DOUGHERTY COUNTY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

January 26, 2026

The Dougherty County Commission met in Room 100 of the Albany Dougherty Government Center on January 26, 2026. 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, Anthony Jones, and Ed Newsome. 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 December 15th Regular Meeting, December 16th Public Hearing (10 am), December 16th Public Hearing (6pm), and December 23rd Special Called Meeting.

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

The Chairman opened the zoning public hearing for Joe Clark, applicant, and George Suarez, owner (25-057) request for special approval to operate office spaces for business operations. The 1.52-acre parcel is zoned C-7 (Mixed-Use Planned Development District). The property is located at 716 Philema Road. The Planning Commission recommended approval. Planning and Zoning Deputy Director Angel Gray addressed. This was a request to re-purpose the old Colony Bank on Philema Rd to serve as a training site for Mr. Suarez's businesses and allow office spaces for others. There was a conflict with the future land use map, but it was noted that the building had been used previously for commercial purposes. Mr. Suarez addressed questions from the Board. During his responses, Mr. Suarez shared that he owned thirteen McDonald's and the training will be geared to management [skills], not cooking. There being no additional individuals present in support of or opposition to the proposed zoning matter, the Chairman closed the public hearing.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation to accept the quote from the Sourcewell Contract vendor, First Class Emergency Vehicles (Monroe, NC) to purchase two Medix ME-153 Type I Ford F-350 Ambulances in the amount of $252,410 each, for a total expenditure of $504,820. Funding will be provided by SPLOST VIII.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. Under discussion, Director James Gibney clarified for Commissioner Gray that the sub-account will be for vehicles. There being no further discussion, the motion for approval passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation to accept the budget amendment from the Special Services District Fund Balance in the amount of $114,330 to the Special Services District Fund to allow for acceptance of the bid for the Right-of-Way Mowing.

Commissioner Jones moved for approval. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. Under discussion, Mr. Brooks clarified for Commissioner Johnson that this item was not budgeted because it was anticipated that staff would perform the duties, but due to staff loss, there was a request to make a budget amendment to allow the service to be completed. It would be determined in future budgets if the request should be budgeted to be performed by staff or a contractor. Per request, Public Works Director Chuck Mathis addressed questions. He said that the vendor was only mowing certain roads to help the department stay within the cutting cycle. It was noted that Public Works just finished cutting in January, but it was typically completed in October. Commissioner Edwards asked that a conversation occur between Public Works and the Jail for the utilization of inmate labor. Commissioners Edwards and Johnson requested that the service be budgeted. Commissioner Jones asked that he receive a written report on the roads maintained by the County. Commissioners Gray and Gaines both had questions pertaining to personnel during the discussion. In layman's terms, Mr. Mathis shared that the need was greater than the services being provided, noting that personnel positions would not be frozen. There was a need to provide the services being requested, and the positions would perform more duties than cutting grass. Mr. Brooks stressed the need for strategic planning so the Board can determine what services the County would perform. After a lengthy discussion, Commissioner Gray requested the Chairman call for the question. Commissioner Jones mentioned that compensation was a concern for all entities. Commissioner Edwards requested that this be discussed at the retreat. There being no further discussion, the motion for approval passed via roll call with one nay from Commissioner Gray, and six ayes from Commissioners Newsome, Edwards, Johnson, Gaines, Jones, and Chairman Heard.

The Chairman called for consideration of the resolution providing for the acceptance and execution of the contract allowing Public Works to accept the bid for Right-of-Way Mowing from the lowest, responsive and responsible bidder, C&S Landscaping and Property Management (Parrott, GA) in the amount of $114,330, subject to execution by the County Administrator. Funding will be provided by the Special Services District Fund.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the motion for approval passed via roll call with one nay from Commissioner Gray, and six ayes from Commissioners Newsome, Edwards, Johnson, Gaines, Jones, and Chairman Heard. Resolution 26-002 is entitled:

A RESOLUTION
ENTITLED
A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ACCEPTANCE AND EXECUTION OF THE CONTRACT TO ACCEPT THE BID FOR THE PUBLIC WORKS RIGHT OF WAY MOWING PROJECT FROM THE LOWEST RESPONSIVE AND RESPONSIBLE VENDOR MEETING SPECIFICATIONS, C&S LANDSCAPING AND PROPERTY

MANAGEMENT; REPEALING RESOLUTIONS OR PARTS OF RESOLUTIONS IN CONFLICT HEREWITH; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation from the Sheriff's Office to accept the quotes from Response Technologies (West Chester, OH) to add panic alarm systems to the Government Building and the Tax & Tag Office in the amount of $36,543. Response Technologies is the current vendor for the Courthouse. Funding will be provided by the General Fund.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. Under discussion, Commissioner Edwards asked for the justification to have this system in the Tax and Tag Office when there was glass in the offices and a security officer present. Mr. Brooks shared that this was a recommendation from the Sheriff, the trusted official who manages our security, and we should adhere to his suggestion. Major Faust addressed and Mr. Brooks clarified for Commissioner Gray that this request was budgeted and upon discussion with the City of Albany, there can be a request for partial funding. Mr. Brooks also clarified for Commissioner Gray that specifics on the accounts can be found on the write-up. In the discussion, Commissioner Newsome suggested that the request be tabled until there is a discussion with the City of Albany. Commissioner Johnson stated that Dougherty County is serving all citizens and suggested not holding the project, but later increase the City of Albany's cost [for service]. There was clarity regarding a motion to table. The tabled request failed via roll call with two ayes from Commissioners Newsome and Jones, and five nays from Commissioners Edwards, Johnson, Gray, Gaines, and Chairman Heard. Commissioner Gaines motioned that the request be stated that the money was being designated from the Sheriff's Office budget; there was no clear second. There being no further discussion, the motion for approval with the stated funding source passed via roll call with one nay from Commissioner Jones, and six ayes from Commissioners Newsome, Edwards, Johnson, Gray, Gaines, and Chairman Heard.

