

**DAWSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
VOTING SESSION MINUTES – THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 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 Melissa Tracy; 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 November 7, 2024. Stowers/Bruce

Motion passed 4-0 to approve the Minutes of the Voting Session held on November 7, 2024. Stowers/Bruce

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion passed 4-0 to approve the agenda as presented. Dooley/Stowers

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

PUBLIC HEARING:

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

Chairman Thurmond reviewed possible changes to the FY 2025 Proposed Budget that were requested or discussed during this item's first two public hearings or that developed since the last public hearing, including:

- Senior Services' request for an additional \$2,760 for its Sit and Stretch program;
- Chamber of Commerce's request to increase its portion of hotel/motel tax from 6 percent to 8 percent;
- Administration's request to fund House Bill 451-Ashley Wilson Act, an unfunded mandate from the state that requires all public entities in Georgia to offer a supplemental benefit program for first responders diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, with \$28,940;
- Library's request for additional funds for employee insurance;
- Superior Court's request for jury pay and court transcripts in the amount of \$42,800; and
- Administration's request to pay the county's EMS medical director (a licensed medical doctor) in the amount of \$12,000 per year;

Commissioner Bruce said there were two areas of the proposed budget that she does not “fully support,” including combining Planning & Development with the Marshals Office under a new Community Development director role, and a part-time position for EMS billing under Finance at \$35,000.

“I believe this approach is counterproductive,” she said. “My preference is to consider either hiring an assistant county manager or a ‘super director’ model, which has proven effective in counties like Lumpkin and Cherokee. A proposed assistant county manager would oversee half of the departments reporting to the county manager, easing the workload...” Bruce said. “Alternatively, a super director could manage Planning & Development, the Marshals Office and Public Works, with each department maintaining its own director who reports to this new role...” She added, “Combining two high-performing, distinct departments into one, however, risks undermining their effectiveness. Both need to function independently to best serve citizens' needs. While I do agree on the goal of improving processes, communication and transparency, I don't see this proposal as the right solution. Adding a new position would still increase the budget, but it's a proactive step for a growing county. Over the past eight years, we've consistently expanded departments to meet citizen needs, from creating the Marshals Office to establishing independent IT and Fleet teams. Consolidation would undo that progress, wasting prior investments of time, money and resources. Instead, we should build on what's working to remain proactive rather than reactive.” Bruce also said, “I'm having a hard time feeling fiscally comfortable adding a part-time position for EMS billing under Finance [at \$35,000] when we have full-time positions making that same amount with what is considered a larger or equal work load according to the job descriptions... I am either in favor of lowering the pay for that part-time position until we can do a salary audit and study to kind of get all of our salaries where they should be, or asking Finance if there is a possibility of other duties and increasing it to a full-time position for similar but maybe slightly higher pay.”

Chairman Thurmond opened the hearing by asking if there was anyone present who wished to be heard on a FY 2025 Proposed Budget and, hearing none, closed the hearing.

Motion passed 4-0 to approve adding Senior Services' request for an additional \$2,760 for its Sit and Strech program to the FY 2025 Budget. Gaines/Stowers

Commissioner Bruce made a motion to use funding currently in the county's hotel/motel tax fund for beautification of Dawson County and to increase the Chamber of Commerce's portion of hotel/motel tax by 1 percent, from 6 percent to 7 percent. Chairman Thurmond seconded the motion for further discussion. The motion failed to pass 3-1.

Motion passed 4-0 to approve adding \$28,940 to fund House Bill 451 to the FY 2025 budget. Gaines/Stowers

Motion passed 4-0 to approve maintaining the Dawson County's Library's proposed FY 2025 funding at \$509,795 until an efficiency study is performed for the library's satellite branch. Dooley/Bruce

Motion passed 4-0 to approve adding Superior Court's request for jury pay and court transcripts, as well increasing Grand Jury pay to \$50 per day (presented at the November 21, 2024, Work Session), in the amount of \$42,800 to the FY 2025 budget. Gaines/Stowers

Motion passed 4-0 to approve adding Administration's request to pay the county's EMS medical director (a licensed medical doctor) of \$12,000 per year to the FY 2025 budget. Stowers/Bruce

Motion was made by Commissioner Bruce to replace a proposed Community Development director role to a super director, to be titled Community Development Agency role. Motion died for lack of a second.

Motion was made by Commissioner Bruce to either lower the salary of the proposed part-time EMS billing position or make the position a full-time position with increased duties. Motion died for lack of a second.

Motion passed 3-1 to approve a FY 2025 Budget – the General Fund in the amount of \$48,821,512 and All Funds in the amount of \$98,226,292. Gaines/Stowers- Commissioner Bruce voted against the motion

NEW BUSINESS:

Consideration to Move Forward to a Public Hearing Concerning Amendment to Sign Code

Motion passed 4-0 to approve to Move Forward to a Public Hearing Concerning Amendment to Sign Code. Dooley/Stowers

Consideration of RFP #447-24 - Debris Monitoring Services

Motion passed 4-0 to approve RFP #447-24 – Debris Monitoring Services; to accept the offers received and award a contract to Thompson Consulting Services Inc. Stowers/Bruce

Consideration of Request for Approval to Extend Two Contracts

Motion passed 4-0 to approve a Request for Approval to Extend Two Contracts – one-year extensions for an inmate food services contract for Kellwell Food Management and an auditing services contract for BatesCarter. Stowers/Gaines

Consideration of Board Appointment:

- **Board of Health**
 - *Dr. Saba Haeringer- reappointment (Term: January 2025 through December 2030)*

Motion passed 4-0 to reappoint Dr. Saba Haeringer to the Dawson County Board of Health for a term of January 2025 through December 2030. Gaines/Stowers

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Motion passed 4-0 to enter into Executive Session to discuss litigation and real estate. Gaines/Stowers

Motion passed 4-0 to come out of Executive Session. Gaines/Stowers

APPROVE:

ATTEST:

Billy Thurmond, Chairman

Kristen Cloud, County Clerk