

**DAWSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
VOTING SESSION MINUTES – THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2024
DAWSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER ASSEMBLY ROOM
25 JUSTICE WAY, DAWSONVILLE, GEORGIA 30534
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE 4:00 PM WORK SESSION**

ROLL CALL: 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.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Chairman Thurmond

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion passed 4-0 to approve the Minutes of the Work Session held on February 1, 2024.
Stowers/Dooley

Motion passed 4-0 to approve the Minutes of the Voting Session held on February 1, 2024.
Dooley/Bruce

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion passed 4-0 to approve the agenda with the following change:

- Addition of a New Business section following section “H. Zoning” to include Nos. 1-3:
 - FY 2025 Drug Treatment Court Grant Application
 - Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Transmittal to the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security for Review
 - Request to Apply for a 2024 Fireworks Tax Grant

Gaines/Stowers

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

CONSENT AGENDA:

Renewal of a Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement

COVID Employee Leave Policy Change Recommendation

Board Appointments:

- **EMS Advisory Council**
 - *Justin Mitchell- reappointment (Term: Through June 2025)*
 - *Johnny Irvin- replacing Bridget Rigby (Term: Through June 2024)*

Motion passed 4-0 to approve the Consent Agenda. Gaines/Bruce

ZONING:

ZA 23-10 - Dawson County on behalf of Chestatee Development requests to amend zoning stipulations for the Creekside and the East Harbor portions of the Chestatee on Lanier development, TMP 118-008.

Chairman Thurmond announced that if anyone contributed more than \$250 to the commissioners or chairman in the past two years and wished to speak, they would have to fill out a disclosure form, which would be made available to them. Under the normal program, 10 minutes is given to those who wish to speak in favor of or opposition to with some redirect, time permitting.

Planning & Development Director Sharon Farrell (also speaking on behalf of Dawson County) said the zoning application is county initiated. She said the Chestatee project started many years ago. “In 2009, there was an amendment to the master plan,” she said. “At that time, the Board of Commissioners associated a private agreement, a private HOA covenant, with the approval. So, this year, when things picked up, we had a whole new section under plat review. Basically, there were concerns regarding how the homes look compared to this document from 2009 and, as everyone knows, building materials have changed, desires with the way homes look, lot changes – so much has changed in the last 15, 17 years that it was time to update these covenants and agreements within the county document. So we moved forward with a county-initiated [zoning application with 14 proposed stipulations].”

Chairman Thurmond opened the hearing by asking if there was anyone present who wished to speak either for or against the application.

The following spoke in favor of the application:

- Josh Nason, Dawsonville, Georgia
- Todd Nichols, Cumming, Georgia (with Ashton Woods Homes)
- Olivia Coughlin, Dawsonville, Georgia

None spoke in opposition to the application.

Chairman Thurmond asked if there was anyone else present who wished to speak on the application and, hearing none, closed the hearing.

Chairman Thurmond read aloud 14 proposed stipulations.

Motin passed 4-0 to approve ZA 23-10 with the following stipulations:

1. Ashton Woods agrees that all garages will be two-stall/two separate doors. Garage doors shall have the appearance of wood doors from the street – including to have hardware, windows (in some homes elevation specific but not all garage doors require windows), and shall be colonial- or traditional-style garage doors;
2. Ashton Woods agrees to provide round downspouts for all homes. Gutters are not required to be ½ round gutters;
3. Ashton Woods agrees to provide an overhang/trellis over the garages for some portions of the homes in order to provide varying aesthetics to the garages of the homes. These elements should be specific to elevations as to avoid monotony throughout the community. Not every home will be required to have a trellis/shed roof above the garage;

4. Ashton Woods agrees to provide a variety of material/roofing types (including metal as an option) to front porches' roof overhangs in order to provide varying aesthetics of the homes;
5. Ashton Woods shall incorporate a variety of materials on front porches. Acceptable materials are brick, stone, slate, tile or wood; no concrete;
6. Ashton Woods will provide a written copy of monotony code;
7. Ashton Woods agrees to provide front yard underground irrigation to all homes and offer irrigation options for rear/side yard;
8. Ashton Homes shall provide screening to outside A/C compressors/heat pumps with shrubs/bushes at all homes;
9. Front doors, provided by Ashton Homes, cannot be made of metal and cannot be blank;
10. Ashton Woods shall add windows to the sides of homes plan specific. All windows on the fronts of homes to be simulated divided light. For elevations with shutters, shutters will be wood with hardware;
11. Ashton Woods to provide three landscaping plans (for home sites) to avoid monotonous front yards;
12. Ashton Woods agrees to install the same style of street lights as the existing street lights in Chestatee. This additional expense will be absorbed by Ashton Woods. It is understood that there is a long lead time to get the specific streets lights, and temporary street lights of a different style may need to be installed for a period of time during the construction phase;
13. Ashton Woods agrees to install bushes/shrubs around the community mailbox (kiosk) area as a screening. The number of shrubs is to be determined by the space available in this area (near the barricades); and
14. Sidewalk and driveway appearance (colored black dyed) shall be consistent with the broader Chestatee community.

Dooley/Gaines

NEW BUSINESS:

Consideration of FY 2025 Drug Treatment Court Grant Application

Motion passed 4-0 to approve a FY 2025 Drug Treatment Court Grant Application. Gaines/Bruce

Consideration of a Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Transmittal to the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security for Review

Motion passed 4-0 to approve a Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Transmittal to the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security for Review. Stowers/Dooley

Consideration of Request to Apply for a 2024 Fireworks Tax Grant

Motion passed 4-0 to approve a Request to Apply for a 2024 Fireworks Tax Grant. Dooley/Gaines

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Gary Pichon, Marble Hill, Georgia, discussed "The Grand Park Idea."

He said, "Right in the middle of Dawson County there is a 10,000-acre tract, which is owned by the Atlanta Airport Authority and is managed by the DNR under a lease. There are hiking and horse-riding trails on the property. It's a beautiful piece of ground with the Etowah River, Amicalola Creek and Shoal Creek running through it. It is the largest piece of unoccupied land in North Georgia."

“That land is at risk for development because it will be sold at some point to help fund the Atlanta Airport. It could be broken up into several pieces and become a new suburban city or a series of large industrial sites. It will not stay forever like it is.

“Not only is it a place of natural beauty, which should be preserved from development, it was an important federal atomic center of research. That atomic research had a key role in the defense of the U.S.A. during the Cold War. What we learned there was very important and much is still classified. Many of our citizens that live in this county worked there. Today the historic significance is being lost. Today there is not one sign telling the story of what happened on that property.

“Most of the property should be owned by the State of Georgia and managed by the DNR as a state park to be something like Amicalola State Park and connected to it by hiking trail through the existing DNR lands up along the Amicalola River. We already have about 15,000 acres of land held by DNR right now in our county. It is not connected to anything.

“That portion of the land that contained the Georgia Nuclear Aircraft Factory, Air Force Project 67, should be a national historic site with a visitor’s center, and it should provide tours to the visiting public to explain Dawson County’s role in our national defense effort. It is a story worth telling.

“The Board of Commissioners can facilitate this idea with the state government and the federal government by passing a resolution of support, expressing specifically that the land be brought under the ownership of the state and a portion under control of the federal government and used permanently as a park for the citizens of the state and the nation. I request that the BOC pass such a resolution this year. My advice is do not tarry. If you don’t get your oar in the water, that ship will leave.”

ADJOURNMENT:

APPROVE:

ATTEST:

Billy Thurmond, Chairman

Kristen Cloud, County Clerk