

**REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
PIKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

The Pike County Board of Commissioners held its Regular Monthly Meeting on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Courthouse, Main Courtroom, 16001 Barnesville Street, Zebulon. Chairman Briar Johnson convened the meeting and Commissioners Tim Daniel, Tim Guy, and Ken Pullin attended. County Attorney/Interim County Manager Rob Morton and County Clerk Angela Blount were also present. (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1(e) (2)). Due to unforeseen circumstances, Commissioner James Jenkins was unable to attend the meeting.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Chairman J. Briar Johnson
2. **INVOCATION**.....Silent Invocation
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**..... Chairman J. Briar Johnson

4. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA - (O.C.G A. § 50-14-1 (e) (1))**
Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to approve the agenda, motion carried 4-0.

5. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1(e) (2))**
 - a. Minutes of the January 8, 2025, Regular Monthly Meeting.
Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2025 Regular Monthly Meeting, motion carried 4-0.

6. **INVITED GUEST - NONE**

7. **REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONS, DEPARTMENTS, COMMITTEES, AUTHORITIES**

- a. Monthly Reports submitted from County Departments and County Authorities, including a Revenue/Expenditure Statement for all departments and a summary check register. *There are no Department reports as they will be provided during the first Board meeting of February. Revenue/Expenditure Statement and Detail Check Register is included.*

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Pullin to accept reports, motion carried 4-0.

- b. County Manager Report

Update on County finances for the following funds/accounts:

| | |
|--|----------------|
| General Fund | \$4,946,744.09 |
| Fire Dept. Donations..... | \$10,905.91 |
| Cash Reserve Account..... | \$110,318.25 |
| Jail Fund | \$22,468.74 |
| E-911 Fund | \$85,359.84 |
| DATE Fund | \$27,514.18 |
| Juvenile Court Fund..... | \$13,746.25 |
| Residential Impact Fee | \$416,899.72 |
| Commercial Impact Fees | \$32,103.20 |
| C.A.I.P FUND | \$118,370.38 |
| General Obligation SPLOST 2022-2028..... | \$1,048,389.98 |
| L.M.I.G. Grant (DOT)..... | \$47,548.81 |

- c. County Manager Comment

Interim County Manager Rob Morton addressed the Board stating he provided them with documentation about a matter that has come up regarding Whitehorse Subdivision, phase II, and the related roads. The county has been discussing the release of the required bond/letter of credit in connection with the roads for phase II. ICM Morton noted he has been working with Public Works Director, Chris Goodman, regarding the required repairs/remediation that was required concerning the phase II roads so that the bond/letter of credit could be released, and the roads could be dedicated to the county. The county has already accepted the dedication of the roads for phase I. ICM Morton and Chris Goodman rode the roads in Whitehorse Subdivision and noticed centerline cracking/separation that would need to be addressed. Morton noted he contacted the contractor, and they negotiated with a subcontractor to seal the centerline cracking and separation. Chris Goodman has recommended that the county proceed with addressing the same issues with the portion of the roads in phase I that have already been dedicated to the county. Since the contractor is under a time constraint to perform the remediation to the phase II roads, ICM Morton and Chris Goodman are requesting that the Board authorize Southern Pro Paving in the amount of \$5,925.00 to rout and clean the cracks and then install hot crack seal to the county's portion of the roads in Whitehorse Subdivision, which is phase I. The expenditure would be paid from M/R Paved and Unpaved Roads in the current budget for Public Works. There is 62% remaining in that line item for the year, approximately \$450,000.00. Commissioner Daniel stated it would make sense for the subcontractor to go ahead and do the county's portion while they are already doing phase II.

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to approve the expenditure of \$5,925.00 to Southern Pro Paving to rout and clean the cracks and install hot crack sealer in Whitehorse Subdivision, Phase I, motion carried 4-0.

Interim County Manager Rob Morton updated the Board on the remediation that is happening at the Pike County Jail. The HVAC had to be replaced. The Board had inspections of the Jail facility after the inmates were relocated to another facility. There were some immediate needs identified, and those needs are being worked on. The needs include remediation in the showers, counters, and flooring. The

repairs should be finished in the next couple of weeks. In connection with the Sheriff's Department, ICM Morton noted he was contacted by Major Neal requesting to surplus seven chairs. The condition of the chairs will determine if they need to be disposed of or if they can be sold on GovDeals.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to declare seven chairs at the Pike County Sheriff's Department as surplus, motion carried 4-0.

