

**Jasper County Board of Commissioners**  
**February 3, 2025**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**6:00 P.M.**

Chairman Bruce Henry called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Bruce Henry, Chairman; Steven Ledford, Vice Chair; Sheila Pounds, Asher Gray, and Rob Alexander

Staff: Mike Benton, County Manager, Sheila Jefferson, Clerk- Administrative Services Director, Larissa Ruark, Chief Accounting Officer, Doug Attaway- Planning and Zoning Director

**Pledge of Allegiance:**

**Invocation:** Chairman Henry read Blessing: Nowhere by Accident by Richard Halverson before his prayer.

**Agenda Approval:** Commissioner Gray motioned to amend the agenda and move the County Attorney items to agenda item 5. Commissioner Ledford seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Henry Explained that County Attorney Adam Nelson had some updates on Bills that could affect the county that he would like citizens to hear. He said most of the time citizens miss the County Attorney items.

**County Attorney Items:** County Attorney Adam Nelson gave an update on Bills that have not yet passed but are currently scheduled to go before the Legislature. Mr. Nelson began with HB137. He said this may be helpful to the county if passed. He explained that Georgia law currently requires local governments to use Public Works Bidding Statutes for construction services over \$100,000. He said these days \$100,000 does not build much and there is a lot of expense in advertising and other requirements. He said often these projects only produce one bid and this bill would increase the required amount from \$100,00 to \$250,000. Mr. Nelson said the county would still be required to go through the public process of procuring the bids but it would allow them more flexibility to reach out to contractors they used in the past that they had success with. He said they could still use the bid process but the county could decide how their bid process would work.

Mr. Nelson moved on to HB179. He said this bill is a proposal to allow digital county reporting. He said currently when in the court of law, it is required to have a court reporter. He said there has been a push since COVID to get digital court recording in place. He said if you have reliable devices that can accurately record they are more cost effective. He said there is a process to confirm the accuracy and all parties involved must agree to use the digital reporter. He said this means if someone accused of a crime did not want the digital recorder it could not be used. He said this bill would reduce costs for our court systems if it moved forward.

Mr. Nelson then explained Senate Bill 51- HB 152. He said that currently counties are allowed to engage engineers and architects for construction projects without getting proposals and bids. Mr. Nelson said this bill would require proposals and bids for projects over one million dollars and engineer or architect fees over seventy-five thousand dollars. He said ACCG has a negative opinion on this bill because they feel it limits the county's ability to work directly with engineers and architects. He said he feels it is up to the

county to decide if they want that flexibility. He said there are benefits to using the bid process because you see everyone's qualifications.

Mr. Nelson explained HB168. He said currently if there is a local SPLOST in place when that SPLOST expires commissioners can ask voters if they want to continue that SPLOST. He said HB168 would not allow that without a local bill being adopted to renew the SPLOST. Mr. Nelson said it is another requirement for the state legislature to be able to dictate to counties whether or not they are going to have an additional SPLOST allocation. Mr. Nelson said he feels SPLOST is a valuable tool for the counties because it brings in revenue from people who may not live in the county and allows voters to decide how they want their money spent. He said personally he would rather the bill not pass and thinks it adds procedural steps that don't make a lot of sense to him.

Mr. Nelson there are two proposals to increase CUVA limits and if changed it would have a direct effect on Jasper County's tax digest. He said currently CUVA has a limit of 2000 acres and one proposal is to increase it to 4000 acres and the other is a proposal to increase it to 6000 acres.

Mr. Nelson said then moved to HB581 which is on the Agenda. He said there is a deadline of March 1, 2025, to opt out but there is a House Bill to extend the deadline to May 1, 2025.

Mr. Nelson said there are proposed statutes for AI. He said the State of Georgia is trying to define what AI is and the county's responsibilities if they use it. He said some items included would be Open Records requests and the ability to use it to interact with the public. He said it seems they are thinking the bills out as they are happening and he would rely on ACCG to give their explanation of them. He said we are trying to figure out how our current system works with upcoming technology and we usually lag. He said it is difficult to legislate through things they didn't know were coming.

Mr. Nelson said the last item is a proposal to cap revenue made from certain citations and fines attached to criminal proceedings and civil forfeitures at 10%. He said anything over the 10% would go to the state of Georgia. He said he believes it is likely to target statutes for those counties with excessive revenue from fines and civil forfeitures. He said we are about halfway through the legislative session and the bills might change but ACCG has a website that tracks the bills and their progress. He said commissioners can always call and reach out to the local legislatures to voice their opinions and make suggestions.

Commissioner Gray asked about the House Bill for the Hotel/Motel tax. Mr. Nelson said the bill is put together and it is in line to be published. He said as soon as he gets word on whether or not it has passed he will let the Commissioners know.

Chairman Henry said he feels like everyone at the meeting showed up because they want to be involved in what is going on.

