



BALDWIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS BUDGET WORK SESSION

October 22, 2025

1601 N Columbia St, Suite 240

6:00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT

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

OTHERS

Carlos Tobar
Dawn Hudson
Brandon Palmer
Bo Danuser

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Andrew Strickland called the October 22, 2025 work session to order at 10:00 AM.

ADMINISTRATIVE/FISCAL MATTERS

Recreation Policy

County Manager Carlos Tobar discussed the posted notices for recreation park use, prohibited entry, and creating a special use permit.

The commissioners were presented with a copy of the proposed recreation policy including the special events permits.

The commissioners discussed sections of the policy including:

- Volunteer Obligations outlining the policy regarding volunteers and included volunteer background checks, volunteer notification responsibility in case of arrest, and the appeals process for being denied the ability to volunteer.
- Offenses that carry a 10-year ineligibility period and what offenses should be included in a 5-year, 10-year, and lifetime exclusion from volunteering.
- Having a policy that allowed discretion and who should have the discretion regarding a volunteer's offense
- Having clear rules
- Allowing the sheriff's Department to enforce the rules rather than staff
- Volunteers receiving DUI's, how long in the past the DUI's were incurred and at what level they would affect the ability for someone to volunteer
- Using portions of the Board of Education's volunteer policy

- Background checks and having a clear policy to address offenses
- Child neglect and cruelty charges and the level of consequences for volunteers
- Using section D of the policy as a catchall to address allegations
- Ejection from park, clarifying terminology and procedure for ejecting someone from the park to include if someone should be ejected from a specific section of the park or from all areas of the park, a procedure to appeal ejection and the process for issuing a trespass
- Having an announcement at the beginning of games as to the offences that would have someone ejected from the park and having them clearly posted
- Rules applying to all officials and umpires
- Patrons parking haphazard on the recreation grounds
- Establishing a special events application and policy for park use that would apply to everyone who wanted to reserve the park – including non-profit organizations
- Updating the older facilities to be more conducive to hosting tournaments
- The need for a master plan to prioritize the facilities and making the park as a whole “festival ready” for large events
- Non-profits using/reserving the park, charging a fee for use - especially when the event generated revenue for the user/nonprofit, league use taking precedent over all other uses, and whether food vendors should be allowed to service the organization who rented any portion of the park
- Reserving the pavilions as opposed to keeping them available for first come first serve use, creating a policy for reserving facilities, and setting fees for users – including non-profits
- The fact that the park was operated with tax dollars and should be open to everyone at all times the park was open, that leagues had priority over other users including park reservations, and having a posted schedule for all park use via a public accessible web calendar
- Concessions and the profits it generated
- Having a waiver in lieu of requiring insurance for events, especially for events that did not create revenue
- The inadequacies of some facilities and using fees to make improvements
- Organizations that charge fees for things like memberships and tournaments that put the profits back into the facilities
- Providing transportation for the track program but not for any of the others
- Providing adequate staff during tournaments
- Allowing an opportunity for the recreation committee to review the policy and making edits they see fit, in particular to the special events policy
- Creating a streamlines special event policy for smaller events

Commissioner Davis made a motion to break for lunch. Commissioner Little seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting broke for the provided lunch at 12:00 PM.

Commissioner Davis made a motion to reconvene the meeting. Commissioner Little seconded the motion and the work session was reconvened at 12:30 PM.

Employee Handbook

County Attorney Brandon Palmer reviewed the revisions to the employee handbook to include sections:

- 6-14 – hiring the County Manager through an agency or by appointed committee
- 6-17 – nepotism – hiring cousins not considered nepotism
- 9-11 – unauthorized use of county equipment and what would be classified as equipment other than the obvious motor vehicles and heavy equipment, using discretion about using office equipment and supplies and clearly defining what would be mandatory for dismissal
- 12-03 – placing investigations into harassment somewhere other than Human Resources
- 17-07 – prohibiting the use of cell phones while driving with the exception of first responders and requiring the use of hands-free communication using the transit as an example of responding to calls with a handsfree communication
- 19-04 – personal grooming, tattoos, and piercings

There was a discussion about the use of time clocks.

There was a discussion about the need to provide employees with the handbook revisions and provide training and education.

Short Term Rentals

There was a discussion about fire safety requirements for short term rental properties.

There was a discussion about proposed sections of short-term rental ordinance to include:

- Issuing certificates on a first come first serve basis
- The process for issuing permits
- Adding a definition for residential dwelling units
- Limiting the number of certificates issued to no more than 150 per year
- Expiration dates
- Setting minimum distance requirements between rental properties, eventually setting 500 foot minimum
- Day and night occupancy and setting the limit to a maximum of 12 persons
- Requiring HOA approval if there is an HOA for the area
- Setting application due dates
- Keeping the right to inspect property and require property compliance with the ordinance
- Requiring adequate trash receptacles.

Attorney Palmer handed out the recommendations of the Fire Marshall.

There was discussion about the following which included comments from members of the public:

- Requiring property compliance with building codes
- requiring smoke detectors and their interconnectivity

- requiring carbon monoxide detectors on properties with an enclosed garage and fire places
- requiring fire extinguishers and their annual inspection
- requiring annual fire place cleaning by an approved chimney sweep which was removed

Attorney Palmer left the meeting at 1:15 during the discussion of the recommendations of the Fire Marshal to attend a court procedure on behalf of the commissioners.

- Requiring 2 points of ingress and egress for bedrooms and removing measurement requirements
- Limited the number of certificates issued to 150
- Setting an expiration date for certificates and the possibility of creating a race for application approval
- Using distance requirements to create balance and setting the distance to 100 feet
- Enforcing the ordinance

There was a break at 1:58 PM.

Budget

Assistant County Manager/Finance Director Dawn Hudson presented commissioners with budget figures. She discussed line items to include:

- A merit step increases in salaries
- A public hearing would be held prior to budget adoption,
- Increases in insurance and retirement were based on many factors
- Pension plan being 24% of the budget
- Property and liability insurance increased due to the water park

There was a discussion about giving a 2% step raise, growth in the tax digest, and the FLOST.

Ms. Hudson returned to her presentation, she discussed:

- Increase in attorney fees
- Increase in the Board of Election budget due to more election in 2026
- Increase in the auditing fee and charging some of the increase to the grants
- Tax Assessor would be doing a homestead audit next year

The commissioners discussed property taxes, the homestead exemptions, exemption freezes, performing a homestead exemption audit, and cleaning up the digest.

The commissioners discussed the cost of providing medical services at the jail and the contract with Direct Health, finding another healthcare provider at the jail, directly hiring a physician and nurse, and providing mental health services in the jail.

There was a discussion about placing prisoners on probation and parole, researching how other counties provided health and mental health care to prisoners, and working with Atrium Health to use their hospitalist.

Ms. Hudson continued:

- Public Works increases were offset with SPLOST
- Health Department was being paid what was required and that they requested an additional \$30,000
- Overview managed the Senior Citizens Center and requested an additional \$41,000
- Aquatic Center budget was based on other water parks and she anticipated a \$183,000 loss the first year
- Library branch costs and opening the branch at the Harrisburg Community Center
- County Extension Office fell under the state teacher's retirement program and was increasing in the amount of \$3,800
- Airport contract increased, additional revenues would not cover the cost
- Putting a FLOST referendum on the March ballot, that the FLOST would not create additional revenue, and sales taxes would increase to 9%

Ms. Hudson stated she would put a budget together indicating that revenues would not cover expenditures and that the budget would have to pull from fund balance.

Commissioner Little asked that the Solicitor's budget be reduced by \$20,000 to cover the additional cost of having the District Attorney prosecute misdemeanor county ordinance violations.

There was a discussion about the budget, anticipated growth, promoting industrial growth, and using the golf course as an economic resource.

There was a discussion about which line items should be increased and which should be left alone.

There was a discussion about the Solicitor's office finding alternatives to jailing for misdemeanors, reducing the Solicitor's budget by the same amount as the District Attorney's budget had to be increased for taking on prosecuting misdemeanors county citations.

There was a discussion about the District Attorney taking on the role of prosecuting ordinance and code violations and the amount of time it took to prepare to prosecute those cases.

There was a discussion about overtime in the Board of Elections for poll workers, that there had never been as much overtime with other elections, and the need to eliminate as much overtime as possible.

There was a discussion about the commissioners being good stewards for the taxpayer and increasing salaries to keep tenured employees.

There was a discussion about appointing another Deputy Coroner because two of the four would be out on leave for 8 weeks.

There was a discussion about giving raises mid-year.

Ms. Hudson stated that she would get with Department Heads and see where cuts could be made.

There was a discussion about moving the due date for taxes to mid-year and giving raises mid-year. Ms. Hudson stated she would prepare a budget with mid-year salary increases and COLAs.

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

The budget work session was adjourned at 3:49 PM.

Submitted,



Andrew Strickland, Chairman
Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:



Bo Danuser, County Clerk
Baldwin County, Georgia