

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

The Pike County Board of Commissioners held its Regular Monthly Meeting on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at 9:00 a.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/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.....Keith Ford**
- 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 April 29, 2025, Regular Monthly Meeting.
Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to approve the April 29, 2025 regular monthly meeting minutes, motion carried 4-0.

6. INVITED GUEST

- a. Employee Recognition for service to Pike County.
Tracy Durham with the Pike County Sheriff’s Department/ E-911 was recognized for her 20 years of service in E-911. County Manager Rob Morton commended Ms. Durham for her dedication and long-standing service. Sheriff Jimmy Thomas noted that Tracy works at night in 911. Tracy is one of those girls that goes in to work, does her job and goes home. Sheriff Thomas noted that Tracy has given more than 20 years of her life to his department, and he appreciates it more than she knows. Sheriff Thomas thanked Tracy Durham for her service. Jennifer Vennett, Admin/Director of 911 thanked Tracy for her dedicated service, she has been the rock of dispatch. Ms. Vennett noted she has seen a lot of dispatchers come and go over the years, and she appreciates Tracy’s consistent dedication and help throughout. Tracy has a wealth of knowledge. Tracy Durham was presented with a 20-year certificate and pin.
Leon Alpough with Pike County Sheriff’s Department was recognized for his 10 years of service as an Investigator. County Manager Rob Morton thanked Investigator Alpough for his dedication to Pike County. Sheriff Jimmy Thomas stated that Investigator Alpough is a community person and has been with the county for 10 years. Sheriff Thomas noted if you have someone that is hard to deal with, this is your guy because he can talk the horns off a billy goat and is very good at it. Sheriff Thomas noted that Investigator Alpough has done the department a good job and he appreciates him and his friendship. Leon Alpough was presented with a 10-year certificate and pin.

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

- b. County Manager Report
Update on County finances for the following funds/accounts:
General Fund \$842,639.12
Fire Dept. Donations..... \$10,905.391
Cash Reserve Account.....\$157,872.81
Jail Fund \$15,947.00
E-911 Fund \$89,922.93
DATE Fund \$25,181.18
Juvenile Court Fund..... \$13,775.83
Residential Impact Fees \$172,762.86
Commercial Impact Fees \$39,842.54
C.A.I.P FUND \$85,204.38
General Obligation SPLOST 2022-2028..... \$1,985,928.01
L.M.I.G. Grant (DOT).....\$43,757.86

- c. County Manager Comment
County Manager Rob Morton stated he provided the Board with a detailed report related to the agenda and he will go over some of the highlights in that report.
Audit: The county received the FY 2023-2024 audit report from the auditors. The Pike County portion of the audit was completed with no findings and resulted in a clean opinion. CM Morton thanked Clint Chastain, Finance Administrator, for his diligent work. The Board was provided with a copy of the audit. CM Morton stated he anticipates that the auditors will make a formal presentation at some point. CM Morton noted that Commissioner Jenkins conveyed his appreciation via email for Mr. Chastain’s efforts and professionalism.

