

LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mid-Year Review

Administration Building

July 16, 2025, 9:00 AM

1. Call to Order

Chairman Traylor called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 AM. Present for the meeting was Chairman Traylor, Commissioner Lovett, Commissioner Fletcher, Commissioner Gilles, Commissioner Boyle, County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson.

2. Workshop Meeting Items for Discussion

i. 9:00 a.m. – Mid-Year Review – County Administrator Townsend

FY 2025 Budget Overview:

- The original FY 2025 budget, approved in December 2024, totaled \$22,539,328.00.
- Applying the rollback rate reduced the budget to \$21,794,370.00.
- As of December 31, 2024, the County had collected approximately 92% of projected revenue.
- Title Ad Valorem Tax (TAVT) trends have increased by 1.29%.
- Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) collections are trending 3.1% higher than forecast.

Expenditure Trends and Budget Performance:

- Overall County expenditures are slightly below projected levels.
- Liability insurance costs increased by \$30,262.00.
- Expenditure breakdown:
 - Personnel: 50.7%
 - Contracts: 18.1%
 - Outflow: 11.6%
 - Capital Outlay: 11.8%
 - Supplies: 7.7%
 - Special Revenue Funds: No changes reported.

Departmental Budget Variances:

- Commissioner Training: Expenditures exceeded forecast due to ACCG and other training needs.
- IT Costs: Overages tied to unbudgeted computer equipment and camera installations at the new Animal Shelter.
- Risk Management: Insurance increases noted.
- Conflict Attorney: Costs higher than anticipated.

- Old Administration Building: Budget higher due to Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigation Office occupancy and elevator service costs.
- Increase at the Health Department due to a water leak.
- Decrease in building permit activity.

FY 2025 Financial Projections:

- Approved Budgeted Expenditures: \$18,162,866
- Increase from prior year: \$8,322,344 (45.8% increase)
- Projected Expenditures: \$16,055,851.29
- Projected Revenues: \$17,417,908.11 with a 9.053 Rollback
- Projected Revenues: \$18,196,272.11 with a current 10.092 Rollback
- Projected Revenues: \$18,600,119.11 with (a ½ mill increase) 10.592 Rollback

Chappel Mill, High Falls, & Rock Springs:

- LMIG, Special LMIG, and LAR funds received for Chappell Mill, High Falls, and Rock Springs Roads totaled \$2,072,778.62.

Millage Rate and Digest Review:

- Current millage rollback rate: 9.054, down from 10.092
- Revenue Projections:
- 9.053 millage rate: \$17,417,908.00.
- 10.092 millage rate: \$18,196,272.00.
- 10.592 millage rate: \$18,600,119.00.
- 2025 Net Digest value: \$800,000.00, up from \$400,000.00 in 2014
- Historical Millage Rate Comparison:
- 2006: 8.952
- 2024: 10.092

Property Tax and Legislation Impact:

- Reviewed PT32 and discussed HB 581, including:
- New exemption for \$85 million in personal property
- Potential impacts on property tax revenue and exemptions

Employee Compensation and Benefits:

- Reviewed employee salary and benefit studies to ensure competitiveness with surrounding counties.
- Discussed health insurance cost-sharing and impacts on recruitment and retention.
- Budget Comparisons with Neighboring Counties
- Lamar County:

- Population: 22,257
- Budget: \$18,162,866
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ii. 9:30 a.m. – Sheriff’s Department-Sheriff White and Major Holmes

- Sheriff White addressed ongoing communications infrastructure challenges. Discussion outlining the need for tower and antenna upgrades:
- Repeater estimated at \$11,385.00
- New antenna and tower projected at \$180,000.00
- Portable radios are currently operating below capacity, functioning at 1 watt instead of the standard 5 watts

Lamar County is financially responsible for the Fire Department. It was noted that if the Board of Education wishes to continue using this infrastructure, they will need to contribute funding. Funding sources discussed included:

- SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax)
- Collaboration with the City of Barnesville, City of Milner, Lamar County Fire Department, and Lamar County Schools
- Excess SPLOST funds roll into the General Fund at the end of the term, with any existing debt service paid out first
- The last SPLOST cycle concluded with only \$1.80 remaining

The County previously used a mesh network, but it was disabled due to lightning damage. Equipment and Subscription Costs Overview

A review of major operational and technology expenditures included:

- K2 Tower Access Fee: \$7,200.00/year (access only; not actively used)
- Annual Subscriptions:
 - Onsolve: \$8,000
 - SSI (Court Software/Fingerprinting via GBI): \$3,000 for fingerprinting; \$12,000 for court writing software
 - CAD system (SSI interface): \$7,600/month
 - Time clock system: \$4,300/month
 - Axon (body cameras): \$12,000/year (*being terminated*)
 - Johnson Controls (fire protection): \$6,000/year
 - Accurate (research/fines): \$24/year
 - Pawn shop tracking system: \$4,400/year
 - Slot camera system (license plate readers): \$19,000/year

The County is transitioning to Ten-8 for body cameras and managing video backups in-house. The slot camera system was praised for aiding in:

- Locating a suspect in a deputy shooting
- Solving a murder case on High Falls Park Road

- Recovering a stolen vehicle from a multi-state theft ring

All technology expenses are included in the current budget except the slot camera system.

Personnel and Pay:

- The Sheriff's Office continues to face pay and recruitment challenges.
- Starting salaries are lower than in surrounding counties.
- Long-term employees are the only ones earning competitive pay.
- The jail faces high turnover, with some employees allegedly quitting and drawing unemployment.
- A new employee manual is being developed and will be distributed soon.

