

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
OF THE BEN HILL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON JANUARY 7th, 2025, AT 6:00 PM IN THE
BEN HILL COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX

Those present for the meeting were as follows:

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

Call to Order

Chairman Hal Wiley called the meeting to order

Commissioner Bennie Calloway gave the invocation.

Everyone gave the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the Agenda/Agenda Changes

Chairman Hal Wiley added agenda items Designate a Liaison For ACCG

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to approve the agenda that included agenda items Designate a Liaison for ACCG. Commissioner John Mooney seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner Daniel Cowan and Chairman Hal Wiley 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 December 03, 2024. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner Daniel Cowan and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting for the motion.

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to approve the Public Hearing minutes that was held on December 11, 2024. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner Daniel Cowan and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting for the motion.

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to approve the Special Called Meeting minutes that was held on December 11, 2024. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting for the motion.

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to approve the Special Called Meeting minutes that was held on December 19, 2024. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting for the motion.

Required Annual Actions:

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to rehire County Manager Hampton Raulerson. Commissioner Bennie Calloway seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting for the motion.

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to rehire County Clerk Pamela Turner. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner John Mooney, and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting for the motion.

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to rehire County Attorney Hall, Smith & Booth Managing Partner Tony Rowell working with Nick Kinsley. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice Chair-Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, Commissioner John Mooney, and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting for the motion.

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to rehire Tony Eckler CPA Auditing Firm. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Bennie Calloway and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting for the motion.

Commissioner John Mooney nominated Commissioner Hope Harmon for Vice-Chair.

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

Constitutional Officer:

Tax Commissioner Barry Foster reported that 2024 was not a good year even though the money is high because of the millage rate, collection was down by 9 percent. Tax Sale will be the 1st Tuesday in March.

Sheriff Lee Cone reported for 2024:

- Patrol Division took a total of 7,165 calls which includes all services that the Sheriff Office provides.
- Joint Task Force of Ben Hill County Sheriff Office and Fitzgerald Police Department have made 90 arrests in connection with gang charges, 326 warrants were taken, 47 guns taken off the streets, 12 drug cases (gang related), and 7 search warrants were served.

- Sheriff Lee Cone thanked the County Commissioners along with Mayor Jason Holt for supporting him on putting the Joint Task Force together.
- Special Operations had a total of 171 cases
- A total of 33 phone extractions were performed at the Sheriff Office
- Internet Crimes Against Children cases for 2024 were 65 with 57 arrests
- E911 dispatched a total of 10,303 calls for service
- Jail population had a total of 1,098 inmates, this total includes 543 inmates from Fitzgerald PD
- Meals are served three times a day which total 123,459 for the year of 2024

Department Head Reports:

DLS Director Keith Morrison stated that Basketball program has started at the Elementary School gym, practice is at Primary School gym. Games are on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturdays.

Baseball/Softball Registration will start on January 21st, 2025

Keith Morrison welcomed Chairman Hal Wiley and County Manager Hampton Raulerson.

County Board Reports: NONE

County Manager's Report:

County Manager Hampton Raulerson gave an update:

- Applying for LMIG funds from the State before the end of the month.
- Road Superintendent Nathan Fountain and County Manager Hampton Raulerson looking at some potential roads, looking at applying for Tulip Rd.
- Will submit cost estimates to the State
- Priorities can be switch if needed for Tulip Rd., these State funds should be put on County roads.
- Seeking Community Development Block Grant/Project Area/looking for a dirt road that is well populated, ruff shape that needs some help.

Annexation Request/Notification: NONE

Rezoning Application: NONE

Alcohol Application: NONE

Appointments:

Commissioner Daniel Cowan nominated Commissioner Hope Harmon as the Liaison for ACCG

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

Commissioner Daniel Cowan made a motion to Reappoint Scott Spivey to the Hospital

Board. Vice- Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting on the motion.

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to Reappoint Becky Gay and Nickie Smith to the Fitzgerald-Ben Hill Library Board. Vice- Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting on the motion.

Old Business: NONE

New Business:

Tax Commissioner Authority to Waive Penalties & Interest Resolution

Commissioner John Mooney made a motion to approve the Tax Commissioner Authority to Waive Penalties & Interest Resolution. Vice-Chair Hope Harmon seconded the motion; which passed with Commissioner John Mooney, Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner Bennie Calloway and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting for the motion.

Authorizing the Tax Commissioner to Accept Payments of Taxes and Fees Resolution

Vice-Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to approve the Authorizing the Tax Commissioner to Accept Payments of Taxes and Fees Resolution. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Bennie Calloway and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting for the motion.

2025 Holiday Calendar

Vice -Chair Hope Harmon made a motion to approve the 2025 Holiday Calendar. Commissioner Daniel Cowan seconded the motion; which passed with Vice-Chair Hope Harmon, Commissioner Daniel Cowan, Commissioner John Mooney, Commissioner Bennie Calloway, and Chairman Hal Wiley all voting for the motion.

Agenda Changes and/or add on: NONE

Legislative Report:

Vice- Chair Hope Harmon stated that her and Chairman Wiley will be attending the Eggs and Issue with the Georgia Chamber in Atlanta. She will meet with County Manager to see what we need to focus in on for the next session at the Capitol.

Public Comments:

Johnathan Burch 945 West Roanoke Dr. Ext. Fitzgerald Ga. spoke as a concern citizen, a father of child that is on the Fitzgerald Swim Team. He understands that DLS is a shared services between Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald. With the County voting to increase the funding to DLS of \$20,000.00, the city funding \$20,000.00 making the total of \$40,000.00; however no one from the County or City Council knew of the decision from DLS board or executive director to remove funding for the pool, which represents only 2% of their overall budget. Mr. Johnathan Burch finds this completely unacceptable that only 2% would cause the entire Swim Team Program. This decision will affect 40 families in this community. What he wants to accomplish is that the County Commissioners and the City Council do a better job of asking questions on how the funds are being used, and that the

Commissioners and City Council would make a recommendation to DLS to keep the pool open for one more year/next year, so that the \$20,000.00 can be spent to give the parents and everybody that is affiliated with the Swim Team enough time to come up with a plan for next year and beyond so that families don't have to go out of the area to another town.

Chairman Hal Wiley thanked Johnathan Burch on expressing his concern, and that the Commissioners will consider his concerns.

Executive Session

Commissioner's Remarks:

Commissioner John Mooney welcomed Chairman Hal Wiley and County Manager Hampton Raulerson.

Chairman Hal Wiley thanked previous Chairman Steve Taylor and Mike Dinnerman for leaving the County in good shape. Chairman Wiley also thanked the Commissioners

Meeting adjourned.

_____ Hal Wiley, Chairman

_____ Pamela D. Turner, County Clerk