

OCONEE COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Oconee County Administrative Building
CALLED MEETING
January 27, 2026

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
Justin Kirouac, Oconee County Administrator

The meeting was called to order at 9:38 a.m., by Chairman Brock Toole.

Approval of Agenda:

On motion by Brian Brodrick and second by Courtney Bernardi, the Agenda was approved.

Approval of Minutes:

On motion by Courtney Bernardi and second by John Daniell, the Minutes for the Meeting of January 13, 2026 were approved as presented.

Discussion on Dawson Park:

Brian Brodrick asked if the IDA would plan to fund the beautification for the last phase of the Experiment Station Road widening, as he would like to see consistency. John Daniell responded that there is still \$76,000 in reserve for the final phase of beautification, which is not included in the \$5.4 million that the IDA has available at this time.

Rick Waller expressed concerns over depleting IDA funds on the Dawson Park project in case another opportunity is presented in the future. He brought up the additional funding expected from SPLOST during the time that grading occurs. John Daniell explained the expected funding has been considered in SPLOST 27, but much of those funds will be required for maintenance and improvements at other County parks. Inflation costs are also being considered. Rick Waller then asked how the IDA could generate revenue. He questioned whether the IDA could loan the county the money or charge a fee based on tournaments to provide revenue back to the IDA. John Daniell explained the prior history of the IDA is to assist the county with bonding and financing the larger projects. Discussions continued around the IDA's purpose and history. Brian Brodrick stated there should be clarity with the group on the purpose of the Committee, whether to aid in strategy or just be a financing arm. He mentioned the possibility of a small hotel room fee as an IDA revenue producer. Brock Toole stated the purpose should be both a financing arm and a partner with the county on economic development. Daniel Haygood stated that with any IDA projects, the county typically puts the money up and the IDA is a helper. When a need is identified for IDA funding, possibilities for economic stream could be discussed at that time.

John Daniell stated the County is planning for six to eight fields in the first phase of Dawson Park depending on budget and funding, and each field will require approximately \$500,000 to fund turf over grass. He requested the IDA contribute \$500,000 per field for up to eight fields which would be a \$4 million maximum amount. Courtney Bernardi stated that less fields mean less economic development impact as many tournaments will not be held at a smaller complex, so she feels at least eight fields should be constructed in the initial phase. Rick Waller asked the status of the gymnasium. John Daniell stated the County could not currently commit to the gym in the first phase because the money is not available. The gym would likely require IDA bonds or GO bonds, which would require a referendum and decision left up to the citizens. The fields are the top priority now with a goal of eight fields. At completion, the park can

hold 16 fields. Courtney Bernardi and Brian Brodrick stated the importance of going with the most fields possible to support the sports tourism industry and bring in more teams and tournaments.

Brock Toole proposed the IDA fund \$500,000 per field for eight fields, for a maximum total of \$4 million. Rick Waller asked again about a possible loan. Brian Brodrick stated the Committee should look at this as an investment to create jobs, hotels, and tourism. He proposed investing the money, then looking at revenue streams down the road once development occurs, possibly through hotel stay fees. Courtney Bernardi suggested the Committee think broadly, stating the project cannot stop with six to eight fields as that would not be large enough to be a driver in the sports tourism field. During the two-year time frame expected to complete these fields, talks with developers could bring other projects during the process. The full impact comes with a complete complex, hotels, restaurants and other developments so that large tournaments will choose to come here as opposed to other locations. Brian Brodrick added that first impressions are important so the park should be as complete as possible and look good from the start. Daniel Haygood stated the Oconee County IDA has broad powers. Brock Toole thanked the members for wonderful discussion at the last few meetings. John Daniell stated the County has never done a project of this size. The citizens must first pass SPLOST 27, then pass TSPLOST for county to have funding to fully commit to Dawson Park and the number of fields completed in the first phase. A gym is also needed as soon as it can be funded. The County will complete all the grading for the park initially so that additional fields can be added quickly once the money is in place. Discussions continued about the importance of publicly educating the citizens on SPLOST and TSPLOST before the elections and the proper wording of the items on the ballots. Brian Brodrick added that this group should be looking fifty years down the road, setting a bigger plan in place, when talking about strategy.

On motion by Brian Brodrick and second by Courtney Bernardi, the Authority approved unanimously to invest in turf for Dawson Park fields at a price of up to \$500,000 per field for up to eight fields for a maximum of \$4 million.

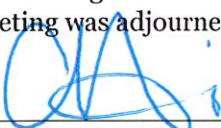
On motion by Brian Brodrick and second by John Daniell, the Authority approved unanimously for Courtney Bernardi to solicit proposals for a strategic plan for Sports Tourism.

Daniel Haygood advised a Called Meeting will likely be needed in net few weeks as he expects Presbyterian Homes to ask the OCIDA to issue bonds for additional financing which will produce some revenue.

Courtney requested updated timelines from the County on Dawson Park's progress once the numbers are all in, and that the project be looked at as a partnership with the IDA.

Adjourn:

There being no further business, on motion by Brian Brodrick and second by Courtney Bernardi, the meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m.



Courtney Bernardi, Secretary
Oconee County Industrial Development Authority

1.15.26
Date

Submitted by: Holly Stephenson, County Clerk