Tower and Facilities Funding Discussion:

- Commissioner Lovett asked County Administrator Townsend about budgeting \$20,000 annually for ten years for a tower and antenna.
- SPLOST funding for Sheriff's Office facilities is allocated but will be used in later years.
- Sheriff White stated funds were budgeted to renovate the Criminal Investigation Division building, and the excess may be applied to other needs.
- Commissioner Boyle noted Fire Chief Matthews may have funds available.
- All agreed that the City of Barnesville, City of Milner, and the School System should contribute to infrastructure costs.
- Commissioner Boyle reported that Chris Murray owns the old radio station, WBAF, on Hwy 41. The old AM antenna is functional. The AM station has to be on the air in order to transmit FM. radio and without the AM station it is no good. He would like to put up an AM on the antenna, but his radio contacts said they will get AM noise on the radio signals: announcers, music, etc. and they do not want to do that. He would like to build a tower that belongs to Lamar County. Southern Rivers has expressed their desire to have space on the tower. They are paying \$1,440.00 a year to sit on the K2 tower. He has a company from Waycross, Georgia that builds towers that will give him a quote for 200 ft. they stay under 200 ft. do not have to have lights on the tower which would be an additional expense. Mr. Murray is paying \$1,200.00 a month for the lease of the AM antenna and he could be another paying customer to have FM on the tower.
- A Waycross-based tower company may offer a quote for a 200 ft. tower, avoiding lighting requirements.

Animal Control and Safety Needs:

- Sheriff White requested light bars for animal control trucks, which cost approximately \$11,800 per vehicle. These safety features are essential for roadside stops.

Courthouse and IT Issues:

- Internet at the Courthouse security desk is currently down.
- Sheriff White suggested Wired Technology tap into the fiber line in the basement, identified by Clerk of Superior Court Tyson, for connectivity and camera integration.

Health and Maintenance Concerns:

- The Courthouse reportedly smells of mold and gas.
- Though AT&T workers said water was found in the basement, Maintenance Director Beverly found none upon inspection.
- Sheriff White remains concerned due to past black mold remediation costs and previous roof leaks, claiming the prior roofing contractor was inadequate.
- The gas company investigated but did not detect any leaks.

Jail Operations and Facility Needs:

- The jail currently houses 70 inmates, with a capacity for 150.
- Plans to add a standalone unit are under review.
- All jail locks were recently replaced using SPLOST funds.
- The transfer of the old Administration Building to the Sheriff's Office delayed their original 10-year renovation plan by eight years.
- Repairs to the 911 center cost upwards of \$200,000.
- The center was upgraded from analog to digital systems and now supports only six frequencies (Sheriff, Police, Fire, EMS, Gordon State College).
- It will cost \$250,000 to fully upgrade the 911 dispatch system.

Sheriff's Office Location Concerns:

- Sheriff White expressed concern about the current location of the Sheriff's Office due to nearby retail development.
- A state-owned facility off Highway 41 once used as a pre-release center was considered, but retrofitting it into a jail would cost \$15 million, making it impractical.

iii. 9:45 a.m. – Coroner's Office-Clay Tillery

- Chairman Traylor reported that Kenyatta Walker with McIntosh Trail has offered to provide suicide prevention training. Coroner Tillery stated he had a former Captain of the California highway patrol come and speak on suicide.
- Reported air conditioning issues in the office that are being addressed.

iv. 10:00 a.m. – Board of Elections-Anita Reid

- Reviewed recent election operations including early voting periods and precinct openings. Elections Superintendent Reid stated that the City of Milner does not have specific districts for their council members. It is at large. The City of Barnesville has districts for

their council members. If five people in the City of Milner want to be a council member and there are two slots available, then the one with the highest vote gets the slot. The City of Milner Charter states that the majority vote wins. If there are multiple slots open on the ballot then then a voter will pick two candidates. There is only one seat available for the Mayor so the ballot would say pick one. However, if they win and they decide they do not want the seat then the qualifying process starts over. There is only one seat available for the Mayor. If the ballot says pick two and there is only one person qualified they have to start over with the qualifying process the next week. Qualifying for the Elections for the City of Barnesville are on August, 18th, 19th and 20th and the same is true for the City of Milner. The County election is August 19th and 21st. This is for the Tax Commissioner. There will be a Special Election in the City of Milner, The City of Barnesville, The County and possibly the Board of Education in November. The Board of Education is going on the ballot for ESPLOST renewal.

- Reported that the last election was a waste of time due to the low turn-out with a total of 305 votes in June and 145 votes for the run-off. They had to have early voting; three weeks and two Saturdays, and then the run-off election day they had one week of early voting, and all of the precincts were open and manned. Elections and Poll workers were paid overtime wages or earned compensation time during the long election hours.
- Discussed vendor issues with Hewes Family Movers not being paid due to not turning in their invoices. Discussed budget considerations for truck rental options for future elections.
- Discussed providing information early to the Board of Elections office if they plan to have a special election.
- Discussed having high turnover and salary concerns in election staffing.

v. 10:15 a.m. – Planning and Zoning-Anita Buice

- Discussed vehicle and equipment needs including outfitting the truck that Mark Evans drives with lights and accessories for a cost of around \$10,000.00. This does not include the cost of a new truck; their truck is old, and they need a new one. The funds for this will come out of SPLOST.
- Case backlog and advertisement cost increases noted. When Mr. Evans there were 72 open cases and now they are down to nine open cases.
- Challenges with zoning signage, heavy metal signs, addressed with potential solutions involving Public Works.
- Building permit activity and new home construction trends reviewed. There have had 234 building permits this year. This includes new homes and remodeling.
- Consideration of contracting out high-level building inspections.

vi. 10:30 a.m. – Tax Assessor's Office-Jeannie Haddock

- Keeping the contract with Norman and Associates. Finishing the assessment's on the North part of the County. Hiring out the Commercial assessments contractor for the values on Legacy 75. The cost for qpublic is \$9,000.00 and they can go up to \$19,000 a year and this offers online applications for homestead exemptions, conservation use, mailing labels for the tax assessors and zoning office, and necessary studies. People want

services online. Took the contract for Tinker and Associates, personal property audit, out of her budget. This cost \$32,000.00.