CM Morton reported that he attended the Board of Assessors meeting the previous day and as noted in a follow-up email, the Board of Assessors approved the consolidation values and notices of assessments. Earlier in the week, CM Morton and Chief Appraiser Greg Hobbs met with Joe Norman of Norman Appraisals, who reported that approximately 1,700 properties have been reviewed since the reassessment process began. In light of the Board of Assessors' adoption of consolidation values, CM Morton requested that the Board of Commissioners consider setting an estimated rollback rate within 15 days prior to the issuance of assessment notices. He explained that documentation has been provided to assist in this process and can also be used during budget discussions. CM Morton noted that setting an estimated rollback rate is now required under House Bill 501 and House Bill 92. Referring to a chart provided to the Board, CM Morton explained that, based on current general property tax revenues of approximately \$8.6 million, the estimated rollback rate would be 8.940 mills. At that rate, each mill would generate about \$961,969.00. If the County were to maintain the existing mill rate of 9.639 mills, as set last fall, it would correlate with the chart. However, to meet the County's current proposed budgetary needs, CM Morton recommended an estimate rollback rate of 11.071 mills, which appears as the bottom figure on the chart. CM Morton clarified that this action does not set the final millage rate. Instead, it is a new legal requirement to estimate the rollback rate based on projected tax revenues needs. The actual millage rate will be finalized only after the State approves the tax digest and the County completes the formal adoption process, which includes public hearings and required notices. CM Morton emphasized that this estimated rate of 11.071 mills provides a buffer, preventing the County from unintentionally exceeding the estimate rollback rate, which would trigger additional notice requirements under state law. He noted that Clint Chastain, Greg Hobbs, Donna Chapman and he himself had all received training on these new statutory requirements. Given that this is the first year under the new legislation, the state recommends estimating conservatively on the higher side. Commissioner Daniel asked if the estimated millage rate would appear on the tax notices. CM Morton confirmed that, based on his understanding of the law, the notices must show the previous year's millage rate along with an estimate based on current figures. By setting an estimate rollback rate now, the County can avoid prematurely including an estimated tax amount, which has caused confusion in the past when citizens assumed their taxes were increasing before the actual millage was set. Commissioner Pullin asked for confirmation that last year's millage rate was 9.639 mills, which CM Morton affirmed. Commissioner Pullin then inquired whether the County Manager was recommending placing the 11.071 mills on the tax notices. CM Morton confirmed this, stating that it provides necessary flexibility. Commissioner Pullin asked what the current estimate is for general property tax revenue, and CM Morton reiterated the figure is approximately \$8.6 million, though that could increase as the digest is finalized. He added that an increase is anticipated, but not as high as the proposed \$10,649,000.00. Clint Chastain explained that the \$8.6 million reflects budgeted property tax revenue. The rollback rate takes the inflationary growth that the County could have. If the County were to leave the millage at 9.639, it would collect an estimated \$9.272 million after applying inflationary growth. To avoid triggering a tax increase under state law, the rollback rate would need to be reduced to 8.940 mills to keep collections at \$8.6 million. Maintaining the current millage without a rollback could lead to the appearance of a tax increase. Commissioner Pullin noted that from a taxpayer's perspective, seeing a millage rate increase from 9.639 to 11.071; the perception is going to be higher due to the increase of 1.432. CM Morton replied that it is possible that they are going to interpret it that way. The intent is that what the new State laws were wanting is the County to be responsible for notifying the public related to the millage rate process, rather than what the estimated taxes were when the County does not have a millage rate yet. The Board has been provided with the calculation of the variable millage rates that will be suggested in connection with the discussions on the budget. The rollback was based on the general property taxes that were received. The County will not know what those revenues are until they come in. An increase is projected. The revenue line in the budget book shows an increase in general property taxes for anticipated revenues in the current budget that is being proposed. Commissioner Pullin stated he thinks this is a lot clearer. CM Morton asked the Board to look at page two of the proposed FY 2025-2026 budget. On page two it shows a line item for General Property Taxes. The current year budget was \$8.6 million and the recommendation at this time in the proposed budget is \$10,649,795.00, that is why the number is at the bottom of the chart that was handed out. This number is just in case, it is going to be estimated at that number, so it does not exceed that number. Commissioner Pullin asked whether the rate could be set higher than 11.071. CM Morton replied that the Board can set it higher if they choose but advised against doing so abruptly. The county would not want to hit that jump all at once. Some policies and procedures need to be put in place related to the capital acquisition fund and fund balance reserve. CM Morton noted approving the reserve because it is at zero line for reserves. The county policies require a three-month prudent reserve. The proposed action today supports responsible planning and compliance with State law.

Motion/second by Commissioners Pullin/Daniel to approve listing an estimated millage rate of 11.071 mills on the upcoming property tax notices as required by state law, motion carried 4-0.

Building and Grounds - County Manager Rob Morton stated the remediation work for the annex building is ongoing and the replacement of the flooring is due to the moisture from the roof damage. Ken Lalumiere, Director of Building and Grounds, addressed the Board stating the flooring is scheduled for Friday, May 16, 2025. The Registration Office will be closed on Friday to have the carpet replaced. Hope to have the carpet replaced in a day's time, if not, they will continue for a little bit on Saturday. It will be completed in time to set up for early voting that is scheduled for the week after next week. CM Morton noted the County has received reimbursement funds this week from the carrier related to the work. This renovation is not coming out of the budget, per se. Some things had to be paid up front in connection with the jail and other things, but the county was able to work with the carrier on the roof issue.