Interim County Manager Rob Morton reminded everyone that the county is starting the FY 2025-2026 budget process, and a budget calendar has been issued. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers/Component Units budget requests are due by February 21, 2025. The Finance Department will begin inputting the data received. Meetings with the Department Heads/Constitutional Officers/Component Units will begin the first two weeks of March to discuss budget requests before a draft budget is prepared and presented to the Board for consideration in April.

Interim County Manager Rob Morton addressed the Board stating the Board voted in May 2024 to surplus some personal property at the library that included a specific list of books, DVDs and cubbies. The information was received by the county and the Board authorized the surplus to be sold on GovDeals. After the meeting, there was a request to surplus additional items that were not approved so the GovDeals transaction never took place. The library at the time requested an additional 234 books to be sold as surplus that include 146 adult fiction books and 88 adult non-fiction books in addition to the amounts that were previously approved in May 2024. The Finance Administrator, Clint Chastain, was provided the documentation for GovDeals but he was advised to hold off from putting them on GovDeals due to the additional items. ICM Morton noted the books, DVDs and cubbies will be removed from the library and placed in another area that has opened up for storage.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Pullin to declare as surplus 234 additional books from the J. Joel Edwards Library, consisting of 146 adult fiction books and 88 adult non-fiction books, and authorize the surplus books for sale on GovDeals, motion carried 4-0.

Interim County Manager Rob Morton noted the county currently receives the fuel from Ranger Petroleum. The county has been contacted by a prior provider that provided fuel years ago before Ranger Petroleum received the contract. It is that time of the year for the Board to decide if they want to seek competitive bids for this process. ICM Morton asked the Board if they were interested in seeking bids for the fuel. Chairman Johnson asked if that would include a larger fuel tank. ICM Morton stated that would be something that the county would want to include in the specifications if the Board decides to seek bids. Chairman Johnson asked if the county owns the tanks now. Public Works Director, Chris Goodman, replied no. Commissioner Pullin asked when the current contract ends. ICM Morton replied he had not seen a written contract and he would have to go back and look at the minutes when that was changed.

Motion/second by Commissioners Pullin/Daniel to approve soliciting bids for fuel, motion carried 4-0.

Interim County Manager Rob Morton stated he attended the Board of Assessors meeting this morning and there was a lengthy discussion about HB 581. During the meeting, the Board of Assessors was provided with reports that aerial flyover mapping that was approved was completed. The Board of Assessors approved another proposal that will be satisfying some of the requirements under the consent order. The contract with Norman Appraisers was approved at the meeting. Each week, the county is moving forward with complying with the consent order. The Board of Assessors has adopted policies at a recent meeting that was required by the consent order. Commissioner Pullin asked as part of the consent order if all the properties have to be reassessed in the year 2025. ICM Morton replied yes. Commissioner Pullin asked if the appraisers plan on having all the properties reassessed this year. ICM Morton replied that their contract, which is \$80,000.00, is to be completed by the spring but per the contract they are not doing the door-to-door assessments, that is being done in-house by the Board of Assessors office.

d. Commissioner Reports

District 1 – Commissioner Daniel – No report.

District 2 – Commissioner Guy thanked Chris Goodman and Public Works for all their work during the ice storm and rain. Commissioner Guy noted he sent Chris a list of roads that needed attention and Chris has already followed up with him on the list.

District 3 – Commissioner Pullin thanked Chris Goodman and Public Works for all their work as well as Jim Totten with EMA for his work during the storms.

Commissioner Pullin asked Interim County Manager Rob Morton for an update on the paving schedule for McCard Lake Road. ICM Morton replied the county is waiting on Atlanta Paving, their provider is closed for the season and from his understanding their provider will be reopening around February 6, 2025. The county will have an updated schedule, but Atlanta Paving is obligated under their contract to have the road paved by sometime in April.

District 4 - Commissioner Jenkins – Absent.

At Large Chairman Briar Johnson welcomed Elected Officials that were present at the meeting. Mayor John Strickland with the City of Concord, Anita Neath Clerk for the City of Concord and Probate Judge Ginny Blakeney.

e. County Attorney Report to Commissioners – No report.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – NONE

9. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Consider use of Courthouse Grounds, Main Courtroom, from Judge Ginny Blakeney on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. for Agriculture Students Mock Trial.

