

**Oconee County Board of Commissioners Meeting
Administrative Building Commission Chambers
July 28, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.
Minutes**

**TAX MILLAGE LEVY PUBLIC HEARING
July 28, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.**

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
C. J. Worden, EMA Director
Jaron Queen, EMS Director
Adam Layfield, Water Recourses Director
Whitney Sperlik, Administrative Services Director
Clay Christian, IT Specialist

Call to Order: 6:00 p.m.

Chairman Daniell stated this is the first Public Hearing for the 2026 Tax Millage Levy. He gave the current digest numbers, stating that the incorporated digest increased to \$424,597,452 for 2026, with \$19 million of the increase related to real growth. The incorporated exemptions increased by \$4 million. The unincorporated digest increased to \$3,520,900,575 billion for 2026, with \$176 million of the increase related to real growth. The unincorporated exemptions increased by \$63 million. The Tax Commissioner's calculated roll back rates to only recognize real growth are: unincorporated -4.157, incorporated -4.984. State law requires the gross millage rates to be the same for both unincorporated and incorporated areas. The rate is then reduced by local option sales tax for all taxpayers and the insurance premium tax which affect unincorporated areas only.

The recommended unincorporated millage rate for 2026 is 4.124 mills, which is lower than the calculated roll back rate. The recommended incorporated millage rate for 2026 is 5.154 mills, which is the same as 2025. The recommended tax rates will generate additional property taxes of \$788,124 over 2025, which is 4.5% less than the true real growth of the digest at the true roll back rate.

The second Public Hearing will be on August 4, 2026. Then the third and final Public Hearing will be on August 25, 2026, followed by a vote on the millage rate.

Commissioner Harden asked about the increase in exemptions.

Chairman Daniell responded that opting into House Bill 581 and increasing local homestead exemptions two years ago have resulted in the increase in exemptions.

Commissioner Thomas asked Chairman Daniell to restate the total digest numbers.

The Public Hearing was opened.

Rahn Lieberman, 4490 Meadow Springs Drive, confirmed with Chairman Daniell that the proposed millage rate for the unincorporated rate is lower than the recommended rate.

*There were no further comments.
The Public Hearing was closed.*

Call to Order: 6:07 p.m.

Chairman John Daniell called the meeting to order.

Pledge of Allegiance:

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

Approval of Agenda:

ACTION:

Motion:	Chuck Horton made a motion to approve the July 28, 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:

County Administrator Justin Kirouac stated he would be presenting a \$2,000,000 grant opportunity for the Rocky Branch Road improvements for Dawson Park at the August 4, 2026 meeting.

Chairman Daniell announced the county is seeking applicants for the following Community Advisory Boards: Family and Children's Service and the Recreational Affairs Committee. The deadline for applications is August 14, 2026 at 12noon.

Due to renovations, the Courthouse will be closed to the public for the rest of the week and will re-open on August 3, 2026 at 8am.

Discuss the Oconee County Points of Distribution (POD) Plan:

Presented by: C. J. Worden, EMA Director

Discussion: EMA Director C. J. Worden explained that the Oconee County Emergency Management Agency has completed the development and review of the POD Plan which will establish procedures for the distribution of life-sustaining commodities like water, food, tarps, and other supplies to residents following a disaster or emergency event. The recommendation is for adoption of this plan to provide a standardized framework for coordinating county departments, volunteers, state agencies, and partner organizations during emergency commodity distribution operations.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the August 4, 2026 Regular Meeting.

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

Discuss a Traffic Calming Policy:

Presented by: Justin Kirouac, County Administrator

Discussion: County Administrator Justin Kirouac explained that Oconee County periodically receives requests from neighborhoods to install traffic calming devices within subdivisions. The proposed Traffic Calming Policy would establish a pathway for concerned citizens to request such devices on subdivision roads as well as a toolkit of allowable traffic calming devices, which were shown with a Power Point. Installation of the devices would be the responsibility of the subdivision property owners after meeting petition thresholds. Should the county elect to install any devices and create a Special Tax District, there would be an upfront capital expenditure by the county.

Commissioner Harden clarified that when an HOA does not exist, the residents would still be responsible based on lots of record.

Commissioner Thomas asked about differences between public or private roadways.

Mr. Kirouac responded that the government has little influence on private roads.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the August 4, 2026 Regular Meeting.

The Public Comment Period was opened.

Stephen Aleshire, asked about flock cameras, speed tables, and roundabouts.

Chairman Daniell responded this has nothing to do with flock cameras and law enforcement. The county does not allow speed bumps in the roadway, so other ways are being looked at to reduce speeding in neighborhoods. Chairman Daniell explained roundabouts have been placed at six of the most dangerous intersections in the county with excellent safety results.

There was no further Public Comment.

Discuss the Bid Award for EMS Billing Service:

Presented by: Jaron Queen, EMS Director

Discussion: EMS Director Jaron Queen explained that an RFP was issued for a company to provide EMS billing services to collect on EMS transports. The recommendation is to award the bid to Emergency Billing LLC, a company out of Maysville, Georgia with over twenty years of emergency billing experience. The billing company will deposit all collected funds into a county account, then charge a 7.5% collection fee, to include use of their hardware and training.

Commissioner Harden asked the term of the contract.

Mr. Queen responded that we could terminate at any time, but a thirty-day notice is recommended. The contract can renew after one year for a total of five years.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the August 4, 2026 Regular Meeting.

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

Discuss FY27 Equitable Sharing Funds Budget Amendment:

Presented by: Melissa Braswell, Finance Director

Discussion: Finance Director Melissa Braswell explained that Oconee County has received equitable sharing funds from the Department of Justice's asset forfeiture program. These funds constitute federal financial assistance and may be used for law enforcement purposes that supplement the agency's appropriated resources such as training and education, equipment, awards and memorials. Because the funds were received after adoption of the FY27 budget, a budget amendment is required to appropriate the funds. A revenue-neutral budget amendment of \$181,164 is recommended to supplement the FY27 budget using equitable sharing funds.

On consensus, this item will be placed on the Consent Agenda at the August 4, 2026 Regular Meeting.

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

Discuss and Consider a Georgia Transmission Corporation Encroachment Agreement for US 441 Sanitary Sewer Division:

Presented by: Adam Layfield, Water Resources Director
Discussion: Water Resources Director Adam Layfield explained that the Georgia Transmission Corporation has provided an encroachment agreement allowing Oconee County to construct, operate, and maintain a 12-inch gravity sewer across its 75-foot-wide East Watkinsville-Mars Hill transmission line right-of-way. The request is for approval of this agreement that must be signed by August 3, 2026 and completed within one year of execution. The request includes authorization for the Chairman to execute the agreement and any related documents.

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

ACTION:

Motion: Mark Saxon made a motion to approve the Georgia Transmission Corporation Encroachment Agreement for US 441 Sanitary Sewer Diversion.
Second: Chuck Horton
Voted in Favor of Motion: Mark Thomas, Chuck Horton, Amrey Harden, Mark Saxon
Voted Against Motion: None
Final Action: **Motion Passed.**

Discuss a GDOT Utility Aid Contract Amendment for SR35/Rays Church/Malcom Bridge Road:

Presented by: Adam Layfield, Water Resources Director
Discussion: Water Resources Director Adam Layfield explained that the contract previously approved for water relocation at this intersection was less than the actual contract cost of \$437,780. Thus, Oconee County's 75% share will increase from \$281,853.75 to \$328,335. The request is for a contract amendment and related budget amendment for the additional \$46,481.25, along with authorization to use GDOT's two-installment payment option. The request includes 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 August 4, 2026 Regular Meeting.

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

Discuss and Consider Osbourne Road Water Main Relocation and Task Order:

Presented by: Adam Layfield, Water Resources Director
Discussion: Water Resources Director Adam Layfield explained that an existing 12-inch water main line on Osbourne Road is experiencing continued leakage. The recommendation is for replacement to avoid further issues. The request includes all necessary budget amendments up to the contract amount for the life of the project.

Commissioner Thomas asked if there would be any outage during valve replacement. Mr. Layfield responded there would be a period of water shutoff with the most impact on Dove Creek Middle School. Thus, the urgency to complete the project.

Commissioner Harden asked if the 20-inch casing would allow for future growth. Mr. Layfield stated the 12-inch was the maximum for the 20-inch protective casing.

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

ACTION:

Motion: Chuck Horton made a motion to approve the Osbourne Road
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 and Consider an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for TSPLOST:

Presented by: John Daniell, Chairman
Discussion: Chairman John Daniell explained that the commission is preparing to ask voters for a renewal of TSPOST and explained what the prior TSPLOST funds have been used for. If passed in November, he stated the sales tax rate would remain the same, a one mil reduction in property taxes would be maintained, and additional paving and intersection improvements could be completed. A minimum of \$72 million would be expected over the 6-year collection period. Of the collection, Watkinsville would receive \$5.5 million, Bogart would receive \$2.2 million, North High Shoals would receive \$950,000, and Bishop would receive \$568,000, leaving \$62 million for county-wide projects. The county would commit \$17.1 million for property tax relief, \$36 million for paving, and \$9.5 million for safety and intersection improvements. All the mayors of the cities have approved this IGA. The recommendation is for the county to approve the IGA also.

Commissioner Harden asked if all intersections have been addressed as planned from the prior TSPLOST.

Chairman Daniell explained all had been addressed and additional intersections are also being worked on with the funds collected.

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

ACTION:

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

Discuss and Consider a Referendum Resolution for TSPLOST:

Presented by: Daniel Haygood, County Attorney
Discussion: County Attorney Daniell Haygood explained that approving this resolution would implement the IGA and authorize the levying of a special sales and use tax for transportation that would commence April 1, 2028. The Board of Commissioners and the Board of Elections would jointly approve the Call for Election to allow a ballot question on the November 3, 2026 ballot. He stated that October 5, 2026 will be the last day to register to vote in the November 3, 2026 election.

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

ACTION:

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

Executive Session:

Motion: Mark Saxon made a motion to adjourn into Executive Session to discuss land acquisition, personnel, and litigation.
Second: Mark Thomas
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: 6:40 p.m.

No action was taken in Executive Session.

Executive Session Adjourned: 7:26 p.m.

Regular Session:

Motion: Mark Thomas 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: 7:28 p.m.

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: 7:28 p.m.


Chairman John Daniell


Holly Stephenson, County Clerk

8/4/26
Date