Chestnut Oak: County Manager Rob Morton stated that Commissioner Pullin and Chairman Johnson met when the County had a group meeting with the Agribusiness Authority. A separate nonprofit entity

is being organized related to the Chestnut Oak Facility so they can apply for 501 C 3 status. Local Governments and Authorities are not recognized by the IRS for 501 C 3 status consideration. Accordingly, the new entity “Chestnut Oak, LLC” is being formed in connection with the use of the Chestnut Oak facilities in order to be considered as a 501 C 3 tax exempt entity.

Compensation Study: CM Morton stated he is continuing to receive the position questionnaires distributed by UGA from the various departments. The County appears to be on schedule, collecting data and analyzing through the end of May and into June, with their analysis taking place in June and a draft in July.

Library: CM Morton noted the paving at the library has been completed. The paving did not include sealing of the lot. Chris Goodman, Director of Public Works, is going to inspect the paving/painting of the lines that were done and determine whether any additional work would be beneficial to protect the integrity of the parking lot. The paving of the parking lot was a donation, and the work was done by a third-party provider. Ken Lalumiere is working on the library counter replacement project to improve ADA accessibility. Ken is obtaining workers that are going to be assisting with the project. The library intends to close on July 5, 2025 (the Saturday after Friday, July 4th). The library has been advised in the same manner as previous requests that this is an operational decision for the Library Board but if it is approved, this will not be an additional paid holiday for the library employees.

Personnel Policy: CM Morton noted he is continuing to work on the proposed revision to the Personnel Policy. There have been some discussions to consider personnel time versus the current separate allocations for sick, vacation, and other leave. There also has been discussion about clarifying exempt versus non-exempt employees, particularly in connection with overtime, comp time, and what seems to be an informal use of flex time. CM Morton noted he discovered that overtime has been miscalculated, and clarification has been necessary. It seems that flex time may be something that needs to be considered.

Planning and Zoning Board Motion: CM Morton stated he attached a written motion to the Board packet that was read at the end of the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) meeting on May 8, 2025. This item was not on the PZB agenda and there was no urgency identified to support the need to address this matter since it was not on the agenda. CM Morton noted that he and Jeremy have met regarding the motion/request, and both agree that the Board of Commissioners should address the request as the PZB is not empowered to address professional services. CM Morton reminded the Board that the current County Attorney contract includes zoning, and the Board already addressed the County Attorney contract at their last meeting. CM Morton noted that he and Jeremy met for almost two hours on Friday and discussed several items.

Impact Fee update: Consultant, Bill Ross, is working on the Capital Improvements Element (CIE). The Board will need to appoint a committee in connection with this project prior to finalizing the updated ordinance and fee schedule.

GIS Services: Jeremy Gilbert, Planning and Development Director, has been assisting with Three Rivers related to GIS Services. The County has just received information (shapefiles) from the county’s engineering consultant, Mark Whitley, which will be provided to Three Rivers in connection with the requested proposal related to GIS services for Pike County, that may also assist the E-911 operations and the operation of the Tax Assessors.

Public Works: Two Light Equipment Operators were promoted to Mechanic II and Heavy Equipment Operator. Two new Light Equipment Operators have been hired within budgeted positions.

Roads update:

- McCard Lake Road: Paving is complete.
- Friendship Circle and Gaulding Road: Paving is underway. In connection with the paving, the County has received a request from a citizen to consider guardrails to protect a cemetery that is immediately adjacent to the road. The County has received requests about adding Hood Road to the paving list since it is surrounded by Friendship Circle and Gaulding Road.
- Harden Road: Pre-paving drainage preparation has been completed. Atlanta Paving will be moving to Harden Road once they compete with Friendship Circle and Gaulding Roads. CM Morton reminded the Board that Harden Road has a realignment that is being addressed as part of the relevant roadwork.
- Scott Road Extension: Site preparation in progress.
- Short Cut Road and Flowers Road: Identified as needing attention. Chris Goodman, Director of Public Works, agreed that both roads need to be considered for improvements.
- Bolton Road: The County received an email from John Yates, requesting the County to look at Bolton Road. The County is in the process of following up with the request. There are some issues that the County can address but there are some that the County cannot address.

