DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

July 13, 2026

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany Dougherty Government Center on July 13, 2026. Chairman Lorenzo Heard presided and called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Present were Commissioners Victor Edwards, Gloria Gaines, Clinton Johnson, Anthony Jones, Ed Newsome, and Russell Gray. 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.

After the invocation by Chairman Heard, he asked the Commission to review the minutes of the June 15th Regular Meeting, June 22nd Public Hearing, June 29th Work Session and June 29th Special Called Meeting.

The Chairman recognized citizen Lawrence Knighton to speak about a community accountability framework for education, workforce, development, public safety, and population growth. The purpose of the proposal was to encourage county-wide collaboration around outcomes that affect every resident of Dougherty County. He shared that the presentation coincides with the information that Chief Persley provided to the Board previously. Within 45 days, he would like a Dougherty County Community Accountability Council created to evaluate the validity of data pertaining to our community. His ask was for Commission participation. There was engaged conversation with the Board and Commissioner Edwards shared that something similar was started in the past. Mr. Knighton emphasized that he was confident that this endeavor would be successful and the Chairman offered his support.

The Chairman recognized citizen Meagan Weaver, who requested that a moratorium be in place to allow Dougherty County sufficient time to study data centers. The Chairman clarified that the City of Albany had presentations made on the topic, but there have been no requests for data centers in the unincorporated area of Dougherty County. Ms. Weaver petitioned the Board to enact a moratorium to prevent any applications from being accepted under the current ordinances that may not have enough "protection" in place. Commissioner Johnson asked Attorney Shalishali if a moratorium in the County would impact the City. Attorney Shalishali shared that based upon his understanding, it may not and may stop at the city line.

The Chairman recognized Commissioner Johnson, who introduced Trevor Wilson to share information on his business, Flight Redemption Aviation (FRA). His company provides FAA certifications for drone readiness and use. His ask was to utilize vacant space in Radium Springs as a training hub. It was clarified by Commissioner Johnson that Mr. Wilson has a mobile unit furnished by Albany Tech. Attorney Shalishali will research the ask of Commissioner Johnson regarding lease agreements. There were suggestions and concerns proposed by several Commissioners to include potential staging for restroom use, presentation to neighborhood watch

groups, and potential other locations. Mr. Wilson did confirm contacting FAA, and the Chairman asked the attorney to review requests.

The Chairman called for the recommendation of the zoning discussion of Mary Alice Thomas, applicant and owner (26-044) request to rezone 0.42 acres from R-2 (Single-Family Residential District) to RMHS (Mobile Home Single-Family District). The rezoning would allow installation of a manufactured home for single-family residency. The property is at 507 Engram Court. The Planning Commission recommended approval. Angel Gray, Deputy Planning Director addressed. Mrs. Gray confirmed that the applicant and owner presented to the Board previously, and that this request extended her development plan.

The Chairman called for the recommendation from EMS to accept the execution of the GEMA Medical Transportation Vendor Agreement. The Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS) Medical Transportation Vendor Agreement is a voluntary agreement that allows an EMS agency to become a pre-approved ambulance transportation vendor for the State of Georgia during a Governor-declared State of Emergency. The County Administrator executed the agreement to meet the July 1, 2026 deadline. County Administrator Deron King and EMS Director James Gibney addressed. Mr. King shared that the Attorney suggested that the agreement be presented despite no monetary commitment from the County.

The Chairman called for the recommendation to accept Amendment #1 to the Contract with Accenture for grants management services in the amount of $65,000, bringing the new total contract amount to $415,000. Accenture currently provides oversight of the County's ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds. Funding will be provided by ARPA. County Administrator Deron King addressed. It was clarified that this was an extension to the current scope of services. Mr. King addressed the funding availability and questions of Commissioner Gray for additional services. Commissioner Gaines asked that Mr. King provide a more detailed written review for the Commission to consider. Commissioner Johnson elaborated on the services and added that the time frame was for 6 months. Commissioner Edwards voiced concerns and Interim Finance Director Amy Westenfeld also provided clarity on funding availability.

The Chairman called for the recommendation to authorize the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Albany Convention and Visitors' Bureau to allow participation in the County's medical insurance plan and for other purposes. County Administrator Deron King addressed. Mr. King explained that services will be effective August 1st and will be for medical only, not vision or dental. Our TPA and Attorney vetted. Upon the request of Commissioner Gaines, Attorney Shalishali confirmed that the MOU was designed so that there will be no monetary impact to the County. Mr. King mentioned that the County also covered the Economic Development Commission.

The Chairman called for the recommendation to declare a 2019 Ford F150 (from Facilities Management) as surplus and authorize the sale through Charles Taylor TPA. County Administrator Deron King addressed.

County Administrator Deron King reminded the Board that there will be a Special Called meeting following the Work Session. Mr. King allowed Ajith Venkatesan, Admin's MPA intern, to

introduce himself. Commissioner Jones spoke well of the services Mr. Venkatesan provided while interning in elections. Attorney Shalishali allowed five of his interns from Page Scrantom to introduce themselves. Commissioner Johnson would like the Board to commission a study of our law enforcement to [better] serve our community. He would also like to consider changes to Code Enforcement. He requested that the County Attorney put him on the books immediately for an executive session. Commissioner Johnson and Attorney Shalishali addressed the questions of Commissioner Gaines about our local level cooperation with ICE [Homeland Securities Immigration and Customs Enforcement]. Attorney Shalishali noted that he will provide additional details upon the request of Commissioner Gaines.

The Chairman allowed two additional citizens to speak because it was not announced at the beginning of the meeting. Citizen James Malphrus, resident on Ramsey Road, requested that the County Commission create a moratorium for 18 months. He and his coalition, SOWEGA Aquifer Alliance, could provide information to create ordinances. Erica Davis, resident in District 4, spoke with the same requests adding potential impacts to citizens. She also requested that there be one centralized website that has independent information that will help educate citizens. Commissioner Gaines believed that the County Zoning Ordinance does not allow data centers. Commissioner Jones verbally provided information on information he received on the topic. Ms. Davis referenced some lawsuits currently filed in the nation. The Chairman recognized the July birthdays of Clerk Ware and Commissioner Edwards, which was followed by a serenade by Commissioner Jones.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m.

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CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

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COUNTY CLERK