

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

The Pike County Board of Commissioners held its Regular Monthly Meeting on Wednesday, August 13, 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)). Commissioner James Jenkins joined the meeting via phone.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman J. Briar Johnson
2. INVOCATION.....

Kyle Garner
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 5-0.
5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1(e) (2))

a. Minutes of the July 29, 2025, Regular Monthly Meeting.

b. Minutes of the July 29, 2025, Executive Session.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to approve the minutes of the July 29, 2025 Regular Monthly Meeting, and the July 29, 2025 Executive Session, motion carried 5-0.
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.

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to accept reports, motion carried 5-0.

b. County Manager Report

Update on County finances for the following funds/accounts:

General Fund	\$361,319.73
Fire Dept. Donations.....	\$11,658.64
Cash Reserve Account.....	\$183,600.79
Jail Fund	\$18,495.07
E-911 Fund	\$39,196.77
DATE Fund	\$24,428.97
Juvenile Court Fund.....	\$13,775.83
Residential Impact Fees.....	\$298,125.01
Commercial Impact Fees	\$39,847.38
C.A.I.P FUND	\$32,117.08
General Obligation SPLOST 2022-2028.....	\$2,084,921.95
L.M.I.G. Grant (DOT).....	\$887,139.18

c. County Manager Comment

County Manager Rob Morton reported that he had provided the Board with extensive information prior to the meeting.

CM Morton stated that the county received notice from its insurance carrier regarding the 2023 Ford Explorer that was damaged by a drunk driver. The vehicle was declared a total loss, and the insurance carrier will issue payment of \$28,548.33 in exchange for the vehicle title.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to approve County Manager Rob Morton to execute the title for the 2023 Ford Explorer, motion carried 5-0.

County Manager Rob Morton reported that the state has released the preliminary 2024 sales ratio. Pike County’s sales ratio is 37.33, which is above the minimum legal requirement of 36 but below the 38% threshold required to collect utility revenues at 40%.

CM Morton further stated that the county received a request from the owner of all properties surrounding Liberty Park Road to abandon the road. In response to Commissioner Pullin’s inquiry regarding the process, CM Morton explained that if the Board decides to proceed, the road must first be identified, notices sent, and public hearings conducted. Commissioner Pullin asked if there is a fee associated with abandonment. CM Morton replied that a fee would only be required if a survey is needed to identify the road; currently, the entire road appears to be identifiable. CM Morton noted that he and Public Works Director Chris Gooman recommend the Board consider abandoning the road.

Motion/second by Commissioners Pullin/Daniel to approve proceeding with the process for abandonment of Liberty Park Road, motion carried 5-0.

CM Morton also reported that he and Chris Goodman met with the contractor and engineer regarding McKinley Road. The revised plans are nearly complete, with the exception of identifying the relocation of the city’s water lines. Once finalized, construction is anticipated to begin in September.

d. Commissioner Reports

District 1 –Tim Daniel – No report.
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District 2 –Tim Guy reported he received a call on Bates Road, and it needs some attention.

District 3 – Ken Pullin noted he had already spoke with Chris Goodman regarding Brannon Road. Commissioner Pullin thanked Public Works for all their work.

District 4 – James Jenkins – No report.

At-Large Chairman Briar Johnson – No report.

e. County Attorney Report to Commissioners

County Attorney Rob Morton noted the county has received some payments related to the opioid settlements this past week.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Approve/Deny Public Facilities Authority Development Agreement and Quitclaim Deed for 70 Gwyn Street Zebulon, GA.

County Manager Rob Morton reported that the county did not receive the updated plat for 70 Gwyn Street until the evening prior to the meeting. While he has reviewed the plat, it was not received in time to be included in today's meeting materials. CM Morton requested that the Board postpone this agenda item until the next Board of Commissioners meeting on August 26, 2025.

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to postpone this agenda item until the Board of Commissioners August 26, 2025 meeting, motion carried 5-0.