**Consent Agenda:** Commissioner Ledford motioned to approve the following Minutes:

- Regular Meeting Minutes- January 6, 2025
- Work Session Minutes- January 13, 2025

Commissioner Pounds seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Commissioner Ledford motioned to approve Check #'s 72985-73172. Commissioner Gray seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Commissioner Gray motioned to open the public hearing at 6:18 p.m. Commissioner Pounds seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

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## **Public Hearings with Business Action**

### **Public Hearing 1: Land Division Plat off Faulkner Rd dividing 30.96 acres into two parcels.**

Planning and Zoning Director Doug Attaway presented a request to subdivide 30.96 acres off Faulkner Rd E into two parcels. Mr. Attaway said the Planning and Zoning Board voted 5/0 recommending approval.

#### **Citizens Comments**

**Attorney Martin Wilson:** Mr. Wilson, representing the land owner spoke in favor.

### **Business Item 1: Land Division Plat off Faulkner Rd dividing 30.96 acres into two parcels.**

Commissioner Ledford motioned to approve the Land Division Plat off Faulkner Rd dividing 30.96 acres into two parcels. Commissioner Gray seconded for discussion.

Commissioner Gray voiced his concerns about the development and increased traffic destroying the road. He said they may need to put something in place to strengthen the road before development begins. He said Millen Rd is a small dirt road like Faulkner Rd and it was destroyed after development was done there. Chairman Henry asked county Manager Mike Benton to follow up on that. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Public Hearing 2: Land Division Plat off Faulkner Rd dividing 115.018 acres into four Parcels.**

Planning and Zoning Director Doug Attaway presented a request to subdivide 115.018 acres off Faulkner Rd W into four parcels. Mr. Attaway said the Planning and Zoning Board voted 4/1 recommending approval. He said the one no vote was due to a developer adding ten new lots on a dirt road that needs improvement. Commissioner Ledford asked for the road frontage of the lots. Mr. Attaway gave road frontage and all lots had more than the required amount.

#### **Citizens Comments:**

**Mary Patrick:** Mrs. Patrick said the Planning and Zoning board asked for a chart to be added showing the road frontage to future plats to make it easier to determine. She said she agrees with Commissioner Gray on developers bringing roads up to county standards before building new homes. She said there may only be one home now but they are adding ten new lots.

### **Business Item 2: Land Division Plat off Faulkner Rd dividing 115.018 acres into four parcels.**

Commissioner Ledford motioned to approve the land division plat off Faulkner Rd W dividing 115.018 acres into four parcels. Commissioner Gray seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Henry said before they accept any more requests for divisions of land on dirt roads, he would like to get something put in place for improving and maintaining the dirt roads. Mr. Attaway said they would need to put a moratorium in place to stop applications for land division on dirt roads until they put an ordinance in place.

Commissioner Gray motioned to add a business item to item number ten on the agenda for discussion of a moratorium on the division of property. Commissioner Alexander seconded, motion passed.

**Public Hearing 3: Special Use Permit for an Animal Shelter and Boarding Kennel:** Planning and Zoning Director Doug Attaway presented a request for a Special Use Permit for an Animal Shelter and Boarding Kennel off Hwy 83 N. Mr. Attaway said the planning and zoning board voted 5/0, recommending approval with the following conditions. He said the first condition was the development should include a one hundred feet undisturbed buffer except for a thirty-foot wide path for an entrance.

He said the animal shelter boarding facility should be constructed of masonry walls at least eight feet above the interior floor to help mediate the noise.

**Citizens Comments:**

**Tracy Campbell:** Mrs. Campbell spoke in favor saying this is her calling. She said they have saved over five hundred dogs and cats from animal control. She said they help the public also by offering a low-cost spay and neuter transport program. She said she takes animals from Jasper County to a low-cost clinic in Athens every other Monday. Mrs. Campbell said lots of unwanted dogs are left on dirt roads in Jasper County and Animal Control can't keep up with the number of animals they take in. She said it is very important to have a facility to help with the overflow from Animal Control. She said because of the existence of the Jasper County Humane Society animal control has received a no-kill award for the past three years. Mrs. Campbell said they are at adoption events every weekend and they are currently foster-based. She said they want to continue to be foster-based but they need some type of holding facility for dogs and cats. She said they would like to have a medical suite to have vets come in a few days a week to help control the population of unwanted litters. Mrs. Campbell said they are working to educate the public and would like a facility to have summer camp programs for kids to teach them about pet ownership.