County Manager Morton informed the Board that Sun Tribe has requested a joint meeting with the Planning Zoning Board (PZB) and the Board of Commissioners. The request is to schedule the meeting sometime after their public meeting, which is set for May 28, 2025 but prior to the June 12, 2025, PZB meeting. Commissioner Pullin stated he had received a letter from Sun Tribe inviting him to attend a meeting. CM Morton clarified that the event on May 28, 2025, at the Strickland Building in Concord is a public meeting hosted by Sun Tribe to inform the community of proposed improvements to the Flat Shoals Energy Center project. Commissioner Pullin inquired about what Sun Tribe is requesting at the next PZB meeting. Planning and Development Director Jeremy Gilbert responded that Sun Tribe is seeking clarification on existing conditions and proposing changes to certain conditions, specifically regarding the use of herbicides for weed control and gaining access to the property from North Madden Bridge Road. Sun Tribe wishes to engage with the public prior to appearing before the Board in an

effort to be transparent. They are requesting a workshop with PZB and the Board of Commissioners to discuss their plans before any formal decision-making. Commissioner Pullin asked why Sun Tribe did not include the Development Authority in their request. Mr. Gilbert explained that if a workshop is held with the two Boards to discuss modifications, the Development Authority could be involved later during discussions of a potential tax abatement process. Commissioner Pullin stated he did not believe a workshop was necessary and that the PZB could hear the modifications and then make their recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. He added that the Board of Commissioners should not be involved until a formal proposal is presented. Mr. Gilbert reiterated that Sun Tribe is aiming to provide as much information as possible to the public in advance. Commissioner Pullin asked if the PZB members planned to attend the public meeting. Jeremy Gilbert replied that all members received invitations, but if they attend, it will be as private citizens, not as official representatives of the county. Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Gilbert for his and the PZB's opinion on holding a workshop. Mr. Gilbert stated that the PZB has not discussed the idea of a workshop. He suggested that Sun Tribe first submit their request to the Board of Commissioners; if the Board is not interested, there is no reason to move forward with planning a workshop. He noted that the PZB will proceed as directed by the Board and would prefer a joint workshop or to incorporate the discussion into a regular meeting. Commissioner Daniel stated he has met with Sun Tribe enough already. Commissioner Guy agreed with Commissioner Pullin's comments. CM Morton added that if Sun Tribe wishes to make a request or presentation to the Board of Commissioners at regular monthly meeting on June 11, 2025, they are welcome to do so which would be prior to the June 12, 2025, PZB meeting. Chairman Johnson asked who will communicate that to Sun Tribe. CM Morton replied that both he and Jeremy Gilbert have communicated with Tyler Brock from Sun Tribe, and one of them would follow up.

CM Morton read the formal invitation from Sun Tribe Development:

"Sun Tribe Development invites you to attend a community information meeting at the Strickland Building in Concord on May 28, 2025, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. Sun Tribe is hosting this meeting to present and discuss their proposed improvements to the Flat Shoals Energy Center project."

CM Morton also reminded the Board that he would not be in attendance at the May 27, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting due to a previously scheduled annual vacation, noting that the meeting falls the day after Memorial Day.

CM Morton recognized the presence of Ethan Gray from Ameripro and thanked him for attending the meeting.

d. Commissioner Reports

District 1 – Commissioner Daniel – No report.

District 2 – Commissioner Guy thanked Clint Chastain for the clean audit report. He also mentioned receiving a call regarding Bates Road and confirmed that he had already spoken with Chris Goodman about the issue earlier in the day.

District 3 – Commissioner Pullin echoed Commissioner Guy's comments regarding the clean audit report. He asked whether each of the County's authorities had their own audit reports and whether they were also clean. County Manager Morton responded that each authority does have its own audit report as a component unit of the County; however, there were findings in those reports, meaning they were not clean audits. CM Morton added that the County's audit could not be finalized until the component units were received

District 4 - Commissioner Jenkins – Absent.

