

# **LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

## **Regular Business Meeting Minutes**

**August 2025 – 7:00 p.m.**

**Administration Building**

### **1. Call to Order**

Present for the meeting were Chairman Traylor, Vice-Chairman Fletcher, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Gilles, Commissioner Boyle, County Administrator Townsend, County Clerk Davidson, and County Attorney Mayfield.

Chairman Traylor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

### **2. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **3. Invocation**

The Invocation was given by Chairman Traylor

### **4. Approval of Agenda**

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve the agenda. Vice-Chairman Fletcher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **5. Minutes Approval**

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to approve the following minutes. Commissioner Boyle seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- Workshop Meeting – July 10, 2025
- Regular Business Meeting – July 15, 2025
- Public Hearing – July 15, 2025

### **6. Old Business**

None

### **7. New Business**

#### **Ordinance 2025-14 REZONING APPLICATION-FROM C-2 TO M-1 HIGHTOWER COLLISION**

Commissioner Boyles made a motion to approve Ordinance 2015-14 Rezoning application from C-2 to M-1 Hightower Collison with conditions as follows. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- Access for business activities must be approved by Georgia Department of Transportation and installed before building permits are issued;

- Security lighting should be downward facing and shielded;
- A 100' treed buffer required along the back property line and a 25' buffer along all other property lines;
- If security fencing is chain link, applicant will use slats and not plastic sheeting; and
- This property is located in the Eady Creek watershed and has a maximum 25% impervious surface area requirement.

### **Ordinance 2025-15-REZONING APPLICATION-FROM C-2 TO M-1 JOE SIMS FOR SINJAY KUMAR**

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve Ordinance 2015-15 Rezoning application from C-2 to M-1 Joes Sims for Sinjay Kumar with conditions as follows. Vice-Chairman Fletcher seconded the motion.

- Access for business activities must be approved by Georgia Department of Transportation and installed before building permits are issued;
- Security lighting should be downward facing and shielded;
- A 50' treed buffer required along property lines adjoining agriculture/residential properties and a 25' buffer along all other property lines;
- If security fencing is chain link, applicant will use slats and not plastic sheeting; and
- A maximum 50% impervious surface area requirement including buildings and parking.

### **Reconsideration of Laney Rezoning Request**

Commissioner Lovett made a motion for Justin Laney to be able to resubmit zoning application to the Joint Planning Commission and then to the Board of Commissioner at the November meeting for a vote. Commissioner Boyle seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **RFP-2505-1 LMIG**

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve and award the bid to C.W Matthews in the amount of \$1,476,684.87 based on the recommendation of the staff and EXP. The project includes the resurfacing of Piedmont, Howard, & Zebulon Roads. The funds will come from the Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG). Commissioner Boyle seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Surplus of 2017 Caterpillar Track Loader 259D**

Commissioner Boyle made a motion to approve the surplus of a 2017 Caterpillar track loader 259 D. The sale price will be around \$31,000.00 and will go towards the purchase of the new track loader for \$ 60,402.00. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Purchase of New Caterpillar Track Loader 265**

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to approve the purchase of a new caterpillar track loader 265 for a cost of \$91,402.00 less the \$31,000.00 for the 2017 caterpillar track loader 259 leaving the total cost of purchase at \$ 60,402.00. Commissioner Boyle seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Surplus of Fire Engines**

- 1981 Engine 5 Vin # 3728
- 1998 Volvo Semi Truck and Trailer Vin # 3434

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve the surplus of a 1981 Engine 5 Vin # 3728 and a 1998 Volvo Semi Truck and Trailer Vin # 3434. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Administrator's Contract**

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to approve the Administrator's contract for a period of three years. Commissioner Boyle seconded the motion. Vice-Chairman Fletcher and

Commissioner

Gilles denied the motion. Chairman Traylor broke the tie and approved the motion. The motion passed 3-2.

## **08. Administrator's Report**

- July Financial Report
  - Total Revenue: \$5,819,215.74
  - Total Expenditures: \$9,520,216.21.
  - Year-to-Date Expenditures: \$9,520,216.21
  - Excess (Deficiency) of Revenue over (Under) Expenditures: \$-3,701,000.47
  - General Fund: \$1,610,397.92
  - Special Revenue Fund: \$57,243.51
  - Capital Project Fund : \$3,005,929.16
  - Debt Service Fund : \$2,492,168.10
  - Total Governmental Funds: \$7,165,738.69
- Project Updates
  - Animal Shelter: The sewer line has been repaired with a sweep Y Tee. Someone will start working on the floors next Monday. They will add extra sealant at no cost to the County.

