



LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Workshop Meeting
Administration Building
June 12th, 2025
12:30 p.m.

Call to Order

Chairman Traylor called the Workshop Meeting of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners to order at 12:30 p.m. Present for the meeting was Chairman Traylor, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Gilles, Commissioner Boyle, County Administrator Townsend, County Clerk Davidson, and County Attorney Mayfield. Vice-Chair Fletcher joined the meeting via Teams.

Workshop Meeting Items for Discussion

Grant Opportunities – Fire & EMS

SAFER Grant (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response)

- A three-year grant that would fully fund three new firefighter positions.
 1. Year 1: 100% funded
 2. Year 2: 75% funded
 3. Year 3: 30% funded

After year three years, the County must assume full responsibility for funding the positions. If the grant is not awarded, the positions will not be filled. Once the grant ends, the County may retain or release the positions as needed.

FP&S (Fire Prevention and Safety)

This grant is separate from SAFER Grant; offers four years of 100% funding. The grant is designed to aid recruitment through outreach to Gordon State College and local high schools. The grant would support Fire/EMS marketing, training, and outreach efforts. The

grant could cover one full-time position to assist with recruitment and department promotion (e.g., social media, LED signage).

Combined, the grants would support four new positions. The applications are on a short timeline; a vote is needed at the next Board meeting to commit County matching funds, if required. Commissioner Lovett noted Three Rivers Regional Commission is coordinating grant submissions for multiple fire departments. Fire Chief Matthews mentioned that many fire departments apply for these grants but do not retain staff after funding ends. However, the County could include the positions in the County budget in order to retain the new firefighters.

Emergency Preparedness

Discussion of a proposed 4-hour GEMA training session for department heads on emergency response protocols. The aim is to improve coordination between the EOC and Fire Services, especially for large-scale events. EMA is coordinating this effort based on best practices from Spalding County and other major disaster responses.

Surplus Fire Trucks

Engine 4 (1989 model) and Engine 7 (1981 model) have failed annual pump tests and are no longer fit for fire service. Engine 4 will be moved to the County Barn. Engine 7 and three others to be auctioned via TAC; cannot be legally donated or sold directly for fire service use. There was a request to donate one truck for farm use, but legal restrictions prevent such transfers. Some exceptions may apply to law enforcement; this will be reviewed by legal counsel. These engines will not be used since there are two new fire trucks that are now in service. Commissioner Lovett suggested auctioning remaining vehicles legally and using proceeds for future needs. Fire Chief Matthews stated that Engine 7 has sentimental value to it since former Fire Chief Andrews used this fire truck in Dekalb County. Chairman Traylor reflected on the original vision for a full-time fire department and noted Lamar County's progress compared to other counties.

Animal Shelter agreement with the Friends of the Lamar County Animal Shelter

Animal Services Director Tyler White (Mr. White) presented a proposal to partnership with the "Friends of the Lamar County Animal Shelter" through an agreement as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. It does not give them internal functions of the Lamar County Animal Shelter, but it allows them to supplement the animal shelter with volunteers. They are a self-sustaining organization and would not be backed by County funding. It allows them to solicit for fund raising events such as spay and neuter funding, Pet Finder for adoptable pets, missing pet finder facial recognition software, vaccine and microchip clinics, Community programs and pet training incentives (e.g., \$40 Rover coupons) and animal supply needs such as dog beds, dog bones and animal equipment. The "Friends of the Lamar County Animal Shelter" will have its own board. Mr. White said he would be in an

advisory role as the Director giving them the current needs of the shelter. They would lead the charge on volunteer organizations. They will be able to help with adoption programs, and events hosted at the facility. They will organize off-sight events such as adoption in the Ingles Grocery Store parking lot. They will help to supplement a lot of the expenses for the animal shelter.

Mr. White asked the board to consider an agreement with the “Friends of the Lamar County Animal Shelter” and recognize them as an entity of their own. They will be able to host meetings for their organization.

Commissioner Gilles requested a copy of with the “Friends of the Lamar County Animal Shelter” bylaws. She further inquired about their insurance. Mr. White stated he had waivers of liability that they would sign so the County is not liable.

Mr. White explained that with the “Friends of the Lamar County Animal Shelter” being a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, they will be able to apply for more grants and programs that are being missed. Commissioner Gilles asked what is preventing them from applying for those grants now. Mr. White said the agreement shows that their funding is being donated over to the Lamar County Animal Shelter and they will be able to use the County’s logo, name, logo and animals. It does not give them entitlement of perks. Chairman Traylor pointed out that when people donate money to the animal shelter it goes through the Community Foundation.

