Oconee County Board of Commissioners Meeting
Administrative Building Commission Chambers
March 31, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.
Minutes

Members Present:
Chairman John Daniell
Commissioner Mark Thomas
Commissioner Chuck Horton
Commissioner Amrey Harden
Commissioner Mark Saxon

Staff Present:
Daniel Haygood, County Attorney
Justin Kirouac, County Administrator
Holly Stephenson, County Clerk
Melissa Braswell, Finance Director
Donna Norton, Budget Officer
Adam Layfield, Water Recourses Director
Whitney Sperlik, Civic Center Director
Clay Christian, IT Specialist

Call to Order: 6:01 p.m.
Chairman John Daniell called the meeting to order.

Pledge of Allegiance:
Commissioner Mark Saxon led the Pledge after a moment of silence.

Approval of Agenda:
ACTION:

Motion:	Chuck Horton made a motion to approve the March 31, 2026 Agenda.
Second:	Mark Thomas
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:
None.

Statements and Remarks from Commissioners:
None.

Discuss Amendments of the Bear Creek WTP Upgrade Design:

Presented by:	Adam Layfield, Water Resources Director
Discussion:	Water Resources Director Adam Layfield explained that the Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority has approved additional design services for the Bear Creek Water Treatment Plant expansion project. Under the intergovernmental agreement, each participating member must also approve these amendments. Amendment No. 3 includes design of a third solids storage lagoon and evaluation of synchronous VFD alternatives. Amendment No. 4 adds design of a finished water crossover system between pump stations. Amendment No. 5 modifies the speed control strategy for the high service pump station. The request is for approval of the Amendments and Task Orders for a total of $72,366.74, to include all necessary budget amendments up to the contract amount for the life of the project.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the April 7, 2026 Regular Meeting.

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

<u>Discuss an Amendment to the Rocky Branch Pump Station and Force Main Task Order:</u>

Presented by: Adam Layfield, Water Resources Director

Discussion: Water Resources Director Adam Layfield explained there have been recent price increases for required submersible pumps at the Rocky Branch Road, Oconee Veterans Park, and Daniells Bridge Road pump stations. He also requests, only if necessary, a temporary pump station be installed at the Rocky Branch LAS site to aid in the decommissioning of the Dawson Park site. The request is for the total additional costs of $201,635.60, bringing the total contract amount to $2,660,136.60. The request includes all necessary budget amendments up to the contact amount for the life of the project.

Commissioner Thomas asked for a timeline on decommissioning the ponds at the LAS site. Mr. Layfield stated the ponds are currently being emptied and a demolition proposal will be available in the next month with a better timeline.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the April 7, 2026 Regular Meeting.

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

<u>Discuss the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Agreement:</u>

Presented by: Justin Kirouac, County Administrator

Discussion: The State of Georgia has awarded a subgrant to Oconee County with an 80/20 percentage match to be used for network refresh and enhancing next level cybersecurity. The county would receive $245,000 with $61,250 required in matching funds. To move forward, an agreement must be signed between Oconee County and the State of Georgia. The request from the IT Department is for approval of the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program Agreement, along with all future budget amendments as necessary for the life of the project and authorizing the Chairman to execute the grant documents.

Commissioner Horton asked where the funding comes from for this grant.
Mr. Kirouac explained the funding is through Homeland Security and GEMA.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the April 7, 2026 Regular Meeting.

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

<u>Discuss the Purchase of a Hydraulic Boom Mower for the Road Department:</u>

Presented by: Melissa Braswell, Finance Director

Discussion: The Road Department is requesting a new hydraulic boom mower with a rotary cutter attachment in the amount of $266,738.03 to replace existing equipment that can no longer be repaired. The request includes approval of the purchase of the equipment from the FY26 General Fund and a budget amendment.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the April 7, 2026 Regular Meeting.

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

Discuss Oconee County-run EMS Strategy:

Presented by: John Daniell, Chairman

Discussion: Chairman John Daniell stated a Town Hall Meeting was held on March 26, 2026 with a strong turn out to discuss EMS in the county and receive citizen input. He recapped the current EMS structure and history in Oconee County as presented at that meeting. The Georgia Department of Health oversees EMS regulation in Georgia. There are 10 regional EMS Councils in Georgia, with our Region 10 including Barrow, Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oconee, Oglethorpe and Walton counties. Chairman Daniell then explained the history of EMS services for Oconee County, which has been served by National EMS since 2008 when hospital-based service ended. An Oversight Committee was formed to review the performance of National EMS, investigate complaints, and to review billing rates and collection policies. In 2013, Oconee and Clarke counties along with the hospitals entered into an MOU with National EMS for service. In 2018, National EMS sold to Priority Ambulance. Since 2019, the Oversight Committees no longer met due to HIPAA concerns. Next, he explained the concerns with the current service to include longer response times, excessive billing with no oversight or quality assurance, and increased subsidies paid by counties and hospitals. The goal is to become to designated zone provider for Oconee County and have local control and oversight over EMS operations in the county. The Chairman's recommendation to achieve these goals is to implement a county-run EMS service and seek to become the designated 911 zone provider. He then explained the proposed plan as explained at the Town Hall Meeting. The start-up focus will be completely on 911 readiness with no non-emergency transports. A medical billing company will be utilized to maximize revenues. Oversight and accountability will be with the Board of Commissioners.

