

**Oconee County Board of Commissioners Meeting
Administrative Building Commission Chambers
May 20, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.
Minutes**

Members Present:

Chairman John Daniell
Commissioner Mark Thomas
Commissioner Chuck Horton
Commissioner Amrey Harden
Commissioner Mark Saxon

Staff Present:

Justin Kirouac, County Administrator
Holly Stephenson, County Clerk
Melissa Braswell, Finance Director
Donna Norton, Budget Officer
Christi Bittle, Senior Center Director
Pam Morris, Senior Center Assistant Director
Emily Deal, Senior Center Program Assistant
Jeannie Caldwell, Senior Center Office Assistant
Jody Woodall, Public Works Director
Cindy Prichard, KOCBC Director
Adam Layfield, Water Resources Director
Sarah Baird, Receptionist
Justin Milligan, IT Director

Call to Order: 6:00 p.m.

Chairman John Daniell called the second FY26 Budget Public Hearing to order.

Pledge of Allegiance:

County Administrator Justin Kirouac led the Pledge after a moment of silence.

FY26 Proposed Budget Public Hearing:

Finance Director Melissa Braswell presented the proposed FY26 Budget, stating the Budget supports the mission of Oconee County and is designed to achieve the strategic goals set forth for the county.

The proposed FY26 General Fund Budget is \$45,704,250 which is a balanced budget with fund balance usage for Sheriff's Office body cameras. She discussed the FY26 General Fund proposed revenues and expenditures as compared to the FY25 budget, while detailing some increases departmentally and by classification. The proposed budget is an increase of 12.20% over the FY25 General Fund Budget.

The total proposed budget for FY26 is \$83,700,551 to include capital, SPLOST and TSPLOST, special revenue, and enterprise funds. This is a 9.22% increase from prior year. Proposed revenues and expenses by fund and function were presented.

The total proposed budget for Water Resources, the largest Enterprise Fund, is \$16,495,616. This is an increase of 6.62% over FY25. Revenues and expenses were presented by classification.

The FY26 Budget supports the strategic goals of the county with a commitment to public safety, transportation maintenance and improvements, water and sewer infrastructure plan, and the fleet phase replacement program.

Budget Adoption is scheduled for June 3, 2025 at 6pm. The full presentation, budget summary, and updated fee schedule are available on the Oconee County website. Ms. Braswell explained some fee schedule changes for FY26.

Commissioner Horton asked about the remaining debt service on the Caterpillar bonds. Ms. Braswell will provide the information to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Harden asked if she had received any public comment since the first presentation. Ms. Braswell responded that she had not.

The Public Comment Period was opened.

Pam Hendrix, 1151 Thornwood Drive, expressed her opposition to the increase in the budget and governmental growth, questioning the county budget process.

Chairman Daniell explained that to Ms. Hendrix that her property taxes have actually gone down \$31 in the last five years.

Commissioner Harden responded that strict instructions are given to hold or drop the millage rate which has been done for several years so there is not a property tax increase for residents. He also explained how much revenue SPLOST and TSPLOST bring into the county.

Commissioner Horton asked if Ms. Hendrix had spoken to the Sheriff regarding the budget considering the new SRO program is a large increase in the budget. He offered to meet with Ms. Hendrix to go over the budget in more detail.

Commissioner Thomas asked Ms. Braswell to show again the revenue sources from FY25 to FY26 which show property tax increasing less than 1%. He also explained to Ms. Hendrix that the Oconee County millage rate is far lower than most other counties in the state since the Commission utilizes revenue sources other than just property taxes.

The Public Hearing was closed.

Call to Order: 6:41 p.m.

Chairman John Daniell called the meeting to order.

Approval of Agenda:

ACTION:

Motion:	Mark Saxon made a motion to approve the May 20, 2025 Agenda.
Second:	Amrey Harden
Voted in Favor of Motion:	Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion:	None
Final Action:	Motion Passed.

Statements and Remarks from Citizens:

Terri Thompson, 1100 Silver Leaf Road, spoke representing Community Works Oconee, a new volunteer effort in the county that is hosting a meeting next week to assist with the search for a new school superintendent.

Statements and Remarks from Commissioners:

Chairman Daniell reminded citizens that the detour for Snows Mill Road at Lane Creek Road will begin this weekend for up to 50 days during the construction of a roundabout at the intersection.

Proclamation Honoring Older Americans Month:

Presented by: John Daniell, Chairman
Commissioner Amrey Harden presented a proclamation for Older Americans Month in Oconee County.

Proclamation for Public Works Week:

Presented by: John Daniell, Chairman
Commissioner Mark Saxon presented a proclamation for Public Works Week in Oconee County.

Discuss RFP #25-03-015 Roadside Mowing Annual Contract Bid Award:

Presented by: Jody Woodall, Public Works Director
Discussion: Public Works issued an RFP for roadside mowing services countywide with three vendors responding. The recommendation is to award the FY26 bid for \$390,000 to Lovin Contracting Company, Inc. with funding from TSPLOST. The request includes authorizing the Chairman to execute the documents and approving all necessary budget amendments up to the contract amount for the life of the project.

Commissioner Harden asked how the bid amount compared to prior years and length of term. Mr. Woodall responded that it is very close with an allowable increase for the four annual renewals after the first year.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the June 3, 2025 Regular Meeting.

The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.

Grounds Maintenance Contract RFP Update:

Presented by: Justin Kirouac, County Administrator
Discussion: County Administrator Justin Kirouac explained that staff are currently reviewing the RFP for Grounds Maintenance for all county facilities. A final recommendation will be presented at the June 3, 2025 Board of Commissioner meeting.

The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.

Discuss the Epps Bridge Parkway Sewer Collector Upgrade Engineering:

Presented by: Adam Layfield, Water Resources Director
Discussion: Water Resourced Director Adam Layfield explained the Precision Planning, Inc. has presented a proposal for professional survey, engineering design, and permitting services to increase capacity by replacing a 12-inch line between the Oconee Connector and Parkway Boulevard. The proposal includes design phase, bid phase, and construction phase support. The recommendation is to approve the proposal in the amount of \$105,300 and a budget amendment for the life of the contract not to exceed the proposed amount.

Commissioner Thomas questioned where this line will connect and the sizing of the line. Mr. Layfield responded that it will tie into a current 18-inch line. Discussions continued about adequacy of a 12-inch line which has been deemed appropriate based on the growth in the area.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the June 3, 2025 Regular Meeting.

The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.

Discuss the US 441 Sanitary Sewer Diversion Engineering:

Presented by: Adam Layfield, Water Resources Director

Discussion: Water Resourced Director Adam Layfield explained the Precision Planning, Inc. has presented a proposal for professional survey, engineering design, and permitting services for the diversion of sewer flows from an existing US 441 pump station. The proposal includes field survey, engineering design and permitting, easement acquisition support, bid phase support, and construction phase support. The recommendation is to approve the proposal in the amount not to exceed \$189,135 and budget amendment for the life of the contract not to exceed the proposed amount.

Commissioner Harden asked what happens to the current line and timeline.

Mr. Layfield and Chairman Daniell explained it will be kept in place for future capacity.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the June 3, 2025 Regular Meeting.

The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.

Discuss and Consider Estimated Millage Rate:

Presented by: John Daniell, Chairman

Discussion: Chairman Daniell explained House Bill 581 allows local governments to do an estimate millage rate, allowing estimated taxes to come off the property tax assessment. If the estimate rate is not met, a warning will be placed on property tax bills. A full millage rate rollback is accommodated in the proposed FY26 budget. Due to questions on whether to use the net millage rate or gross millage rate, Chairman Daniell recommends the county does not set an estimated millage rate, but that property tax proposals go out with last year's millage rate, until all questions are answered. The Board has no plans for to hold a hearing for 2026 property tax increase of now.

The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.

Discuss Quarterly Acceptance of Deeds, Easements, etc. to Oconee County:

Presented by: Holly Stephenson, County Clerk

Discussion: County Clerk Holly Stephenson requests approval of a Quit Claim Deed from JENHILL, LLC to Oconee County that was recorded on December 27, 2024; and a Right of Way Deed from Oak Farms Enterprises, LLC to Oconee County that was recorded on May 14, 2025.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the June 3, 2025 Regular Meeting.

The Public Comment Period was opened and there was no Public Comment.

Executive Session:

Motion: Mark Thomas made a motion to adjourn into Executive Session to discuss land acquisition, personnel matters, and litigation.

Second: Mark Saxon

Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon

Voted Against Motion: None

Action/Motion: **Motion Passed.**

Adjourn into Executive Session: 7:03 p.m.

No action was taken in Executive Session.

Executive Session Adjourned: 7:09 p.m.

Regular Session:

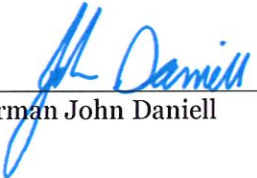
Motion:
Second:
Voted in Favor of Motion:
Voted Against Motion:
Action/Motion:
Adjourned into Regular Session:

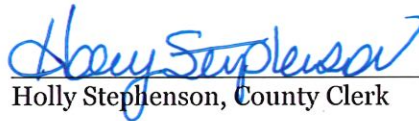
Mark Saxon made a motion to adjourn back into Regular Session.
Mark Thomas
Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
None
Motion Passed.
7:10 p.m.

Adjourned:

Motion:
Second:
Voted in Favor of Motion:
Voted Against Motion:
Action/Motion:
Meeting Adjourned:

Mark Saxon made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
Mark Thomas
Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
None
Motion Passed.
7:10 p.m.


Chairman John Daniell


Holly Stephenson, County Clerk

6-3-25
Date