement originally adopted in late 1990s to reduce duplication of services between Monroe County and municipalities.
- Current SDS valid until December 31, 2028.
- Under SDS, Monroe County provides building permitting, plan review, and inspections countywide (including inside Forsyth).

New issue:

- City of Forsyth sent a letter (Oct. 16) requesting to take in-house:
 - Building permitting,
 - Plan review,
 - Inspections for properties inside city limits.

Options discussed:

1. Open full SDS renegotiation now.
2. Carve out only building-related services for the city now.
3. Defer any SDS changes until the scheduled 2028 review.

- County Manager recommendation:

- Respond to City's request, but do NOT reopen SDS now.
- Address at the required 2028 SDS renewal.

Commissioner Davis motioned to maintain the current Service Delivery Strategy through 2028 and revisit then.

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

Property Tax Interest/Penalties Refund

The Jayla Group LLC owns two parcels within River Forest and are requesting abatement of interest of \$613.83, and penalties of \$866.58. Lori Andrews, Tax Commissioner, points out the parcels were sold on March 14, 2024, and her office was notified of this sale until 2025, at which time she mailed out the 2024 tax bill. Upon receipt, Jayla Group immediately paid the 2024 tax bill in full, including interest and penalties. Jayla Group points O.C.G.A. 48-5-242 stating that abatement of interest and penalties is due to reasonable cause (Tax Commissioner not mailing a tax bill) and not due to gross or willful neglect or disregard of the law.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to deny.

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

2026 Budget Public Hearing

Commissioner Davis motioned to enter into a public hearing at 10:07 a.m. for the 2026 Budget.

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

County Manager Jim Hedges presented the 2026 Budget Overview:

- The County's proposed FY 2026 budget totals **\$55.2 million**, an increase of **\$4.4 million** over FY 2025's adopted budget of **\$50.8 million**.
- The budget includes **61 revenue accounts**, funding for **33 departments**, and approximately **2,200 individual budget lines**.
- Staffing totals **426 personnel**, including 11 elected officials, 287 full-time staff, 60 part-time staff, 35 appointed roles, and 33 current vacancies.
- Importantly, **56% of all personnel are first responders**, reflecting the County's public safety-focused workforce composition.

Key Budget Drivers

- Personnel remains the largest cost element, totaling **just over \$28 million**, or about **50.8%** of all expenditures.
- The budget includes **\$1 million** for implementation of the Evergreen Solutions salary study; however, updated estimates indicate an additional **\$375,000** may be required.
- Fund balance usage is significantly reduced—from **\$7.4 million in FY 2025** to **\$3.7 million** in FY 2026 (a **49% decline**).
- Raising the **capitalization threshold** from **\$5,000 to \$10,000** lowers capital category costs and shifts certain purchases to operating funds in accordance with auditor recommendations.

General Fund Revenue

- General Fund revenue increases by approximately **\$6.5 million**, driven largely by property taxes and growth.

Major revenue elements:

- **Property Tax**: +\$2M from millage increase (1.2 mills) plus +\$700k in digest growth
- **Fines & Forfeitures**: +\$700k (I-75 enforcement trends)
- **Insurance Premium Tax**: +\$200k
- **Interest earnings**: +\$300k
- **Carryforward SPLOST**: +\$2M from prior year
- **All other revenue categories**: net +\$197k

General Fund Expenditures

- General Fund expenditures increase by **≈\$4.2 million**, with substantial impact in public safety and technology replacement.

Major operational changes:

- **IT:** +\$359k for county-wide replacement of obsolete computers
- **Sheriff's Office:** +\$672k (vacancies funded, equipment, radios, cameras, fuel)
- **Jail:** +\$715k (vacancies and inmate medical care)
- **MCES:** additional staffing and fuel
- **Fleet Management:** +\$500k+ due to repair volume and outsourced work
- **Recreation:** additional full-time and part-time staffing for expanded facilities
- **Public Works:** net decrease driven by TSPLOST sharing of road and fuel costs

Notable cost reductions:

- **Debt Service (GF):** reduced by **\$865,000** (GF debt service fully eliminated)
- **Transfers Out:** lower due to reduced capital requirements

Special Funds

- **Care Cottage:** +\$84k (vehicle purchase and personnel corrections)
- **E-911:** increases entirely salary-related
- **DARE:** no significant changes

Enterprise Funds

- **Water:** significant increase in purchased water (~\$400k) but still projects **+\$156k** net position
- **Solid Waste:** equipment shifted from capital to operating
- **Conference Center:** +\$24k for replacement of worn furniture and supplies

Capital Expenditures (Selected)

Includes:

- County Manager vehicle
- Cat shelter improvements
- Early warning sirens (4)
- Tire changer for large equipment
- Courthouse security scanning system
- Maintenance equipment replacements

Manager's Recommended Additions

To strengthen operations and address emerging needs, the County Manager recommends:

1. Additional Fleet mechanic
2. Landfill protective cover restoration (\$250k–\$300k)
3. +\$375k for Evergreen salary implementation
4. \$450k Paramedic/EMT stipend program