The item will be discussed again and considered at the April 7, 2026 Regular Meeting.

Commissioner Harden asked about a medical director in addition to an EMS Director.
Chairman Daniell responded that there must be a medical doctor contracted for this position, who must attend training through the state and would provide the oversight for the service.
Commissioner Harden asked if this medical director would enhance the current services of the Fire Rescue volunteers.
Chairman Daniell explained this would allow current volunteers who have medical certifications to function as such rather than being restricted to basic life support measures. This would be a benefit to our citizens.
Commissioner Thomas asked for more information on the county protocols.
Chairman Daniell explained that Oconee Fire Rescue members can only perform what protocols allow even if they have a paramedic certification. The new service will expand coverage and allow current paramedics more treatment options as soon as they arrive on scene.
Commissioner Saxon asked about the projected start up timeline.
Chairman Daniell responded that he would anticipate by the end of the calendar year once a director is hired, licensing obtained, and the hospitals are consulted.
Commissioner Horton asked what the response from the hospital has been.
Chairman Daniell stated it has been very positive. He discussed the importance of obtaining the zone rather than allowing it to go to National if given up by the hospitals.
The Commissioners discussed that National would remain in service until all parties are ready to make the change.

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

Discuss Approval of a Contract to Purchase Ambulances:

Presented by: John Daniell, Chairman

Discussion: Chairman John Daniell explained a proposal for the purchase of (5) 2026 Ford F-350 XLT's at a cost of $224,800 each from Ten-8 Fire & Safety per a cooperative agreement. The total funding request is for $1,124,000 from the FY26 SPLOST 2021 budget. Due to lead times, this purchase will also be requested in the FY27 budget.

The item will be discussed again and considered at the April 7, 2026 Regular Meeting.

Commissioner Harden confirmed these are brand new, top-of-the-line ambulances. He asked if these are re-sellable if the plan does not work out.
Chairman Daniell explained the demand for these vehicles would allow resale if necessary.

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

Discuss Approval of a Contract to Purchase Ambulance Equipment:

Presented by: John Daniell, Chairman

Discussion: Chairman John Daniell explained a proposal for the purchase of various equipment required for effective operation of five ambulances at a cost of $768,279.65 from Stryker Sales, LLC. The total funding requested is for $768,279.65 and is available from the FY26 SPLOST 2021, Capital Fund or Opioid funds. Due to lead times, this purchase will also be requested in the FY27 budget.
The item will be discussed and considered at the April 7, 2026 Regular Meeting.

Commissioner Saxon asked how the pharmaceutical portion would work.
Chairman Daniell explained pharmaceuticals are provided in sealed packaging through an agreement with the hospitals and any exchanges are made at the hospital.
Commissioner Thomas asked if he foresaw the county ever having a pharmaceutical vault.
Chairman Daniell thinks that is possible in the future and could provide cost savings.
Commissioner Harden asked which contract covers the lights and sirens.
Chairman Daniel explained this is covered under the vehicle contract.
Commissioner Harden asked if the ambulances will be equipped with electric stretcher lifts.
Chairman Daniell explained those will be electric, which reduces workers comp claims.

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, 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:	6:33 p.m.

No action was taken in Executive Session.
Executive Session Adjourned: 7:28 p.m.

Regular Session:

Motion:	Chuck Horton made a motion to adjourn back into Regular Session.
Second:	Mark Saxon
Voted in Favor of Motion:	Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion:	None
Action/Motion:	**Motion Passed.**
Adjourned into Regular Session:	7:29 p.m.

Commissioner Saxon spoke in favor of House Bill 190 that would benefit veterans with free membership of State Parks and additional health and welfare benefits.

Adjourned:

Motion:	Mark Saxon made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
Second:	Mark Thomas
Voted in Favor of Motion:	Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion:	None

Action/Motion: **Motion Passed.**

Meeting Adjourned: 7:31 p.m.

Chairman John Daniell

Holly Stephenson, County Clerk

4-7-26

Date