

OCONEE COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Oconee County Administrative Building
CALLED MEETING
August 1, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brock Toole, Chairman
John Daniell, Vice Chairman (Chairman, Oconee County Board of Commissioners)
Courtney Bernardi, Secretary (President, Oconee Chamber of Commerce)
Brian Brodrick (Mayor, City of Watkinsville)
Rick Waller

OTHERS PRESENT:

Daniel Haygood, Oconee County Attorney
Holly Stephenson, Oconee County Clerk
Melissa Braswell, Oconee County Finance Director

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m., by Chairman Brock Toole.

Approval of Agenda:

On motion by Courtney Bernardi and second by John Daniell, the Agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes:

On motion by John Daniell and second by Rick Waller, the Minutes for the Meeting of May 9, 2025 were approved as presented.

Discuss and Consider Ratification of the FY26 Insurance Renewal:

County Clerk Holly Stephenson presented the FY26 ACCG-IRMA Insurance Renewal for ratification.

On a motion by John Daniell and a second by Courtney Bernardi, the FY26 Insurance Renewal was approved as presented.

FY25 Budget Amendment Consideration:

Melissa Braswell, Oconee County Finance Director, presented the year-end budget amendments related to COSCTO debt service. The increase in the interest revenue and debt service are in the amount of \$33,550, increasing the total FY25 budget to \$88,550. The amendments will bring the FY25 budget into balance for the year end.

On a motion by Brian Brodrick and a second by Courtney Bernardi, the budget amendments were unanimously approved as presented.

Future Planning Discussion:

Chairman Brock Toole led a future planning discussion.

When asked by Rick Waller, Melissa Braswell stated the current account balance is \$5.2 million.

John Daniell reminded the Authority that the money does not have to be spent immediately as one project can easily utilize these entire funds.

Courtney Bernardi explained that the role of the Authority is not to create plans, but to support the County and the City financially with their priorities.

Brian Brodrick, speaking as the Mayor of Watkinsville, discussed community connection, parks and green space, reimagining the Industrial Park off Barnett Shoals and Highway 15, and the desire for more jobs. The City of Watkinsville is currently working on a downtown master plan with Georgia Power, driven by residential and commercial development, along with quality of life for the residents and creating more jobs. The City will continue to promote the arts and serve as an incubator for new businesses as they grow into larger businesses.

The Committee discussed future needs in technology and infrastructure.

Courtney Bernardi stated the focus of the IDA for many years has been the Highway 316 corridor due to property ownership there. Focus can now shift towards other areas such as Highway 15 and Highway 441.

John Daniell, speaking as the Chairman of the Oconee County Board of Commissioners, named creating jobs, building wealth, and citizens who will get involved in the community as major focal points of the County. He explained the importance of being selective and spending money on the right projects. A conversation on the advantages of data centers followed.

Rick Waller discussed the Highway 441 corridor and need for more four-lane development in our county.

Courtney Bernardi advised there are over 500 acres of privately owned land still available in the Orkin tract near Caterpillar, along with other tracts along Highway 316. She gave updates on the automotive plant industry in Georgia and the strength of the Port of Savannah as it continues to grow, both of which give the Authority something to watch to determine what is the best for the future of our County.

John Daniell stated the county is currently focused on infrastructure developments to include finishing the sewer plant, expanding the water supply, and numerous roadway projects.

Rick Waller suggested more revenue could be generated in the community by utilizing an avenue where many citizens are already spending a lot of money: travel-sporting events. Sports tourism could be a big revenue generator through entry fees, restaurants, shopping, and hotels.

John Daniell explained that Dawson Park is currently in design with twelve outdoor fields and a gym that could make tournament opportunities possible. Market research is underway for economic impact, and traffic studies will be reviewed. Costs will be a large factor in what can be developed at the park.

Brian Brodrick stated the City does not have resources for an active recreation department, so they are looking to partner with others in recreation. He also stated that Rivian will need a supplier network very close by if the decision is made to market the industrial tracts and bring more people to the area.

Brock Toole stated the current road projects will help facilitate traffic and move people to where these projects develop.

Courtney Bernardi stated a huge sports draw for this area is having the University of Georgia in our backyard. The sports tourism business in Georgia is a huge industry.

Discussions continued about the possibility of a sports tourism industry while also enhancing the quality of life of the citizens, benefiting the county as a whole, creating an active and healthy community, and respecting natural beauty and the history of our community.

John Daniell mentioned the expansion at Heritage Park for the horse community and mountain biking.

Brian Brodrick mentioned the Harris Shoals developments, partnering with the schools, mental health benefits, and safety at the parks. He also discussed the benefits of connectivity between various areas.

Courtney Bernardi suggested posting County-branded QR codes at parks to direct people to close locations to get food, beverages and other things, along with an interactive map to help people find Oconee locations.

Rick Waller led a conversation on food trucks at events, while providing balance with existing restaurants.

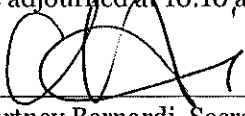
In conclusion, the Committee agreed it would like to spend money where it can most benefit development, encourage what is best for the community, improve quality of life, and provide value for all age groups.

John Daniell expects the site plans for Dawson Park to be completed by September 29.

The Committee will plan to meet again on Friday, October 3, 2025 at 9am for further planning discussion.

Adjourn:

There being no further business, on motion by John Daniell and second by Brian Brodrick, the meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.



Courtney Bernardi, Secretary
Oconee County Industrial Development Authority

10.3.25

Date

Submitted by: Holly Stephenson, County Clerk