9. NEW BUSINESS

a. Consider use of Courthouse Grounds from Bryan Richardson with Pike County American Legion Post 197 for Patriot Day Observance Program on September 11, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

County Manager Rob Morton stated the applicant has met all the requirements and recommends approval for use of Courthouse Grounds on September 11, 2025.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to approve the use of courthouse grounds on September 11, 2025 for Patriot Day Observance Program, motion carried 5-0.

b. Consider use of Courthouse Grounds from Bryan Richardson with Pike County American Legion Post 197 for Veterans Day Observance Program on November 11, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

County Manager Rob Morton stated the applicant has met all the requirements and recommends approval for use of Courthouse Grounds on November 11, 2025.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to approve the use of courthouse grounds on November 11, 2025 for Veterans Day Observance Program, motion carried 5-0.

c. Consider one appointment to the Agribusiness Authority to fill an unexpired three-year term, set to expire December 31, 2025. *Applicant has met the criteria.*

Applicant is Rusty Gwyn of Williamson, GA. County Manager Rob Morton stated that Rusty Gwyn and his family were present. CM Morton stated that Mr. Gwyn is qualified for this position and it is his recommendation to appoint Rusty Gwyn to the Agribusiness Authority.

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to appoint Rusty Gwyn to the Agribusiness Authority, motion carried 5-0.

d. Approve/Deny alcohol license (Retail Sales – beer and wine) for Bimal Patel, Royal 77 LLC dba Zebulon Whistle Stop, 5900 Highway 19 South, Zebulon, GA. *Applicant has met criteria.*

County Manager Rob Morton stated the applicant has met the criteria and is his recommendation for approval of alcohol license.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to approve alcohol license for Bimal Patel, Royal 77 dba Zebulon Whistle Stop, motion carried 5-0.

e. Consider a request regarding the reduction speed limit on Hollonville - Zebulon Road for school zone.

County Manager Rob Morton stated that Commissioner Jenkins, along with Mayor Steve Fry, presented a request at the last meeting regarding the reduction of the speed limit. The Board has already authorized reducing the speed within the school zone to 25 mph; however, a transition is needed to properly enforce the reduction.

CM Morton reported that he conferred with the Pike County Sheriff's Office to determine the required distances and requested approval to proceed with implementing the necessary transition. The proposed changes would reduce the speed from 55 mph to 45mph, then to 35 mph, before reaching the 25 mph school zone.

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to approve the transition in the reduction of the speed limit on Hollonville-Zebulon Road for the designated school zone, motion carried 5-0.

f. Award Bid for the Melville Brown Road Paving Project.

County Manager Rob Morton noted that bids for the project were opened at the last Board of Commissioners meeting. Public Works Director Chris Goodman reviewed the bids in detail and met with the County Manager regarding the results. Based on that review, it is the joint recommendation of the County Manager and Mr. Goodman to award the bid to Atlanta Paving in the amount of \$451,373.83.

Although Atlanta Paving submitted the second-lowest bid, CM Morton explained that Empire Contracting's proposal did not appear to be a reasonable and responsible bid based on the figures provided in the bid documents and prior experience with similar projects. He further noted his understanding that the applicant is working with another paving company, and that Empire Contracting does not perform the paving work directly.

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to approve awarding the Melville Brown Road paving project to Atlanta Paving, in accordance with the submitted bid and project specifications, motion carried 5-0.

- g. Authorize Chairman Briar Johnson to execute the pending tax appeals provided by the Chief Tax Appraiser for the digest submission.

County Manager Rob Morton noted that Chief Appraiser Greg Hobbs was in attendance. He stated the Board has been provided with an update on the status of pending appeals and was being asked to certify the existing appeals requiring action. The supporting documentation was included in the meeting packet.

Motion/second by Commissioners Pullin/Guy to authorize Chairman Briar Johnson to execute documents related to pending tax appeals, motion carried 4-1, with Commissioner Daniel abstaining due to his personal property being listed among the pending appeals.

- h. Consideration of Plat for Road Abandonment – Etheridge Mill Road.

County Manager Rob Morton stated that the Board has previously addressed this request and voted to move forward with consideration of the possible abandonment of Etheridge Mill Road between Shackelford Road and Liberty Road. An updated plat has now been provided, showing four separate areas along Etheridge Mill Road.

CM Morton noted his understanding that the applicant has been contacting other property owners in the affected area. He explained that the applicant owns property in the middle section, but there are additional owners to the north near the Shackelford Road and Etheridge Mill Road intersection, as well as to the south near the Liberty Road and Etheridge Mill Road intersection on the east side.

With the survey now available, the Board must determine whether to proceed with public advertisement for abandonment of the entire section of Etheridge Mill Road between Shackelford and Liberty Roads, or to consider a partial abandonment. CM Morton cautioned that abandoning only a portion could create cul-de-sacs at the applicant's location. He further noted that the Etheridge Mill Industrial Park has been closed off by the applicant, and the applicant intends to do the same with this section of the road.

Chairman Briar Johnson stated he spoke with the applicant's representative, who indicated efforts are underway to contact adjoining property owners. Chairman Johnson recommended postponing the item until the next Board of Commissioners meeting to allow the representative additional time to reach the affected landowners, rather than addressing the abandonment in sections.

Motion/second by Commissioners Pullin/Daniel to postpone this agenda item until the Board of Commissioners August 26, 2025 meeting, motion carried 5-0.

- i. **PUBLIC HEARING:** To receive public input regarding Capital Improvements Element (CIE) Annual Update, pursuant to the Georgia Development Impact Fee Act and the Development Impact Fee Compliance Requirements of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and authorize transmittal of the CIE Resolution.

County Manager Rob Morton clarified that Impact Fees were not being approved at this meeting. The Board was considering approval of the Capital Improvements Element (CIE) transmittal resolution to be submitted to the state for a 60-day review. Following the state's review, the matter will return to the Board—typically in September or October—for final approval.

Planning and Development Director Jeremy Gilbert explained that the CIE is updated annually and requires a public hearing before submission to the state. The document reports on impact fees collected by the county, how those funds have been expended, and the county's five-year projection for improvements and expenditures.

Bill Ross of ROSS+Associates addressed the Board, stating that impact fees are designed to shift the cost of growth from existing residents and businesses to new development. He explained that the fees create equity among developments by assessing costs proportionate to their impacts. Impact fees under review apply to road and street improvements, parks and recreation, libraries, public safety—including E-911, police, fire, EMS, and Animal Control.

Mr. Ross further explained that the law distinguishes project levels and system-wide improvements. The methodology report details the research methods, growth projections over the next 20 years, existing facility data, and proposed fee schedules, all of which are submitted to the state for review. During the state's 60-day review, the ordinance and fee schedule may be updated.

Mr. Ross noted that the Georgia Development Impact Fee Act requires formation of an advisory committee, consisting of up to ten members, with at least five involved in land development or real estate sales. The committee must meet at least once before adoption but may meet more frequently. The committee serves in an advisory capacity only; the Board retains full discretion to accept or reject its recommendations. He emphasized that the maximum calculated fees are not automatic recommendations, as actual fee levels are set locally by ordinance.

Public Comments:

Speakers included Teresa Watson, Becky Watts, Robert (last name unknown), an individual identified only as "Junior," and Shannon Mullinax.

Citizens raised concerns about proposed increases to impact fees without the required advisory committee. Speakers stated that impact fees, combined with rising property values, are driving up taxes and discouraging people from moving into the county. One citizen requested refunds of impact fees collected since the most recent increase, alleging the increase was implemented improperly. Citizens also stressed that state law mandates formation of an advisory committee.

Concerns were further expressed that residents are being unfairly burdened with the \$2 million debt from the county's recent land purchase, suggesting that impact fee increases are being used to offset the cost of that debt.

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to approve the Capital Improvements Element (CIE) transmittal resolution and to authorize Chairman Briar Johnson to execute the resolution on behalf of the Board, motion carried 5-0.

- j. **PUBLIC HEARING:** To receive public input on the notice of proposed property tax increase.

This is the first of three public hearings regarding the proposed property tax increase. The second hearing will be held at 1:00 p.m. today, and the third will be held on August 26, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

County Manager Rob Morton and Finance Administrator Clint Chastain reviewed the county's financial position and options for the millage rate. Morton reminded attendees that when the budget was adopted on June 11, 2025, the General Fund was set at \$20,805,412, with a total budget of approximately \$38 million including special funds. Anticipated property tax revenue for the General Fund is \$10,649,035. The current millage rate is 9.639. Options presented for consideration include 11.064, 10.639, and 10.520.

- Option 1 (11.064): Would fully fund the budget and restore the fund balance reserve.
- Option 2 (10.639 – identified as Option 5): Would fund the budget without cuts but require the sale of paving equipment in Public Works.
- Option 3 (10.520 – identified as Option 6): Would fund the budget without cuts but would not improve the county's fund balance.