Interim County Manager Rob Morton recommends approval.

Motion/second by Commissioners Pullin/Daniel to approve use of Courthouse Grounds on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, motion carried 4-0.

- b. Ratify purchase of HVAC System for Jail Facilities.

Interim County Manager Rob Morton stated that the county had an emergency situation when the heating went out at the Jail facilities and had to be replaced. Under the county policy, the county was authorized to proceed under emergency circumstances. ICM Morton asked the Board to ratify the purchase of the HVAC system. The total cost of the HVAC System for the Jail Facilities is \$28,133.00.

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to approve ratifying the purchase of HVAC System for Jail Facilities, motion carried 4-0.

- c. Approve the hiring of an employee for the Joint Board of Elections and Registration office.

Interim County Manager Rob Morton stated based on the language of HB 623, the hiring of personnel by the Joint Board of Elections and Registration requires county approval. The proposed hire will be within the current budget allocations. Depending on the response to the advertisements, the proposed hire will either be for the registrar position being advertised; or, if the applicants are not qualified for the registrar position, then a promotion from current employees in the office will take place and the new hire will be for an election's systems specialists. ICM Morton recommends approval of hiring one new employee for the Joint Board of Elections and Registration office. Commissioner Pullin asked if this was backfilling a position or creating a new position. ICM Morton replied it is creating a new position that was in the budget as an open position.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to approve the hiring of one employee in the Joint Board of Elections and Registration office, motion carried 4-0.

- d. Discussion of Etheridge Mill Road and Yancey request.

Interim County Manager Rob Morton addressed the Board stating the county has received a request that based on certain issues that have occurred recently, but also because of the growth that is occurring at the Yancey facility on Etheridge Mill Road, that the Board of Commissioners consider abandoning a portion of Etheridge Mill Road. The portion of Etheridge Mill Road would be from Shackelford Road to Liberty Road. ICM Morton noted if the Board decides to move forward with the process, that the motion would be to move forward with the process of abandoning a portion of the road not approving the road abandonment.

Motion/second by Commissioners Pullin/Daniel to approve moving forward with the process of abandoning a portion of Etheridge Mill Road, motion carried 4-0.

- e. **PUBLIC HEARING:** To receive public input on HB 581, statewide floating homestead exemption and possible opt out by Pike County.

Interim County Manager Rob Morton read HB 581 Statement for Public Hearing. HB 581 was passed in November 2024 and became effective January 1, 2025. HB 581 involves a new floating homestead exemption with an option to impose a floating local options sales tax (FLOST). The new law also provides an "opt out" provision, whereby local governments may choose to opt out of HB 581 but must do so by March 1, 2025. Because of the time constraints imposed by the new law, the Board of Commissioners decided to begin the process required to "opt out", as a "just in case" measure. However, the Pike County Board of Commissioners have not yet made a decision whether or not to "opt out" of HB 581. The Board of Commissioners continues to research and investigate the potential impact HB 581 may have on Pike County, including but not limited to, the potential impact on individual property owners, the potential impact on the county's digest, the potential impact on the county's millage rate, the possibility of Pike County pursuing local legislation that is more tailored to Pike County, and the issues concerning being able to have a FLOST in Pike County as allowed by the new law. The County has been diligently investigating these issues, and several county officials have attended training sessions concerning HB 581. It is intended for the Board of Commissioners to receive public comment at three separate Public Hearings concerning the possibility of Pike County opting out of HB 581. The Board of Commissioners do not intend to engage with citizens during these Public Hearings since the intent of Public Hearings is for the Board to receive input from the citizens. Prior to making a final decision regarding whether or not to opt out of HB 581, the Board will place the issue on its agenda for discussion and action and will consider the information that has been obtained during its investigation including the public comments received at the Public Hearings prior to any vote to "opt out".

Public Hearing open for 20 minutes:

- David Paulson addressed the Board stating Pike County should not opt out. The homestead exemption now comes out to approximately \$24.00, that is what you tax bill is lowered for homestead exemption. Mr. Paulson noted if you can make legislation by opting out of HB 581, can you make legislation while in this with a stricter rule like the Feds have rules. HB 581 wants to freeze the taxation; can it be capped within that legislation like at 3% or 10%.
- Becky Watts addressed the Board stating she would like to hear more about legislation. Mrs. Watts would like more information to make a good comparison.