- Atlanta Street (State Route 7): GDOT is waiting on a pole for the signal light that should come in late October. Waiting on GDOT to modify the guard rail.
- Approved the bids for the paving of Piedmont, Howard, and Zebulon Road RFP and the bid was awarded to C.W. Matthews.
- Waiting on clarification with the County Attorney, offers can be made on the right of way of Chappel Mill Road, High Falls Road, and Rock Springs Road.
- The County has an RPF for a lawn care service and the due date is August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025.
- GDOT is waiting for approval for a new speed of 45 mph to 35 mph in the School Zone on Hwy 18.
- Sales Tax Distributions
  - LOST: \$152,595.91
  - SPLOST: \$267,716.71
  - TSPLOST: \$250,207.88
- Ameri Pro Health project update

Request: 291   Transport: 170   Refusal: 82   Cancellation: 39   Response Time: 6:34

## 09. Public Comments

Bonnie Martin – 626 Piedmont Road

Commented that the road near her residence does not need resurfacing. Stated that further south there is only one bad section. Noted only one area near Honeywood that collects water.

Regarding the Laney rezoning request, questioned why the Court sent the matter back to the Board of Commissioners. Emphasized that the land use plan was followed. Hopefully, the Board will make the right decision again.

Harold Jackson – 200 Laurel Drive

Commented on Johnstonville Road, stating that C.W. Matthews completed the work, but it feels like “riding a roller coaster.” Questioned whether choosing the cheapest option was the best investment. Addressed the proposed tax millage rate, noting that he and his wife manage with retirement and Social Security, but those on fixed incomes cannot absorb additional costs. Urged the Board not to raise property taxes, suggesting there are alternative ways to make financial adjustments. Stated that most citizens would agree with his position.

Elaine Hallada – 131 Steeplechase

Thanked the Board of Commissioners for following the Comprehensive Plan on the rezoning decision and hoped they could get that worked out. Expressed relief that her taxes will not increase. Commented that school taxes will not provide meaningful relief. Spoke about the Solid Waste Authority (SWA), past and present board members, and stated that if the Board of Directors had done proper due diligence with invoices and contracts and completed the project in 2017 as planned, the County would not now be facing a millage rate increase. Stated that with better management, money would be available for the Recreation Department and every road in the County could be paved.

Expressed frustration that issues with the SWA continue and reminded citizens of a meeting scheduled for 6:00 p.m. tomorrow at the Courthouse.

Donald Hartman – 507 Old Milner Road

Spoke about the recent storm, noting it impacted areas further to the west, and expressed thanks to Commissioner Boyle for looking after the tower situation. Requested to be kept informed on the progress regarding the radio tower and communications with Southern Rivers and others involved. Stated it was nice to see Commissioner Lovett's wife Linda Lovett present tonight.

## **10. Round Table**

Commissioner Lovett reported on the recent sale of a large piece of property, stating that the revenue from the sale was sufficient to reduce every homestead in Lamar County by a small amount. He said this demonstrates the County's commitment to what he calls the "Rural Bliss" of Lamar County, noting that in the past 2.5 years there has not been a single subdivision, the population has remained steady, and industrial property growth continues. He addressed HB 581, explaining that the only increase he identified was a 0.22 millage rate adjustment based on conservation and soil values. Commissioner Lovett, along with Vice-Chairman Fletcher and Board of Education Chairman Danny Turner, reviewed projections for the next year's tax digest, estimating \$1.9 million in property growth alone. Commissioner Lovett suggested the Board consider establishing a senior exemption, noting that seniors are among the most active members of the community and many live on fixed incomes that do not rise with inflation.

Commissioner Lovett humorously commented that Walter would not take a bet with him on this matter. He also reported that he offered Planning and Community Development Director Buice a bet regarding Lamar County's property taxes. He wagered \$158.00 (representing all counties in Georgia except Lamar) that she could not find another county in the State that had reduced property taxes for homesteads. If she is successful, he owes her \$158.00; if not, she owes him a dozen doughnuts. Commissioner Lovett said Ms. Buice would present her findings publicly at the October meeting. He emphasized his confidence that Lamar County is the only county in Georgia to have reduced property taxes for homesteaders.

Commissioner Gilles reported on a Saturday workday cleanup at the Old Jail Museum. She shared photos of the stairwell cleanup and the removal of leaves from the steps, noting that Mexican tiles were uncovered during the process. She also recognized Commissioner Boyle for mowing the grass and Joe Thompson for assisting with grass cutting. Commissioner Gilles announced that donations are being accepted for the upcoming Halloween event to support repairs at the Old Jail Museum. She shared that Halloween props are being prepared and encouraged additional contributions. The event will be held on Halloween night from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Commissioner Boyle reported that he had spoken with GDOT two weeks ago. As a volunteer firefighter, he noted that he frequently hears radio traffic about numerous wrecks occurring at State Route 18 and Fredonia Church Road. After reviewing crash reports from 2020, GDOT plans to provide safety recommendations. He added that the right-of-way has recently been

cleared in the direction of Johnstonville, which should help improve visibility, as the hill on State Route 18 is a primary safety concern.

Commissioner Boyle also shared that he has been in discussions with Southern Rivers regarding the installation of a single 190-foot-tall meter reader pole. Southern Rivers has expressed agreement to allow the County to use the pole, and negotiations are underway with the City of Barnesville for a property lease. He noted that this project appears to be moving forward quickly, and although it will involve some cost to the County, he is enthusiastic about the progress.