- Online appeal system implementation and homestead exemption impacts discussed. Planning and Community Develop Director Buice (Mrs. Buice) explained that when they have a zoning request or variance, she gets a list of addresses out of qpublic so she can send letters to the surrounding neighbors. Currently the list cannot be transferred, and it does not show their mailing address in the generated list, just the parcels and the physical address. You have to click on the mailing list one by one, and you have to go back in and double count them one by one and then physically make labels. This is about 2 hours of work per application. With the new program in qpublic it would print the mailing list in label format instantly. This is a savings of \$1,500.00.
- Reported there were 130 appeals. Several of these were older and bigger homes; 300,000 to 400,000 square feet. Some appeals were repeats every single year. In order for your value to freeze, for three years, the value has to go down.
- Recent legislative changes with HB 581 affected tax assessments notices being sent out late.
- Noted that the Board of Education bond was not on the tax assessment notice.
- Property value trends were \$595 million in 2020 and in 2025 they are over a billion in property values. There has been an increase of 420 parcels and 75 new homes.

vii. 10:55 a.m. – Magistrate Court-Paul Kunst

- Facility and technology needs outlined including new computer and additional office/storage space. The computer the Magistrate Court Clerk uses is a Windows 7, and it will not download files. They are out of space for their records and the boxes are stacked in the corner of the Magistrate Court.
- Discussed using the old Health Building for extra storage or the old Administration Building for extra storage. Discussed the issues with records being off-sight.
- Internet and security improvements underway.

viii. 11:10 a.m. – Fire Department-Douglas Matthews

- Fire Inspections includes over 30 inspections. Waiting on the Ordinance before next steps. They have three building plans reviews.
- EMA building: Adding a classroom for half of the rear of EMA/Fire Admin Building. Need a transfer switch added to the electrical panel to plug in small generators for cooler computers and lights.
- Station 3: Cost of about 8 million dollars. The land is 4 acres, the septic is about \$15,000.00, with ATU/system adding around \$45,000.00 on to that. Boring is around \$50,000.00 to sewer with City of Milner; Sprinkler system is around \$50,000.00. Working on getting a quote from the Architect for the total cost.
- 2026 Vehicles: 2017 Ford Explore with 102,000 miles, keep for Fire Fighters to run calls, and move things around the county fire stations and daily operations.
- 2010 Chevy Tahoe-250,000 plus miles. Recruitment & Retention R&R coordinator should be able to use it, until they find something or budget for later.

- NFPA life safety code-set of online or books will cost \$3,000.00. An email account for Lamar Fire-NFPA needed.
- New Canon EOS R50 Mirrorless Camera RF-S18-45mm F4.5-6.3 IS STM lens kit, 24.2-Megapixel CMOS (APS-C) Sensor, 4K Video will cost \$750.00 to \$1,000.00.
- RIT Bag's for \$1,000 to \$1,500.00
- Volunteer Pay- Requesting and increase of \$15,000.00 per year, \$5,000 per quarter for a total of \$10,000 per quarter for a total cost of \$30,000.00. This currently goes towards 18 volunteer firefighters, with five more being hired.
- Request to add 8 hours for each Firefighter for setup and completion of training. A total of 50 will cost \$5,980.00 based on \$14.95 an hour.
- Training and Certification increase of \$1,600.00.
 - Grants-2025-Firefighter Grant (3 Firefighters)
 - Year 1 Total Cost County Share FEMA Share
 - \$181,399.20 \$45,349.80 \$136,049.40
 - \$192,119.16 \$48,029.79 \$144,089.37
 - \$203,540.13 \$132,301.80 \$71,239.05
 - Year three reflects a shift in the cost share to 65% County/35% FEMA and year 4 is all County.
 - Recruitment & Retention (R&R Coordinator)-100% Funded by FEMA
 - Year 1-\$55,000.00 Total \$71,467.00
 - Year 2-\$60,637.50 Total \$79,974.88
 - Year 3-\$60,637.40 Total \$84,637.13

All the about projections include a 5% COLA and a 10% annual increase in group insurance. The grant writer fee is payable upon receipt of successful award of the grant and does not factor into the County's local match calculations. The approximate payout for the grant writer is \$17,568.89 for three firefighters and the R&R Coordinator is \$15,538.42.

Discussion Summary – Volunteer Firefighter Work Policy

Commissioner Boyle raised concerns regarding inconsistencies in how volunteer firefighters are permitted or prohibited from performing work for the County. He questioned why some volunteer firefighters are allowed to conduct contract work for the County, while others, particularly those who own businesses are not. As an example, Commissioner Boyle referenced a volunteer firefighter who owns a fire extinguisher business and is the only person in the area equipped to hydrotest cylinders, a process that places the cylinders under water pressure to ensure they do not rupture. Due to County restrictions, this individual is prohibited from performing this service directly for the County. As a result, the cylinders must be sent to a diving supply company, which in turn subcontracts the work back to the same firefighter, thereby circumventing the County's policy.

County Administrator Townsend explained that County policy prohibits employees from serving as vendors. Commissioner Boyle requested clarification on whether the same policy applies to volunteers. County Administrator Townsend responded that under County policy, if a volunteer receives payment, they are considered an employee. Commissioner Boyle further cited instances

of perceived inconsistencies, noting that a volunteer firefighter, Richard Stanley, had previously performed roofing work for the County, while another volunteer, who owns a heating and air conditioning company, had been told he could not do business with the County. Commissioner Boyle emphasized the need for consistent application of the policy, stating, "Either it's good for everyone or bad for everyone. County Administrator Townsend responded that he was unaware Richard Stanley was a volunteer firefighter at the time the roofing work was performed. Chairman Traylor added that it may not have constituted a conflict since the work was conducted through Stanley's business. County Administrator Townsend also stated that the County uses a formal bid process and noted that Rooks Brothers Heating and Air had not submitted a bid. However, Commissioner Boyle said he was informed they were not allowed to bid. County Administrator Townsend explained that, in the case of the volunteer firefighter with the fire extinguisher business, former County Administrator Zellner had ruled it was a conflict of interest for the County to contract with him.

Fire Chief Matthews expressed his support for reevaluating and potentially amending the current policy. County Administrator Townsend mentioned another scenario involving a Public Works Department employee who works Monday through Thursday and owns a truck. The employee has expressed interest in delivering gravel to the County. Townsend raised concerns about the public perception of employees awarding business to themselves. Commissioner Boyle reiterated that he did not object to either case but emphasized the need for a clear and consistent policy. County Administrator Townsend concluded that going forward, the County may need to include a question on bid documents inquiring whether the bidder is a volunteer firefighter.

ix. 11:35 a.m.- Animal Shelter-Tyler White

- Reported he received documentation regarding the dog "Oreo," adopted by Commissioner Gilles. Although there were mild repercussions from a past incident, the paperwork confirms the matter was resolved. Over 30 adoptions were processed while the shelter was open. Through phone conversations and community outreach, many dogs were matched with ideal homes. They continue to receive emails and photos of successful adoptions, and the shelter is now recognized on a statewide level.
- Since opening on April 12, 2025, the animal shelter has processed over 200 animals, achieving a 92% adoption rate. This qualifies them for potential 2026 grant funding. However, if euthanizations become necessary, the rate could drop to 89%, jeopardizing grant eligibility. Owner-requested euthanizations are not counted against the live release rate.
- The Best Friends Animal Society, a private organization (not affiliated with the State), administers these grant awards.
- Reported over nine animal attacks during the last two weekends.
- Strategic partnerships with "Better Together Georgia" have yielded a \$19,000 grant for no-kill initiatives, with \$10,000 remaining. Due to grant conditions, funds are not transferred directly; instead, Mr. White must request services from the provider, who pays the expense directly, avoiding red tape.
- The H.E.L.P. Spay and Neuter Clinic has been introduced in collaboration with Emergency and Central Services and the Barnesville Animal Clinic. This program

contributes to public safety and emergency readiness planning for 2026. “Rover” provides a \$40.00 training coupon with each adoption.

- Noted plans for operational and facility improvements in the future. He expressed appreciation for the 2025 start-up resources and stated that current staffing and training levels are satisfactory. Communication will be maintained during any facility downtime.
- Clarified that the purpose of the mid-year review was to provide an operational status update rather than focus on financials. He recommended that the 2026 budget reflect a reduction from 2025, given that most start-up costs were already addressed and should not recur.
- Commissioner Lovett requested an update on facility progress. Mr. White reported that all decisions had been made except for the interior walls, and agreement had been reached on flooring. When asked whether the shelter was providing pickups for H.E.L.P. Spay and Neuter, Mr. White confirmed they were and added that H.E.L.P. also supports adoptions by covering surgery costs. All adopted animals are required to be spayed/neutered and vaccinated before release.
- Commissioner Lovett requested that the animal shelter be permitted to use Alan Smith Consulting for grant writing services. County Administrator Townsend stated that the consulting fee is 5% of the awarded grant, and this could be extended to the shelter.
- Commissioner Lovett objected to a proposed plaque at the shelter referring to “Founders,” noting that the founders are the citizens of Lamar County. Commissioner Gilles supported using terms like “donators” or “supporters” instead.
- Commissioner Lovett asked about the 23 wildlife/livestock-related calls. Mr. White explained that some were shelter walk-ins with medical emergencies, such as animal-related lawnmower injuries or poisoning cases. Commissioner Gilles added that calls involved animals such as cows and goats. When asked about venomous snakes, Mr. White stated that reptile-related calls are voluntary, but deputies may respond. The shelter also provides carcass disposal services.
- The Sheriff’s Office offered the loan of a vehicle to the shelter through the end of the year. There may be a need for a dedicated administrative vehicle in 2026. Commissioner Boyle suggested utilizing the Tax Commissioner’s vehicle, which appears unused. County Administrator Townsend noted it is occasionally used for transporting funds to the bank.
- Discussion regarding purchasing an incinerator, estimated between \$11,000–\$17,000, plus fuel costs. Commissioner Lovett asked whether the Sheriff’s Office could purchase it for drug disposal purposes. Mr. White responded there would be no issue. Chairman Traylor recalled that incinerator odors were once a concern for nearby schoolchildren. Mr. White said operations would be scheduled after hours to avoid conflicts and described the odor as similar to BBQ.
- Reported that Lamar County is not part of the City of Barnesville/Upson County disposal contract. A proposed arrangement would have Barnesville transport animals to Upson County on Lamar County’s behalf, with Lamar paying disposal fees. Veterinarian offices may also partner with Lamar County for cremation services, offered to citizens for \$30–\$50 depending on weight.
- Commissioner Lovett recommended an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Barnesville, stating that two shelters are unnecessary. County Administrator Townsend suggested using one facility for adoption and another for incineration.

- Proposed an agreement with the City of Milner, allowing them to adopt Lamar County's ordinances and pay for shelter services. Sheriff White has instructed that no further complaint calls from the City of Milner be handled until such an agreement is established.

x. 12:00 p.m.– Buildings and Grounds-Jim Beverly

- Reported Facility maintenance challenges, including grass cutting, and HVAC issues.
- Reported they are having staffing shortages.
- Discussed the smell of gas and mold in the Courthouse. The service representative from Georgia Natural Gas went down in the basement and reported there was a little bit of water in the basement. Mr. Beverly went down there and found nothing. There is a pump that draws the water from the condensation out and there was no water in the basement. He said there it was reported that the Courthouse smells like her grandmother's house. Mr. Beverly said that makes sense since papers are in the Courthouse.
- Chairman Traylor said he installed commercial humidifiers in his crawl space, and it has helped. County Administrator Townsend said they probably need a commercial humidifier in the basement. He asked if Mr. Beverly had been able to install one at the Old Jail Museum and said he knew they were behind. They want to run hoses. Mr. Beverly said he did not know anything about this. Chairman Traylor said they have those that have hoses that run outside. Mr. Beverly said the only request he had received was that they need two legal filing cabinets. Commissioner Lovett also requested they get a large commercial de-humidifier for the Courthouse. Mr. Beverly said the basement is in better shape than it has been in years. They removed a lot of old moldy paperwork from the basement many years ago.
- Reported that they only have two maintenance workers and two custodians. County Administrator Townsend said they had an HVAC employee before they received the ARP funds to replace the air conditioning units. They are working towards moving employees from other departments to help with staffing.
- Discussion about past truck purchases from JW Truck Services back in 2022. Mr. Beverly reported that his truck has around 54,000 miles.

xi. 12:15 p.m. EMA-Becky Martin

- Body cooler has been moved inside the building but there were plans to relocate it to the Health Department. Generator at the old EMA building is no longer functional; thus, the body cooler cannot be moved there.
- Natural gas line at the old facility has been reconnected, but gym lines were cut, limiting functionality.
- Transfer switch was added at the EMA building to ensure continuous power for the body cooler, computers, and lights.
- Grant Applications (2026–2027 Cycle):

Two grants submitted:

- \$42,500 for a generator to support the EOC and the body cooler – 75% reimbursement rate.

- \$9,700 for warning radios.

Note: Lamar County can decline or accept grant awards if circumstances change.