The Chairman called for consideration of the resolution providing for the acceptance and execution of a HVAC Service Agreement with Sourcewell Contract vendor, Johnson Controls in the amount of $145,644.98, subject to execution by the County Administrator. Funding will be provided from the General Fund. Assistant County Administrator Barry Brooks and Interim Facilities Management Director Matt Idlett addressed.

Commissioner Gray moved for approval. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. Under discussion, Mr. Brooks clarified the questions of Commissioner Johnson pertaining to pricing and location. There being no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously. Resolution 26-003 is entitled:

A RESOLUTION
ENTITLED
A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ACCEPTANCE AND EXECUTION OF THE HVAC SERVICES AGREEMENT BETWEEN DOUGHERTY COUNTY AND SOURCEWELL CONTRACT VENDOR, JOHNSON CONTROLS; REPEALING

RESOLUTIONS OR PARTS OF RESOLUTIONS IN CONFLICT
HEREWITH; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation to accept the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant for the 2026 calendar year in the amount of $248,000. The grant is provided by the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council for the operation of the Southwestern Regional Drug Enforcement Office.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. Under discussion, Mr. Brooks answered the questions of Commissioner Gaines. There being no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for consideration of the resolution establishing the qualifying fees for the public offices in Dougherty County for the 2026 Election.

Commissioner Gray moved for approval. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously. Resolution 26-004 is entitled:

A RESOLUTION
ENTITLED
A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE QUALIFYING
FEES FOR PUBLIC OFFICES IN DOUGHERTY
COUNTY, GEORGIA, FOR THE 2026 ELECTION;
REPEALING PRIOR RESOLUTIONS
IN CONFLICT AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation for the proposed board appointment.

Upon nomination by Commissioner Johnson, new applicant Angela Patterson was unanimously appointed to fill a one-year term ending on December 31, 2026 for the Southwest Georgia Housing Task Force.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation to accept the list of roads to be resurfaced with the FY 2026 Local Maintenance & Improvements Grant (LMIG) funds ($520,034.61) and TSPLOST Resurfacing ($1,603,143.80). The total cost estimate for 11.92 miles was $2,123,178.41.

Commissioner Jones moved for approval. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. Under discussion, Commissioner Johnson asked if additional money should be sought. Mr. Brooks shared the sources of funding and other requests that staff are working on. Commissioner Johnson requested that funding discussion be continued at the retreat. There being no further comments, the motion passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation to remove the January 5, 2026, tabled discussion pertaining to the reimbursement to the Board of Regents.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Commissioner Gray seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation to transfer $35,909.09 from the Library GA Fund 1 account to General Fund Contingency to allow reimbursement to the Board of Regents for the purchase of surveillance cameras located at the Northwest Branch and Central Library. The transfer to General Fund Contingency will be applied to the Library's Other Equipment account to prevent the utilization of fund balance. County Attorney Alex Shalishali and Library Director Gail Evans addressed.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. Under discussion, Attorney Shalishali provided an update on his rendering, and there were no provisions for an appeal. There being no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommended action on the special approval request for Joe Clark, applicant, and George Suarez, owner to operate office spaces for business operations. The 1.52-acre parcel is zoned C-7 (Mixed-Use Planned Development District). The property is located at 716 Philema Road. The Planning Commission recommended approval.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the motion passed via roll call.

The Chairman called for consideration of the recommendation to accept the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) VOCA Grant #AW-VOCA-25-071-012 for FY 2025-2026 in the amount of $123,995. The local matching funds amount of $30,999 was waived for all offices. The grant acceptance is required annually. County Clerk Jawahn Ware was present to address on behalf of Donna Garcia, Victim Witness Assistance Director.

Commissioner Johnson moved for approval. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. King informed the Board that Johnson Consulting provided an update on the feasibility study on the Convention Center to the Albany Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB). He also reminded the Board of the Work Session immediately following the Regular Meeting. Commissioner Edwards announced that Keep Albany Dougherty Beautiful (KADB) had their 35th annual recognition event. David Little was awarded Public Works Manager of the Year, Deborah Patton, Public Works Employee of the Year, Cynthia Green, Solid Waste Employee of the Year, and Latresa Harvey, Solid Waste Employee of the Year. It was also noted that the County received an award and kudos were provided to KADB staff. Commissioner Johnson wanted the Development Authority to work with a pipeline of individuals being hired for work force development. He said that the County would need to be proactive on how to address large investitures with the State planning to withhold revenues and he asked for a FLOST update.

Commissioner Gaines gave kudos to KADB and volunteers for the MLK pickup events. Appreciation was given to Commissioner Howard. Commissioner Gaines suggested that information from Planning Director Paul Forgey be on the website and social media.

Commissioner Jones highlighted the community events held and gave appreciation to Commissioner Howard and the younger volunteers participating. He said site work at Putney Park started and Chairman Heard asked for a moment of silence in honor of the passing of Bishop Fredrick Williams.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:12 a.m.

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CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

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COUNTY CLERK