CM Morton explained that the county's fund balance is currently below the required three-month reserve. He noted that prior use of rollback rates has not generated sufficient revenue to fully fund the budget. The county budgeted \$1.5 million out of the fund balance last year when the Board approved the budget in 2024 to be used as revenues to offset expenditures. That reduced the fund balance well below the required three-month threshold.

No decision was required at this hearing. The millage rate will be set after all three hearings, with a final decision expected on August 26, 2025.

CM Morton addressed public concerns regarding the recent property acquisition, noting that the purchase was discussed in Executive Session and approved in an open public meeting. The property was identified for potential future use as a jail and administration facilities, fire facilities, and training grounds. He stated that funding for the purchase was publicly disclosed and planned for, and that Master Planners and Architects have been consulted. The increase in the millage rate is not related to the property purchase. He further noted that portions of the property not needed may be sold to offset debt.

Public Comments:

Speakers included Cherry Thomas, David Paulson, Pat Kelly, Danielle Kelly, Jeff Barnes, Melissa Stephens, and Martin Collins.

Residents expressed strong opposition to additional property tax increases, citing hardships on fixed-income households and long-time residents. Concerns were raised that continued increases would force citizens out of the county. Comparisons were made to higher taxes in other counties, with the expectation that Pike County will remain affordable.

Several speakers noted that approximately 60% of property taxes go to schools, yet academic proficiency rates remain low despite a 95% graduation rate. Concerns were expressed regarding transparency and necessity of the county land purchase, the associated debt, and its potential impact on taxes.

Some residents advocated for slower, more deliberate growth to avoid rapid increases in the tax burden. Others cited a 23.7% property tax increase over the past three years, raising concerns about disparities in property valuations and appeals. The timing of public hearings was criticized as limiting participation by working citizens. Residents also called for clearer communication and education regarding major financial decisions.

Chairman Briar Johnson encouraged residents to seek information directly from the Board of Commissioners office rather than relying on social media. He noted that most citizens have their commissioners' phone numbers and may also contact the office directly. Chairman Johnson further stated that the Board is actively working on a senior citizen tax relief measure, which remains a priority and is hoped to be in place by year's end.

Chairman Johnson also clarified his role with the Pike County Development Authority, explaining that he was appointed as an ex-officio member. Due to quorum issues at the time, the Authority amended its bylaws to include the County Chairman and School Superintendent as voting members. The Development Authority currently consists of nine members.

In response to misinformation regarding property ownership, Chairman Johnson stated that Q-Public records confirm Pike County as owner of the recently purchased 238.60-acre tract. He also noted that the Board voted unanimously (5-0) in open session on April 23, 2023, to approve the purchase.

Commissioner Ken Pullin expressed appreciation for the work put into addressing the millage rate but emphasized the importance of finding a way to avoid increasing the county's portion of property taxes.

Public Hearing only, no motion entertained.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT (Limited to 5 minutes per person)

- a. Bryan Richardson with Pike County American Legion Post 197 to address the Board regarding the Pike County Veterans Memorial Refurbishment Project.

Bryan Richardson, Project Manager for the Pike County Veterans Memorial Refurbishment, addressed the Board and presented plans for the project. The proposed work includes removal of overgrown hedges, trimming of the magnolia tree, replacement of stone and marble barriers, pouring of a new concrete slab, and installation of a four-foot concrete wall to accommodate future plaques. The estimated project budget is between \$12,000 and \$15,000, with funding to be secured through fundraising and sponsorships. The goal is to complete the major work by Memorial Day, with preliminary steps beginning prior to Veterans Day.

Mr. Richardson requested the Board consider waiving the building permit fee. County Manager Rob Morton noted that the building permit fee would be assessed by the City of Zebulon. CM Morton further stated that, since this was not an agenda item, it will be placed on the August 26, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting agenda for consideration of approval to launch the project.

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 10:55 a.m., motion carried 5-0.

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 8-13-2025.

2.

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

3.

The executive session was called to order at 10:55 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.)
James Jenkins, Commissioner	(L.S.)

This the 13th day of August 2025.

Sworn to and subscribed
Before me this 13th day of August 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 11:12 a.m., motion carried 5-0.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to adjourn at 11:12 a.m., motion carried 5-0.

J. Briar Johnson, Chairman

Angela Blount, County Clerk