

DAWSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION MINUTES – THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2024
DAWSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER ASSEMBLY ROOM
25 JUSTICE WAY, DAWSONVILLE, GEORGIA 30534
4:00 PM

Those present were Chairman Billy Thurmond; Commissioner Seth Stowers, District 1; Commissioner Chris Gaines, District 2; Commissioner Alexa Bruce, District 3; Commissioner Emory Dooley, District 4; County Manager Joey Leverette; County Attorney Angela Davis; County Clerk Kristen Cloud; and interested citizens of Dawson County.

PUBLIC HEARING

FY 2025 Proposed Budget (1st of 3 hearings; 2nd hearing will be held at the November 7, 2024, Voting Session and the 3rd hearing will be held on November 21, 2024)

Chairman Thurmond opened the hearing by asking if there was anyone present who wished to be heard on a FY 2025 Proposed Budget.

The following spoke on a FY 2025 Proposed Budget:

Dawn Johnson, director of Dawson County Senior Services, said she wished to discuss “a slight increase in our Silver Sneakers account.” She said, “This is a class that we teach all of our exercise classes out of. We have one instructor and one backup.” Johnson said six classes are taught each week and a volunteer teaches yoga on Friday. “We started last year with a new class called Sit and Stretch that is held on Monday and Wednesday at 10 o’clock, and that is actually held in the Ivey building,” said Johnson. “They do not have to go next door. These are for sedentary clients, walkers, high walkers; they will not go next door, but they will walk 10 feet and exercise...” Johnson said the Sit and Stretch classes are “highly used” and American Rescue Plan Act and other funds have run out. She requested an additional \$2,760 for the FY 2025 budget.

Alexandria Williams, representing the Dawson County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, thanked the county for its partnership with the Chamber. “On behalf of [Chamber President Mandy Power and the executive board] I’m here to request a review of the budget line item for hotel/motel tax for Dawson County,” said Williams. “Currently, we are levying 6 percent out of the 8 percent, and we are requesting the full 8 percent.” She noted that the 6 percent is used solely for tourism promotion. She said the extra 2 percent “would allow us to improve our current welcome center as well as helping with the new building that we’re planning on doing over the next five years” and to expand marketing efforts.

Joey Leverette, Dawson County manager, said new state legislation - House Bill 451, the Ashley Wilson Act – that passed during the last legislative session becomes effective January 1, 2025. The act requires all public entities in Georgia to offer a supplemental benefit program for first responders diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from exposure to line-of-duty traumatic events. “We, just this week, got the [insurance] premium quotes; that’s the reason for the delay in having this item in the budget,” said Leverette, explaining that the county is mandated to provide this coverage. “I do think it’s a good program, even though it is a mandate,” he said, adding that the insurance premium for basic coverage is \$28,940 annually. “I’m asking that be included in the FY25 budget to pay this mandated insurance,” said Leverette.

Dave Smetts, Dawsonville, Georgia, said he is a business owner in Dawson County. “I’m here today in opposition of the proposal to dissolve the Marshals department and other departments in the county to form a Department of Community Development,” he said. “Those employed by the Marshals department have made great strides within the community to offer first-class service to the citizens and business owners of the county.” He explained that the Marshals office provides both code enforcement and animal control services, as well as “pouring permits for establishments that serve alcohol and [permits for] short-term rentals throughout the county.” He added, “They play a pivotal role in these areas of expertise...” Smetts said the “proposal in question would cost the county more and therefore the taxpayers more.”

The following spoke concerning the Dawson County Library and its budget:

Speakers expressed concern over what they called a “shortfall,” saying the state is requiring the library to cover their employees with insurance and there’s a \$43,000 shortfall.” All expressed the importance of libraries and their vital role as an educational resource to communities, children, students and others. Speakers said library employees are informed and helpful and that their “healthcare benefits are important.”

- MG Finch, Dawsonville, Georgia
- Carolyn Ryan, Dawsonville, Georgia
- Katrina Wigren, Dawsonville, Georgia, reading a statement on behalf of her neighbor and friend Robert Reidinger
- Philip Hunt, Dawsonville, Georgia
- Holly Barfield, Dawsonville, Georgia
- Sean Barfield, Dawsonville, Georgia

Chairman Thurmond asked if there was anyone else present who wished to speak on a FY 2025 Proposed Budget and, hearing none, closed the hearing.

The next hearings concerning a FY 2025 Proposed Budget will be held at the November 21, 2024, Voting Session.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Presentation of a Draft Capital Improvements Element Amendment Update / Impact Fee Program Update – Methodology Report Briefing- Paige Hatley, ROSS+associates (*Last discussed at the February 15, 2024, and July 18, 2024, Work Sessions*)
This item was for discussion only and will appear on a future Work Session Agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Presentation of Amendment to Sign Code- Planning & Development Director Sharon Farrell
This item will be placed on the November 21, 2024, Voting Session Agenda for consideration to move forward to a public hearing.

2. Presentation of RFP #447-24 - Debris Monitoring Services- Emergency Services Director Troy Leist / Public Works Director Robert Drewry / Purchasing Manager Melissa Hawk
This item will be placed on the November 21, 2024, Voting Session Agenda.
3. Presentation of Request for Approval to Extend Two Contracts- Purchasing Manager Melissa Hawk
This item will be placed on the November 21, 2024, Voting Session Agenda.
4. Presentation of Recommendation for Budget Reallocation of Remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds to be Utilized to Support Emergency Shelters and Community Warming Centers- County Manager Joey Leverette
This item will be added to the November 7, 2024, Voting Session Agenda.
5. Presentation of Board Appointment:
 - a. **Board of Health**
 - i. Dr. Saba Haeringer- *reappointment* (Term: January 2025 through December 2030)
This item will be placed on the November 21, 2024, Voting Session Agenda.
6. County Manager Report
This item was for information only.
7. County Attorney Report
County Attorney Davis had no information to report.

APPROVE:

ATTEST:

Billy Thurmond, Chairman

Kristen Cloud, County Clerk