Overall Budget Takeaways

- Public safety staffing and operating needs remain the dominant cost driver
- Technology and equipment replacement now reflected more accurately in operating funds
- Significant reduction in fund balance reliance strengthens long-term financial position
- One-time SPLOST carryforward and enforcement revenues support current-year capacity
- Evergreen salary adjustments are likely to require additional funding beyond current allocation

Public Comments:

Rob Law (Budget Contingency and IT Security)

- **Budget Contingency**
 - Expressed concern that the proposed **\$500,000 contingency** in the Commissioners' budget may be insufficient.
 - Noted the discussion in this same meeting regarding a **landfill protective cover project** estimated at **\$250,000–\$300,000**, which was **not included** in the draft budget.
 - Suggested that unanticipated expenditures of this scale are likely to recur and that contingency levels should be reconsidered based on recent experience.
- **IT and Cybersecurity**
 - Acknowledged the planned replacement of workstations but asked what cybersecurity measures are included.
 - Pointed out the increasing cybersecurity risks to public entities and stated he would expect significant emphasis on cybersecurity (firewalls, monitoring, hardening) in addition to device refresh.
 - Indicated he will review the budget further prior to the next meeting and return with specific questions.

Nick Sagnienene (Process, Communication, and Public Understanding)

- Commented primarily on **process and communication** related to the budget:

- Acknowledged Commissioner Davis’s frustration with negative social media comments and how they can feel personal.
- Stated that many citizens feel responsibility to monitor county decisions because “everything is hitting us at one time,” including budget, development, and policy issues.
- Observed that commissioners have detailed information, while citizens must seek out and interpret that information.
- Expressed a desire to protect county residents’ interests and ensure decisions are made with those interests in mind.
- Called for improved unity and collaboration between citizens and officials and offered willingness to participate in constructive solutions.
- Did not object to any specific line item but emphasized communication and trust-building around budget and policy decisions.

Riley Bennett (EMS Training Costs and Retention)

- Focused on **EMS and Fire training costs** and implications for the county budget:
 - Asked whether the county pays for EMT and paramedic education for personnel transitioning from firefighter roles.
 - Suggested that if the county funds this training:
 - Employees should be required to serve a minimum period with Monroe County after completion, **or**
 - Reimburse the county for training costs if they leave before fulfilling the commitment.
 - Explained the purpose as:
 - Protecting county funds invested in specialized EMS training, and
 - Supporting recruitment and retention by ensuring training investments benefit Monroe County over the long term.

Commissioner Davis motioned to close the public hearing at 10:33 a.m.

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

Commissioner Rowland motioned to incorporate the four recommended additions (mechanic, landfill cover funds, Evergreen contingency increase, EMS ambulance stipend) into the draft 2026 budget to be presented at the December 2, 2026, meeting.

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

Viewpoint with Dennis Quaid Show

The Dennis Quaid Show that appears on Public Television in all 50 states is proposing a show dedicated to Monroe County. The cost is approximately \$27,000 to be split between the City of Forsyth, Monroe County Development Authority, and Monroe County.

Public Information Officer Richard Dumas presented.

Commissioner Rowland motioned to decline.

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

Public Comment

Nick Sagnienene: Oversight and EMS Pay

- Responded to Commissioner Davis's remarks about social media and perceived personal attacks.
- Stated that it is the **public's role to provide oversight** and "keep officials in check," particularly on major financial or development issues.
- Noted that anyone in such a position might be tempted by opportunities, which reinforces the need for public accountability.
- Expressed strong support for **higher paramedic compensation**, stating they should earn **more than they currently do**.

Betty Eskew: Landfill Cover and NDA Atmosphere

- **Landfill cover**
 - Asked why the landfill cover failed and why the county must pay again to repair a project already funded.
- **NDA and social media**
 - Acknowledged there are always a few negative voices online but emphasized that most citizens are trying to stay informed.
 - Noted that commissioners have the full information while citizens must work to locate and understand it.
 - Her stated intention is to protect residents, not to attack board members personally.
- **Collaboration**
 - Called for improved unity between citizens and officials.
 - Offered herself as a resource and noted she contacts commissioners directly even when conversations are challenging.

Ronald Morgan: NDAs and FOIA Risk

- **Commended** the board for closely reviewing and ultimately rejecting the Google NDA.
- **FOIA/Open Records implications**
 - Warned that NDAs justified as protecting trade secrets can also shield public-interest information.
 - Explained that proprietary information may be excluded from disclosure if it provides economic benefit and is kept private.
 - Stated that entering an NDA could help a company meet those criteria, potentially making information such as water and power usage non-disclosable.
- **Planning impacts**
 - Argued that reduced information sharing would hinder planning on water capacity, electricity, watershed, and environmental issues.
- **Quoted research** noting that data center deals often occur without sufficient public transparency.
- **Requested** the board remain cautious of similar NDA requests in the future.

Carol Edge: Agenda Wording and NDA Presentation

- Clarified that her remarks are **issue-focused**, not personal.
- **Agenda description**
 - Noted that the agenda said the county attorney would recommend entering the Google NDA, which created the impression that approval was being pushed.
 - Suggested future agenda items be phrased more neutrally (e.g., “present Google NDA request”).
- **Presentation**
 - Questioned why the county attorney, rather than a Google representative, presented the NDA request.
 - Suggested the company should make such requests directly.

Anthony White: EMS Pay and Transparency

- **On Google/data center**
 - Observed Google already owns the land and will build and pay taxes regardless.
 - Emphasized the need for transparency from both Google and the county.

- **On EMS pay**
 - Argued that stipends and shift perks are not sufficient for retention.
 - Noted most EMS/Fire staff work second jobs.
 - Advocated for higher base salaries to reduce the need for secondary employment and strengthen retention.

Joshua Pruitt: Data Centers and Moratorium

- Identified as a nearby landowner who abandoned plans to build a home after the Nov. 4 data center approval.
- **Concerns**
 - Stated the industrial use replaces potential residential tax base.
 - Argued the Nov. 4 approval eroded public trust.
- **National context**
 - Cited Fairfax County, VA, and other jurisdictions as examples of hesitation or opposition to further data center expansion.
 - Noted Atlanta and Coweta County have enacted moratoriums.
- **Requested** Monroe County consider a similar stance and expressed support for commissioners who align with this position.

John Oakes: NDA Liability and Video Promotion

- **NDA**
 - Acknowledged the business need to protect competitive information.
 - Asked who would bear liability if an NDA were breached (taxpayers, officials, or insurer).
- **Dennis Quaid / national video proposal**
 - Recognized concerns over spending but noted film and television opportunities often arise from visibility.
 - Suggested the board not dismiss professional promotional videos, as they could provide long-term economic benefit.

Nipper Bun: Library Board Appointments

- Focused on library board appointments.
- Noted there are many qualified candidates.

- Expressed disappointment that, after discussion, two appointments remained unresolved and were tabled.
- Urged commissioners to review nominees promptly and complete appointments rather than leaving seats vacant.

Rob Law: Agenda Language, Bond Question, and Risk

- Began by thanking Commissioner Ambrose for attending via phone while recovering from back surgery.
- Reiterated that the **agenda wording** regarding the Google NDA (“recommend approval”) contributed to social-media confusion and “fires.”
- Suggested that **more precise and descriptive agenda language** could prevent misunderstanding and public alarm.
- Cited a notice in the **legal advertisements** showing the Middle Georgia Development Authority intends to raise a **\$66 million bond**, apparently tied to a **Buc-ee’s purchase/lease-back arrangement**.
- Asked whether, if Buc-ee’s were to close or substantially underperform:
 - Any **financial risk could fall back on the county**, or
 - Whether all such risk is borne solely by the Development Authority.
- Requested clarification on how similar **bond structures** might affect county finances under worst-case scenarios.

Commissioner’s Comments

District 1 Lamarcus Davis

- Highlighted positive youth accomplishments:
- There are multiple local football teams competing in championships.
- High school competitive cheer squad placed **4th in the state**.
- Raptors placed **6th out of 26**.
- Announced the **Men Making a Difference** annual **toy drive** on **Saturday, December 20**.
- Encouraged community support and participation.
- Thanked citizens for attending.

District 2 Eddie Rowland

- Thanked the community for strong engagement.
- Expressed appreciation for living in a county where residents follow local government closely.

- Extended **Thanksgiving blessings** to all families.

District 3 John Ambrose (via phone)

- Thanked everyone for well wishes during his recovery.
- Expressed a desire to:
 - Address **Water Department** issues,
 - **Keep the county rural**, and
 - Consider a **moratorium** on additional data centers.

Commissioner Al Turner

- Thanked attendees for their participation.
- Emphasized family and faith, especially with **Thanksgiving** approaching.
- Wished everyone a **safe and happy holiday**.

Chairman Alan Gibbs

- Expressed appreciation for the public's attendance and engagement.
- Provided several follow-ups:
 - **Library Board:** Each commissioner will **personally contact** shortlisted candidates before the next meeting to reach consensus.
 - **Landfill Cover:** Reiterated explanation regarding erosion and related EPD requirements.
 - **Data Center & NDA:**
 - Not opposed to the **current data center project**, but cautious about additional centers without evaluation.
 - Noted attorney's guidance on the NDA and the board's decision to reject it.
 - Acknowledged that agenda wording could have been improved and that complex items can be mis-phrased.
- **Joint City–County Meeting**
 - **Date:** December 17 at 6:00 p.m.
 - **Location:** County building (this facility)
 - **Purpose:** Discuss 2026 collaboration and priorities and further strengthen County–City cooperation.

Executive Session-Litigation

Commissioner Davis motioned to enter executive session at 11:07 am for Litigation.

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

Commissioner Davis motioned to come out of executive session at 11:13 a.m.

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

Action from Executive Session

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated a litigation matter was discussed and no action was necessary.

Adjourn

Commissioner Davis motioned to adjourn at 11:14 a.m.

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

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk