DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

June 16, 2025 DRAFT

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany-Dougherty Government Center on June 16, 2025. Chairman Lorenzo Heard presided and called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Present were Commissioners Victor Edwards, Gloria Gaines, Russell Gray, Clinton Johnson and Anthony Jones. Also present were County Administrator Deron King, Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks, County Attorney Alex Shalishali, 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. Commissioner Ed Newsome was absent.

After the invocation and Pledge of Allegiance by the Chairman, he called for approval of the minutes of the May 19th Work Session.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Edwards, the minutes were unanimously approved.

The Chairman recognized the current Leadership Albany class members who were present.

The Chairman recognized Angie Jones, Secretary, Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN), to update the Commission on a local historic property design and adaptive reuse plan. The presentation was to request that one local property be declared historic. Additional information regarding Georgia African American Historic Preservation (GAAHPN) was shared. She suggested that GAAHPN be involved when the Commission looks at any initiative considering historic designation or preservation. She shared that Governor Brian Kemp officially proclaimed May 2025 as both Georgia Historic Preservation Month and Archaeology Month. The specific request was to designate 623 Whitney Avenue, the Harris home, as a local historic landmark. Many of the residents were key educators, civic leaders, and social equity activists and one notable Freedom Singer, Rutha Mae Harris. The home and those that are "fruit'' were noted in several books due to involvement during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. The Ethos Preservation studied the home and recommended that the Harris home be designated on the National Historic Register and Mrs. Jones felt that there should also be a local designation. The presentation included documentation to support the historic preservation. She shared the local historic property designation procedure, which includes a presentation to both City and County Commissions, public hearings, and notice. She mentioned housing ideas pertaining to adaptive reuse that she has become familiar with while serving on different committees that could be beneficial for Dougherty County. She encouraged Dougherty County to send representatives to the 2025 statewide Historic Preservation Conference. Ms. Rutha Harris

and supporters were recognized, including School Board Member Geraldine Hudley. Kudos and questions were presented by the Board, including Commissioner Edwards suggesting that the home be included on our planned Black Historical Trail. In response to the question of Commissioner Edwards, she reminded the Board that part of the County's ordinance requires that a representative from the Historical Preservation Committee be "at the table" on discussions for preservation and designation desires.

The Chairman recognized Kaelyn King, Executive Assistant to the County Administrator, and Tee Taylor, Recreation Supervisor, for the Parks and Recreation Division, to update the Commission on the upcoming Juneteenth celebration. The event will be held on Saturday, June 21st, at the Civic Center. The Board and public were invited to attend, and some activities were highlighted. The joint budget for the event will be $70,000 and questions and comments from the Board were addressed. Commissioner Jones shared that the event will be under budget and accolades were provided to the Committee. Commissioner Gray inquired about the county's Event Planner RFP.

The Chairman opened the zoning public hearing for Buford Jenkins, applicant owner, (25-021) request to rezone a 3.0-acre parcel from R-MHP (Manufactured Home Park District) to C-3 (Commercial Business District). The rezoning would be used for commercial purposes. The property is located at 1725 SE Liberty Expressway. The Planning Commission recommended approval. Angel Gray, Deputy Planning Director, addressed. Commissioner Jones shared that there are new businesses on Liberty Expressway, and this would be an addition. There being no individuals present desiring to speak in support of or opposition to the proposed zoning matter, the Chairman closed the public hearing.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation from Code Enforcement to purchase one (1) 2024 Ford Maverick Truck from Wade Ford (Smyrna, GA) under state contract 99999-001-SPD0000183-0006 in the amount of $31,230. Funding is budgeted in Special Services District - Code Enforcement Vehicles Capital Outlay.

Commissioner Jones moved for approval. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. Under question, Commissioner Jones asked for the cost of a F150. Mr. Brooks shared that he did not have the cost, but he has seen other Code Enforcement vehicles be smaller and confirmed that state contract pricing was obtained. There being no further discussion, the motion for approval passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation from the Library to apply for the Georgia Public Library Service Capital Outlay Grant for the Westtown Library in the amount of $1,000,000. There is a local match of 10% required. Funding is budgeted in SPLOST VI and SPLOST VII.

Commissioner Jones moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Johnson, the motion for approval passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for the consideration of the revised joint resolution between Dougherty County and the City of Albany reestablishing Keep Albany-Dougherty Beautiful (KADB) and the administration, operation, governance, board membership, authority, and responsibilities.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. The motion passed with five ayes from Commissioners Edwards, Johnson, Gaines, Jones, and Chairman Heard and one nay by Commissioner Gray. Resolution 25-027 is entitled:

A JOINT COUNTY RESOLUTION AND CITY ORDINANCE
ENTITLED
A JOINT COUNTY RESOLUTION AND CITY ORDINANCE
REESTABLISHING KEEP ALBANY-DOUGHERTY BEAUTIFUL
AND THE ADMINISTRATION, OPERATION, GOVERNANCE,
BOARD MEMBERSHIP, AUTHORITY, AND
RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SAME; REPEALING THE
GOVERNING SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY PROVISIONS,
RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

The Chairman called for the zoning consideration of Buford Jenkins, applicant owner, (25-021) request to rezone a 3.0-acre parcel from R-MHP (Manufactured Home Park District) to C-3 (Commercial Business District). The rezoning would be used for commercial purposes. The property is located at 1725 SE Liberty Expressway. The Planning Commission recommended approval.

Commissioner Jones moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Johnson, the motion for approval passed unanimously. After the action, Commissioner Gaines asked that the discussion go back to the KADB item. Mr. Brooks addressed the question by sharing that it was projected that all changes would be effective July 1, 2025, but the City will need to pass the resolution. He added that the Board will be notified when their respective names [for Board appointments] are needed.

The Chairman called for the consideration of the recommendation to continue the discussion and review of the proposed FY 2026 Budgets as recommended by the Finance Committee. Finance Committee Chairman Clinton Johnson, County Administrator Deron King, and Interim Finance Director Amy Westenfeld addressed. Mrs. Westenfeld shared that the presented request for the FY26 Budget from departments was $78,328,668. This amount was adjusted by Finance as instructed, in an attempt to balance the budget. Finance was instructed after the June 9, 2025 meeting to go back to what was decided upon after the budget meetings with the County Administrator. The requested FY26 budget after the County Administrator, some department heads, and Finance met was $80,837,788. The revenue projection remains the same at $67,234,788, which is a shortfall of $13,603,000. The departments were tasked with reducing their requests by 15.75%, which would be a total reduction of $7,309,307. This would require

using the fund balance in the amount of $6,293,693 to balance the budget. Commissioner Johnson addressed the questions of Commissioner Gray regarding the potential impact of the millage rating.

Mr. Brooks was asked to share about possible changes to the Service Delivery Strategies and other opportunities. It was noted that Davenport, our consultants, will review the proposed budget prior to adoption. Commissioner Johnson mentioned that Mrs. Westenfeld and her team had reallocated some expenditures (i.e., some costs that should be in the Special Service District be moved from the General Fund). It was mentioned to the Board that they have started putting [financial] changes in place; however, without the revaluation and other processes not being completed, the Board may have to budget fund use for this budget cycle. Commissioner Johnson and Chairman Heard clarified the concerns of Commissioner Gaines regarding potential fund balance use. Commissioner Gray shared information regarding his concern about cutting the budget on necessary services. He referenced the EMA management services and operational needs. A lengthy discussion ensued.

Mr. King reminded the Board that there will be a Government Affairs Committee immediately following the Executive Session in Room 120. It was also noted that there will be two Public Hearings for the proposed FY 2026 Budgets held on Monday, June 23rd, in Room 100. The first hearing was scheduled for 10 am and the second was scheduled for 6 pm. Due to five Mondays in June, there was no County Commission meeting scheduled for that day. The next County Commission Meeting will be on June 30, 2025. In observance of Juneteenth Holiday, Administrative offices will be closed on Thursday, June 19th. Attorney Shalishali introduced his law firm's three summer interns and also shared the loss of one of the firm's partners. He thanked the County for allowing his firm to serve, and a moment of silence was then held.

Commissioner Edwards asked for condolences on the loss of Chairman Heard bonus father, Reverend Carter. Commissioner Gaines offered condolences and thanked the Chairman for his consistent prayers. Commissioner Jones shared similar sentiments and mentioned that there will not be any additional Town Hall meetings regarding Nelms Road until an update was provided by GDOT.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation from the County Attorney to enter into an Executive Session for the purpose of discussing pending litigation, reconvene, and then take potential action.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Edwards, the motion for approval passed unanimously.

The Board reconvened at 12:47 pm. All were present except Commissioner Edwards.

The Chairman called for consideration to approve all litigation claims asserted by Antavious Davenport against Dougherty County, in the amount of $100,000.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Upon a second by Commissioner Gaines, the motion for approval passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:48 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

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COUNTY CLERK