Additional Personnel

Mr. White explained that the shelter is currently staffed with three full-time employees; however, operating a shelter requires coverage seven days a week. The current team includes a manager, an administrative assistant, and an animal control officer. When the animal control officer is unavailable due to training or illness, their ability to respond to the increasing volume of calls, especially since the grand opening is significantly impacted. As a result, some calls are going unanswered, and staff are still working to return voicemails and respond to emails that have not yet been addressed.

Mr. White emphasized that maintaining the animal shelter is their top priority. He cautioned that if the shelter is not properly maintained, they could face serious consequences from the State Department, including the potential loss of the shelter's license. He noted that it currently takes the staff three to three and a half hours each morning to clean and maintain the facility. As a result, staff members are unable to respond to phone calls or emails during that time.

Mr. White clarified that he is not requesting inconsistent volunteer or inmate labor but is instead seeking the addition of two full-time positions: an Animal Control Field Technician and an Animal Care Assistant. These positions would allow current staff to better respond

to calls, while enabling him to focus on networking, management, project oversight, and addressing the broader needs of the community.

Mr. White noted that community needs include implementing TNR (Trap, Neuter, or Spay) programs, hosting microchip and rabies clinics, and creating space to intake new animals that are appearing across the County. At present, the shelter is at full capacity, and they are having to turn people away. Additionally, they have not been able to meet the demand for successful animal adoptions due to limited staffing and resources.

Mr. White stated that the animal shelter requires coverage seven days a week. As a result, staff members are currently working weekends without any days off. He emphasized that shelter operations are high-demand, and additional resources are needed to provide the level of service the community expects, particularly field services. In addition to requesting two new staff positions, Mr. White also requested the addition of a vehicle to support operations. He explained that if he is called to respond to an incident, an additional vehicle would allow staff to cover multiple calls efficiently.

Mr. White further stated that the current team is working more than 80 hours a week, and with only three employees, they are unable to keep up with the full scope of shelter responsibilities.

Chairman Traylor asked whether the vehicle was immediately needed and if Mr. White had discussed the matter with Sheriff White. Mr. White responded that they had only spoken briefly, and he was advised to bring the request before the Board of Commissioners first.

Commissioner Gilles expressed her support for Mr. White having the necessary tools and resources to perform his duties effectively. However, she pointed out that the current challenges reflect concerns that were raised prior to the shelter's opening. She noted that one of the initial commitments was the involvement of volunteers, which has not materialized as expected.

Commissioner Gilles also voiced her reservations about allocating additional funds to the shelter, particularly as the County is considering the purchase of a fire truck, which serves direct emergency purposes. She questioned whether it was worthwhile to invest in another vehicle when the shelter is already at full capacity and unable to take in more animals. Additionally, she asked if Mr. White could provide evidence of any current volunteer support.

Mr. White responded that the shelter had already explored the use of volunteers but found their availability to be inconsistent and unreliable. He emphasized that the shelter requires staff coverage seven days a week and reported that he has personally worked over 160 compensatory hours since the shelter opened.

Mr. White explained that, as a government agency, they have a responsibility to respond to every call received but are unable to do so within the current time constraints while also maintaining the shelter and caring for the animals. He clarified that the requested additional vehicle is intended as an administrative vehicle, which would enable him to meet with the field officer, as requested by the supervisor. He stressed that their current focus is on enforcement and accountability.

Since the grand opening, the shelter has received over 170 calls, the majority of which have been enforcement-related. These included 9 bite cases, 20 cruelty investigations, 80 general enforcement calls, 2 livestock cases, 2 animal seizures, 5 shelter intakes, and 58 stray animal reports. Commissioner Gilles expressed concern about citizens from Pike County dumping animals in Lamar County, noting that Pike County's animal shelter is currently not open.

Commissioner Lovett said this request is not a slight percentage increase. In the private sector they do not look at a 3 percent increase. In local government it's a five percent increase and you are good to go. They have added zero to the end of what they were promised even though none of this is Mr. White's fault. He feels that the animal shelter was not properly sold to the community but now they are in. He asked Mr. White what he is asking for. Mr. White said including himself he is asking to have five staff members. He currently has three and he needs two new employees and one more vehicle. He is also asking for an additional \$12,000.00 be added to his operating budget to be allocated for dog food, cat food and cat litter. Commissioner Lovett requested that at the next budget meeting he bring receipts. Commissioner Lovett stated that he was in support of getting Mr. White the resources needed to do his job and stated he has done a remarkable job with the animal shelter.

