Effingham County Georgia
Board of Commissioners

Damon M. Rahn, Chairman at Large
Forrest F. Floyd, District 1
Roger Burdette, District 2
Jamie Deloach, District 3
Elizabeth Helmly, District 4
Phil Kieffer, District 5

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

The Board of Commissioners of Effingham County, Georgia, Mr. Forrest Floyd, Mr. Roger Burdette, Mr. Jamie Deloach, Ms. Elizabeth Helmly and Mr. Phil Kieffer, met in work session 4:00pm on Tuesday September 15, 2026 in the Commissioners Meeting Chambers at the Effingham County Administrative Complex located at 804 South Laurel Street Springfield, Georgia 31329.

STAFF PARTICIPATION

Mr. Tim Callanan – County Manager, Ms. Stephanie Johnson – County Clerk, Mr. Jake Zeigler – Communications Manager and Mr. Nicholas Stark – I.T. Specialist.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Walt Lawson, John Smith, Scott Lewis, Nancy Walmsley, Raymond Carver, Amy Hurbert, Kenny Lak, Karren McDonald, Shalee McKenzie, Judy Oakley, Joel Jurado, Janell Gillespie

I - CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Kieffer called the session to order at 4:08pm

II – DISCUSSION TOPICS

REVIEW OF PROCUREMENT OPTIONS FOR ROADSIDE MOWING SERVICES, INCLUDING CONTINUATION OF THE CURRENT CONTRACT, COMPETITIVE SOLICITATION, AND EXPANSION OF THE COUNTY'S IN-HOUSE MOWING OPERATION (1):

County Manager Callanan presented procurement options for roadside mowing across 267 miles of arterial roadways, currently contracted to McGraley for $321,000 annually across four cycles. Under the existing setup, inmate crews manage secondary routes and pre-mowing litter pickup, though weather delays occasionally cause coordination gaps that leave shredded debris. County Manager Callanan outlined three pathways: renewing with McGraley at current rates, issuing a competitive solicitation (projected at $425,000–$435,000 annually), or bringing all four cycles in-house using inmate labor supervised by existing correctional officers. The in-house model requires purchasing two batwing tractors, a boom mower, and a fuel truck, yielding Year 1 savings compared to re-bidding when cycling machinery within warranty periods, with recurring annual costs dropping to $24,390.

Commissioners addressed maintenance risks and administrative oversight, with Commissioner Deloach emphasizing past equipment upkeep issues while suggesting rate discussions with McGraley. Commissioner Burdette supported the in-house approach for its labor savings and schedule control, while Commissioner Kieffer requested confirmation that EOM and prison leadership have sufficient supervisory capacity.

The item will be returned for formal Board action at the second meeting in October to allow adequate preparation ahead of the January 1 contract date and the March mowing season.

DISCUSSION AND GUIDANCE REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DATA CENTER ORDINANCE (2):

Development Services Planning Manager Wright and County Manager Callanan presented a framework to regulate data centers through conditional use permits within the Table of Permitted Uses, rather than a standalone ordinance. Under this structure, the county will simultaneously strengthen baseline regulations across all heavy industrial zones. Key provisions include low-frequency noise limits, backup generator standards (explicitly prohibiting natural gas turbines as accessory uses), mandatory decommissioning plans, power and water demand disclosures, and objective traffic study triggers. Engineering standards will also enforce dust, burning, and temporary generator controls during construction.

Classifying data centers as conditional uses ensures a public hearing before the Board of Commissioners regardless of underlying zoning, and Commissioners requested updating rules to require Planning Board review for all commercial and industrial conditional uses as well. Draft regulations are scheduled for a formal vote in November 2026.

During public comments, resident Janell Gillespie expressed strong opposition to data centers and advocated for a public moratorium vote, while Attorney Kenny Lak recommended regulating Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) as conditional uses, consulting independent research, and creating non-mow wildflower medians to reduce county roadside mowing expenses.

II – ADJOURNMENT

At 4:57pm, being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Damon Rahn, Chairman

Stephanie D. Johnson, County Clerk

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OCTOBER 6, 2026