Commissioner Gray asked if they would be leasing or purchasing the property. She said they would be purchasing it. Commissioner Alexander asked how many dogs they plan to house. Mrs. Campbell said their license allows twenty. She said they would like a holding facility for around twenty dogs and a boarding facility for fifteen to twenty. She said that the boarding facility would fund the humane society so all money would go back into taking care of animals. Mrs. Campbell said the intention is to stay foster-based but this would allow housing and get the dogs out of kennels until they find a good placement. She said the property is important to her because she wants county or city water so they are not dependent on a well to take care of the animals. She said it is also a great location. Commissioner Ledford said he has a concern about the location. He said he is afraid that people would just be dumping animals outside the fence and those animals would either be hit by a vehicle or wander into the subdivision nearby and tear out trash. Mrs. Campbell said they would have cameras and make it known that the cameras are there. She said they would rather have a safe place so people don't have to dump animals. She said without a place for these animals they would be dumped on dirt roads. Commissioner Ledford said he agrees but he is concerned with the animals being dumped and wandering into the neighborhoods. Tax Assessor Lynn Bentley said that she has just been made aware of these plans and the property they are discussing is in conservation. She said she and Mrs. Campbell needed to talk more.

**Salena Wilson:** Mrs. Wilson said she lives in the Oak Ridge Estates subdivision and opposes the construction of an animal shelter and kennel across from their subdivision. She said she has a petition with thirty-two signatures of her neighbors with the subdivision having approximately thirty-five occupied homes. She said that she believes this is a need for the humane society facility, but she also believes that the location across from a subdivision is not suitable. Mrs. Wilson said she believes it will be a nuisance and create a noise disturbance that will reduce their quality of life and lower their property values. She said she is an animal lover but doesn't want to hear dogs barking while trying to enjoy time outside. She said they also have concerns about animals being dumped after hours and then being hit by a car or potentially aggressive animals wandering into their neighborhood. She said they are concerned about the threat to their children and pets. She said they are also concerned about the increased traffic it will add with the entrance to a commercial property being directly across from their subdivision. She said she researched the noise ordinances based on Article 2 Chapter 18. She wants to ensure the county will hold the Humane Society accountable for excessive, unnecessary, or unusually loud noise that annoys, disturbs, injures, or endangers the comfort, repose, health, or safety of others outside the one hundred feet from the source. She said she doesn't think a hundred feet of trees will

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keep them from hearing forty dogs barking. Mrs. Wilson gave the Commissioners a copy of her signed petition.

**Business Item 3: Special Use Permit for an Animal Shelter and Boarding Kennel:**

Commissioner Gray said he believes a facility for the Humane Society is going to be a good thing. He asked if those opposed to the location are going to be willing to help find another location. He said they are coming out full force against them so he hopes they will volunteer to put some efforts towards finding a suitable location.

Commissioner Ledford said he felt bad about it but motioned to deny the Special Use Permit for an Animal Shelter and Boarding Kennel. Commissioner Gray seconded. Commissioner Alexander suggested using the empty lots at the industrial park. He said they would have city water there. He said the county needs something, but he thinks the requested location is not the right place. The motion to deny passed unanimously.

**Public Hearing 4: Issuance of a Development Authority of Jasper County \$2,000,000 Revenue Bond for New Equipment for T&F Lumber Co, LLC 11484 Hwy 83 South, Monticello, GA:**

Jasper County Development Authority Executive Director Tony Rogers presented a TEFRA resolutions request for T&F Lumber Co. Mr. Rogers explained that TEFRA is the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982. He said that this is essentially a resolution that signals in an open hearing the development authority's intent to issue tax-exempt revenue bonds on the financing of two million dollars for new equipment for T&F Lumber. He said this is for Federal taxes only. Mr. Rogers said step two is that the resolution is an acknowledgment by the Board of Commissioners that they understand that it is the Development Authority's intent to issue a \$2,000,000 revenue bond. He said a TEFRA resolution does not imply any tax incentives but is simply a necessary step in the revenue bond application process. He said it is just required paperwork by the IRS and it does not in any way obligate the county or development authority for the repayment of the bonds. Mr. Rogers said the customer is solely responsible for the repayment of the revenue with the revenues generated from the project and that is why it is called a revenue bond. Mr. Rogers again said by signing the resolution the Board acknowledges in an open forum the Development Authority's intent to issue two million dollars in revenue bonds to T&F Lumber Co.

Commissioner Alexander asked if the county would receive taxes on the new equipment even as it depreciates over time. Mr. Rogers replied yes. Mr. Alexander said he has received calls from citizens concerned that T&F would be given tax incentives, allowing them not to pay taxes on the equipment. Mr. Rogers said they would have to pay county taxes on the equipment. Mr. Rogers said a revenue bond helps with financing and is a way to use the Development Authority as a conduit to give access to tax-exempt bonds they could not otherwise access. Commissioner Gray asked if there were any tax abatements and if this was only being presented to the BOC because of the particular bond it was. Mr. Rogers said there are no tax abatements and he is bringing it to the board in an open hearing for the board to acknowledge their intent. Commissioner Gray asked about the difference between a revenue bond and just getting a loan and if pilot payments would be made to the development authority. Mr. Rogers said the revenue bond offers cheaper rates because it is set up for Federal Tax Exemptions. He said there are no pilot payments as those are associated with tax incentives and there are none; they are simply requesting assistance to purchase equipment that they will pay taxes on. Commissioner Alexander asked if the building was already built and if they funded the building themselves. Mr. Rogers said it had been built, and they had found it on their own. Chairman Henry asked if a business that has been operating for some time could apply for this type of revenue bond. Mr. Rogers said there are federal guidelines on qualifications, but if they meet those qualifications, they could.