At Large Chairman Briar Johnson referred to a previous discussion about the paving of Friendship Circle and shared that some citizens expressed concerns about the nearby cemetery. They requested the installation of guardrails to protect the site. Chairman Johnson asked whether the County would be addressing this issue. CM Morton replied that he had spoken with Chris Goodman and that the project is a matter of scheduling. It will be similar to the guardrail installation on Concord-Hollonville Road and Roberts Quarters Road. This is a specialized service with only one vendor in the area that the County uses. A meeting will be scheduled with a representative from the church, Chairman Johnson, and Chris Goodman to meet with the vendor and obtain an estimate for the Board of Commissioners to consider.

Chairman Johnson also thanked AmeriPro for their prompt and professional response during a recent medical emergency involving his father on April 27, 2025. He extended his appreciation to the Fire Department as well.

e. County Attorney Report to Commissioners – No report.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Discussion regarding pruning and maintenance of trees located on the courthouse grounds.

County Manager Rob Morton stated this item was a follow-up to the previous meeting's discussion concerning the condition of the courthouse grounds. The Building and Grounds Department is seeking direction from the Board on whether to proceed with the removal of trees and sodding the grounds, or to continue pruning the trees, which has resulted in ongoing bare spots on the lawn due to lack of sunlight from the large tree canopies.

Chairman Johnson, who was not present at the last meeting, stated he would like the County to consult with an arborist for a professional opinion. He acknowledged the concerns expressed by Ken Lalumiere, Director of Building and Grounds.

Mr. Lalumiere addressed the Board, stating that pruning the upper canopy of the trees to improve visibility of the courthouse would not resolve the issue of grass not growing. Chairman Johnson asked if the trees are healthy. Mr. Lalumiere confirmed that the trees – pin oaks- are extremely healthy.

Chairman Johnson also inquired whether the trees on the north side of the courthouse obstruct the view of the Sheriff's Department. Mr. Lalumiere responded yes, noting that he receives calls about visibility issues during inmate transfers due to the trees obstructing the line of sight. For officer safety, he suggested that removing the trees on the north side of the courthouse might be necessary. He emphasized that the trees would continue to grow, increasing shade and making it even harder for grass to survive due to insufficient sunlight.

Commissioner Pullin asked for an estimate to prune the trees. Mr. Lalumiere estimated the cost at around \$7,000.00. He explained that tree maintenance would be ongoing, as once the upper canopy is pruned, the limbs will regrow and begin to droop again. He also mentioned that the City of Zebulon is responsible for clearing leaves that fall into the courthouse parking areas but has not fulfilled that obligation.

Commissioner Pullin then asked about the cost to remove all the trees. Mr. Lalumiere stated the estimated cost is approximately \$17,000.00, which would include tree removal, stump grinding, and replacement with lava rock. He clarified that this estimate only applies to the pin oak trees, not the magnolia trees, which he recommended keeping.

All estimates are preliminary; the County would need to solicit formal bids. Mr. Lalumiere added that if the trees are removed, the south side of the courthouse that is currently shaded, would need to be repainted due to fading caused by past sun exposure. At present, the color is not easily visible due to the shade, but it has faded to a sherbert color. He emphasized that the courthouse is a central focal point for the County.

Commissioner Daniel noted previous discussions about planting new trees that will not grow as large, such as maple trees, to preserve the aesthetics of the courthouse grounds without the long-term maintenance issue. Mr. Lalumiere agreed and reiterated his preference to preserve the magnolia trees.

Commissioner Pullin asked where the funding for this project would come from. CM Morton replied that funding would first be evaluated from within the Building and Grounds budget, reviewing what projects have been completed or remain pending. If insufficient, the funds would come from Department 13. Commissioner Pullin asked Mr. Lalumiere if he had the remaining funds in his budget. Mr. Lalumiere confirmed that he did.

Chairman Johnson then asked whether the removed trees, being hardwood, could be repurposed. Mr. Lalumiere responded that the trees would simply be cut up and hauled off, as they are not suitable for lumber or timber use.