Chairman Traylor noted that County Administrator Townsend had hoped the requested items could be postponed until January 1, 2026, before being implemented. However, amount of volume is a contributing factor to implementing this request now. Chairman Traylor asked what are the things that are needed right now. Mr. White said the funding for food and litter and an Animal Control Officer. Commissioner Lovett asked if he could figure out a way to make the two new trucks they just bought work for now. Mr. White said he would speak to Sheriff White about getting a truck.

Mr. White said he also wanted to bring to the table another program called Petco Love Partners. This allows them to provide a resource to the community when it comes to missing and found pets. This is a facial recognition system that allows them to tie into their system. It allows them to notify the citizen who has reported a missing animal and increases the chance for unification and gets the animal back home. They have also partnered with Fix it Pet Spay and Neuter. They also working on partnering with Fix Georgia pets and Rover Rescue for adoptions. They will receive a \$40.00 coupon that goes into the adoption

package for obedience or dog training. Mr. White says this increases pet retention so people will not return the animal because it pees in the house. This bridges that gap as a resource and an incentive to keep the pet. They also partnering with Petfinder which will allow them to post adoptable pets online in real time.

County Administrator Townsend stated \$155,000.00 was added to the budget for positions in the Fire Department, and Zoning. There is \$66,588.00 remaining which could be used for this proposal. In order to include everything in the proposal they will need to take \$30,412.00 from contingency.

Proposed Increase Request Recap

Total for two positions (9 payroll cycles + benefits): \$29,758.46.

Additional supplies request for dog, cat food and litter: \$12,100.00.

Suggestion to use \$30,412.00 from contingency funds to support the proposal.

Infrastructure and Maintenance:

Renovations and repairs to kennels and facilities are needed.

Commissioner Lovett requested updates from Wright on renovation requirements.

Public Hearing Meeting

Planning and Community Development Director Buice addressed the board with the following Public Hearings. (Ms. Buice). The Joint Planning Board recommended approval on all three request.

i. Rezoning Application-Highway Commercial to Light Manufacturing and R-2-Eleven Group LLC-Paul King

Eleven Group LLC has applied to rezone 5.5 acres located at 1402 Old Hwy 41(outlined in blue below) from Highway Commercial to Manufacturing 1 (3.74 acres) and Residential 2 (1.76 acres) as shown on survey below. The applicant proposes to have a commercial repair shop on the front acreage and a home on the back acreage. The Lamar County Comprehensive Plan shows this area as Industrial with an implementation strategy of maximizing existing sites and ensure adequate screening. The Joint Planning Board recommended approval. The staff recommendation was any access for the business come off of Old Hwy 41 and not on Brown Springs Road. All structures have setback at least 75 ft. from the front property line. Ms. Buice recommended that if the property were under two ownerships, a privacy fence be installed between the two.

ii. Rezoning Application-Agricultural Residential to Manufacturing 1-Micah Patrick and Buddy Patrick -Old 41 Hwy, Tax ID 017021

The applicants have purchased the 8.55-acre tract that fronts on Old 41 Highway. The request is to develop a small business park for light manufacturing and for other uses included in M-1 zoning. The Lamar County Comprehensive Plan shows this parcel as Rural Residential, while neighboring properties are shown as a combination of Industrial and Suburban Residential. The current zoning of the surrounding properties are as follows: to the south by Industrial, to the as a combination of Highway Commercial and Residential, and to the north by a cemetery and just north of the cemetery by Neighborhood Commercial. The staff recommendation was that the first 50 ft. of the property remain concrete and all structures fronting Old 41 Hwy be setback at least 75 ft. from the front property line.

iii. Rezoning Application-Residential 4 to Agricultural-Residential Spencer and Jessica Young 219 Rogers Circle, TAX ID 025 050

The Young family purchased this 5.49-acre property(outlined in blue) in 2024 with the intention of creating a small family farm. After a visit with the building and zoning office and realizing that any type of agricultural use is not permitted in Residential 4 zoning, they immediately asked to apply for a rezoning. Properties on Rogers Circle and the adjoining Carol Lane are zoned R4 , and these are surrounded by larger agricultural properties. The Lamar County Comprehensive Plan has this area as "Rural Residential" with goals towards 5 plus acre tracks to protect agricultural uses. The staff recommendation is that it be limited to crop farming, livestock and farm animals, farm retail only and a vegetable stand. Any structures housing animals should be located to the rear of the property and at least 50 ft. from all property lines.