- Discussion on setting up cooling stations during extreme heat or power outages. Lamar County cannot house individuals lacking air conditioning due to current capacity limitations.
- Developing plans for area dams; noted that if they break, they could affect upstream areas
- Overflow classroom space in the rear of the building will be used for EOC overflow and equipment storage, although it is not climate controlled.
- Sirens & Code Red: Siren system troubleshooting ongoing; one siren has been down for two months waiting on technician.
- Working to repair sirens in-house:
 - \$400 for software and cable
 - \$100 per siren site for local repair.
 - Currently, 12 sirens are in place; residents are being directed to Code Red via Facebook when sirens are down.
 - Alpha Electronics: \$8,000 spent; current system is not viable. Decisions were made to handle issues locally and discontinue working with Alpha Electronics.
 - EMA Director Martin reported that she is making only \$15/hour, working 25 plus hours/week, sometimes sleeping at the firehouse during an emergency. Request made for increased compensation and additional resources. GEMA is contributing \$7,874.00 toward current needs.
 - Upcoming training scheduled for August 7th, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM. GEMA instructor will lead; attendance is mandatory for funding eligibility. FEMA has strict requirements for reporting and use of funds.
 - Disaster Funding Report: County received \$29,000 for Hurricane Helina recovery.
 - Referenced use of the formula that Public Works has been using since the 2011 Tornado disaster. This makes for simplified reporting and reimbursement tracking.
 - Goal is to include City of Barnesville and Gordon in emergency planning. Noted that the City of Milner may be more difficult to incorporate.

xii. 12:35 p.m. – Lunch Break

Resumed Mid-Year Review

xiii. 1:00 p.m. – Recreation Department

Operational Updates:

- Cleaning supply costs have increased.
- Air conditioner usage was raised but not confirmed.
- Utility expenses remain steady; no major concerns.
- Mowers are becoming less reliable; they are four to five years old.
- Vehicles requested.

Budget and Fees:

- Running 17 programs at the Recreation Department.
- Funding for adult programs are funded based off of fees collected.

- Youth fees have increased.
- Scholarship requests were received for 5–6 football participants.

Recreation Board Membership:

- Two members term expire this year with one vacancy. One board member or employee joined the military and stepped down.
- The current Recreation Board lacks diversity:
 - No female representation.
 - No Minority: No African American males or females currently serving.
 - There is a call to create a more diverse board.
 - The county will advertise for an open board position:
 - Applications will be prepared, submitted, and then reviewed by the Board.

Recreation Programs and Participation:

- Emphasized the focus on kids but recognized that adults in the community are also interested in participating. Programs and community interest include basketball, soccer, and a growing interest in pickleball. Twenty people are waiting to play pickleball while only one basketball player shows up to play.
- Facilities:
 - Floors are holding up well.
 - Continuing to use the old EMA building for office space. Current office has two people; future office space planning is under analysis. Ensuring new office space is ADA compliant.
- Technology and Equipment:
 - A lightning strike damaged a small camera.

Participation Trends:

- Spring sports had 550–600 kids.
- Fall sports have approximately 300 kids, indicating 250 fewer participants: Some may be opting out or playing in other counties. Some kids will go to Upson, Spalding, or Pike to play if the sport is not offered.
- To fill the gap, Fall Baseball/Softball was introduced. Despite concerns, football numbers held steady at 100–120 participants.

Facilities and Programs:

- Working with the high school to secure the old gym for additional programming space.
- Recent Signing Day and All-Star events were a big success.
- Noted a strong interest in travel ball among community members.

xiv. 1:25 p.m. – Public Works

- John Deere equipment broke down with only 7 hours on it, another example of ongoing machinery issues.
- Reported that due to an accident he had the County had to pay \$5,000.00 for a \$3,000.00 vehicle.
- Reported that the County paid for three licensed CDL drivers.
- Increased repair costs across the board; high volume of tire replacements.

- Machinery breakdowns are becoming more frequent, and qualified help is scarce.
 - Currently have 8 employees but need 12 to operate effectively: Eight years ago, the department had 24 employees.
- Skilled labor shortage is a problem statewide and nationally.
 - Example: Fayette County is the only fully staffed county out of 159 in Georgia.
 - Starting wage in Fayette County
 - Grass Cutting: \$22–\$23/hour
 - Equipment operators (e.g., shovel): up to \$30/hour

Discussion on equipment not being used. Bush cutter and side mower could be run daily if staff were available.

Budget Concerns:

Fuel usage (monthly):

- Gas: \$6,500
- Diesel: \$6,500

Uniforms:

- Cost is \$12,000 annually.
- Most employees wash their own uniforms
- New uniform company proposal:
- \$5,000 first year, rising to \$15,000 next year.

Signage, Road Work, & Pipe Replacement:

- Signage: Recommendation to hire someone to manage signage:
 - Check, clean, and repair signs.
 - Stop signs have dropped in price from \$3,500.00 to \$899.00.
 - Blinking lights cost around \$900 each.
 - Rumble strips are effective on rural roads.
 - Need to set signs farther back to avoid damage from farm equipment.
 - "Stop Ahead" signs recommended to warn early.
 - Signage is expensive, but many signs are in poor condition.

Pipe Issues:

- Roger Brown and Dean Roads – major pipe issues:
 - Outside quote: \$82,000. Public Works could do it for \$40,000 with road closure for a week.
 - Issue on Howard Road with a 48-inch pipe. Another pipe job quoted at \$58,000 required reducing pipe size due to extraction issues.

- Reported that AT&T bore through a couple of the pipes; right through the middle.
- Replaced a pipe in the City of Milner on Honeysuckle. They did not see a gas line but when they took the pipe out the gas line was under the pipe.

Trailers:

- 14 years old.
- Cost increased from \$7,500.00 (5 years ago) to \$14,000.00 now.
- Marcus Byrd (Custom Trailers) is the supplier.

Auto Shop and Staffing concerns:

- Temperatures reached 104°F inside.
- Large fan in use to mitigate heat.
- Shop handles oil changes, brake work, and light mechanical repairs.
- Staffing & Recruitment issues. Immediate help needed.
- Only 10 employees for all of Public Works.
- Need four additional field workers and one for the Shop.
- Experience is critical, especially with heavy equipment.
- Skilled Labor in high demand.
- One note: Three CDL drivers committed to staying with the County for two years.

Dirt Road Discussion:

- Fayette paying \$20/hr. for part-time weed eater work. They have a larger budget. They use a chemical on their dirt roads that plows into a dirt road and makes it hard and dust free. . Includes plowing, scraping, and dust-free finish. Expensive but effective.
- Jasper County has contracted out dirt road maintenance. Includes plowing, scraping, and dust-free finish. Expensive but effective.

Road Projects & Equipment Needs:

- Need a skid steer. The one previously purchased one for \$31,000, has been in service for 8 years.
- Habbakuu Weeks is operating a 1985 motor grader. Drives from Brooks, Georgia every day.
- Zebulon Road widening is in the works before it is paved.
- Equipment is needed to begin the project.
- EXP bids to be received.
- Plan to discuss at August meeting.
- Once awarded, there is a 180-day window to complete paving.

Signage and Speed Limit Discussion:

- Curve Ahead signage – suggested for 35 mph zones.
- Signage help is needed every day. Signs are in bad shape or missing. They need to be cleaned.
- Speed radar program being used: Set out for 7 days, data sent to GDOT. Discussed the following roads.
 - Bottoms Road: 55 mph
 - Within city limits: 35 mph
 - By-pass at swamp turn: 55 mph

xv. 2:00 p.m. – Senior Center-Antonitte Watts

Events:

- Superbowl Party
- Valentine's Ball
- Mother's Day Gospel Fest
- Continued participation in the brown bag program
- Paint and Sip
- Mother's Day Fashion Show and Brunch
- Gold Corral For Lunch
- Senior Hunger Awareness Month Walk at the City Park
- Cindy Blount- Monthly Medicare Reviewal of Plans
- Bay Breeze Trip
- Senior Shopping and Lunch
- Blood Pressure Checks
- Three Rivers Farmers Market 72 Seniors Served
- SNAP sign ups
- Heating and Cooling Assistance Sign Ups
- Senior Health and Wellness Day
- Three Rivers Farmers Market-72 Seniors received \$30.00 for fruits and vegetables. The next one will be on August 1st, 205 at the Barnesville Housing Authority.

Current New Program:

- Painting with Becky Patterson (Seniors pay \$5.00 per class for materials)
- Run and shoot basketball

Upcoming Events:

- Harlem Nights Themed Sneaker Ball August 23rd, 2025-Civic Center
- \$10.00 per ticket

- Fall Festival October 25, 2025-Seniors and Kids
- Angel Tree Program-Purchased Gift Cards to Ingles
- Santa for a Senior

Technology:

- Beyond the Bell LLC will be being computer technology classes at the Senior Center on July 29th, 2025.

Upcoming Workshops:

- Rest Workshop-They will provide lunch, Fish Fry, and the State will also visit the Senior Center

Future Projects Needed:

- Outdoor seating area
- TV needed in yoga room for chair exercise
- Space for individuals that are not feeling well

Goals:

- Volunteers to help with activities- Four full-time staff and Two part-time staff
- More educational classes in relation to healthy eating and exercise

Issues:

- Sink has been installed but it leaks
- The outdoor display case still needs to be hung
- Landscaping in front of the building is not being done
- Grass is growing in the sidewalk at the entrance of the center as well as the back area of the building
- Ceiling fans on back patio need to be replaced they are worn out
- The side doors of the building have not been replaced but they have done some work on them
- Bathrooms-need higher toilets two of them are to low
- Water Fountains-Still need to be replaced
- Windows need to be cleaned
- Micro switches still need to be connected to the electrical shutoff on the stove before they can have a required fire inspection.
- The dishwasher is connected but needs another hot water line run to it
- Dumpster is currently too small, it is full after two days

Joy Club:

- Meets every third Wednesday at 11:00 a.m.

HDTC:

- No longer meets at the Senior Center

Senior Center Trips Taken and paid for by Three Rivers Area on Aging:

- Lanes Peach Orchard
- Lunch at Bay Breeze
- Dekalb Farmers Market
- Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History
- Selma Alabama to Edmund Pettis Bridge and Legacy Museum and Legacy Sites
- Savannah River Boat Cruise

Upcoming Trips:

- Jasper County Senior Center July 16th-Socializing Trip
- Caregiver Conference (Newnan Georgia) July 24th, 2025-Educational

Planned Trips:

- Overnight trip to Gatlinburg Tennessee (November 2025)
 - Need Volunteers to help chaperone
- Callaway Gardens at Christmas
- Stone Mountain at Christmas
- Georgia Conservation Park Madison, Ga
- SAMS Shortline-Plains, GA Jimmy Carter's hometown

Three Rivers Transportation:

- Sometimes Seniors are not picked up and they are told that we did not put an order in for them to be transported. However, when they pull it up in the system, the order is there. They call and they tell them they overlooked their trip. They tell them that if they can get the Senior to the Senior Center they will take them home. This is a major issue with the transportation system with Three Rivers Transit.

Home Delivered Meals:

- There are none on the waiting list at this time.

Congregate Meals:

They are having an increased number of Seniors age 55-59 that are disabled but do not meet the age requirements for the nutrition program. Asked how they ensure they are not hungry, and she is working with Three Rivers Area on Aging about other programs they can use for these Seniors.

Training Received This Year:

- CPR (Senior Center Director)
- Mandated Reporter Training (Senior Center Director)
- Certified at Risk Adult Crime Tactics Specialist (Senior Center)
- CPR part one without checkoff (Senior Center Staff)
- SERV Safe (Senior Center Director)

Grants Received:

- Give 365
 - Room Divider for \$1,331.00
- Mom & Dad
 - Mom & Dad Grant - \$2,000.00 for racks and shelving

Material Aid Grant (Three Rivers) Members of the Center and HDM Received this Year:

- Rollators
- Walkers
- Canes
- Blood Pressure Cuff
- O2 Monitors
- Leg Peddlers
- Lift Chairs
- Scooters
- Raised Toilet Seats
- Portable Toilets
- Wrist Splints
- Arm and Knee Braces
- Wheelchairs

Staffing/Salaries:

- Currently need an additional person to help with activities

After reviewing compensation data for similar centers within the Three Rivers Regional Commission's 10-County service area, the salaries for employees at the

Lamar County Senior Center may be somewhat below the regional average. This comparison considers centers with similar responsibilities and demographics.

Given the important work Senior Centers do in supporting the community, Senior Center Director Watts respectfully requested a review of employee salaries be considered as the 2025-2026 budget plan. Integrity and dedication are the core of everything they do, and she believes that fair compensation will maintain the high standards of service they provide to the Lamar County Senior community.

xvi. 2:15 Clerk of Superior Court-Caleb Tyson

- Requested for an immediate need to replace a broken table in the courtroom. Requested to purchase a commercial-grade table.
- Requested to purchase a podium with wheels.
- Current furniture has a strong odor, described as gas or mildew-like, causing complaints from both employees and citizens weekly.
- Concerns about Wi-Fi and Internet Connectivity throughout the Courthouse. Requested an upgrade for the Courthouse's internet to fiber optic for Judges and Courts so that it will function effectively.
- Court Software and Case Management System was requested. The existing case management software has been in place since Frank Abbott. The system is over 25 years old. Data migration to a modern system would cost approximately \$25,000. The current software system costs \$10,000. A new software vendor was discussed, but concerns about potential data loss were raised. Recommendation to stay with the current vendor for the upgrade due to system familiarity and security. The software vendor "Catalyst" was recently bought out. Requested to upgrade to a web-based, digital transcription system. Additional monthly cost for system maintenance and upkeep is \$500. The Proposal set to expire December 31, 2025.
- Courthouse building updates are needed throughout the building. Expressed satisfaction with the structure of the Old Courthouse, but windows in offices are outdated. The specific issue is with double-pane windows that are foggy and difficult to see through. These same windows have not been replaced in 12 years. Major renovations were last completed when Commissioners were still located in the Courthouse. The windows at the back of the Courthouse were replaced, but issues remain in the front offices.
- County Administrator Townsend reported that the contractor originally assigned to the project backed out. Multiple measurements (at least five) have been taken, but no updates have been received. It was noted that window manufacturers stopped producing the existing style around 2020.
- Reported continued issues Trash and Waste Services. Specifically issues with who services the dumpster and which one they should have; AmWaste or GFL.
- Reported smelling gas, and mold and mildew in the Courthouse from employees and the public on a weekly basis. Received a complaint this past week.

xvii. 2:30 p.m. – Administration

- Chairman Traylor gave praise to County Administrator Townsend because there were a lot of things that he had not heard about until today.
- Discussion about cutting grass, weeds and spraying round-up.
- Discussion about AmWaste and GFL dumpsters. The City has the contract for the GFL dumpsters. The City of Barnesville was getting billed for the County's AmWaste. Through the Solid Waste Agreement, all County facilities were to have AmWaste dumpsters for free. The County is supposed to have AmWaste dumpsters. When GFL came along AmWaste removed the dumpsters but now they are putting the AmWaste dumpsters back at the facilities in the County. County Administrator Townsend said that there is still confusion over which buildings should have AmWaste, and which buildings should have GFL. Commissioner Lovett said there is no one that will answer the phone about garbage. Chairman Traylor said his contact responded in five minutes. Commissioner Boyle said he has Kelly from AmWaste. Commissioner Lovett and Commissioner Gilles said it would be nice if they could call their director from Solid Waste.
- Commissioner Lovett expressed concern that each Mid-Year Review results in a list of unresolved issues, which he felt was unfair to County Administrator Townsend. County Administrator Townsend clarified that he requested this feedback during the budget process. Commissioner Lovett emphasized that the Mid-Year Review should serve as a brief update on where the County stands, where it is headed, and what has changed. He recommended holding quarterly meetings between the County Administrator, Department Heads, Constitutional Officers, and the Maintenance Director, citing that "everyone needs help." He pointed out that the Maintenance Department remains a top concern. He advocated for hiring a handyman or outsourcing some maintenance functions, noting that many meeting attendees raised facility-related issues. He added that the Maintenance Director and one other employee are currently responsible for cutting grass, which is unsustainable due to the recent rainfall. He also noted this was often the first time he was hearing about many of these issues.

County Administrator Townsend said he was aware of a sink installation but had not been informed about any leaks. Commissioner Lovett stated such issues should not reach him without going through proper channels. A Board discussion followed regarding the work order system. It was suggested that:

- Work orders should be addressed and resolved at the department level.
- If unresolved after the first attempt, they should be escalated to the County Administrator.
- A third unresolved attempt should go directly to the County Administrator.

Vice-Chairman Fletcher suggested that County Administrator Townsend receive copies of work orders. Chairman Traylor disagreed, saying he should only receive copies of those submitted multiple times. Vice-Chairman Fletcher compared the process to the school system where IT and principals are looped in, helping to filter out unnecessary requests.

County Administrator Townsend shared that the Maintenance Director spends significant time at the jail. Chairman Traylor noted that Gordon State College outsources both their maintenance and lawn care services. County Administrator Townsend responded that the board had asked him to cut the budget, leading to the purchase of two lawnmowers instead of outsourcing. Chairman Traylor said that decision made sense if staff were available, but currently it may not be the best approach. Commissioner Lovett added that removing lawn mowing duties from Maintenance could lead to substantial savings.

Commissioner Gilles emphasized that water-related issues were mentioned by nearly everyone and are causing significant damage to County buildings. County Administrator Townsend reported a busted toilet in the old Administration building. Commissioner Gilles remarked that grass cutting could wait and even offered to cut it herself on weekends. Both Chairman Traylor and Commissioner Lovett agreed that outsourcing lawn care should be considered.

Commissioner Boyle informed the Board that he had sent County Administrator Townsend the names of three plumbing contractors recommended by Nathaniel Rooks, stating that if Rooks vouched for them, they were reliable. County Administrator Townsend responded that he would compare prices, adding that Steady-Flo is currently offering highly competitive rates. Commissioner Lovett suggested hiring a plumber to address the top ten plumbing issues immediately. He also recommended releasing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for lawn maintenance services. He encouraged the Board to empower Department Heads and Constitutional Officers to handle problems within their own departments.