County Clerk Davidson reported that on August 20, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., there will be a continuation of the 5-year update to the Lamar County Hazard Mitigation Plan. This will be the second meeting in the process, focusing on the critical facilities list, hazards and their frequencies, and the vision/goals/objectives. She noted that various entities across the County will participate in this meeting. Commissioner Boyle added that the meeting is open to the public and that grant funding credit would be given to all participants who signed in..

Chairman Traylor stated that he had become friends with TJ Hutson over the past few years. He noted that Mr. Hutson ran for Secretary of State and previously served for 17 years as a Judge in Treutlen County. Mr. Hutson has frequently attended meetings on behalf of Lt. Governor Burt Jones, serving as the Lt. Governor's South Georgia Field Director. Chairman Traylor remarked that Mr. Hutson would often sit alone for extended periods conducting business, but on many occasions there was a line of citizens waiting to meet with him to discuss both County and State concerns. Chairman Traylor shared that at one time he had considered pursuing State office. However, he recalled advice from an elected State official who emphasized that at the local level, elected officials remain more accessible to citizens in everyday settings such as church or the grocery store, where people frequently wish to engage with them directly. By contrast, he noted that fewer citizens typically take the time to speak with their State and House Representatives.

Chairman Traylor encouraged citizens to take the opportunity to speak with TJ Hutson when he is in town and to thank him for the work he is doing on behalf of the community.

Chairman Traylor stated that years ago EXP conducted a study on the County roads. In the past, Commissioners selected a list of priority roads to be paved, but at that time Public Works Director Rigdon had added roads to the list without having full details. Since then, the County has hired EXP, a professional company that provides video footage of all roads and uses that footage to score and determine when roads should be paved or resurfaced. Chairman Traylor noted that many roads in the County have been neglected for years, and some now require full reclamation due to their poor condition.

Chairman Traylor reported that McIntosh Trail has reached out to schedule a presentation on suicide prevention. He noted that during the mid-year review, the Coroner emphasized that suicide cases have increased significantly and that their office has been extremely busy. While some Department Heads and Constitutional Officers focused on facility needs such as roof repairs, the Coroner stressed the urgency of addressing the rise in suicide cases. Chairman Traylor also mentioned that approximately ten years ago, his wife conducted a study on

suicide in Lamar County which predicted this increase. McIntosh Trail is in the process of scheduling dates for the presentation, which will also include information on crisis hotlines, including available 1-800 numbers.

Chairman Traylor reported that on Thursday at 10:00 a.m., a “Healthy Brain Initiative” will be held at Summers Field. He noted that they have been conducting dementia-related programs as part of this initiative.

Chairman Traylor discussed the importance of understanding a Tax Anticipation Note (TAN). While attending training in Athens, the speaker asked how many counties were familiar with a TAN, and only a few raised their hands. He then asked how many counties currently had a TAN, and Chairman Traylor said he raised his hand, later realizing this was not a positive thing.

He explained that many citizens may not realize Lamar County previously operated with a TAN, which he compared to “living on a credit card.” The County did not have sufficient funds to operate for an entire year and had to borrow between \$3.5 to \$4.5 million, resulting in approximately \$40,000.00 to \$60,000.00 in interest costs to taxpayers. Some counties, by contrast, maintain enough reserves to avoid TANs and even plan several years ahead when setting tax rates.

Chairman Traylor praised County staff, noting that through lean management and strong leadership, particularly from County Administrator Townsend, the County was able to eliminate the TAN. As a result, they reached a position where taxes could be lowered—a significant achievement considering the County was financially strained just four years ago. He emphasized that this progress took hard work and forward-thinking and expressed optimism about further financial improvements in the future. He also noted the value of maintaining open, constructive conversations with the School Board. Addressing Mr. Harold Jackson, Chairman Traylor remarked that while the savings may “only be enough to get a biscuit, it is still a biscuit.” He acknowledged that when residents receive their assessment notices in the mail, the figures may initially seem alarming; however, once reviewed closely, it becomes clear that HB 581 provided meaningful relief. He credited both the Board of Commissioners and state legislators for helping put this measure in place, stressing that it has greatly benefited the community and allowed Lamar County to be in a much stronger position today.

Chairman Traylor said people look at the millage rate and they do not understand how that works. The HB581 were they froze the evaluations, there will be communities that say, “Well, we are rolling back” and you might read in the newspaper or on Facebook that they rolled back 2.5 mills, but they did not Opt-In to HB581. He said an example that Tax Assessor Haddock used was on a house valued at \$690,00.00. This year the assessed value on the same house is \$835,000.00. If Lamar County had not opted into HB581, they would be using that value of \$835,000.00. At that point it appears you are rolling back the millage rate but for those that did not opt-in to HB581 you will still be paying more money. So, do not allow what you read make you feel like you are spending more money. He said is excited with the Board of Commissioners, County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson made this happen.

## 11. Adjournment

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to adjourn the Regular Business meeting at approximately 8:09 p.m. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Lamar County Board of Commissioners

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Ryran Traylor, Chairman

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Jarrod Fletcher , Vice-Chairman

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Jason Lovett, Commissioner

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Ashley Gilles, Commissioner

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Truman Boyle, Commissioner

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk