



Baldwin County Board of Commissioners
Budget Work Session

September 16, 2025
1601 N Columbia St, Suite 220
4:00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT

Andrew Strickland, Chair
Kendrick Butts, Vice Chair
Sammy Hall
Emily Davis
Scott Little

OTHERS PRESENT

Carlos Tobar
Dawn Hudson
Bo Danuser

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Strickland called the September 16, 2025 work session to order at 4:00 PM.

ADMINISTRATIVE/FISCAL MATTERS

FY 2026 Budget Presentations

Probate Judge

Todd Blackwell gave his budget presentation for the Probate Court. Mr. Blackwell stated that his budget request was basically the same as the previous year with the only changes being between the amounts of the line items. He stated that 80% of his budget was funded by petitioners for the services he provided.

There was a discussion about the revenue generated by Probate Court fees and that the fees were set by state legislature.

Clerk of Superior Court

Wanda Paul gave her budget presentation for the Clerk of Superior Court. Ms. Paul discussed the need to buy a dehumidifier to combat moisture and mold in the records room. She discussed digitizing court records; that they would start on the next phase next year; and upgrading file servers and web servers. Ms. Paul asked for merit increases for the employees of the Clerk of Superior Court.

There was a discussion about the request for an additional \$8,500 from the Clerk of Superior Court and the increase did not include a cost of living raise; funds that were allocated the previous year for the first phase of digitizing records; and purchasing dehumidifiers and adjusting the air conditioning to combat moisture

District Attorney

Wright Barksdale was recognized for a budget presentation from the District Attorney's Office. He stated that he did not have any additional budget requests and thanked the commissioners for making the DA's office stronger.

Magistrate Judge

Magistrate Judge Shane Geeter was recognized for a budget presentation for the Magistrate Court. Judge Geeter asked for help in prosecuting ordinance cases and courtroom scheduling difficulties. He requested an increase in the court reporter's per diem by \$25.00; there were approximately 42 - 45 court days in the year. Judge Geeter asked for audio/visual capabilities in the courtrooms so court could be done remotely.

There was a discussion about using SPLOST funds to make improvements to public buildings and courtroom scheduling, and the court reporter's stipend.

State Court Judge

State Court Judge Paul Hitchcock presented his budget requests. He updated the commissioners on the increasing number of civil cases and decreasing criminal cases in State Court. Judge Hitchcock discussed his request to become a full-time judge; he gave statistics for the number of cases handled in similar county state courts and the pay for their State Court judges; requested a salary between \$140,000 and \$160,000; and the best timeline in making the position full-time - working with the election schedule.

There was a discussion about the timeline for making the judgeship full-time, the courtroom assignments, and the State Court and Magistrate Court sharing the court reporter. Judge Hitchcock supported the court reporter's per diem being increased.

Solicitor

Sky Gess presented her budget requests for the Solicitor's Office. She requested an increase in her supplies and travel line items; a cost of living raise for the employees; and her community outreach projects.

There was a discussion about the staff in the Solicitor's office getting a 4% salary increase last year; Solicitor's Office employees followed the county's pay classification system; and updating the county's pay classification system.

Coroner

Chief Deputy Coroner Steve Chapel presented his budget requests including body coolers that would be in the hospital morgue, stretchers, and a vehicle.

There was discussion about the coolers. Mr. Chapel stated they used the hospital coolers and there was possibility that they would not always be available. There was a discussion about the

age and cost of the stretchers. There was discussion about a vehicle coming from fleet management and the addons totaling about \$6,000.

Sheriff

Sheriff Bill Massee gave a budget presentation on behalf of the Sheriff's Office. Chief Massee discussed:

- the E911 system; the new real time crime time center and the center being stated staffed with interns learning analytic systems - technology was being used to solve harder cases;
- The Sheriff's Office received in excess of 109,000 calls per year;
- planning a ribbon cutting for the real time crime center and grand reopening of the 911 center;
- increases in jail medical expenses and in mental health cases;
- the jail was a mandated service; there were currently 172 inmates, 9 inmates were mentally incompetent and should be in state institutions and 30% of the inmates had mental issues;
- deputy salaries started at \$47,000 while other institutions started law enforcement officers at \$50,000 or greater; even with the 6% raise, salaries were still behind;

Sheriff Massee concluded by stating that Baldwin County was a progressive County and he was proud of his employees.

There was a discussion about the cost of housing inmates and moving inmates out of the jail; increasing liability; and mental health issues.

Commissioner Davis asked Sheriff Massee to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission meeting on November 13th.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Davis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Butts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:34 PM.

Submitted


Andrew Strickland, Chairman

ATTEST:


Bo Danuser, County Clerk