

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
OF THE BEN HILL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON **August 5th, 2025, AT 6:00 PM** IN THE
BEN HILL COUNTY COMMISSISONER MEETING ROOM LOCATED
AT 321 DEWEY MCGLARMRY ROAD.

Those present for the meeting were as follows:

Hope Harmon	Vice-Chair
Daniel Cowan	Commissioner
John Mooney	Commissioner
Hampton Raulerson	County Manager
Pamela D. Turner	County Clerk

Chairman Hal Wiley was absent.

Call to Order

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon called the meeting to order

Commissioner Bennie Calloway gave the invocation.

Everyone gave the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the Agenda/Agenda Changes

Commissioner Bennie Calloway made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner John Mooney, and Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, all voting for the motion.

Acceptance of Prior Minutes

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to approve the Regular Monthly Meeting minutes that was held on July 8th, 2025. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, and Vice-Chair Hope Harmon all voting for the motion.

Constitutional Officer: None

Department Head Reports:

Keith Morrison DLS Director Reported as follows:

- 10 and under boys' baseball team was recognized for winning this year's state championship defeating Bacon County 3-2, in the title game.

County Board Reports: NONE

County Manager's Report:

County Manager Hampton Raulerson reported the following:

- There will be a meeting on August 14th, 2025, to adopt the Millage Rate and to also possibly bring bids for our road projects, looking at about 8 miles of resurfacing. The initial bid total came below what we expected, so we will be able to get that done and hopefully roll some over into next year's projects as well.

Annexation Notification:

Rezoning Application: NONE

Alcohol Application:

A Better Place- 162 Bowens Mill Hwy

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to approve the Alcohol Application for A Better Place located at 162 Bowens Mill Hwy. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, all voting for the motion

Appointments:

Ben Hill Planning & Zoning Board

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to appoint Zach Luckie to the Ben Hill Planning & Zoning Commission. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Vice-Chair Hope Harmon all voting for the motion

Ben Hill County Forestry Board

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to re-appoint Wesley Mitchell, Milton Hopkins, Bill Luke, Chip Dorminy and to appoint Jason Cook to the Ben Hill County Forestry Board. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioners Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Vice-Chair Hope Harmon all voting for the motion.

Ben Hill County Department of Family & Children Services

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to re-appoint Dianne Bullard to the Ben Hill County Department of Family & Children Services Board. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner John Mooney, and Vice-Chair Hope Harmon all voting for the motion

Old Business: NONE

New Business:

Authorization to Participate In The New Purdue Opioid Settlement

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to authorize participation in The New Purdue Opioid Settlement. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion, which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway and Vice-Chair Hope Harmon all voting for the motion.

Legislative Report:

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon reports as follows:

I was able to attend the 90th NACo Annual Conference a few weeks ago, and it was an insightful and impactful experience. The conference provided valuable learning opportunities, space for collaboration, and a national platform to elevate the voice of rural communities like ours.

1. Disaster Preparedness & Community Recovery Training (Hagerty Consulting)

One of the sessions I attended focused on disaster preparedness and community recovery, led by Hagerty Consulting. It emphasized the need for counties to have strong, well-structured response and recovery plans in place — especially as natural disasters increase in frequency and cost.

I had the opportunity to speak about the unique challenges we faced during Hurricane Helene, including extended power outages and the heightened levels of food insecurity that followed. It was enlightening to be in a room with representatives from larger counties and see that disasters affect us all in similar ways, regardless of size or capacity.

A key topic discussed was CDBG-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding. While this funding is essential, many counties shared frustration over multi-year delays in actually receiving the money. This will be something we continue to closely monitor and advocate for improvements around.

2. Agriculture & Rural Affairs Policy Steering Committee

This session addressed the most pressing issues facing rural America today, including broadband expansion, agricultural innovation, rural education, and infrastructure. We also reviewed and voted on federal policy resolutions that will shape NACo's advocacy agenda for the coming year.

As a result of ongoing advocacy and engagement, I am honored to now serve as:

- Vice Chair, Rural Action Caucus Steering Committee
- Subcommittee Vice Chair, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Policy Steering Committee

These appointments give us a greater platform to influence national rural policy and bring attention to the needs of smaller counties like ours.

3. National Association of County Intergovernmental Officials Business Meeting

Although this meeting is primarily designed for intergovernmental relations staff, I attended on our behalf because we are a smaller county and do not have staff specifically in that role.

It was an incredibly worthwhile session. The organization does an excellent job breaking down complex federal policies and showing how they will impact counties at the state and local levels.

Additionally, I've been able to establish key relationships with county administrators and policy staff from across the country. These connections have proven valuable in keeping us informed about grants, federal decisions, and key developments coming down the pipeline.

4. General Reflection & Forward Focus

Overall, the NACo Conference was insightful and impactful. I left with a deeper understanding of federal processes, policy development, and practical steps we can take as a rural county to strengthen our voice and increase access to funding and support.