Commissioner Lovett revisited the discussion regarding the purchase of a table and podium for the Clerk of Superior Court, suggesting the items might be available on Facebook Marketplace. Commissioner Gilles added that there might be suitable options at a furniture store in Forsyth, Georgia. County Administrator Townsend reported that last year he received quotes for podiums ranging from \$2,400.00 to \$2,800.00 from two companies. Commissioner Boyle shared that he had looked up tables online and asked Clerk of Superior Court Tyson if the options matched his needs. Tyson confirmed they did. Chairman Traylor noted there are liquidation stores in Atlanta that could be explored for cost-effective furniture. He also suggested that County Administrator Townsend ask those with furniture or computer needs to send their selections for approval. County Administrator Townsend expressed concerns about the added workload, noting he has already been delaying other tasks and that compiling information for the mid-year review has been his priority. County Administrator Townsend noted that with the purchase of the table or podium the Clerk of Superior Court Tyson wants him to find it for him rather than finding it on his own and sending in a purchase order request. Commissioner Lovett said as the County grows County Administrator Townsend needs to empower these directors to take the lead in finding and purchasing what they need.

- County Administrator Townsend reported that current trends show increases in both expenses and revenues. He noted that some employees are expecting salary increases ranging from 10% to 40%, which may not be sustainable across the board. He stated that he is considering a return to employee evaluations as part of the performance management process. Commissioner Lovett emphasized the need to involve Human Resources (HR) to help develop a value-added pay scale. He cautioned against implementing blanket pay increases, such as offering \$30.00 per hour for both machine operators and administrative staff, without considering differences in skill sets. County Administrator Townsend referenced the 2020 wage study, which provides a structured approach to compensation. He added that compensation should reflect performance, not simply be based on precedent. He explained that in some evaluation models:
 - Top performers receive around 6% increases
 - Mid-level performers receive between 2.5% and 3.5%
 - Lower-tier performers receive around 1.5%

This results in an average overall salary increase of approximately 3.75%.

Commissioner Lovett said that with a new HR Director in place, the County has an opportunity to be creative and innovative with its compensation system going forward.

- County Administrator Townsend reported that the budget for Conflict Attorneys has increased significantly, rising from \$25,000.00 to \$81,000.00. He also informed the Board that the County audit is currently delayed due to ongoing issues involving Conflict Attorneys Amy Cowan and Tim Buckley. Both attorneys are still awaiting reports from the Special Master, which has caused delays in the audit process. County Administrator Townsend noted that the auditors have not received any updates, and as a result, a complaint has been filed with ACCG (Association County Commissioners of Georgia). County Administrator Townsend reported that the budget for Conflict Attorneys has increased significantly, rising from \$25,000.00 to \$81,000.00. He also informed the Board that the County audit is currently delayed due to ongoing issues involving Conflict Attorneys Amy Cowan and Tim Buckley. Both attorneys are still awaiting reports from the Special Master, which has caused delays in the audit process.
- County Administrator Townsend reported that overall, the Commissioner's budget is good. County Clerk Davidson submits the budget for the Commissioners. County Administrator Townsend reported that he cut the budget for the Commissioners because they did not use all of the money allotted for travel and training. Currently the budget for travel and training is at 44.23.
- County Administrator Townsend reported that Interim Tax Commissioner Lesley Kilchriss was out of the office for training. He stated that Kilchriss requested a scanner/copier for each office within the Tax Commissioner's Office. The equipment was purchased using funds from the salary difference between former Tax Commissioner Gamez and Deputy Tax Commissioner Leggett, whose salaries were already listed in the budget. Additionally, Townsend reported that a salary increase

was given to a senior employee in the office by reallocating funds from the contracts line item to the salaries line item.

- County Administrator Townsend reported that he spoke with Magistrate Judge Kunst regarding the possibility of transitioning to digital scanning, similar to the Probate Judge and the Clerk of Superior Court. Judge Kunst expressed that he preferred to continue using paper records and therefore required additional physical storage. The Board discussed concerns about the Judge continuing to use outdated media and emphasized the importance of modernizing storage solutions for long-term efficiency and space management.
- Commissioner Lovett commented on the trend lines presented by County Administrator Townsend, noting that both expenses and revenues are increasing. He expressed his opinion that, regardless of their approach, the County will not be able to meet the rollback rate without significantly cutting the budget. He added that even adopting a rate just \$0.50 over the rollback would require public advertisement in the legal organ. Commissioner Lovett stated he would prefer to maintain the current millage rate of 10.092, allowing the Board to say they did not raise taxes. Chairman Traylor responded that holding the rate at 10.092 could put the County at financial risk, especially since the cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) are not factored into the current budget. County Administrator Townsend noted that the millage rate was held at 8.942 from 2006 to 2012. In 2009, the County experienced an \$800,000 deficit, which led to the need for a Tax Anticipation Note (TAN). Commissioner Lovett stated that to meet the rollback rate and avoid advertising an increase, the County would need to set the millage rate at 9.053, which would generate approximately \$17.4 million, roughly \$1 million short of the needed \$18 million. He explained that setting the rate at 9.054 would technically be considered a tax increase. He also noted that due to the value lock on properties, taxpayers would continue paying the same amount even if the millage rate remains unchanged. Commissioner Lovett reiterated his desire to maintain the current millage rate but acknowledged that the County must still address needs related to staffing, buildings, and roads.

Commissioner Lovett noted that five vehicles had been requested. County Administrator Townsend stated that the vehicles would be funded through SPLOST, with approximately \$600,000 currently available in the account. He also mentioned that SPLOST funds could be used for the tower project. A partnership with Tammy and the School System is underway to lease space for the tower installation. Chairman Traylor inquired whether it would be possible to build the tower and leave the cables in place for future use by another entity. Commissioner Boyle confirmed that this was feasible and would be significantly more cost-effective if done during initial construction rather than retrofitting later. He added that if the City of Barnesville chooses to join the project later, the County could charge a connection fee. Commissioner Lovett emphasized that the County should retain ownership of the tower. Commissioner Boyle recommended beginning the process with the City of Barnesville and noted that they would need a 50x50-foot area at the top of Hog Mountain, where the old forestry tower is currently located.

4. Executive Session

None

5. Adjournment

Commissioner Gilles made a motion to adjourn the Mid-Year Review Workshop meeting at approximately 3:08 p.m. Commissioner Lovett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Ryran Traylor, Chairman

Jarrod Fletcher , Vice-Chairman

Jason Lovett, Commissioner

Ashley Gilles, Commissioner

Truman Boyle, Commissioner

Attest: _____ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk