DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

February 9, 2026

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany Dougherty Government Center on February 9, 2026. Chairman Lorenzo Heard presided and called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. Present were Commissioners Victor Edwards, Gloria Gaines, Russell Gray, Clinton Johnson, Anthony Jones, and Ed Newsome. Also present were County Administrator Deron King, Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks, County Clerk Jawahn Ware, and other staff. The public and media participated in person and via live streaming of the meeting on the County's Facebook page and the government public access channel. County Attorney Alex Shalishali was present via livestream.

After the invocation by Chairman Heard, he asked the Commission to review the minutes of the January 26th Regular Meeting and January 26th Work Session.

The Chairman recognized citizen J.D. Armstrong to discuss homeless concerns in our community. Pastor Rance Pettibone was also present. Upon the request of Commissioner Johnson, Mr. Armstrong received an update from Mr. Brooks regarding the Homeless Coalition and the actions taken by the City of Albany. It was noted that Mr. Armstrong will be introduced to Mr. David Blackwell and Mr. Ken Bevel so his funds can be directed for best use, and he can obtain information on how to participate in local efforts.

The Chairman recognized Tax Director Shonna Josey to update the Commission on the 2025 Tax Collection. It was noted that within the first 30 days of 2026, $8,764,413 was collected for the Countywide and $990,483 for the Special Service District (SSD). As of February 2, 2026, the collections for Countywide were at 21%, equating to $10,484,797 and 12% for the SSD, equating to $1,134,550. The tax collection summary for the 2023 and 2024 tax years were provided.

The Chairman called for the recommendation to accept Amendment #2 to the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) 401(a) Defined Contribution Plan for Dougherty County Employees to add County Commissioners as Eligible Employees, effective as of January 1, 2027, and to provide for each such Participant an Employer Basic Contribution equal to twelve percent (12%) of his or her compensation. County Administrator Deron King, Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks, and County Attorney Alex Shalishali addressed. ACCG Client Manager Ron Rowe was available online. Mr. Brooks clarified for Commissioner Gray that it would be a flat County cost and would mirror the new program [recently implemented] for management. Mr. Rowe was asked to provide the proposed total cost to the County for consideration.

The Chairman called for the zoning discussion for Buford Jenkins, applicant, and Weatherspoon Inc., owner (26-001) request to rezone a 9.20-acre parcel from AG (Agricultural District) to C-3 (Commercial Business District). The property is located on Liberty Expressway, south of

Williamsburg Road. The rezoning would allow the property to be used for commercial purposes. The Planning Commission recommended approval. Angel Gray, Deputy Planning Director addressed. The Public Hearing and Action on this item are scheduled for the February 16, 2026 Regular Meeting.

The Chairman called for the recommendation from the City of Albany Board of Commissioners to add two new members to the Albany/Dougherty County Land Bank Board of Directors. The new positions would be for an elected representative of each government. The Intergovernmental Agreement that created the Land Bank would have to be amended to allow this change and would require the approval of both governments. The City of Albany approved the recommendation to increase membership in their January 27, 2026 Regular Meeting. Land Bank Director Paul Forgey addressed. There are no restrictions for an elected official to serve on the Board. It was noted that the City of Albany approved the concept but did want to not make language changes until direction was determined by Dougherty County. Mr. Forgey mentioned the efficiency of the current Board. Mr. Forgey shared that any person could attend the meetings and ideally provide comments for consideration. The Board of County Commissioners said that the Land Bank was functioning well and does not desire to make a change. By unanimous consent, it was noted that a letter will be sent to the City of Albany declining the change and the Board will not take official action in the upcoming Regular Meeting.

The Chairman called for the recommendation from the Sheriff's Office for the Board of Commissioners to issue a resolution authorizing the utilization of a Traffic Safety Camera Program to assist with the enforcement of speed limits in school zones within the unincorporated area of Dougherty County. County Administrator Deron King and Chief John Ostrander addressed. The safety of children was stressed with statistics noted. Chief Ostrander shared the results of a traffic study and explained when violation times would be tracked by the system. He added more information on the proposal to include how citations would be reviewed and a potential revenue stream for the County. Commissioner Edwards was not in favor because it would cause hardship on his constituents, and Commissioner Gray noted similar constraints. Commissioner Newsome said that legislation was being considered by the State. Chief Ostrander mentioned the constitutional ability of the Sheriff and jurisdiction to proceed with this request. Commissioner Jones requested that there be more collaboration and communication between the City of Albany, the Sheriff's Office, and Dougherty County Police. Chief Ostrander noted the intent to proceed in four school zones with two being in the unincorporated area. Commissioner Johnson voiced his concerns about the business model, sharing that if children were the focus, then the threshold number of violations should not be a concern. Chief Ostrander reminded the Board that they would have discretion to provide funds to the Dougherty County Police. He responded to the business model program by sharing that under a certain threshold of violations, the company would not pay the costs for the equipment. The Board stated their desire to change driver behavior via more traditional methods and Chief Ostrander confirmed their approach to the vendor was not money-motivated but for safety. Upon the request of Commissioner Edwards, Chief Ostrander clarified that the City of Albany provided consent to proceed with the zones in the city limits, and the Sheriff's Office requests to receive consent from the County to do the same in the unincorporated area.

The Chairman called for the recommendation from EMS for a budget amendment in the amount of $483,343 to address overtime budgeting needs of the department. Funding will be provided from the General Fund Balance. County Administrator Deron King and EMS Director James Gibney addressed. Interim Finance Director Amy Westenfeld was present. It was clarified that the amount of $483,343 would suffice for the remainder of the Fiscal Year and this is the amount requested in the Finance Committee meeting as opposed to a partial $250,000. A full report will be presented to the Board to address requests from the Finance Committee Meeting. Upon question of Commissioner Gray, Mr. Gibney provided more information on triage services.

The Chairman called for the recommendation from Administration to approve a budget amendment for the salary and benefits in the amount of $100,000 to be placed within the FY 26 budget for the purpose of recruiting a Chief Financial Officer for the County. Funding will be provided by General Fund Contingency. An annualized amount of approximately $200,000 for salary and benefits will be budgeted for future years. County Administrator Deron King and Interim Finance Director Amy Westenfeld addressed. Mr. King referred to the material provided in the Finance Committee meeting.

The Chairman called for the recommendation from Administration to accept the proposal to engage Developmental Associates LLC (Chapel Hill, NC) to conduct the Executive Search for a Chief Financial Officer for Dougherty County in the proposed amount of $25,500. Funding will be provided by General Fund Contingency. County Administrator Deron King addressed. Commissioner Johnson clarified that the Finance Committee motioned to deny the request because there were enough in-house staff [to handle]. Mr. King responded to Commissioner Jones regarding the time frame of approximately one to two months [for recruitment]. Clerk Ware clarified for Commissioner Gaines that the Finance Committee Chair made a request to have items presented in a Work Session and then Regular Meeting to be efficient for time. Mr. Brooks reconfirmed that the Board should formalize their ordinance process [for consistency on their desire of items to be presented]. It was noted that Commissioner Gaines asked Attorney Shalishali to provide clarity.

The Chairman called for the recommendation to consider the resolution providing for execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement between Dougherty County and the City of Albany for a Floating Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST). County Administrator Deron King and County Attorney Alex Shalishali addressed. Action on this item was scheduled in the following Special Called Meeting. Mr. King noted that the determination of the wording of the resolution would be verified by County Attorney Shalishali. Upon the request of Commissioner Jones, Mr. King explained the benefits of FLOST for citizens. Commissioner Johnson noted that this would impose a sales tax to alleviate property tax with Commissioner Newsome noting it would remove approximately six mills from the digest. It was clarified that the Chamber would assist with marketing. Commissioner Jones shared that he planned to have town hall meetings on FLOST.

The Chairman called for the recommendation to consider the acceptance of the Resolution authorizing the implementation of a County Floating Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST) and requesting that the Albany/Dougherty County Board of Registration and Elections call an election of the voters to approve the imposition of such sales tax. County Administrator Deron King and County Attorney Alex Shalishali addressed. Acceptance of the resolution will be done in a

Special Called Meeting later in the week, contingent upon the action by the City of Albany pertaining to the FLOST IGA. Mr. King provided clarity on the items requiring action in a Special Called Meeting. Commissioner Gray asked if optical changes should be made to the distribution schedule. Mr. King noted that this was the same distribution that the City of Albany has, so both entities needed to have the same number.

The Chairman called for discussion of Board Appointments. County Clerk Jawahn Ware addressed.

> Department of Behavioral Health & Development Disabilities Regional 4 Board- There is one appointment with a three-year unexpired term ending December 31, 2027.
>
> Electrical Board – There are four appointments: One County appointment for a Master Electrician, two joint appointments for an Electrical Supplier, and one joint appointment for a Professional Engineer, all with a one-year term ending December 31, 2026.
>
> Fire Code of Appeals Board – There is one appointment with a three-year term ending December 31, 2028.
>
> Flood Plain Management Review Board – There is one appointment with a three-year unexpired term ending December 31, 2027.
>
> Voter Registration and Elections Board – There is one appointment with a two-year unexpired term ending December 31, 2026.

County Administrator Deron King provided an update that there would be a Special Called Meeting following the Work Session. There will also be a Public Works Committee held on February 16, 2026 at 1:00 pm. Mr. King recognized Public Works Director, Chuck Mathis who was just sworn in as the first African American President for the American Public Works Association (APWA). It was noted that he has served Dougherty County for 47 years and has been a member of APWA for 20 plus years. Mr. Mathis provided appreciation to the Board, County Administration, former PW Director Larry Cook and his wife. Verbal support was provided for Interim Finance Director Amy Westenfeld, who lost her father due to death.

Attorney Shalishali said that October 1, 2026 would be the effective date for the FLOST and the resolution will be updated. He also mentioned the procedural notation for the Finance Committee items on the agenda. He also shared that the retirement plan amendment has no contribution by the Commissioners. If all were to opt in, there would be an estimated $10,000 financial impact, based on his calculations.

Commissioner Edwards asked citizen Larry Harris to address his appointment with the HVAC Board. He said Mr. Brooks said that the Board does not exist. Clerk Ware and Mr. Brooks addressed. Clerk Ware noted the Board not meeting indicated good code [of the City and County] and Mr. Brooks addressed the actions he initiated since working with the City of Albany pertaining to the one-year term Boards. Commissioner Newsome provided additional

information from his previous years of service on HVAC. Mr. Brooks also noted that the City of Albany made changes that never materialized on the County side. Commissioner Johnson asked about the splash pad and Turtle Park requesting an update and alternative options. Mr. Brooks said it would be an excellent item for consideration in a Recreation Committee meeting. Commissioner Johnson clarified that he would like a specific action for citizens. Commissioner Gray asked for a moment of silence for Dr. Lucille Wilson, who was a long-term service provider in the healthcare field. Commissioner Gaines asked for a moment of silence for Mrs. Westenfeld's father. Chairman Heard recognized Commissioner Gaines' birthday and she was serenaded by Commissioner Jones.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

_____
CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

_____
COUNTY CLERK