

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of February 3, 2026

Regular Meeting

6:00 P.M.

Present:

Alan Gibbs, Chairman

John Ambrose, Vice-Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, District 1

Eddie Rowland, District 2

Al Turner, District 4

Staff:

Lorri Robinson, County Manager

Ben Vaughn County Attorney

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

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 6:00 P.M.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Gibbs presented the agenda for approval with the following changes:

- Tabling minutes until the next meeting.
- Adding litigation to executive session

Commissioner Rowland motioned to approve the agenda.

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

Minutes-December 16, 2025, Regular Meeting & December 17, 2025, Called meeting

Removed from the agenda.

Waiver of Claim to Insurance Proceeds-Jeff Thompson

Jeff Thompson is requesting \$101,000 waiver for an accident his wife Dana Thompson was in. The third-party administrator (TPA) has stated: “Per our subrogation matters. This is never recommended unless the vendor sees no potential recovery based on policy limits available to the case. By accepting to waive on the current settlement, the plan will be setting precedence to future cases. In cases like this one, the subrogation vendor can try and negotiate a reduction to benefit all parties. The self-funded plan will ultimately decide to accept or reject any reductions or waivers of any settlement offers.”

Attorney Kerry Howell appeared before the Board on behalf of Jeff Thompson (retired Sheriff's Captain) and the estate of his late wife, Dana Thompson. He described Dana's catastrophic 2024 auto accident involving an uninsured driver and a City of Forsyth boom truck, her extensive injuries, large medical bills (over \$500,000), and her death in December 2025.

Howell explained that the Monroe County Employee Benefits Plan, administered by the Board and managed by claims administrator Luminaire, has paid significant medical costs and is asserting a reimbursement/subrogation claim of about \$181,000. He requested that the Board, as Plan Administrator, waive the Plan's reimbursement rights only as to \$101,000 in uninsured-motorist (UM) insurance proceeds, which came from a policy personally purchased by Jeff and Dana and is currently held in his trust account. He did not request waiver of any rights to the separate \$25,000 City of Forsyth settlement or to any potential future recovery from the uninsured at-fault driver.

Commissioners expressed concern about the impact on the health plan and its roughly 300 covered lives, the precedent this might set for future cases, and the need to clearly understand how the Plan's \$2,500 annual out-of-pocket maximum and stop-loss coverage relate to the more than \$500,000 billed and

\$181,000 paid. They also wanted written assurance that granting a waiver would not create additional liability or recapture risk for the County from Luminaire, stop-loss carriers, or other parties.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the waiver contingent on confirmation that the County would face no recapture or added liability. The motion failed 1–4, with Commissioner Ambrose in favor and Chairman Gibbs, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Rowland and Commissioner Turner opposed.

Commissioner Rowland motioned to table the matter until the February 17, 2026, meeting, to allow staff and counsel to obtain detailed answers about deductibles, balance billing, stop-loss, and liability/recapture issues.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded for discussion.

Following a Board discussion the motion carried 4-1 with Chairman Gibbs, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Rowland and Commissioner Turner in favor and Commissioner Ambrose opposed.

Road Name Change-Towaliga River Drive to Joe Proctor Sr. Drive

Commissioner Al Turner is requesting Monroe County change the name of Towaliga River Drive to Joe Proctor Sr. Drive, to honor Mr. Proctor for his lifelong service to the county and recognize his efforts to organize the first fire department in the High Falls area. This is the road that fronts the new High Falls Fire Station, and only that portion of the road that leads up to the split.

Commissioner Davis motioned to enter a public hearing for the road name change at 6:46 p.m.

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

Chairman Gibbs read a resolution renaming the road and honoring Mr. Joe Proctor.

Commissioner Davis motioned to close the public hearing at 6:49 p.m.

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

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the road name change.

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

IGA-Monroe County and City of Forsyth Library Funding

County Manager Lorri Byrd presented the funding issue for the public library, noting that the library's bylaws currently provide 11 board seats, including 1 for the City of Forsyth and 1 for the Board of Education, and stated that entities with appointed seats should also provide funding. Historically, both the City of Forsyth and the Board of Education contributed about \$5,000 each, but records show no payments from either since 2017. The current annual operating budget is about \$297,589, which does not include building maintenance, cleaning, or other support the County already provides.

Lori outlined two main approaches:

1. Accept the City's suggested flat \$5,000 contribution (and match that with \$5,000 from the Board of Education); or
2. Allocate costs by board representation, meaning each of the 11 seats would correspond to 1/11 of the budget. Under that formula, the City and Board of Education would each pay about \$27,054, and the County would pay the remaining 9/11 (also about \$27,054 per "seat," times nine).

Commissioners discussed fairness, clarified that this is not double taxation (it's an intergovernmental funding agreement similar to 911 and jail services), and emphasized that students and city residents heavily use the library, including when school libraries are closed. There was also discussion that the library board is revising its bylaws and is open to County input.

After discussion, Chairman Gibbs motioned to:

- Add the Board of Education formally into the IGA discussions, and
- Pursue a funding approach based on the 1/11 per seat cost-share model (City = 1/11, Board of Education = 1/11, County = 9/11), with staff to contact the Board of Education and prepare revised IGA language reflecting this structure.

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

No final IGA document was approved at this meeting; the action was to set the funding framework and direct staff to negotiate and draft accordingly.

Emergency Mass Notification System

Chief Jackson reported ongoing problems with the CodeRED mass notification system: increasing slowness sending alerts, difficulty logging in during severe weather, and a nationwide data breach on November 10 by CodeRED's third-party host. Out of caution, CodeRED shut down, leaving Monroe County without mass notification capability for a period. When CodeRED restored service on a new "Crisis 24" platform, they used backup data from March 31, and there have been continued performance issues—for example, a January 17 winter weather alert reached only 3,636 of about 10,600 intended recipients in the first hour.

In addition, GEMA notified the County on January 6 that CodeRED's IPAWS certification (needed for federal wireless emergency alerts) had lapsed with no clear reinstatement timeline. Based on these reliability and certification concerns, staff evaluated other vendors and recommended Hyper-Reach. Hyper-Reach was described as more user-friendly, offering the same weather alerts, active IPAWS

certification, two-way communication options, and support for data migration and public enrollment campaigns (including phone and social media outreach).

The County currently pays about \$10,435/year for CodeRED (contract through June); Hyper-Reach will cost about \$6,500/year, resulting in savings. Staff will proceed with the transition to Hyper-Reach, attempt to obtain a prorated refund or credit from CodeRED for undelivered service, and coordinate data transfer and public sign-ups. No formal Board vote was required because the cost is within budget and under purchasing thresholds; this was an informational update.

Public Comment

Russ Edge-1168 Edge Road

- Emergency alerts: Urged the County to require a cybersecurity audit or proof of a recent cyber audit before fully committing to the new mass notification vendor, warning that a lower price might mean weaker security.
- Library/IGA: Suggested library funding should be clearly tied to property tax base or a proportional method to avoid recurring disputes and clarify each entity's responsibility.
- General coordination: Encouraged better coordination and informal communication between the County and City of Forsyth, especially on projects like the Forsyth Technology Center, shared roads, and infrastructure.
- Budget concerns: Referenced a spreadsheet previously received from Jim showing \$1,375,000 in 2026 expenditures that had no corresponding spending in 2024 on the same line items.
- Spending scrutiny: Urged more careful review of new or increased budget lines before raising revenue.
- Specific questions:
- Noted \$1,133 in delivery fees charged to Planning & Zoning.
- Noted about \$830 for "decor for admin office" under the Commissioners' line.
- Stated intent to continue reviewing financial documents and raising items that appear inconsistent or questionable.

Candy Mountain-582 Bar None Road

- UDO / subdivision standards: Asked when there will be a public meeting on the UDO changes related to subdivisions (acreage, lot sizes, etc.).
- Noted that residents have not yet heard any specific follow-up date after the earlier, unproductive meeting and wants a clear schedule and process.

Nipper Bunn-274 Frank Bunn Drive

- Road naming – Joe Proctor Sr.: Spoke in favor of renaming the road to Joe Proctor Senior Drive, describing Mr. Proctor as a fine man who significantly advanced growth in the county, especially in the High Falls area (e.g., water service).
- Insurance waiver item: Later commented that the Thompson case seemed extraordinary, and that when people buy insurance with their own money, they should be able to use it; suggested the Board might have been better served by acting that night rather than tabling, while acknowledging their duty to do what's right and manage "slippery slopes."

EMS Chief Matt Jackson

- Road naming support: Spoke strongly in support of naming the road after Joe Proctor Sr., noting he was a founding figure for the county fire service, helped bring and stabilize fire protection in Monroe County, and even donated property to support that effort.
- Said it was fitting that the road in front of Fire Station #2 in High Falls carry his name.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Lamarcus Davis – District 1

- Thanked citizens for attending and acknowledged they have families and busy lives.
- Noted it is February, emphasizing a focus on love and peace in the community despite division; reminded that it is okay to disagree, but people should still "love thy neighbor."
- Praised county employees, especially Fire/EMS, Sheriff's Office, and Road Department, for recent weekend storm preparations and response, including being on standby and away from their families to keep roads safe and respond to emergencies.
- Expressed hope that Monroe County will continue moving in the right direction.

Commissioner Eddie Rowland – District 2

- Shared a personal story about taking his 4-year-old granddaughter Riley to the public library after she asked what the building was; described it as a very positive experience and a reminder of the library's value.
- Noted that his 87-year-old mother also uses the library weekly, checking out multiple books.
- Highlighted that library patrons can obtain free tickets to the Atlanta Zoo, Georgia State Parks, and the Georgia Aquarium through the local library, encouraging citizens to take advantage of these benefits, especially given high costs elsewhere.

Commissioner John Ambrose – District 3

- Addressed Rob Law’s question stating that the library board writes its own operating rules and the county has little direct control, which contributes to current funding/friction issues.
- Addressed Russ Edge’s comment stating that the reason some 2023 budget lines showed no spending was because, after the Georgia Power reduction on the burners, the county intentionally stopped discretionary spending while waiting to see how 2024 would look.
- Addressed Ms. Candy Mountains question about the UDO/subdivision meeting, saying there had already been one meeting, that it “was a mess,” but that “we’re going to get it straightened out.”
- Stated firmly that he is not going to resign and will not allow the board to force him out, saying he intends to “stay and fight.”

Commissioner Al Turner – District 4

- Thanked the Board for approving the road name change to honor Joe Proctor Sr., noting its importance for the High Falls area and his goal of significantly improving that district.
- On the Thompson insurance issue, stated that since the Thompsons paid for the insurance with their own money, he felt a decision might have been made that night, but agreed more detail was needed going forward.
- Expressed a desire to love neighbors, beautify the community, and see Monroe County grow and prosper, not just in District 4 but countywide.
- Thanked attendees for coming and specifically thanked Chief Jackson and his wife for their efforts and support.

Chairman Alan Gibbs – Chairman (Countywide)

- Addressed the UDO / subdivision moratorium, noting some department heads still need to finalize their recommended standards (he has seen some road-related proposals but not all). Emphasized the moratorium must eventually end, and the County must find a workable path forward.
- Discussed rapidly rising property costs and the challenge of providing attainable housing. Relayed a developer’s estimate that a \$200,000 house in Middle Georgia would require an extremely narrow lot, which he does not support for Monroe County, but underscored there must be some form of new housing allowed when the moratorium is lifted.

- Described an earlier UDO meeting as unproductive, with a lot of talking and no real progress, and said he felt many left disappointed; stressed the need for a more focused, effective follow-up process.
- Shared a positive citizen comment about the Johnsonville Road recycling center and praised employee Curtis Moore for his Christian attitude and good service as an example of county employees handling difficult public-facing work with a positive spirit.
- Thanked all employees for their efforts and then moved the Board into executive session for personnel and litigation.

Executive Session-Personnel, Litigation

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter executive session for personnel and Litigation at 7:28 p.m.

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

Commissioner Turner motioned to close executive session at 8:05 p.m.

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

Action from Executive Session

County Attorney Ben Vaughn stated a personnel matter was discussed and no action was needed at this time by the board.

Adjourn

Commissioner Davis motioned to adjourn at 8:06 p.m.

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

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk