

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of June 16, 2026

Regular Meeting

9:00 A.M.

Present:

Alan Gibbs, Chairman

John Ambrose, Vice-Chairman

Eddie Rowland, District 2

Al Turner, District 4

Staff:

Lorri Byrd, County Manager

Jessica Haygood, County Attorney

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Kim Stokes, Public Works Director

Kelsey Fortner, Community Development Director

Angie Sorrow, Finance Director

Jeff Wilson, Code Enforcement Officer

Welcome

Chairman Gibbs welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Col. Rod Callahan led the invocation.

Pledge

Chairman Gibbs led the pledge.

Roll Call

Public Information Officer Richard Dumas called roll.

Call to Order

Chairman Gibbs called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Proclamation for Men's Health Month

Commission Chairman Alan Gibbs read aloud a proclamation in honor of Men's Health Month. Chairman Gibbs said Men's Health Month is part of an ongoing international effort to educate men, boys, and their families about the importance of preventative health screenings, early detection, and healthy lifestyles. Commissioners encourage all Monroe County residents "to support efforts that promote preventative care, healthy lifestyles, mental wellness, and increased awareness of men's health issues."

Monroe County Commissioners officially proclaimed that June 2026 is Men's Health Month in Monroe County in conjunction with National Men's Health Week, which runs from June 15-21.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Gibbs presented the agenda for approval with no changes.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the agenda.

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

Minutes – June 2, 2026, Regular Meeting

Chairman Gibbs presented the minutes of the June 2, 2026 Regular Meeting for approval. Commissioner Turner motioned to approve the minutes of the June 2, 2026 meeting with the normal 30 days for changes.

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

Deputy Chief Josh Wagner-Professional Certified Emergency Manager

MCES Chief Matt Jackson said Monroe County Emergency Services Chief Deputy Josh Wagner, who was accompanied by his family at Tuesday's meeting, is one of two persons in Georgia who completed his/her Professional Certified Emergency Manager certification in 2026.

Georgia Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS) Field Coordinator Mandy Juarez presented Wagner with his certificate. Juarez said the certification recognizes outstanding achievement and is the highest level of Emergency Management Agency (EMA) certification in Georgia. Juarez said recipients of this credential “have demonstrated exceptional dedication, expertise, and leadership within the Emergency Management professional. Juarez said recipients have completed all Georgia Basic and Advanced certification requirements, including 20 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) independent study courses and more than 320 hours of classroom instruction, at least 150 hours of advanced training and possess at least five years of Emergency Management experience. She said the program first began in 1999 and only 120 Georgia EMA professionals have earned the designation, including just 40 EMA professionals who are still actively serving in the field.

“Josh, your dedication, hard work and commitment to the citizens you serve have distinguished you among your peers,” Juarez said. “Your accomplishments exemplify the highest standards of professionalism in Emergency Management and reflect the career devoted to preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts that strengthen our community.”

Commission Chairman Alan Gibbs said he’s seen Wagner’s leadership and dedication to his craft firsthand and is not surprised that he has received a statewide certification.

Animal Control Manager Introduction

County Manager Byrd said new Monroe County Animal Services Manager Jennifer McGettigan has more than 17 years of public service experience, having demonstrated “a strong commitment to animal welfare, community engagement, and responsible stewardship of public resources.”

Byrd added, “Jennifer has dedicated much of her professional life to serving both the citizens and animals of her community, working to improve animal care, increasing adoptions, strengthening partnerships with rescues and community organizations, and promoting public education on responsible pet ownership.”

Byrd said McGettigan is committed to building “a positive, transparent, and community-focused Animal Services program.”

McGettigan, who started her new job on Monday, June 8, told Commissioners she is honored by the opportunity and excited to begin a new chapter of her professional career in Monroe County.

McGettigan said, “I’m excited to build strong relationships with the Board, the community, our rescue partners, and my staff.”

Commission Chairman Alan Gibbs said he’s excited to see McGettigan’s leadership as Monroe County Animal Services continues to grow.

Upon McGettigan’s introduction, she received a round of applause from the Board members and meeting attendees.

FY 2025 Final Budget Amendment

Finance Director Sorrow requested budget amendments totaling \$3,491,258 in General Fund (\$1,609,121), C.A.R.E. Cottage (\$20,049), Water (\$1,835,452), Solid Waste (\$23,800), and Conference Center (\$2,836). Sorrow said when Monroe County adopted its 2025 budget, it originally set aside about \$7 million for reserves but only used about \$3.1 million of that total, which was used for capital purchases. Sorrow said the budget increases were all related to transfers in from Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) or grants except for the Conference Center transfer, which came from the General Fund.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the final 2025 budget amendments.

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

Ray Hartley Road Water Line Easement

The Utility Easement Agreement between Monroe County, Oglethorpe Power, and Gresco Utility Supply states grants Monroe County access to the secondary water line being built on Ray Hartley Road. The Easement Agreement states that Monroe County will have the responsibility of building, maintaining, and operating the water line. Monroe County Attorney Jessica Haygood said she has reviewed the Agreement and recommended approval.

Monroe County Public Works Director Kimbel Stokes said the water line will be a redundant line used by Oglethorpe Power for increased volume or in case of emergency. Stokes said Oglethorpe Power has been an outstanding community partner.

Stokes said, “We’re very fortunate to be able to attract an industry such as Oglethorpe Power in our community.”

Chairman Gibbs motioned to approve the Utility Easement Agreement.

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

UDO – Road Requirements Discussion

Community Development Director Fortner said that Chapter 6, Section 6.01.08 of the county’s Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) currently does not require residential developers to be mandated to make improvements to existing streets and right-of-ways by bringing them up to county standards as required of commercial and/or industrial developers. Fortner said residential developments were removed from the requirement in February 2024.

Fortner asked Commissioners if they want residential developments to be included once again in the county’s requirement that roads must be improved to county standards if new development takes place. Fortner said this change would require a developer to improve the road not only in front

of the newly subdivided lots but all the way to the nearest county road. Fortner said this residential development exclusion applies to developments that have fewer than four lots with lots that are less than five acres in size.

Commissioner Ambrose said he thinks the road improvement requirements should not apply to smaller subdivisions but should only apply to situations when a subdivision creates five or more new lots. Fortner said this would require changes to the county's current UDO definitions of "subdivision", "major subdivision", and "minor subdivision." Fortner said, for example, a developer who creates 10 five-acre lots would not be building a development that would be defined as a "subdivision" while a developer who creates 10 three-acre lots would be creating a "subdivision." Commissioner Ambrose said all large subdivisions, no matter the lot acreage, should be required to come before Commissioners for final approval.

Public Works Director Stokes said anytime a lot is subdivided that uses the county's right-of-way system the developer should be required to upgrade the road to county standards. Stokes said many subdivisions have been built in Monroe County on unimproved roads where new homeowners have urged the county to pay for road upgrades once the houses were built. Stokes said "subdivisions" must be better defined in the UDO to determine when road improvements should be mandated. He said variances for road improvements could be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Chairman Gibbs asked whether it can be stated on a property plat that the county will not pave a county road in the future. Fortner said that is already taking place.

Chairman Gibbs said Fortner and Vaughn need to work to get the language right in the UDO to ensure developers improve the county's road system when they subdivide land, particularly when they create small lots. Commissioner Rowland urged Commissioner Ambrose and Public Works Director Stokes also to be involved in the subdivision definition updates. Commissioner Rowland said any definitions that are decided upon must be deemed to be legally defensible by the county attorney.

Chairman Gibbs said about 200 new homes are built each year in Monroe County and that number didn't change last year despite Commissioners having a year-long moratorium on major subdivisions. He said there has not yet been an influx of new homes being built since Commissioners ended the moratorium on May 5 either.

Chairman Gibbs said, "It sounds like most of the people moving into Monroe County want what we want, what we're trying to enforce."

UDO – Accessory Dwelling Unit Clarification

Community Development Director Fortner said Commissioners amended the county's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) on May 5 and changed the size requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to a maximum of 1,000 square feet. Fortner asked whether that 1,000-

square-foot maximum size applies to the heated and cooled area or whether it also includes storage/utility spaces, porches or other uninhabitable areas. Commissioner Rowland said the approved maximum size for ADUs applies to the heated and cooled area of a home.

Commissioner Rowland motioned to amend the UDO to approve 1,000 square feet heated and cooled area as the maximum square footage for an ADU in Monroe County.

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

Public Comments

Lassiter Road resident Rob Law said County Road 88 on the eastern side of Hwy. 87 is the next unpaved road that could be developed with residential properties. Law thanked Monroe County leaders, including Public Works Director Stokes and District 1 Commissioner Lamarcus Davis, for completing the paving job on Lassiter Road.

Frank Bunn Drive resident Nipper Bunn said if a landowner wants to subdivide family-owned land for his/her children, the landowner shouldn't have to spend thousands of dollars to re-pave or widen a road. Bunn said Commissioners should ensure that any road improvement requirements don't overburden property owners. Bunn, a Monroe County Library Board member, thanked Monroe County leaders, including Public Works Director Stokes, for recent exterior improvements to Monroe County Library's parking lot, sidewalk, and entrance ways to make it more accessible for citizens.

Monroe County Library Board member Joan Whitehead-Freeman said she is thankful for improvements that have been made at Monroe County Library. Whitehead-Freeman, a long-time educator at Hubbard Elementary, said she wants to improve youth literacy in Monroe County by having book clubs at Monroe County Library. Whitehead-Freeman said a 2024 study indicated that only 37 percent of 4th graders nationwide are reading proficiently.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Rowland said he wanted to recognize Deputy Chief Josh Wagner once again for the certification he received earlier in the meeting. Commissioner Rowland said Wagner is a great example of the leaders that are being grown at Monroe County Emergency Services. Commissioner Rowland also said he wanted to thank Monroe County Maintenance Director Ray White and Monroe County Assistant Maintenance Supervisor John Fortner for their hard work on the improvements to the Monroe County Library.

Commissioner Ambrose said Whitehead-Freeman needs to also take her concerns about youth literacy to the Monroe County Board of Education. Commissioner Ambrose said a lot of technical school graduates are finding more success and making more money in the workplace than college

graduates now. Commissioner Ambrose thanked McGettigan for taking over Animal Services and said Commissioners are working to find property to house a new Animal Services building.

Commissioner Turner said he promised three things when he first ran for District 4 Commissioner: 1.) to stand with the people, 2.) to listen to the people, 3.) to work with the people. Commissioner Turner said he feels confident that he's lived up to those promises. Commissioner Turner encouraged citizens to vote on Election Day and said he thinks the county has a good Board of Commissioners.

Chairman Gibbs said the Tuesday, July 7 Board of Commissioners meeting will be moved to Tuesday, July 14 at 9 a.m., which will be the only Board meeting in July. Chairman Gibbs encouraged the Monroe County Library Board to make a presentation to the Board of Commissioners at a future meeting to outline their ideas for the library. Chairman Gibbs also welcomed McGettigan to the county's "team" and said he has full confidence the county will find land to house a new Animal Services building.

Executive Session-Personnel

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to end into executive session for personnel at 10:07 a.m.

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

Action from Executive Session

County Attorney Haygood said the Board discussed a matter involving personnel during executive session. Haygood said there was no action to be taken in public related to those discussions at that time.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 10:21 a.m.

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