Looking ahead, I will be attending the ACCG South Policy Council Meeting tomorrow, and Commissioner Hampton will attend on Thursday.

2025 Focus Areas for Advocacy & Policy Engagement

- Rural Healthcare & EMS
- Rural Education Equity
- Rural Workforce Development
- Economic and Infrastructure Development
- Strengthening Rural Governments

Public Comments:

Hershell Smith 171 Sparrow Road. Fitzgerald GA.

Mr. Cowan, Mr. Calloway I want to thank y'all for voting against shutting down the dumpsites in Ben Hill County. Ms. Harmon, I spoke with you briefly in email. If y'all close all the dumpsites down at least in Ben Hill County, nobody on that side of town will have a dumpsite to go to except Joshlyn Road and Westwood one mile from town. The only people that are going to benefit from these dumpsites are the people in town not the people in the community. It's 19 miles from my house to the nearest dumpsite. I know y'all offer a trash can pick up for \$25.00 a month, have y'all rode in the Eastern part of the County, trash trucks can't get down those roads. Right now, there is a puddle of water sanding right now in front of that man house. You all put all of us on the spot, having to bring trash all the way through town.

When a trash truck gets stuck on a dirt road or in the ditch, is the County going to be reliable to send somebody out there, a tow truck for a private company. If Golden Waste Management can service Joshlyn Road and Westwood, why can't they service a dumpsite on the Eastern side of the County there are three sites out there, they got the same truck, it won't be any difference to come to one of those sites on that side of the County.

What about the people that live on disability, \$25.00 a month is a lot of money to, what about the little old lady that can't bring the trash can to the road. I know the newspaper says to leave the trash can by the side of the road, what about when they have to drag it to the house. What about when I come home and see trash can on the roadway and I have to dodge it with my vehicle, what's happen when I meet somebody head on. Do I tear my truck up over a trash can. This should have been put to a public vote. There was no public discussion on this, none at all. Is my property taxes going to get a reduction, because I am paying for a service that y'all are taking away. I think if you are going to close one you need to close all of them, make it mandatory that everybody gets a trash can. Don't just let it benefit the people in the city. The people in the city that live on the Eastern side of town in the Cotton Mill division they're not going to get a trash can but y'all going to force us to.

Latasha Joyner 856 Glenn Merritt Road, Fitzgerald GA

I agree with Mr. Smith; I live further than he does on the same road. I'm on a budget; I have three grandsons I have them to take the trash to the dumpsite to give them chores to do where they can learn how to take out the trash, if y'all take that away, how can they learn how to do that. It's a lot, we are not going to benefit if y'all close that dumpsite. I have a neighbor, she is 70 something years old, a lot of the elderly people can't drag a trash can, and we can't go to everybody's house and drag it for them, I'm disabled myself. I think y'all should leave one of them on that end open. It's no way I am going to drive 20 miles to a dumpsite.

On the road that I live on, there is a church on the right hand side, that road has not been worked on in years, there are pot holes that you have to dodge and miss, and on the far end of Glenn Merritt when you first turn off Broxton highway, they got the good paved road, down on the other end the pavement change, it's a mess. They send the County out to patch it; it hasn't been re-paved in a while.

Kala Johnson 274 Eagle Road, Wray GA.

My driveway is the one that is buried under water, my father-in-law is the one that has to dig the ditches out because we call every time there is a rainstorm. I lived in this County for 7 years. It is a hassle; I have to put shocks or something on my vehicle every time I turn around because of the roads, there are no ditches. There were two trash trucks this week that my father-in-law had to pull out of the ditch. People were trying to pass to get to an elderly lady to check on, who's been in the hospital. Fed X does not deliver on rainy days. The taxpayers have already paid in their dues for this year, I'm asking for it to be reconsidered, to be voted on by the community and the taxpayer who fund everyone of y'all pay checks. It's not right to make a decision amongst yourselves, without the input of the people who elected you to speak on their behalf. Do y'all have kids? I have a six-year-old boy who was born premature, and since the age of two he has got attached to going to the dumpsite and seeing the trash dumpsters dumped. Y'all are taking that away from my little boy. In today's world and what everything has come to, me telling him that the dumpsters are no longer going to be there and he will no longer see the trash truck, as a parent do y'all know what that felt like, his world was crushed. Every little boy loves trash trucks. So, I am asking y'all to reconsider it.

The boat landing all the water sources runs from Atlanta all the way down, those are our water sources, y'all going to take the dumpsters people are going to dump in the river, the fishes, everything has a purpose in life. I would really like y'all to dig deep and reconsider things. My husband works, he works from sun up to sundown, turning most people lights on and off, when a storm comes, he's the person that takes the trash out, my truck can't go down there, I rely on him, so he's doing his community service at his job that he loves to make sure y'all have power, at least we should be able to dump our trash at the dumpsite its three of them out there. Most people in the City don't own their property, they rent, they don't pay a huge amount of taxes, it's your County people that own their homes and land, they own 1 or 2 acres that makes a big difference.