- Wayne Glass addressed the Board stating he does not know a lot about the bill but sounds like taxes will go up and he does not want taxes to go up. Mr. Glass would like more information on the bill. Could something be considered in HB 581 to put something in place for Seniors because they need a break on taxes.
- Kristen Cudnohufsky addressed the Board stating she would like everyone to know what the law says ‘Fair Market Value of Property’ is. The law states ‘Fair Market Value of Property’ means the amount a knowledgeable buyer would pay for the property and a willing seller would accept for the property at an arm’s length, bona fide sale. Mrs. Cudnohufsky noted over the last five years that property values have over inflated and skyrocketed. HB 581 is a little too convenient financially, what a business model by the state to lock in their revenue from taxes at the highest inflation this year. What are the stipulations on deflation. What happens when the market crashes. It will happen. Sounds like when you lock in the value at the highest inflation capitalizing on that and then someone will decide what that inflation rate is year after year and that will take the fair market value calculation out of the hands of the Tax Assessors, people who are trained to do this properly and essentially your bill will be based on the inflation rate by someone every year. Mrs. Cudnohufsky stated the Board needs to take in consideration inflation, deflation and why the state is using 2025 property values when they are at the highest.

Chairman Briar Johnson reminded everyone that there will be two more Public Hearings; February 12, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. and February 25, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.

Public Hearing only, no motion entertained.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT (Limited to 5 minutes per person) - NONE

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- Interim County Manager Rob Morton requests an Executive Session for discussion or deliberation on the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary action or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of a public officer or employee or interviewing applicants for the position of the executive head of an agency, as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(2), germane to personnel.
- Interim County Manager Rob Morton requests an Executive Session for consultation with the county attorney, or other legal counsel, to discuss pending or potential litigation, settlement, claims, administrative proceedings, or other judicial actions brought or to be brought by or against the county or any officer or employee or in which the county or any officer or employee may be directly involved as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-2(1), germane to pending or potential litigation.

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to adjourn Regular Session and enter into Executive Session at 7:15 p.m., motion carried 4-0.

(Commissioner James Jenkins joined Executive Session via phone)

CLOSED MEETING AFFIDAVIT

[A copy of the affidavit must be filed with the minutes of the meeting]

**STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF PIKE**

AFFIDAVIT OF PIKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Members of the Pike County Board of Commissioners, being duly sworn, state under oath that the following is true and accurate to the best of his/her knowledge and belief:

1.

The Pike County Board of Commissioners met in a duly advertised meeting on 1-28-2025.

2.

During such meeting, the Board voted to go into closed session.

3.

The executive session was called to order at 7:15 p.m.

4.

The subject matter of the closed portion of the meeting was devoted to the following matter(s) within the exceptions provided in the open meetings law:

Yes Consultation with the county attorney, or other legal counsel, to discuss pending or potential litigation, settlement, claims, administrative proceedings, or other judicial actions brought or to be brought by or against the county or any officer or employee or in which the county or any officer or employee may be directly involved as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-2(1);

No Discussion of tax matters made confidential by state law as provided by O.C.G.A. § 50-14-2(2) and _____insert the citation to the legal authority making the tax matter confidential);

No Discussion of the future acquisition of real estate as provided by O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(4);

Yes Discussion or deliberation on the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary action or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of a public officer or employee or interviewing applicants for the position of the executive head of an agency, as provided in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(2);

No Other – Germane to authorizing negotiations to purchase, dispose of or lease property.

Pike County Board of Commissioners:

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| J. Briar Johnson, Chairman | (L.S.) |
| Tim Daniel, Commissioner | (L.S.) |
| Tim Guy, Commissioner | (L.S.) |
| Ken Pullin, Commissioner | (L.S.) |
| James Jenkins, Commissioner | (L.S.) |

This the 28th day of January 2025.

Sworn to and subscribed
Before me this 28th day of January 2025.

Robert L. Morton
Morton & Morton Associates
County Attorney and Notary Public

My commission expires: August 10, 2026.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to adjourn Executive Session and enter into Regular Session at 8:11 p.m., motion carried 4-0.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Motion/second by Commissioners Pullin/Guy to adjourn at 8:12 p.m., motion carried 4-0.

J. Briar Johnson, Chairman

Angela Blount, County Clerk