County Manager Rob Morton concluded by noting that sealed bids would be required depending on the cost threshold. If below the formal bid threshold, the County would need to receive three competitive bids.

Motion/second by Commissioners Pullin/Daniel to approve soliciting two separate bids related to improvements on the Courthouse Grounds: one bid for the complete removal of all designated trees on the Courthouse Grounds; and a separate bid for the sodding of the grounds, motion carried 4-0.

9. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Award Bid for Fuel Supply and Management System.

County Manager Rob Morton addressed the Board stating they have been provided with information for their review and consideration. Based on the review of the bids, Public Works Director, Chris Goodman and County Manager Rob Morton recommend awarding the project to Walthall based on being the low bidder. Walthall proposed an upfront fee of \$1,750.00 plus an additional \$675.00 annual fee, versus Ranger's proposal which is \$1,500.00 per month, which would be an \$18,000.00 per year budget obligation. Both proposals do not include the cost of fuel, which is based on consumption. Chris Goodman is of the opinion that since Ranger purchases its fuel from Walthall, the County should see savings with the cost of fuel as well if Walthall is awarded the bid. Neither bidder provided an updated fuel cost. The cost of fuel tends to fluctuate based on the market and the amount used. Walthall will provide updated tanks and manage the fuel system.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to approve awarding the bid for the fuel supply and management system to Walthall, motion carried 4-0.

- b. Approve/deny Intergovernmental Agreement with Public Facilities Authority related to 94 Gwyn Street.

County Manager Rob Morton stated the Board has been provided with a proposed Intergovernmental Agreement between the Board of Commissioners and the Public Facilities Authority, regarding the transfer of 94 Gwyn Street Zebulon, GA (formerly the Health Department) to the Public Facilities Authority. The initial meeting of the Public Facilities Authority was held on May 2, 2025 and the proposed agreement was requested to formalize the conveyance of the property, which had been previously approved by the Board of Commissioners last year. The market value analysis for the property at 94 Gwyn Street is \$75,000.00.

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement with Public Facilities Authority related to 94 Gwyn Street, motion carried 4-0.

- c. Approve/deny Pike County Parks and Recreation Department letter of support.

County Manager Rob Morton stated there was a request for a renewed letter of support from the Pike County Board of Commissioners for the efforts of the Pike County Parks and Recreation Authority as it seeks funding opportunities. The proposed letter of support was drafted based on discussions between the Parks and Recreation Authority, a Commissioner, and County Staff. The letter is being issued on behalf of the Board as a whole, not from any individual member.

Motion/second by Commissioners Pullin/Daniel to approve issuing a letter of support for the Pike County Parks and Recreation Department in connection with their efforts to secure funding, motion carried 4-0.

- d. Discussion of request from a member of the public for the transition agreement related to the County Manager.

County Manager Rob Morton addressed the Board stating that there is currently no formal written transition agreement in place. The transition that was previously discussed relates to his legal obligations. The County recently received an open records request for a copy of the transition agreement, and because no such agreement exists, the request included a recommendation that the matter be placed on the agenda for transparency purposes. CM Morton reiterated that he had previously advised the Board that he is in the process of transferring his municipal clients to another attorney. Neither he nor anyone in his law office will continue to serve as legal counsel for any municipality. All cities in Pike County that he currently represents have been notified of the transition, which will be effective July 1, 2025. CM Morton noted that he is also working on transferring or finalizing existing non-Pike County matters and litigation. This includes closing out active cases within a reasonable time, substituting other counsel, or formally withdrawing as needed. The law office of Morton, Morton & Associates will remain open, with current staff assisting Rob Morton in matters related to Pike County. Other Attorney(s) in the firm will handle matters that are not in conflict with his representation of Pike County and service as the County Manager. The law office will continue to handle transactional matters.

Discussion Only - No Motion Entertained.

- e. Discussion of live streaming public meetings RFPS/Bids.

County Manager Rob Morton stated based on the information received including an estimated cost, sealed bids may be required for the setup and ongoing service for the live streaming of the Board of Commissioners meetings. Commissioner Daniel stated he finds it hard to believe that the County cannot find a cost-effective solution, especially since Becky Watts is currently streaming meetings using a phone for free. Chairman Johnson pointed out that the issue lies with audio quality. CM Morton explained that the proposal the County received was for a comprehensive package, including an overhaul of the courtroom's audio, which could also benefit the courts. CM Morton emphasized the importance of following property procurement policies. Commissioner Pullin noted he would support obtaining a couple of bids. CM Morton added that the County will seek information from the current service provider in preparing bid specifications. Commissioner Pullin suggested that a 4K camera be installed in the courtroom and connected to the existing audio system for live streaming-something that could be tested before committing to a larger investment. The Board agreed to move forward with gathering more information and developing a bid solicitation. CM Morton noted maybe one option is to receive demonstrations from interested vendors which will be aligning with Commissioner Pullin's recommendation.

Discussion Only - No Motion Entertained.

- f. Discussion of the renewal of the County's health care insurance plan with McGriff Insurance.

County Manager Rob Morton stated the Board has been provided with the documentation received on May 8, 2025, outlining the negotiated premiums and plan options for the County's health insurance renewal. In February, McGriff presented the projected medical insurance of 23.5%. At a previous meeting, the Board authorized McGriff to renegotiate, and the final negotiated renewal – with underwriting- reduced the increase to 14.9%. CM Morton noted he will recommend changing Short-Term Disability from an employer-paid benefit to a voluntary benefit, which would reduce premiums by \$27,000.00. Additional options include:

- Increasing the deductible on Medical Plan 1 from \$2,500.00 to \$3,500.00.
- Switching dental coverage from Anthem to Aetna for a 2% savings.
- Switching vision coverage from Anthem to Aetna, which, when bundled with dental, will provide an additional 0.5% savings.

If these changes are adopted, the net premium increase will fall below the 10% threshold built into the budget draft. Pike County currently offers two medical plans to employees. Commissioner Pullin asked how many are enrolled in Plan 2. CM Morton responded that out of 91 insured employees, 65 are enrolled in Plan 1 and 26 in Plan 2. Commissioner Daniel asked if Plan 2 is a buy-up plan; CM Morton confirmed that it is. Commissioner Daniel requested that McGriff return to a future meeting to present the options directly to the Board as they have in the past. Commissioner Pullin inquired whether nearby counties have explored pooling their insurance plans to help control costs. CM Morton replied that such options have been discussed, and, in fact, Pike County previously offered to allow local municipalities within the County to participate in its insurance plan. Pooling is a potential strategy depending on the provider and broker, as scale helps spread risk. Commissioner Pullin also asked if most employees meet their deductible each year. CM Morton stated he would have to research that question.

Motion/second by Commissioners Pullin/Guy to approve holding a budget workshop on Thursday, May 22, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. and to request the attendance of McGriff Insurance, motion carried 4-0.

g. Approve/deny First Reading of the FY 2025-2026 Budget.

County Manager Rob Morton stated that the Board has been provided with a first reading of the proposed budget document. He noted that there are some minor adjustments from the earlier draft of the proposed budget. The current total for Revenues and Expenditures under the General Departments stands at \$20,691,372.00. The adjustments include the addition of recently added grants and updates related to insurance needs. Clint Chastaing, Finance Administrator, took the podium to respond to any questions from the Board regarding the proposed budget.

CM Morton highlighted Department 80-Fire Department as an example. The recommended funding does not fully align with the department's initial request. The Fire Department requested funding for staffing to cover three 12-hour shifts (three positions), as well as one additional 24-hour shift. These positions were not fully funded in the proposed budget.

CM Morton also noted that a 2.5% cost of living (COLA) has been included across the board for all departments. He reminded the Board that in 2024, the State approved a 4% COLA, but the Board only approved a 2.5% COLA at the time for County employees—some of which was initially withheld. On August 9, 2024, the Board voted to release the COLA, applying it across all departments, though it still did not reach the full 4% approved by the State. The State did not approve a COLA for 2025; however, the proposed 2.5% COLA is a local recommendation as a gesture of appreciation for employee efforts. The proposed budget reflects employee salaries plus the 2.5% COLA. While some departments requested increases beyond the 2.5%, those were not included in the proposed budget.

Commissioner Pullin noted that in reviewing the revenue side of the budget, he used ChatGPT to estimate how far the County should be at this point in the fiscal year, and it indicated 81%. On page 2 of the proposed budget, Commissioner Pullin asked about the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) for FY 2024-2025 was budgeted at \$1.9 million, with \$1,401,215.00 collected to date. The proposed GY 2025-2026 budget includes a projection of \$2 million, and he asked how this figure was determined. CM Morton responded that the County typically receives LOST collections one to two months behind the actual collection period, so final figures for the current year will not be received until July or August. Clint Chastain added that the collections are for the end of the subsequent month.

Commissioner Pullin also questioned the General Property Tax revenue projection, which increases from \$8.6 million to \$10,649,795.00 in the proposed budget. CM Morton explained that the final number will depend on the millage rate and is based on projected property assessments.

On the topic of the Development Authority's Administrative Fee, Commissioner Pullin noted that the County already provides funding via a quarter-mill allocation and asked what the additional \$116,968.00 in the budget represented. Clint Chastain responded that this amount covers salary and benefits for the Development Authority Director. The County processes the payroll so that the Director can receive insurance and benefits. While the expense appears in the County's budget, the Development Authority reimburses the County for it, and the reimbursement appears on the revenue side.

Commissioner Pullin asked about the increase in the Tax Assessor's budget, particularly in the Regular Employees and Contract Services line items. CM Morton explained that some prior services were covered by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. However, ARPA funds are no longer available, so the proposed FY 2025-2026 budget reflects actual projected costs. For the Tax Assessors, the Board is being provided with what is needed and the county is not able to use ARPA funds, therefore in the 2025-2026 budget, they are projected numbers. Some of the funding allocations are required by State law, and the County does not make all the direct decisions related to Tax Assessors employees and contracted services.

CM Morton stated that the proposed budget does not include further use of Fund Balance. Last year, \$1.5 million from the Fund Balance was used as a revenue source, but that is not included in this budget. The Fund Balance has since been reduced to zero. CM Morton reminded the Board that County policy requires maintaining three months of reserves in Fund Balance.

Commissioner Pullin asked about Impact Fees, noting that actual collections exceeded budgeted expectations for the current year, yet the same figure is used in the proposed budget. CM Morton responded that the projections are based on historical receipts.

Commissioner Pullin asked about the \$3.2 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds listed in the budget. CM Morton clarified that the County has already received those funds, and the listed amount reflects encumbered and allocated balances.

Commissioner Pullin referenced page 93 of the proposed budget and noted that it appears the County is \$2.95 million short for the current fiscal year. The actual revenue is \$18,432,774.00, while total expenditure is \$21,383,280.00. Clint Chastain replied that additional interfund transfers will occur before year-end to close that gap. He also stated that the County came in over on revenues and under on expenditures.

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to approve the First Reading of the FY 2025-2026 Budget, motion carried 4-0.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT - NONE

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. County Manager Rob Morton requests an Executive Session to discuss the possible acquisition of real property pursuant to O.C.G.A. 50-14-3 (b)(1).

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to adjourn Regular Session and enter into Executive Session at 10:41 a.m., motion carried 4-0.

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 5-14-2025.

2.

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

3.

The executive session was called to order at 10:41 a.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:

No 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*);

Yes Discussion of the future acquisition of real estate as provided by O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(4);

No 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.)

This the 14th day of May 2025.

Sworn to and subscribed

Before me this 14th day of May 2025.

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

My commission expires: August 10, 2026.

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to adjourn Executive Session and enter into Regular Session at 11:09 a.m., motion carried 4-0.

County Manager Rob Morton clarified that this item is not a result of Executive Session. Prior to the meeting, he received documentation related to the audit and year-end certifications. CM Morton requested that the Board authorize the Chairman to sign any documents pertaining to the audit.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to authorize the Chairman to sign any documents related to the audit, motion carried 4-0.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to adjourn at 11:10 a.m., motion carried 4-0.

J. Briar Johnson, Chairman

Angela Blount, County Clerk