Jason Miller 290 Othar Lee Rodgers Road, Fitzgerald GA

Everything you read in the paper the editor said that the County is going to save \$200,000.00 to \$400,000.00, millage rate in which y'all are fixing to discuss. \$400,000.00 is going to be about point of that millage rate, are we going to get tax millage decrease with that savings that the Commissioners seems to be getting or the County seems to be getting. Is that savings going to be General Fund money savings or is it going to be reallocated in

another idea, another thing, another building, another office, another roof on a building you move out of. One of the Commissioners said this is a fee for service, your right it is, everybody out here pays fee for services, we pay taxes every year, every year they go up they never go down. So, what kind of plan do we have when people start dumping their trash on the side of the road, throwing it out, it's going to come to that. Most of the people on the Commissioners right here y'all live within mile from town, I think all y'all do, one or two miles. It's not a real bad problem running to Westwood, and not even to Joshlyn, I live on Othar Lee Rodgers, I could run over there to Westwood, but the idea of the way it was done, no public hearings, nobody had no input on it, nobody knew about this, even understood what was going on until it was in the paper about two weeks ago and the signs went up on the fence around the dumpsters. I think it's time for some change on a lot of things, a group of us we plan to do.

Daphne Williams 138 Creekside Court, Fitzgerlad GA.

I want to make several statements I understand the closing, but what I don't understand is what about the taxpayers who lived in our neighborhood for over 30 years that didn't have the convenience of a dumpsite. What about the taxpayers that live in my community that don't have the convenience of signing covenants and getting extra tax breaks. What about the taxpayers that we didn't mind as long as the taxpayers' dollars was coming from us to have these dumpsites, but now they don't have it, we have never had it they got a problem with it.

I am saying this to say another thing, it's sad to see when people come in and complain about how you guys are doing, I watch everything, I go to every meeting, and my most comments are about taxes. Everybody understands what taxes mean, everybody understands when you buy a home you got escrow, whatever you decide to buy, you decided that you can afford to live in that home, which means your taxes is apart of the deal, so that's my problem with it.

Another thing I hate former people come back and when they were being abusive with money that the County had or abusive with the money the City had, oh nothing was said then, but once they walked away or changed jobs, or went to wherever they wanted, then they want to come back and point the finger at the Board. I'm happy that this Board does not have any notes. I have been watching the School, the City, everybody will tell you Daphne shows up at all the meetings. It's good to know that we are in a good place, we are not struggling, but taxes are going to be what they are. And when you decide to buy these types of properties and when you decide to do these things, taxes come along as part of the deal. What I would like to see is that, I would like for y'all to put a dumpster out there where I been living, I owned a dumpster, you know what happens with dumpsters, abuse. I pay for a dumpster at a city property that I owned and everybody brings their sofas, mattresses, all kinds of stuff to the dumpster and they don't even pay for the dumpster outside my place, but I don't have any control over that. The County is in good condition, if it saves us a penny, a penny is what I want. I'm sorry that the people got to be without there dumpsters, I been without one for 32 years where I been, I ain't never had one, then we finally get when the City offered to start letting us have a trash can so that was helpful, but look how long it took for us to get it, and look how long these people have had dumpsters, yet we had to haul our trash forever.

I'm just upset about people are upset about dumpsters and taxes when some of them are getting covenant all kinds of breaks, when you own large acres, guess what you get to apply for an exemption that me directly as a taxpayer can't get, you know who approves that, the County.

Executive Session: NONE

Commissioner's Remarks:

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon gave a report on Opioid Program

Holistically Anchored, from Spring through Summer 2025 successfully implemented both programs reaching over 100 youths, hosting resilient base workshops, and distributing over 300 prevention resources and building stratigent community partnership.

We have seen an impact with our local youth.

The goal of the program when I first talk to Hampton about it, was to get to our youth and get them to the point before they had to go to a celebrate recovery or some other kind of program. We want to prevent the usage of opioid, before they get to the point of want to use them. So, being able to do the education, they have share flyers, they have created a resource guide for us that we will be able to upload to the website. Toolkits have been distributed at events, Schools, Churches, through our Youth Resilient sessions, Monitor Youth sessions, and Anchored Mind Summer Camp Mentorship Activities have been reached.

We have had several volunteers come and mentor, our Educators, our local Faith Leaders. We have been having a great turnout; the community is very supportive of the things we have been able to do through the Opioid Prevention Program.

I know we have some more money in our Opioid Program, and I would like to get more in order to continue the program on because we really had some great successes, I would like to see the success continue on. I will be talking with Hampton, and he will be getting with everyone else.

Meeting adjourned.

_____ Hope Harmon, Vice-Chair

_____ Pamela D. Turner, County Clerk