

WORKSHOP
PIKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

The Pike County Board of Commissioners held a Workshop on Tuesday, January 27, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. in the Courthouse, Main Courtroom, at 16001 Barnesville Street, Zebulon. Chairman Briar Johnson convened the meeting and Commissioners Tim Daniel, Tim Guy, Ken Pullin and James Jenkins attended. County Attorney/County Manager Rob Morton and County Clerk Angela Blount were also present. (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1(e) (2)).

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 Guy/Daniel to approve the agenda, motion carried 5-0.

5. NEW BUSINESS

a. Review and discussion of the updated paving project list

County Manager Rob Morton invited Public Works Director Chris Goodman to present a slideshow detailing the completed road projects for 2024–2026. CM Morton thanked Heather Bell and Chris Goodman for putting the slideshow together.

Director Goodman reported the following completed improvements:

Overlay and Patching Projects

- Pedenville Road
- Chapman Road
- Sanderfur Road

Resurfacing Projects

- Daniel Road
- Roberts Quarters Road

Guardrail Installations

- Roberts Quarters Road
- Concord Road

Paving of Cul-de-Sacs and Road Sections

- Portions of Watering Hole Drive
- Portions of Water Hole Pass

Paving Projects

- Friendship Circle to Gaulding Road
- Gaulding Road to Concord Road
- Harden Road and the Harden Road/Glover Road reconfiguration
- McCard Lake Road
- Scott Road
- Ward Road
- Starks Road
- Woodard Road
- Caldwell Bridge Road
- McKinley Road
- Melville Brown Road
- Tanyard Road

Scott Road Extension and Cul-de-Sac Director Goodman noted that Scott Road was widened to two lanes, and improved a large cul-de-sac was constructed to allow school buses adequate space to turn around. Signage was installed.

Culvert Replacements

- Hunter Road
- Reams Road
- West Fossett Road
- West Road

County Manager Rob Morton noted the funding primarily via SPLOST/LMIG/GTIB and general fund uses selectively.

CM Morton presented an updated list of current and future Pike County paving projects through 2032, prioritized based on citizen complaints and traffic wear. He noted that newly paved roads typically require maintenance within 15–20 years. The county's preference is to pave full road lengths to avoid paved–dirt–paved segments, though phased approaches may be used when necessary.

CM Morton requested input from the Commissioners on prioritizing the paving list. During discussion, Chris Goodman highlighted that Shortcut Road and Brazier Road generate a high number of complaints due to high traffic, though Blanton Mill Road remains the most frequently

reported. Commissioners will review the list and consider adjustments for discussion at the February 11 Board of Commissioners meeting.

Blanton Mill Road The project scope has expanded from a single segment to potentially the entire roadway. Options under consideration include acquiring full right-of-way to meet county specifications or proceeding with an “as-is” approach. Phasing is also being evaluated. The county engineer is expected to provide a recommendation on phasing within the next few weeks. A timely decision will be necessary to ensure alignment with SPLOST funding and GTIB debt-service requirements.

Woodcreek Road Design work is approximately 80% complete. There is consensus to move forward with a 50-foot right-of-way, as preferred by Southern Rivers, rather than the originally proposed 60-foot width. The target asphalt width is 21–22 feet. An updated cost estimate will be provided, and formal approval will be requested by the County Manager.

Chairman Briar Johnson noted that the County Facilities Annex Parking Lot is listed near the bottom of the project priority list and should be moved higher. County Manager Morton reported there are safety and drainage concerns in the parking lot at Highway 19 ingress/egress. The estimated cost to repair the driveway portion is approximately \$5,000.00. The estimated cost to address the entire parking lot behind the Annex, including paving, is approximately \$37,000.00.

The County’s routine road maintenance process was reviewed. It was noted that a full grading cycle of gravel roads requires approximately six weeks; however, the road department frequently adjusts the schedule to address citizen complaints as they arise.

A summary of the County’s available financial resources was provided. Approximately \$10–\$12 million in SPLOST funds remain available through 2028. Other funding sources, including LMIG, are currently obligated to GTIB debt service. Impact Fee revenues total less than \$200,000.00. The estimated cost of the full project list is approximately \$70 million for full right-of-way acquisition or approximately \$19 million for grading and paving only. The possibility of an improved SPLOST in 2028 was noted as a potential future funding source.

The Board discussed the need for additional speed signage on McKinley Road. Following completion of paving, the County will seek state approval for radar enforcement. Enforcement zones will be defined in coordination with the Sheriff’s Department.

The top three priority projects, Wood Creek Road, Old Zebulon Road, and Blanton Mill Road, were confirmed to be moving forward. The County Manager thanked Heather Bell and Chris Goodman for preparing the slide show highlighting the roads that have been completed.

Discussion only, no motion entertained.

b. Discussion of homestead exemptions for seniors and disabled citizens

County Manager Rob Morton addressed the Board and reported that Representative Beth Camp contacted him last week regarding other matters, and he used the opportunity to obtain an update on discussions occurring in the current legislative session related to taxation in Georgia. CM Morton stated that, based on his conversation with Representative Camp, any statewide legislation affecting property taxes would not take effect until 2032. Accordingly, there would be at least five to six years before any changes to property taxation in Georgia are implemented, which may support moving forward with local legislation at this time.

CM Morton noted considering all information reviewed, the following recommendations are presented for potential local legislation during the 2026 session of the General Assembly:

A. Senior Homestead Exemption

It is recommended that the Board consider an additional homestead exemption for seniors aged 65 and older. Specifically, an increase of the current \$10,000 exemption to at least \$15,000.00 initially is recommended. Based on the research referenced, the Board may also wish to consider a phased increase up to \$50,000.00, implemented in \$5,000.00 increments over a defined period (e.g., eight phase-in periods of one, two, three, or five years).

B. Homestead Exemption for Totally Disabled Citizens

It is further recommended that the Board consider an additional homestead exemption for citizens who are totally disabled. The current \$12,000.00 exemption for individuals whose annual income does not exceed \$12,000.00 could be increased to at least \$15,000.00 initially. Based on the research referenced, the Board may also consider a phased increase up to \$30,000.00, similar to the phased approach described in subsection A.

Concerns were noted regarding the existing income limitation of \$12,000.00 for qualification. Federal poverty guidelines classify a single individual as indigent at an annual income of \$15,650.00, with higher thresholds for larger households (e.g., \$21,150.00 for a two-person household and \$32,150.00 for a four-person household). In light of these guidelines, the Board may wish to consider modifying the current \$12,000.00 income threshold for eligibility.

Based on current projections, adoption of the recommended increases would result in an additional \$8,181,000 in homestead exemptions. This estimate is based on the existing number of exemptions, including 1,623 exemptions claimed by seniors aged 65 and older and 22 exemptions claimed by totally disabled citizens with annual incomes not exceeding \$12,000.00.

To offset the \$8,181,000 increase in exemptions, a minimum millage rate increase of 0.068 would be required. With the current millage rate at 8.944, the adjusted rate necessary to cover the increased

exemptions would be 9.012. It was noted that next year's millage rate may differ from the current rate, and therefore the required adjustment may also vary.

CM Morton noted that should the Board consider such limitations, several counties have local homestead exemption legislation that could serve as reference models.

The Board of Commissioners discussed proposed homestead exemptions for Seniors and Disabled Citizens, including a potential increase from the current \$10,000 exemption. Options considered included a phased increase and the addition of income thresholds. The estimated financial impact was presented as approximately \$44.00 in annual savings for a Senior homeowner with a \$300,000 property and a \$5,000 exemption increase, offset by an estimated \$8.00 annual increase for other taxpayers.

Further discussion focused on the Senior property tax exemption. A proposal was made to implement a phased increase beginning with a \$5,000 increase in 2027. The Board also discussed the absence of a residency requirement in the current exemption. There was strong consensus to implement such a requirement, beginning with a five-year minimum, and to explore a tiered system in which the exemption amount increases with longer residency. The Board also agreed to raise the exemption for Disabled individuals. The need to ensure that military personnel are not adversely affected by any residency requirement was noted.

Board members preferred an age-based exemption with a residency requirement (five-year minimum with tiered increases at ten years) and no income threshold. Coordination with the School Board was emphasized to ensure alignment of policies and to avoid budget conflicts. The administrative workload associated with verification and implementation was acknowledged.

County Manager Morton stated he could prepare draft homestead exemption amendment templates, including clarification of current exemption amounts, proposed increases, and residency requirements. The Board all agreed.

A Notice of Intent has been filed, and Representative Camp is familiar with the filing. Commissioner Pullin reiterated his preference to include a residency requirement and potentially exclude income thresholds, suggesting a tiered structure based on length of residency and age. It was noted that the exemption applies to the parcel rather than the individual, and consideration must be given to situations where a long-term resident has lived in multiple homes within the county over a period of twenty years.

Discussion only, no motion entertained.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to adjourn at 5:38 p.m., motion carried 5-0.

J. Briar Johnson, Chairman

Angela Blount, County Clerk