**Citizens Comments:**

**Sherry Benton:** Mrs. Benton said her concern is not understanding the qualifications and ramifications. She asked if this would be money the county put a hold on for this bond project. Chairman Henry said the county is not responsible for the funding, and the business will not be tied to the county unless there is tax abatement. Mr. Rogers said payment of the bond is completely the responsibility of the business, and the default on repayment of the bond, the county and the development authority could not be held responsible.

**Mary Patrick:** Mr. Patrick said Mr. Rogers stated that he did not discuss incentives with the solar farms because they did not ask for incentives. She said we all know they will get tax incentives because they said so at the town hall meeting. Mrs. Patrick asked Mr. Rogers if T&F Lumber requested incentives, would he be looking into giving them to them? He said if they ask for it, he would be coming back before the board for a public hearing because it is required.

**Business Item 4: Resolution Authorizing the Development Authority of Jasper County to Issue a \$2,000,000 Revenue Bond for New Equipment for T&F Lumber Co, LLC located at 11484 Hwy 83 South, Monticello GA** Commissioner Gray motioned to approve the resolution authorizing the Development Authority of Jasper County to issue a \$2,000,000 revenue Bond for new equipment for T&F Lumber CO, INC located at 11484 Hwy 83 South, Monticello GA. Commissioner Pounds seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Public Hearing 5: Issuance of a Development Authority of Jasper County \$6,900,000 Revenue Bond for the Acquisition, Renovation, Expansion, Furnishings, and Equipment for TNT Door & Drawer, Inc., a Manufacturing Facility Located at 199 Perimeter Rd, Monticello, GA** Jasper County Development Authority Executive Director Tony Rogers presented a TEFRA resolutions request for TNT Door & Drawer, INC. Mr. Rogers said Jasper County Development Authority intends to issue a tax-exempt revenue bond of \$6,900,000 for the acquisition, renovation, expansions, furnishings, and equipment for TNT Door & Drawer, INC. He said this does not imply tax incentive, it is just the necessary paperwork. He said there is no obligation to the county, the City of Monticello, or the Jasper County Development Authority. He said signing the resolution is simply the board acknowledging in an open forum that they know the Development Authority's intent to issue \$6,900,000 in revenue bonds to TNT Door & Drawer.

**Citizens Comments:**

**Stephanie Puckett:** Mrs. Puckett said she would like to know if TNT Doors & Drawers Inc. has been vetted and if anyone knows how long they have been in business. She said she would like to know if they ever filed for bankruptcy or defaulted on any abatements of federal assistance programs. She said the BOC talks about offering tax abatements and bringing businesses here, and she supports that. She just thinks they need to do their homework first and really look into these companies. Mrs. Puckett said if they allow them to come into our county, they need to be vetted first because we don't need business to come in for six months and then be gone. Commissioner Ledford said that he knows the TNT Door & Drawer has been in business since at least 2004 because they have a location in Covington, GA.

**Business Item 5.1: Resolution Authorizing the Development Authority of Jasper County to Issue a \$6,900,000 Revenue Bond for the Acquisition, Renovation, Expansion, Furnishings and Equipment for TNT Door & Drawer, Inc., a Door and Cabinet Manufacturing Facility Located at 199 Perimeter Rd, Monticello, Ga:** Commissioner Ledford motion to approve the resolution authorizing the Development Authority of Jasper County to issue a \$6,900,000 revenue bond for the Acquisition, Renovation, Expansion, Furnishings, and Equipment for TNT Door & Drawer, Inc. a Door and Cabinet Manufacturing Facility Located at 199 Perimeter Rd, Monticello, Ga. Commissioner Pounds seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Business Item 5.2: Memorandum of Agreement with TNT Door & Drawer, Inc., Development of Authority of Jasper County, Jasper County Board of Commissioners, Monticello City Council, Jasper County Board of Education, Board of Assessors of Jasper County and the Jasper County Tax Commissioner:**

Jasper County Development Authority Executive Director Tony Rogers presented the memorandum of understanding for TNT Door & Drawer. He said they are looking to possibly move into the vacant Dexter Axle building at 199 Perimeter Rd, Monticello, GA. He said they have been in business for over twenty years and are looking to grow but are space-restricted at their current location in Covington, GA. Mr. Rogers said they Build customized cabinets, cabinet doors, and drawers. He said their waste product is sawdust, but they have a purchaser for that, so it will not go into the landfill. He said Jasper County is competing with the City of Social Circle for this business. Mr. Rogers said the \$6,900,000 bond will allow TNT to purchase the property, expand and purchase the equipment for production lines. He said they would transfer \$4,500,000 of existing equipment to the site. He said the equipment being transferred is 100% taxable without any incentives. Mr. Roger again explained the benefits of the bond to the companies applying for them. He said that with the offered incentives the company has set goals for jobs and investments. He said if they fail to reach those goals the county and Development Authority can request repayment on some or all of the incentives given depending on how short the company is on meeting set goals.

Commissioner Pounds asked how many jobs they would potentially bring to the county. Mr. Rogers said there will be 25 at first increasing to as many as 45 by year five. Chairman Henry asked if that would be 25 new jobs or if it was 25 total, with the company intending to transfer employees from the Covington location. Mr. Rogers said it was 25 total, and they would transfer some employees because they already have the skills to do the job. Commissioner Ledford asked how many employees they currently have. Mr. Rogers said they have 35 and expect that at least 10 will not relocate to Jasper County. Commissioner Gray asked about the tax abatements. Mr. Rogers said the Development Authority had recommended a seven-year tax incentive for two reasons. He said one reason was the competition with Social Circle, and the second was to offset some above-and-beyond non-typical costs that this particular customer is having to pay that would not normally be the case. He said these costs are specific to the site, non-standard utility costs, and there are also trash pits at the location. He said that their recommendation is strictly financial. Mr. Rogers said the customer is committed to their clawback goals to pay in taxes almost seven times what the county receives from that empty building. He said this customer is almost perfect for what the community decided we are looking for in a 2023 comprehensive plan. They attract and retain clean industries, grow in an economically and environmentally responsible manner, and incentivize development. He said they will be good citizens. He said the owner lives in Jasper County and is aware of the new CTAE building being built at the high school. He also has some ideas for equipment he would like to donate to that building. Mr. Rogers said the owner would like to have kids graduate from our high school and be ready to work for TNT Door & Drawer. He said the Development Authority recommends approving the TNT Door and Drawer MOA for all these reasons.

Commissioner Gray said he would like to know what the depreciation schedule is. He said he is uncomfortable approving something without that information because they were given numbers that the county would receive from the solar farm, but after the depreciation and tax abatements, the county would not actually receive that amount. Mr. Rogers said he does not have that information and does not have a way to monitor it. He said that would be for the Tax Assessment Group to discuss with TNT and determine the depreciation schedule. Tax Assessor Lynn Bentley said the depreciation schedule depends on the equipment grouping. She said the groups have different depreciation schedules, but the building and the land would not depreciate like the equipment and would be fully taxable.

Commissioner Gray said the Commissioners received an email that is not on the agenda. He said between the cost to repair issues from the Dexter Axle, the abatement, and depreciation, the amount of taxes the county will actually get is likely to be a lot less than the amount given in the presentation. He said he likes hard numbers, and this just frustrates him. Chairman Henry opened for citizen comments.

**Sherry Benton:** Mrs. Benton said she is opposed. She said maybe she doesn't have enough information. She asked if the company will have thirty-five employees but plans to move twenty-five with them, counting those employees as part of the thirty-five. Mrs. Benton asked if the current employees were moving to Jasper County or just commuting here for work. She said it seems there is a lot of gray area that we don't have the answers for, and before the county starts to grow, we need to take care of the citizens first. Mrs. Benton said many people here want the county to stay rural.

**Vick Columbus:** Mr. Columbus said he comes from a manufacturing background, and in his experience, the current employees move with the company. He said if you move specialized equipment, you move the operators. He said they would move their current employees and increase the traffic flow in the county. Mr. Columbus asked what was in the deal for Jasper County. He asked how HB581 could impact whether their employees reside in Jasper County from a tax standpoint. He said they need more information, including a proper depreciation schedule, and true financial analysis is very important. He asked if the company would move in seven years when the tax abatements end.

**David Thompson:** Mr. Thompson said his biggest concern is that we know the cost to Jasper County but don't know what we gain after the seven years of abatements. He said they will be given Jasper County revenue, but what value do they bring to the county? Mr. Thompson said he is all for the growth, but this company will receive incentives using taxpayers' money, and he would like what the citizens are getting back. He said the agreement seems weak because the employees do not have to reside in Jasper County, so the company is not providing jobs and opportunities for our citizens. He said the commissioners need to either deny or strengthen the agreement.

**Stephanie Puckett:** Mrs. Puckett asked if the property is in the city. Mr. Roger said it is in the City of Monticello. Mrs. Puckett then asked why Dexter Axle was not being held responsible for the cleanup. She said they are a large corporation and should be responsible for the cleanup. Chairman Henry believes that would be between Dexter Axle and the City of Monticello or Dexter Axle and the EPA. She asked if the EPA contacted Dexter Axle. She said that would pull a larger debt off the new coming business and lessen the credited assets to the business. Mrs. Puckett suggested telling the new business to call Central Georgia EMC and let them fix the spilled transformer. She asked if the city utilities would be strong enough to carry the power for this business or if an upgrade would be needed. Does the city have any say in this project, and why are they not at the meeting for this discussion? Commissioner Gray said the county and city would have to agree. Chairman Henry said the commissioners are only voting on the tax incentives for the county taxes. Mr. Rogers said the county gets the majority of the taxes. Mrs. Puckett said would need a manufacturing company in that location. 3 or 4 new jobs are better than an empty building. She said she is not for the abatements, but we need the growth. She said if this is a reliable manufacturing company that will employ our citizens, she doesn't see how the commissioners can deny it. She said she does feel like this company should participate in the work study program at the high school.

**Mary Patrick:** Mrs. Patrick said she used the county depreciation schedule for personal property but we don't know how much of the 6.9 million dollars will be personal or real property. She said that right now, Dexter Axle is still the owner, that the listed value for the real and personal property is \$2,530,158, and that the taxes received for 2024 were \$26,864. She said the new business would be in group 2 of the depreciation schedule listed as wood manufacturing. Mrs. Patrick said with the group 2 depreciation schedule, they would be taxed 91%, the first tax decreasing each year, but the county

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would lose that 91% due to the tax abatements. She said that in year eight, after the tax abatements end, they would be taxed at 29%. She said year nine 21% and in year ten and going forward they would be taxed at 15%. Mrs. Patrick gave some estimates of what the taxes would be and said the county would get 37% of the taxes collected. She said we need jobs but they should be hiring local people. Mrs. Patrick said maybe the commissioners should delay their decision and find out what the depreciation schedule is, what the tax savings are and how much the county will actually get. She said they need to add some incentives to help the citizens of this county.

After a long discussion, Chairman Henry motioned to accept the Memorandum of Agreement with TNT Door & Drawer, Inc. and the Development of Authority of Jasper County, which include the tax abatements. Commissioner Ledford seconded the motion, passed 4 to 1 Commissioner Gray opposed.

**Presentations/Delegations:** Chairman Henry presented a Resolution of Commendation recognizing Kaylee Slocumb for achieving the rank of Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts of America.

**Prior Citizen Comments Follow-up:** Planning and Zoning Director Doug Attaway responded to prior comments made by Cathy Benson concerning abandoned properties. Mr. Attaway said every letter that has been mailed for the property located at 24 Jackson St has been returned stamped undeliverable. Mrs. Benson said the taxes have been paid and there should be a way to find the owner. Mr. Attaway said they used the address on file for the tax notice. Mr. Attaway said currently, in the county ordinances for structure, there is no abatement process. He said there is an abatement process if there is trash and debris in the yard under the solid waste ordinances. Mr. Attaway said he and the Code Enforcement Officer sat down with the new Magistrate Judge to discuss abatement issues for structures in the county. He said he knows of one property in Turtle Cove that has had a condemned notice for over a year but they cannot enforce having it torn down or cleaned up because there is nothing in the ordinance for structures. He said he has got a copy of the Amenity Code for the City of Jackson and the Magistrate Judge has a copy of the abatement process for Morgan County. Mr. Attaway said he will be taking it before the Planning and Zoning Board to get the ordinances updated so they can enforce cleanup and removal of condemned structures. He said it is a long legal process to go through. Commissioner Ledford said he sent the County Manager a link for the amenity code for the City of Covington. He said it is very well written. Mr. Attaway said right now the county needs to add these ordinances. Mr. Attaway said he expects to have something to present to the Commissioners in April or May. Chairman Henry asked if Mr. Attaway would make his presentation at a work session so the Commissioners could make recommendations.

Mr. Attaway responded to prior comments made by Sherry Benton concerning Jason Pope's Property on Landers Way. Mr. Attaway said Mr. Pope has a court date for March 11, 2025. Mr. Attaway said that Mr. Pope currently had one old bulldozer, one old tractor and a trailer that he was in the process of trying to find someone to remove those items. Mrs. Benton thanked Mr. Attaway and the Commissioners for their perseverance to get things done. She said they are finally getting their residential area back and she is very grateful.

County Manager Mike Benton responded to a prior comment made by Mary Patrick concerning vehicle logs being placed in county vehicles for the Building Inspector, Code Enforcement Officer and Animal Control. Mr. Benton said vehicle logs are kept for those vehicles. He said in addition to the log's animal control sends a text to 911 who enters their location. He said it has been working so well that Code Enforcement has started sending a text to 911 also.

Mr. Benton said Mrs. Patrick also mentioned her concerns about the County Manager not having the authority to hire employees in the Tax Assessor's office. He said he can understand how it might have appeared but he did not actually hire a new employee in that office. Mr. Benton said that he had Mrs. Jasper County Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting Minutes February 3, 2025

Carole Norris working on a temporary assignment to perform an in-house audit of homestead filings compared to voter registration filing. He said Mrs. Norris was under the County Manager's supervision, and her time was charged to the County Manager's Budget, not the Tax Assessors. Mr. Benton said Mrs. Norris turned over all her findings to the tax assessor's office, and the audit is complete. He said Mrs. Norris is now officially retired, and he would like to thank her for 18 years of service.

**Citizens Comments:**

**Melissa Strozier:** Mrs. Strozier spoke on behalf of the Jasper County Jubilee Committee. She said she wants to ask the Commissioners to join them for the Jubilee this year to show unity in our community. She said it is a week-long event that will take place April 12<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Mrs. Strozier said the events include A Tour of Homes, a Community Picnic, A week-long scavenger hunt, Tasty Tuesday, A Fashion Show, Music Bingo, and end with the Jubilee on Saturday, April 19<sup>th</sup>. She said the Jubilee last year was a success and they are just looking to get local representatives to join them this year. Commissioner Ledford said they will also host an event at Thomas Persons Hall on March 14, 2025, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. called Get to Know Your Neighbors.

**Kathy Benson:** Mrs. Benson said she wanted to commend Public Works for improving every road in Alcovy Shores. She said there is still some work to be done, but she really appreciates them for their efforts. Mrs. Benson said the commissioner has three applicants for short-term rentals who do not meet the criteria. She said she would like to know why someone can apply for a Short-Term Rental if they do not meet the criteria.

**Julie Newman:** Mrs. Newman said she was coming before the Commissioners to ask for an exception on the requirement to have rental taxes paid before July 20, 2023. She said her home was under construction at the time. She said she has been working with her Commissioner and Mr. Attaway to increase the hotel/motel taxes to 8%. She said her home is high-end and would be listed for \$1500.00 per night. She said her home is for corporate retreats and would be rented approximately 30% of the time with the potential revenue being \$150,000 a year taxed at 8%. She said she was unaware of the changes being made and immediately complied when she received the cease and desist letter, which is why she is asking for an exception.

**Chris and Michell Blakley:** Mrs. Blakeley spoke to the board about Jackson Lake Rd. She said the road is getting increasingly dangerous. Mrs. Blakeley said that due to the lack of pavement markings, road shoulder, lighting, visibility of center line, edge of pavement line, existing potholes, and speed of driver, the road is very dangerous. She said from 2022 to now, there have been 47 wrecks, including 3 fatalities, just from Larry's Four Way to The Sac-O-Suds, which is only 3 miles. She said several county citizens travel this road daily, and she urges the commissioner to consider adding reflectors, improving signage, resurfacing the road, and adding rumble strips to help improve these hazards. She said that safety should be a priority. She said she is requesting the commissioner investigate these issues and take steps to improve road safety immediately.

**Gabrielle Merrell:** Mrs. Merrell said she is seeking support and Official endorsement for a Charity walk she is doing. She said her son has Cerebral Palsy, and she is asking for participation and logistic reports as to whether anything is needed, like ambulances, road closures, permits, or public facilities. She said that she is looking for sponsors and support and invited the community to her event on March 22, 2025.

**County Commissioner Items & Updates:**

**Commissioner Pounds:** None

**Chairman Henry:** None

**Commissioner Alexander:** None

**Commissioner Gray:** None

**Commissioner Ledford:** None

**Business Items Continued:**

**Business Item 6: Fiscal Agent Designation for Family Connection Collaborative – FY 2025-2026:**

Targie Folds began her presentation with an overview of what Family Connections does. She said they are non-profit organizations committed to improving the quality of life for children and families by ensuring they have the resources they need. She said they gave out over 500 backpacks with school supplies to children in the Jasper County school system for the 2024-2025 school year and more than 400 backpack meals every two weeks to children in need. She said they partnered with AT&T to provide over 50 laptops for children in our school systems and residents who attend the Senior Center. Mrs. Fold said they help educate the community on how to report child abuse and neglect. She said the meetings occur on the second Tuesday of the month at noon at the Board of Education Annex boarding on Funderburg Dr. She said the grant amount will remain the same as last year's \$56,250.

Commissioner Ledford motioned to authorize the Chairman to sign Fiscal Agent Designation for Family Connection Collaborative – FY 2025-2026. Commissioner Pounds seconded, the motion passed 4/1 Commissioner Gray opposed. He stated that on the website there is a tool for race, equity, and inclusion. He said he feels this promotes separation and doesn't think the county should be funding organizations that separate.

**Business Item 7: 2025 New Alcohol License Application- Modern Supermarket 11589 Hwy 83**

**S:**Mr. Attaway presented a request for 2025 New Alcohol License Application- Modern Supermarket 11589 Hwy 83 S. He said the license is for retail sales. Commissioner Ledford motion to approve. Commissioner Gray seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Business Item 8: Bear Creek Marina and Restaurant requests the 2025 Alcohol License fees to be**

**waived:** Mr. Attaway presented requests for the 2025 Alcohol License fees to be waived for Bear Creek Marina and Restaurant. Mr. Attaway said both locations were impacted by the hurricane in 2023 and have not been able to reopen yet but the fees were paid in 2023. He said Commissioner waived the fees for 2024 and the owner is just requesting a continuance for 2025 as they are still closed. Commissioner Ledford motioned to table until the March 3, 2025 meeting. Commissioner Alexander seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Business Item 9: Discussion for a Moratorium on Issuing Building Permits on Non-Conforming**

**Lots:** Chairman Henry said they would also discuss subdivisions on dirt roads. Chairman Henry asked him to explain nonconforming lots, saying there are lots throughout the county that have been grandfathered in and are buildable lots but non-conforming. Mr. Attaway said his biggest thing is the county Board of Health and if they can get a septic system. He said as a county he doesn't feel we should be telling people their property is useless but the state can deny it for lack of acreage. Mr. Attaway said he feels we should push toward the State Health Department for liability reasons. He said that there are 1738 non-conforming lots in the county.

Commissioner Gray motioned to moratorium any development of any non-conforming lot for 120 days. Commissioner Ledford seconded, motion passed 4/1 Chairman Henry opposed.

**Discussion for a Moratorium on Land Division on Gravel Roads:** Mr. Attaway said this Moratorium is to establish an ordinance for the number of land divisions and road improvement requirements on dirt roads.

Commissioner Gray motioned to table the item until a later date. Commissioner Ledford seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Business Item 10: New Short-Term Rental License Applications:** Mr. Attaway updated the number and status of STR license applications. He said all current applications will be re-inspected within twenty-five days.

Mr. Attaway presented a STR applicant for 10644 Hwy 212 W. Mr. Attaway has received proof of paid hotel/motel tax as required.

Commissioner Ledford motioned to approve the Short-term Rental application for 10644 Hwy 212 W. Commissioner Pounds seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Attaway presented a STR application for 177 Shoreline Dr. Mr. Attaway has received proof of paid hotel/motel taxes as required.

Commissioner Ledford motioned to approve STR application for 177 Shoreline Dr. Commissioner Alexander seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Attaway presented a STR application for 261 Landers way. Mr. Attaway has received proof of paid hotel/motel taxes as required.

Commissioner Alexander motioned to approve STR application for 261 Landers Way. Commissioner Pounds seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Attaway presented a STR application for 440 Ridgepoint Dr. Mr. Attaway said this is Mrs. Newman's home and the home was under construction at the time of.

Commissioner Alexander motioned to approve the STR application for 440 Ridgepoint Dr. Commissioner Pounds seconded, motion passed 3/2 Commissioner Ledford and Commissioner Gray opposed.

Mr. Attaway presented a STR application for 651 E Mourning Dove Ct. Mr. Attaway said the home was being remodeled, so there is no proof of paid hotel/motel taxes as it was not being rented.

Commissioner Pounds motioned to approve STR application for 651 E Mourning Dove Ct. Commissioner Alexander seconded, motion passed 3/2. Commissioner Ledford and Commissioner Gray opposed

Mr. Attaway presented a STR application for 661 E Mourning Dove Ct. Mr. Attaway said the home was being remodeled so there is no proof of paid hotel/motel taxes as it was not being rented.

Commissioner Pounds motioned to approve STR application for 661 E Mourning Dove Ct. Commissioner Alexander seconded, motion passed 3/2 Commissioner Ledford and Commissioner Gray opposed.

**Business Item 11: HB 581 – Floating Homestead Exemption Options:**

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Commissioner Gray motioned to opt into HB 581. Commissioner Ledford seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Business Item 12: Resolution Addressing the Lump Sum Payment for the Defined Benefit Plan Enhancement:** County Manager Mike Benton presented saying at the December 6, 2024 meeting the Jasper County Board of Commissioners approved a one-time lump sum payment to reduce the cost of the defined benefits retirement plan in the amount of \$ 1,086,100. ACCG is looking for a motion to direct them on what to do with that one payment.

Commissioner Ledford motioned to authorize the chairman to sign Resolution #2025.02.03.1 authorizing the reduction of Accumulated Contribution Credits used to determine the defined benefits plan required annual contribution by \$1,086,100. Commissioner Pounds seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**Business Item 13: FY 2026 Budget Calendar Approval:** Mr. Benton presented the budget work session calendar with added meetings. Commissioner Gray motioned to approve the budget calendar with the two changes (add April 28<sup>th</sup> Work Session at 6 p.m. and May 2<sup>nd</sup> Work Session). Commissioner Ledford seconded the motion, passed unanimously.


**Business Item 14: Schedule Work Sessions and Called Meetings as Needed:** Mr. Benton said a work session would be needed for the new FLOST.

**County Manager Update:** Gave an update on the Assistant Recreation Director position. I received 12 applications, interviewed 5, and scheduled 3 more interviews. He said ACCG information on Governor Kemp's budget approval for LMIG funding. Mr. Benton gave an update on County Line Road progress and building permits.

**Executive Session: None**

### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Pounds motioned to adjourn at 9:36 pm. Commissioner Ledford seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

  
Bruce Henry, Chairman

  
Sheila Jefferson, Clerk