Regular Business Meeting Discussion

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Invocation-Pastor Rex Kessler with Lilla Baptist Church
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Approval of Minutes
 - May 15, 2025 – Workshop Minutes
 - May 20, 2025 – Public Hearing Minutes
 - May 20, 2025 – Regular Business Meeting Minutes
6. Old Business
 - i. Ordinance 2025-04 Francis Street, Tax ID 049 095

Planning and Community Development Director Buice stated that the applicant and Commissioner Lovett had met with the residents.

Commissioner Gilles had concerns about drainage into neighboring properties. They used chopped up toilets therefore ceramic materials are exposed. They buried them using M10, but with all the rain the runoff continues downhill to the other side. Now, all of the porcelain is exposed and some of that may be on the right of way. Ms. Buice said the property owner was given 7 days to clean up and ensure nothing leaves the property.

ii. Ordinance 2025-06 Community House Road, Tax ID 082 046

Chairman Traylor stated he toured the area with Elaine Hallada and reviewed different perspectives of the issue with the applicant and the residents.

iii. Public Safety Tower and Radio Communications Presentation

A formal presentation is scheduled for Tuesday.

7. New Business

1. Ordinance 2025-07 – Rezoning: Highway Commercial to Light Manufacturing and R-2 (Applicant: Eleven Group LLC – Paul King)
2. Ordinance 2025-08 – Rezoning: Agricultural Residential to M-1 Manufacturing (Applicants: Micha & Buddy Patrick – Old 41 Hwy, Tax ID 017021)
3. Ordinance 2025-09 – Rezoning: R-4 to Agricultural Residential (Applicants: Spencer & Jessica Young – 219 Rogers Circle, Tax ID 025 050)
4. Ordinance 10-Lamar County Fire Prevention & Protection

Removed until Fire Marshall Goen can meet with the City of Barnesville on hydrant infrastructure.

5. Ordinance 2025-11-Lamar County Outdoor Commercial Burning

Issues reported regarding pine trees being burned on commercial lots, producing heavy smoke and affecting nearby residents' health. Inspections of burn pits to occur once or twice daily. Farmland is not considered commercial burning.

6. Lamar County Fire Marshall Fees

Proposed fee schedule includes buildings, sprinkler systems, and alarms. The permits will be processed through Planning and Zoning.

8. Board Appointments

1. Reappointment to DFACS Board – Annie Ruth Bush

2. Reappointment Letter – Annie Ruth Bush received.
3. DFACS Bylaws reviewed by the DFACS board.

9. Administrator's Report

10. Public Comment

Diane Perry:

Requested prayers for Linda and Jarrod, Praised Truman for 2 years of effort on the tower, Concerns about buckling on the floors at the newly renovated gym, Voiced concern about animal shelter closure seen on Facebook and the conditions of the shelter, Requested updates on grants and requested status of grants that the Board of Commissioners are working on, Reported she once knew someone that worked on disaster relief planning and suggested she try to get in touch with her for assistance, Voiced concerns with the SWA and meeting issues, Requested information during Round Table instead of "I don't know". Requested to know about trash clean-up, speeding, heavy traffic on Hwy 36, Requested to know what citizens are coming in and talking about and what the Board of Commissioners have handled from previous meetings and how it has been addressed.

Elaine Hallada:

Stated to Commissioner Lovett that she is thinking about his wife Linda all the time, noted Tyler White's dedication to animal welfare, asked when the animal shelter would re-open, asked for clarity on who the shelter architect and was it built to specifications, asked if taxpayers would absorb any reconstruction costs and what are the ramifications for the builder, requested a public response Tuesday evening for these issues to be answered, stated that the SWA meeting is Monday night at 6:00 p.m. and requested for everyone to show up to the meeting.

Donald Hartman:

Noted improvement in Commission teamwork, stated they are have way through the year and they should continue moving forward, requested more community input at the meetings, Praised Fire Chief Matthews for his grant efforts, emphasized a need for public safety funding (fire engine, ladder truck), mentioned the upcoming meeting Monday night regarding the SWA, requested updates of the Legacy 75 project and the need for a station on the property, stated he was thinking of Commissioner Lovett and hoped there would be a speedy recovery for his wife Linda.

Katie Kavanaugh: 1"28'15

Opposed rezoning near Frances Street, raised concerns about commercial encroachment, impact on rural character, runoff, and safety of children on horseback.

11. Round Table

Commissioner Fletcher: Joined online; thanked everyone for support and prayers.

Commissioner Lovett: A statement was made to Commissioner Fletcher to “hurry back,” and appreciation was expressed to everyone for their prayers for Linda, noting that she has a long road to recovery. Comments were made regarding the ongoing issues at the animal shelter, describing it as a “fluid situation.” It was emphasized that the County is committed to ensuring that necessary repairs are made appropriately and without delay. Praise was given to Animal Services Director White for the job he is doing, noting that he has a lot on his plate and that his primary concern is for the well-being of both the animals and the staff. It was reported that efforts to secure grant funding are ongoing and will continue during the upcoming budget meetings. Commissioner Lovett also addressed the ongoing situation with the Solid Waste Authority (SWA), stating that they have been trying for two and a half years to get to the truth. While he is not seeking retribution, he emphasized that the truth has not yet been received. He described the appointment of a special master by the Judge as a positive development and the right path forward. He expressed anticipation for the upcoming Monday night SWA meeting, noting that while he has not yet seen an agenda, proper notice has been given. From a governmental standpoint, he acknowledged that procedural requirements have been met and said he looks forward to seeing everyone at the meeting.

Commissioner Gilles: Acknowledged and expressed appreciation for the Lamar County High School Arts and Drama recognizing their contributions during the last Board of Commissioners meeting. She noted recent accidents occurring in Lamar County and shared that she is actively looking into a safer road initiative. She plans to discuss this further with Congressman Brian Jack. Commissioner Gilles also reported that she, Chairman Traylor, and Commissioner Lovett recently visited the White House, where they received updates on Federal Government efforts. She remarked that it appears the Federal Government is returning more powers back to the States. Additionally, Commissioner Gilles coordinated a meeting between the Board and Congressman Brian Jack, which took place at a secure and undisclosed location.

Commissioner Boyle: He reported that Steel Road experienced a closure due to an unexpected pipe issue and the road was closed for about three days. The public was notified. The Commissioner stated that for the past two years, he has been concerned about traffic conditions at the By-Pass on Highway 36 and Highway 41. Drawing from his experience as a traffic crash investigator, he identified several roadway issues that he believes contribute to traffic problems in that area. He has been advocating for the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to install “Stop Ahead” blinking lights, and he reported that the lights were installed yesterday. Regarding Highway 36, it was noted that GDOT has been sealing cracks along the roadway extending to the interstate. Additionally,

a construction project is underway on Highway 36 near the Cole Forrest Subdivision. The Commissioner explained that when a vehicle turns left into the subdivision, other drivers are able to perform a “go-around” maneuver to pass the stopped vehicle safely. He also addressed a complaint received about vehicles running the stop sign at the intersection of Morgan Dairy Road and Barnesville Road. He shared a personal experience from four to five years ago while riding his motorcycle, when a vehicle ran the same stop sign without slowing down. He reported that efforts are being made to install some type of warning signage, as many drivers are unfamiliar with that intersection.

County Clerk Davidson: Reported that a new Human Resources/Payroll Director has been hired and will begin employment on June 16th, 2025. Additionally, a new Media Relations/Administrative Assistant has been hired and started work this past Friday. Prayers were lifted for Linda Lovett and Commissioner Fletcher.

Chairman Traylor: The presentation regarding the communications tower will be delivered by Commissioner Boyle at the upcoming Regular Business Meeting. Citizens were asked to notify the County if they become aware of any grant opportunities, so those can be researched and potentially pursued. The animal shelter continues to be a significant focus. The County Administrator anticipated future growth and needs in terms of both staffing and equipment. The Commissioner mentioned speaking with community members who initially donated or volunteered. One individual shared that the project had been in the works for so long—over ten years—that she had “aged ten years” waiting for its completion. While she said she could “go read a book to a dog,” she was unable to volunteer in a more active role. It was noted that many of the original volunteers have passed away over the last decade, and it is now time to recruit younger, motivated volunteers. Issues at the animal shelter include water intrusion under the walls. While a more expensive product was originally considered, a more affordable alternative was approved by the State Director. Unfortunately, that product has not worked as expected, and the County is now working to resolve the issue. Voters were reminded to participate in upcoming elections, as turnout has been low. Finally, it was reported that the Senior Center bus has been repaired. A previously scheduled trip was still able to occur, as funding was obtained from Three Rivers to charter a bus.

Additional Comments

Diane Perry reported that she went to a City Council meeting last week and people are coming and reporting what is going on and gave the County Board of Commissioners kudos for what they have accomplished.

12. Executive Session

None

- Real Estate

- Litigation
- Personnel

13. Adjournment

Commissioner Lovett made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:20 p.m. Commissioner Gilles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Ryran Traylor, Chairman

Jarrod Fletcher , Vice-Chair

Jason Lovett, Commissioner

Ashley Gilles, Commissioner

Truman Boyle, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk