



BALDWIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING

March 18, 2025

1601 N Columbia St, Suite 220

6:00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT

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

OTHERS

Carlos Tobar
Dawn Hudson
Brandon Palmer
Bo Danuser

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Chairman Andrew Strickland called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

INVOCATION

Reverend Dr. Gloria Wicker said the prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Scott Little led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENTATIONS

Chairman Strickland invited Baldwin County Firefighter Lt. John Suggs and his family to join him at the podium. Chairman Strickland read a peer review from the Baldwin County Fire Department highlighting the work Lt. Suggs did to better the fire department's operations and preparedness; he then made a statement thanking Lt. Suggs for leading by example and for his dedication to Baldwin County. Commission Chairman Strickland presented Lt. Scruggs with a Certificate of Recognition and a Medal of Honor.

The commissioners joined Lt. Suggs and his family at the podium for his recognition and photos.

The Certificate of Recognition was presented as follows:

Certificate of Recognition
Baldwin County Board of Commissioners
Presented to

Lt. John Suggs

In recognition of an employee who demonstrates his commitment to the safety of the citizens of Baldwin County and his fellow Baldwin County firefighters on a continual basis and to highlight a career based on professionalism, leadership, and a willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty.

s/ _____
Andrew Strickland, Chairman
Baldwin County Board of Commissioner

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Little made a motion to approve the February 20, 2025 commissioner retreat minutes. Commissioner Butts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Little made a motion to approve the March 4, 2025 work session minutes, regular meeting minutes and executive session minutes. Commissioner Butts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE/FISCAL MATTERS

RESOLUTION R-2025-27

County Attorney Brandon Palmer stated Resolution R-2025-27 enacted a moratorium on solar projects, solar energy systems, and solar energy development for a period not to exceed six months or until an amendment is made to the solar energy development ordinance, and that this was discussed during the previous work session.

The resolution was presented as follows:

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-27

A RESOLUTION ENACTING A MORATORIUM ON SOLAR PROJECTS, SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS, AND SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED SIX (6) MONTHS WHILE THE COUNTY CONSIDERS CHANGES TO ITS SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE; TO PROVIDE FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE MORATORIUM, TO PROVIDE FOR FINDINGS OF FACT, IMPOSITION OF MORATORIUM, THE DURATION OF THE MORATORIUM; TO PROVIDE FOR SEVERABILITY; TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS RESOLUTION; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

WITNESSETH:

WHEREAS, Baldwin County (the "County") is a duly formed political subdivision of the State of Georgia; and

WHEREAS, Baldwin County has been vested with substantial powers, rights and functions under Article IX, Sec. II, Par. I of the Georgia State Constitution to generally regulate the practice, conduct or use of property for the purposes of maintaining health, morals, safety, security, peace, and the general welfare of the County; and

WHEREAS, Georgia law recognizes that local governments may impose moratoria on zoning decisions, building permits, and other developmental approvals where exigent circumstances exist to warrant the same, pursuant to case law found at City of Roswell v. Outdoor Systems, Inc., 274 Ga. 130 (2001); Taylor v. Shetzen, 212 Ga. 101 (1955); Lawson v. Macon, 214 Ga. 278 (1958); and

WHEREAS, County staff is in the process of reviewing and preparing recommended changes to the County's Solar Energy Development Ordinance (Chapter 17 of The Code of Ordinances, Baldwin County, Georgia); and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of Baldwin County, Georgia ("the Board of Commissioners") is, and has been, interested in developing a cohesive and coherent policy regarding development in the County, and has intended to promote community development through stability, predictability and balanced growth which will further the prosperity of the County as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners has always had a strong interest in growth management so as to promote the traditional police power goals of health, safety, morals, and the general welfare of the community and other public requirements; and

WHEREAS, it is the belief of the Board of Commissioners that the concept of "public welfare" is broad and inclusive and includes, but is not limited to, the valid public objectives of aesthetic conservation, preservation of the value of existing lands and buildings within the County, making the most appropriate use of resources, preserving existing neighborhood characteristics, enhancing and protecting the economic well-being of the community, facilitating adequate provision of public services, and the preservation of the resources of the County; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners' desire to review and revise its Solar Energy Development Ordinance necessitates a cessation of the construction, installation, enlargement of, or alterations to solar projects, solar energy systems, and solar energy development and finds that such cessation is reasonable and in the public interest.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of Baldwin County, Georgia, and it is hereby resolved by authority of the same, as follows:

1. Incorporation of Recitals. The above stated recitals are true and correct and are incorporated as though fully set forth herein.
2. Findings of Fact. The Board of Commissioners hereby makes the following findings of fact:
 - a. It appears that the County's Solar Energy Development Ordinance is in the process

- of being reviewed and revised by the County;
- b. The County's ongoing revision of its Solar Energy Development Ordinance requires a cessation of the application for and issuance of any solar development permits, variances, or licenses or other permits pertaining to solar projects, solar energy systems, or other solar energy developments;
 - c. It is necessary and in the public interest to delay, for a reasonable time, the processing of applications for and the issuance of any solar development permits, variances, or licenses or other permits pertaining to solar projects, solar energy systems, or other solar energy developments, to ensure that the same are consistent with the long-term planning objectives of the County.
3. Moratorium on Solar Energy Development. The County does hereby enact a moratorium for an indefinite period, not to exceed six (6) months from the effective date of this Resolution, to allow the County Manager and staff to adequately study, review, evaluate, and devise a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners regarding revisions to the County's Solar Energy Development Ordinance. The duration of this moratorium shall be until the Board of Commissioners adopts a revision of the County's Solar Energy Development Ordinance or until the expiration of six (6) months from the date of adoption of this Resolution, whichever first occurs; or until such time as may be later set by the County.

During the moratorium period, no applications for any solar development permits, variances, licenses or other permits of any kind shall be accepted by the County or any of its Departments, Boards, or Committees pertaining to solar projects, solar energy systems, or other solar energy developments to be located or operated on any property located within the unincorporated area of Baldwin County, Georgia. Any such applications tendered and/or submitted to the County or any Department, Board, or Committee during this moratorium period shall not be accepted, considered, nor acted upon by the County, nor any Department, Board, or Committee thereof. Should an application be accepted, in error, during the moratorium period, such application shall be deemed null and void and have no effect whatsoever and shall constitute no assurance of any right to engage in any act or action related to the development of solar projects, solar energy systems, or other solar energy developments. Reliance on any such permit shall be unreasonable.

This moratorium shall have no effect upon approvals of solar development permits, licenses, or other permits for solar projects, solar energy systems, or other solar energy developments previously issued or as to development plans previously approved by the County prior to the effective date of this Resolution. Property owners who claim to have a vested right, pursuant to the laws of the State of Georgia, to obtain a solar development permit, license or other permit for solar projects, solar energy systems, or other solar energy developments must submit a written application for exception to the County Manager for submission and consideration by the County. The written application for exception must include verified supporting documentation of the facts and data that support their claim of vested right, and request for exception to the moratorium.

4. Severability. In case any one or more of the provisions of this Resolution shall for any reason be held to be illegal or invalid, such illegality or invalidity shall not affect any other provision of this Resolution, but this Resolution shall be construed and enforced as if such illegal or invalid provision had not been contained herein.
5. Repeal of Conflicting Resolutions. Any and all resolutions in conflict with this Resolution this day passed be and they are hereby repealed.
6. Effective Date. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

SO RESOLVED, this 18th day of March, 2025.

BALDWIN COUNTY, GEORGIA

Honorable Andrew Strickland, Chairman
Baldwin County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Bo Danuser
Baldwin County Clerk

Commissioner Hall made a motion to approve the ordinance. Commissioner Butts seconded the motion.

There was a discussion about the concerns a solar farm would bring to Baldwin County including the cost of deconstructing and disposing the panels.

Chairman Strickland called for the vote and the motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION R-2025-28

County Manager Carlos Tobar discussed Resolution R-2025-28 stating staff had worked months to get the application together; the CDBG revitalization area was all of Oconee Heights. Mr. Tobar defined the boundaries of Oconee Heights and there was a discussion about the work being done, including the 11.8 million dollars that had already been spent in the area. Mr. Tobar stated the sewer line and two houses would be included in the grant application.

The resolution was presented as follows:

RESOLUTION NO. R-2025-28
A RESOLUTON OF THE BALDWIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS TO AUTHORIZE AN
APPLICATOIN BE SUBMITTED TO THE GEORGIA DEPTMEN OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENTBLOCK GRANT FY2025 CYCLE

WHEREAS, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has established the Community Development Block Grant program to assist cities and counties with improvements to public facilities, economic development, and housing in Georgia, and

WHEREAS, there exists in Baldwin County a need to provide water, sewer and housing improvements to the County's FY2025 CDBG Target Area,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Chair and Board of Commissioners that Baldwin County supports the application for FY2025 CDBG funds and that the County will apply for these funds for water, sewer improvements and housing improvements in the County's FY2025 CDBG Target Area. Baldwin County commits to the required cash match for the project, \$1,000 cash for the required audits and all additional cash and/or in-kind services needed to complete the project over the grant amount.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chair is authorized and directed to act as the official representative of Baldwin County, to act in connection with the application, to be responsible for compliance with the applicable state and federal requirements of the program, and to provide such additional information as may be required;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Chair is authorized to enter into agreements for engineering and grant administration services relating to the application and subsequent grant (if funded) and to execute the application and other required documents on behalf of the County including the grant award package (if funded);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Baldwin County commits to own, operate, and maintain all proposed water and sewer improvements;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Baldwin County hereby adopts the Citizen Participation Plan of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to ensure public involvement in the CDBG process;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County hereby acknowledges that the proposed project is subject to the requirements of Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, as amended, 12 U.S.C. 1701u (Section 3) and in accordance with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Section 3 Compliance Plan will to the greatest extent feasible, comply with all Section 3 requirements;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County hereby acknowledges that the proposed project is subject to the requirements of Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act), as amended, Section 104(b)(2) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, and Section 105(b)(3) of the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 (NAHA). The County hereby commits to Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing to the greatest extent feasible.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County hereby acknowledges that the proposed project is subject to the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968. The County hereby commits to comply with all Section 504 requirements to the greatest extent feasible.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the proposed water, sewer improvements and housing improvements are in conformance with Baldwin County's Comprehensive Plan and are not inconsistent with the County's Service Delivery Strategy;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a true and dedicated commitment has been made to the project for the successful completion of the above improvements for the citizens, especially the low-to-moderate income citizens;

BE IT RESOLVED this 18th day of March, 2025.

BALDWIN COUNTY, GEORGIA

Andrew Strickland, Chairman
Baldwin County Board of Commissioners

Bo Danuser, County Clerk
Baldwin County Georgia

Commissioner Little made a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Butts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

LEAD SERVICE LINE INVENTORY FIELD INVESTIGATION

County Manager Carlos Tobar discussed the lead service line inventory field Investigation stating five bids were received and reviewed, with the engineer's recommendation being to accept the bid from Utility Solutions of America, Inc.

There was a discussion about the lead line inventory including the purpose and scope of the work being done, the work would be county wide, the citizen received notice of the work being done, and water lines on the rights of way at the meter would be tested for lead content.

Commissioner Hall made a motion to accept the bid from Utility Solutions of America, Inc. and authorize a contract be prepared to present to the commission. Commissioner Little seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

HVAC REPLACEMENT

County Manager Carlos Tobar discussed the need to replace the HVAC system at the Sheriff's Department stating the new system would be more efficient and that he and staff were not recommending the low bidder but were recommending Wright Brothers.

There was a discussion about the HVAC replacement and that the low bidder was not always the best, the system would go from large units to several smaller ones, and that the new system should save money.

Commissioner Butts made a motion to accept the bid from Wright Brothers and to authorize a contract be prepared to present to the commission. Commissioner Little seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Butts stated that it was great to see the space X crew landed successfully.

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

County Manager Carlos Tobar gave his manager's report stating there would be a public hearing for the Sibley-Smith sewer extension, the Fishing Creek Trail would go out to bid this week, staff would be meeting with the contractors for the ball field lighting, Oconee Heights playground had been installed, Coopers Park splash pad had been advertised, and the road resurfacing bids are due March 27th with an anticipated recommendation for April 1st and bid award on April 15th. Approximately 15 miles would be resurfaced.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Clarence Hall addressed the commission expressing his concern that an injustice was done to Commissioners Butts on January 7th by him not being selected as chairman. He stated it was legal but not right. He thanked the commissioners for listening and asked them not to take it lightly.

Matt Roessing addressed the commission expressing his concern about House Bill 260 and removing the local representation from the Central State Hospital Local Redevelopment Authority. He addressed Commission Chair Strickland for speaking at the legislative hearing.

Commissioner Butts stated that he opposed the local legislation and there were concerns in the community - there were too many questions. He wanted to have a seat at the table and did not have any difficulty finding appointees for the board.

Commissioner Hall stated that Chairman Strickland did not say the commission approved the bill and that Chairman Strickland had a right to express his personal opinion.

Commissioner Davis stated that she concurred with Commissioner Butts and did not support the bill.

Commissioner Strickland recapped his address to the state legislature stating he made it clear he only spoke for himself.

Desiree Liggins addressed the commission expressing her concerns that Commissioners Butts and Davis did not get timely information. Ms. Liggins asked if the TSPLOST list and map were in the order they would be addressed and questioned the timing of waiting until March to let the bids. Ms. Liggins discussed animal control and that the feral cats needed to be caught and fixed.

Maurice Liggins addressed the commission giving an update on the 4-h summer camp scholarships he sponsored stating there were two positions still available for students grade 4 – 6. Mr. Liggins discussed road paving, the county's failure to better plan the bidding process, and choosing the roads and order for resurfacing.

Commissioner Little responded that the engineer prepared the list of streets and order for resurfacing and it was done strategically based on what was needed most.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Commissioner Butts made a motion to go into closed session to discuss potential litigation. Commissioner Hall seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. The commissioners went into closed session at 6:57 PM.

Commissioner Little made a motion to return to open session. Commissioner Hall seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. The closed session was adjourned at 7:12 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The March 18, 2025 Baldwin County Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,


Andrew Strickland, Chairman


Bo Danuser, County Clerk

