

**Oconee County Board of Commissioners Meeting
Administrative Building Commission Chambers
April 7, 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
Jody Woodall, Public Works Director
Lisa Davol, Parks and Recreation Director
Donna Norton, Budget Officer
Guy Herring, Planning and Code Enforcement Director
Kyle Stephens, Planner
Ethan Perry, Planner

Call to Order: 6:01 p.m.

Chairman John Daniell called the meeting to order.

Pledge of Allegiance:

County Clerk Holly Stephenson led the Pledge after a moment of silence.

Approval of Agenda:

ACTION:

Motion:	Chuck Horton made a motion to approve the April 7, 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:

Lee Becker, 1050 Scott Terrace, announced and invited all to candidate forum at the Community Center of Oconee Veterans Park on April 21, 2026 from 5:30-8pm for Senate and House races.

Statements and Remarks from Commissioners:

Chairman Daniell announced that early voting will run from April 27 through May 15 at the Oconee County Administrative Building from 8am to 5pm Monday through Friday; and Saturday, May 2 and May 9, from 9am to 5pm.

Also, GDOT will host a Public Information Open House for the Watkinsville Truck Bypass on April 16 from 5-7pm at the Administrative Building. The proposed routes are posted online for public comments.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes of March 3, 2026 Regular Meeting, March 26, 2026 Town Hall Meeting, and March 31, 2026 Agenda Meeting:

ACTION:

Motion: Mark Saxon made a motion to approve the March 3, 2026 Regular Meeting, March 26, 2026 Town Hall Meeting, and the March 31, 2026 Agenda Meeting minutes.

Second: Mark Thomas

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

Voted Against Motion: None

Final Action: **Motion Passed.**

Proclamation Recognizing April 2026 as Safe Digging Month in Oconee County:

Presented by: John Daniell, Chairman
Commissioner Chuck Horton presented a proclamation recognizing April 2026 as Safe Digging Month in Oconee County to Public Works Director Jody Woodall.

Variance P25-0309:

Applicants:	Abrar and Ambreen Ansari
Owners:	Abrar and Ambreen Ansari
Location:	3810 Malcom Estates Ridge
Acreage:	±3.34
Zoning:	R-1 (Single Family Residential District)
Request:	Variance to increase the maximum allowed lots accessing a private drive easement from five to six.

Presented by: Guy Herring, Planning & Code Enforcement Director

Discussion: Mr. Herring briefed the Board regarding the request for the property, which is currently zoned R-1 (Single Family Residential District) in the Suburban Neighborhood Character Area. The applicants and owners are requesting a Special Exception Variance from UDC Section 1012.07 to increase the maximum lots allowed to access a private drive easement from five to six. Staff recommends approval of the request with three conditions.

The Public Hearing was opened.

Abrar Ansari, owner, spoke in favor of the request due to the geography of the lot.

There were no further comments in favor of the request and no comments against the request.

The Public Hearing was closed.

ACTION:

Motion: Amrey Harden made a motion to approve Variance P25-0309 for Abrar and Ambreen Ansari; ±3.34 acres; 3810 Malcom Bridge Ridge to allow six lots to access a private drive with three conditions.

Second: Chuck Horton

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

Voted Against Motion: None

Final Action: **Motion Passed to Approve Variance P25-0309 with three conditions.**
(See documentation in Ordinance and Resolutions Book No. 26.)

Appeal of Administrative Decision P26-0069:

Applicants:	Jeffrey W. DeLoach
Owners:	Deferred Tax, LLC
Location:	Oconee Connector
Acreage:	±6.84
Zoning:	OIP (Office Institutional Professional)

Request:	Appeal of the decision of the Planning Director that a Preliminary Site Plan for two buildings with a total of 26,000 SF of retail space was not reviewed by the Development Review Committee while an active rezoning case was pending for the property.
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Presented by: Guy Herring, Planning & Code Enforcement Director
Discussion: Mr. Herring briefed the Board regarding the request for the property, which is currently zoned OIP (Office Institutional Professional) in the Regional Center Character Area. The applicant is appealing the decision of the Planning Director that a Preliminary Site Plan for two buildings with a total of 26,000 SF of retail space was not reviewed by the Development Review Committee while an active rezoning case was pending for the property. The proposal was not reviewed based on UDC section 1214 which was applied and in effect during this process. Mr. Herring presented the findings and history of this rezone and appeal process.

The Public Hearing was opened.

Jeff DeLoach, attorney for the owner, swore in Mr. Kenneth A. Beall to testify on behalf of the applicant and owners as the architect for the project. Mr. DeLoach questioned Mr. Beall to certify the application he originally submitted, the email confirmation from November 23, 2025 that the application was successfully submitted, an email from December 1, 2025 advising an application completeness review had been completed, the review from the Oconee County website link, a list of uploaded documents related to the preliminary site plan to include a traffic impact study, and a January 30, 2026 report of the status of the application for preliminary site approval.

Mr. DeLoach submitted these six exhibits as part of the record to Chairman Daniell.

He stated the appeal is submitted under Section 1301 of the UDC. The decision being appealed is the determination that Mr. Herring provided by email on February 13, 2026. He states that Mr. Herring acknowledged the site development plan was submitted by the applicant on November 23, 2025 at which time the property was zoned B-2 and had been since 1988. The zoning was not changed until 44 days after this application for the proposed site plan was submitted, when OIP zoning was passed for the site on January 6, 2026 against the owners' objection. Mr. DeLoach states that Oconee County UDC is not in compliance with Georgia Law, explaining moratorium laws and the applicant's constitutional rights. He explained why Section 1214 has not been appropriately applied and cannot override State Law. He requests the BOC reverse the decision of the Planning Director and determine the application should be reviewed under the B-2 zoning which was in effect on November 23, 2025 when submitted.

*There were no further comments in favor of the request and no comments against the request.
The Public Hearing was closed.*

ACTION:

Motion: Chuck Horton made a motion to uphold the decision of the Planning Director.
Second: Mark Saxon
Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion: None
Final Action: **Motion Passed to uphold the Appeal of Administrative Decision on P26-0069.**
(See documentation in Ordinance and Resolutions Book No. 26.)

Discuss the Text Amendments to Articles 2, 3, 6, 11 and 12 of the Unified Development Code:

Presented by: Guy Herring, Director of Planning and Code Enforcement
Discussion: Guy Herring outlined the proposed changes to Articles 2, 3, 6, 11 and 12 of the Unified Development Code.

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

ACTION:

Motion: Mark Saxon made a motion to approve the text amendments to Articles 2, 3, 6, 11 and 12 of the Unified Development Code.
Second: Amrey Harden
Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion: None
Final Action: **Motion Passed.**
(See documentation in Ordinance and Resolutions Book No. 26.)

Consider Appointment to the Oconee County Board of Tax Assessors:

ACTION:

Motion: Mark Saxon made a motion to appoint Lafe Hansford to a term to begin immediately and expire March 31, 2028.
Second: Mark Thomas
Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion: None
Final Action: **Motion Passed.**

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. The item was also discussed at the March 31, 2026 BOC Meeting. 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. He explained that each county is a designated EMS Zone and the zone provider for Oconee County is Trinity St. Mary's and Piedmont. 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 two goals that have come to the forefront are to become the 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 prior meetings.

The Public Comment Period was opened.

Tommy Malcom, Northwest Woods, asked about the possibility of allowing citizens, families, or entities to donate to the county EMS plan.
Chairman Daniell explained there is a special revenue fund that will allow anyone to make donations.

There were no further comments, and the Public Comment Period was closed.

ACTION:

Motion: Chuck Horton made a motion to approve the start-up of a County-run EMS Service.
Second: Mark Saxon
Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion: None
Final Action: **Motion Passed.**

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

ACTION:

Motion: Mark Saxon made a motion to approve the Contract to Purchase Ambulances.
Second: Mark Thomas
Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion: None
Final Action: **Motion Passed.**

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. The request includes necessary budget amendment up to the life of the contract up to the contract amount.

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

ACTION:

Motion: Mark Thomas made a motion to approve the Contract to Purchase Ambulance Equipment.
Second: Amrey Harden
Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion: None
Final Action: **Motion Passed.**

Consent Agenda:

There were no items removed from the Consent Agenda.

ACTION

Motion: Mark Saxon made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented.
Second: Mark Thomas
Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion: None
Final Action: **Motion Passed.**

- 1) Approval of Amendments of the Bear Creek WTP Upgrade Design.
- 2) Approval of an Amendment to the Rocky Branch Pump Station and Force Main Task Order.
- 3) Approval of the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Agreement.
- 4) Approval of the Purchase of a Hydraulic Boom Mower for the Road Department.

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:

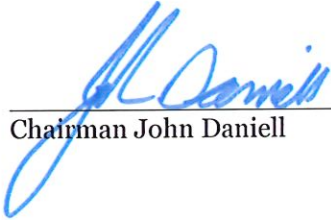
None

Action/Motion:

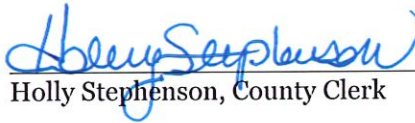
Motion Passed.

Meeting Adjourned:

6:52 p.m.



Chairman John Daniell



Holly Stephenson, County Clerk

5-5-26

Date