REGULAR MEETING AGENDA
Peach County Board of Commissioners
6:00 PM, January 13, 2026

Minutes

I. Public Hearing:

The Public Hearing opened at 6:30 p.m.

1. Liquor License Application

Tabled until the Regular Meeting on February 10, 2026.

2. Rezoning Request - Kathryn Willis

Todd Shepherd, Chief County Marshal, presented a rezoning request for a five (5) acre parcel located at 1531 Evans Road, requesting a change in zoning from M-1 to R-AG, so the property would be contiguous with the surrounding five hundred eighty-one (581) acre tract. Chief Marshal Shepherd advised that the Planning and Zoning Board has reviewed the request and recommended approval.

Chairman Lewis asked if anyone was present to speak in favor of the request. Ms. Kathryn Willis stated that she was present on behalf of Evan Glen Farms and advised that the property is the residential property of Ms. Brenda Evans. Ms. Willis stated that the request is consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Chairman Lewis then asked if anyone was present to speak in opposition to the request. No one spoke against the request.

Commissioner Moseley made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Board to approve the rezoning of the property from M-1 to R-AG, as presented. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The Public Hearing closed at 6:34 p.m.

II. Consent Agenda:

1. January 6, 2026

Vice-Chairwoman Hill made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The motion carried, with Commissioner Howell abstaining due to absence.

III. Agenda Approval:

1. January 13, 2026

Vice-Chairwoman Hill made a motion to approve the Agenda as amended. Commissioner Moseley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Approve of Minutes of Previous Meetings:

1. Regular Meeting - December 9, 2025

Commissioner Moseley made a motion to approve the Minutes from the Regular Meeting held on December 9, 2025, as presented. Vice-Chairwoman Hill seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

V. Announcements/Updates:

1. Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC) - Request for Proposal (RFP) - Architectural Services Update

Brandon Fambro, Community Development Specialist with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC), presented an update on the Request for Proposal (RFP) for architectural services. Mr. Fambro advised that in late 2025, the County requested assistance from MGRC with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. To initiate the process, the County issued an RFP for architectural services to support the grant application.

The local governing body designated a selection committee comprised of MGRC staff to review submitted proposals. One (1) proposal was received by the January 5, 2026, deadline at 4:00 p.m., submitted by McCall Architecture. McCall Architecture is a firm based in Valdosta, Georgia, and founded in 1975 that provides services throughout the state.

The selection committee reviewed the proposal and rated McCall Architecture's experience, staffing capacity, and project approach as excellent, with an overall score of 87 out of 100 based on the established scoring rubric and methodology. MGRC recommended that the County approve the selection of McCall Architecture.

Vice-Chairwoman Hill asked what factors contributed to the score of 87. Mr. Fambro explained that the score was an average of three (3) rubrics completed by the selection committee. He noted that the primary factor affecting the score was the project approach section, which lacked detailed information, though this was not necessarily reflective of the firm's overall quality of work. He further stated that although McCall Architecture was the only firm to submit a proposal, it is a reputable firm that has worked with Peach County in the past and has experience with other CDBG projects.

Commissioner Howell asked why the experience category did not receive a higher score. Mr. Fambro advised that a perfect score would have required the listing of five (5) CDBG projects, and fewer were listed; however, the firm still fell within the excellent category under the rubric. Mr. Fambro distributed copies of the scoring methodology for the Board's review.

Commissioner Moseley made a motion to accept the recommendation from MGRC and approve the proposal from McCall Architecture. Commissioner Howell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. Appearances:

VII. Old Business:

1. Jeff Cook - Peach/Taylor County Cooperative Extension Agent - Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) - UGA Cooperative Extension

Jeff Cook, Peach/Taylor County Cooperative Extension Agent, presented a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Peach County and the UGA Cooperative Extension. Mr. Cook advised that the only changes to the MOU were updates to IT support and the list of personnel from UGA and *the County Cooperative Extension Program. The budget, office space, and compensation provisions remain unchanged. James F. Banter, County Attorney, has reviewed the MOU. Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding as presented. Commissioner Moseley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

2. James F. Banter - County Attorney - Fort Valley Utility Commission - Grace Period Letter

James F. Banter, County Attorney, presented a letter for the Fort Valley Utility Commission (FVUC) to consider implementing a grace period policy to allow a delayed period before enforcing late fees on utility bills. Attorney Banter advised that the letter was recommended by Commissioner Howell.

Chairman Lewis stated that FVUC had followed up with the Board and advised that they already provide an extended payment period of up to thirty (30) days for customers to pay their utility bills. Chairman Lewis expressed that he did not want to interfere in FVUC's operations if such an extended period was already established.

Commissioner Howell stated that the matter is within the County's interest because FVUC requests a sizeable amount of funding and its policies directly affect the County and its constituents. She further stated that she did not believe the letter would be overstepping, but rather an act of advocacy.

Chairman Lewis clarified that he was satisfied with FVUC's response. Commissioner Yoder stated that he felt uncomfortable with sending the letter, as FVUC has its own board responsible for setting policy, and he viewed the action as overstepping; however, he acknowledged understanding Commissioner Howell's perspective.

Vice-Chairwoman Hill stated that she appreciated Commissioner Howell bringing the issue to the Board's attention and emphasized that constituents need to know the Board of Commissioners hears their concerns and is advocating on their behalf.

Commissioner Howell made a motion to approve the letter as presented and to send it to FVUC. Vice-Chairwoman Hill seconded the motion. The motion failed by a vote of 3–2, with Chairman Lewis, Commissioner Yoder and Commissioner Moseley opposing.

3. Commissioner Yoder - County Clerk Position

Commissioner Yoder stated that he wished to make a motion to promote Audrey Jernigan, Assistant County Clerk, to the position of County Clerk in order to provide clarity in her job duties and responsibilities, as she has been acting in the role of County Clerk since December 2025. He stated that Ms. Jernigan has done an excellent job maintaining operations in the absence of a County Administrator/Clerk.

Chairman Lewis advised that funding for the promotion has already been budgeted, that the motion would make Ms. Jernigan's appointment effective immediately, and that the pay rate adjustment would take effect during the next pay period.

Commissioner Moseley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Chairman Lewis - Highway 41 - Driveway Discussion

Chairman Lewis advised that a citizen has requested the County pave a small access road located in front of their property off Highway 41. He stated that the Public Works Department evaluated the road and determined there is no sufficient right-of-way to pave it. However, the County proposed installing a collar along the edge of Highway 41 to make it easier for vehicles to travel up the slope of the road.

Chairman Lewis further advised that this work can be completed in-house, and the Public Works Department will address it when asphalt becomes available. No action taken.

VIII. New Business:

1. James F. Banter - County Attorney

    i. Resolution - Qualifying Fees

Attorney Banter advised that, pursuant to state law, the County is required to adopt a Resolution establishing qualifying fees for the upcoming election by February 1, 2026. He stated that there are two (2) positions on the Board of Commissioners and three (3) positions on the Board of Education to be placed on the ballot.

The qualifying fee for the Board of Commissioners is set at three (3) percent of the base salary, totaling $270.00. The qualifying fee for the Board of Education is set at three (3) percent of the gross salary, totaling $180.00.

Commissioner Moseley made a motion to approve the qualifying fees Resolution as presented. Commissioner Howell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

    ii. Personnel Policy Update

Attorney Banter provided an update on the new Personnel Policy, which has been implemented as of January 1, 2026. He stated that he and the Human Resources (HR) Department have held several town halls for employees to review the changes and ask questions. The main changes included updates to the grievance procedures and the transition from a vacation/sick leave policy to a paid time off (PTO) policy.

Attorney Banter recommended an amendment regarding accidents that occur on County property or involve County employees. The current policy states that employees must report any accidents to their supervisor. After consulting with Ryan Roberts, Safety Coordinator, Attorney Banter proposed adding that accidents must be reported immediately to the supervisor, HR, and the Safety Coordinator.

Vice-Chairwoman Hill asked for clarification on the definition of "immediately." Attorney Banter explained that it means reporting the accident as soon as it occurs, interpreted under the common meaning of a reasonable person, consistent with other policies in the manual.

Attorney Banter also addressed the PTO policy, noting that legacy employees who have accrued sick leave may carry hours over to the new policy. Sick leave must be used before PTO hours, provided a *doctor's note is submitted. He further discussed the on-call/standby policy, clarifying that actual hours worked count toward overtime, while automatic hours do not.*

Vice-Chairwoman Hill made a motion to approve the changes as presented and to make the Personnel Policy effective immediately. Commissioner Moseley seconded the motion. The motion carried 4-1 with Commissioner Howell opposing.

iii. Superior Court Judges - Local Pay

Attorney Banter stated that the General Assembly has passed a law allowing Superior Court judges the option to receive a state salary for their judgeships or to remain on the local pay scale, which includes a local supplement. If a judge chooses the state salary, they are eligible for locality pay, a supplement equal to ten (10) percent of the state salary. As the state salary increases, the locality pay decreases.

The new legislation gives counties the option to "opt in" to the locality pay, allowing them to continue providing this supplement to judges. The Superior Court judges for Crawford, Peach, and Macon-Bibb Counties have requested to continue recognizing the former supplement pay under the new designation of locality pay, ensuring more consistent pay across the state. Attorney Banter noted that this is already budgeted and does not require an amendment.

Commissioner Moseley made a motion to accept the locality pay. Commissioner Howell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Commissioner Yoder - Data Center Discussion/Concerns

Commissioner Yoder discussed the expansion of artificial intelligence and data centers and the importance of developing a plan for Peach County to protect residents and businesses from potential adverse impacts. He spoke about the need for permitting requirements and an ordinance governing data center applications, stating that it would be beneficial to have measures in place before any data centers consider locating in Peach County. He asked whether a one hundred twenty (120) day moratorium on data centers could be implemented to allow time to assess state-level actions and determine how they may align with local policy.

Chairman Lewis explained that a moratorium would not be for or against data centers, but rather would provide a defined period for the County to study potential impacts and review how other counties are structuring ordinances related to data centers. Vice-Chairwoman Hill noted that Crawford County has implemented a sixty (60) day moratorium for this purpose and stated that such action would be proactive.

Commissioner Howell shared that she recently participated in an Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) Mobile Classroom program, during which they visited the Meta data center in Newton County and discussed energy and power usage. She emphasized that data centers require significant electricity and water resources. While she agreed with the concept of a moratorium, she stated that she would like to see water impact studies required for any data center considering locating in Peach County. She further suggested that companies should be required to set aside funds to mitigate impacts, such as deepening wells, to reduce the burden on the community's water resources. Commissioner Howell referenced the use of a Community Benefit Agreement as a legally binding tool to ensure that data centers provide benefits to the community rather than placing a strain on local *resources. She emphasized the importance of addressing potential concerns appropriately to avoid harm to the community.*

Chairman Lewis affirmed that these issues could be addressed through an ordinance and stated that a moratorium would allow the County to move forward proactively, rather than taking retroactive action. He emphasized the importance of adopting sound ordinances that protect the County and its citizens.

Attorney Banter recommended beginning with a thirty (30) day emergency moratorium. He advised that if a longer moratorium is needed, the County would be required to hold a public hearing and adopt a Resolution, as the matter involves development issues.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve a thirty (30) day emergency moratorium, as recommended by Attorney Banter. Commissioner Howell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Todd Shepherd - Chief County Marshal - Business License Presentation

Todd Shepherd, Chief County Marshal, presented a business license application for Byron Belles Boutique, located at 602 Walker Road in Byron. He advised that the business is an online boutique and will not generate foot traffic at the property.

Commissioner Moseley made a motion to approve the business license application as presented. Commissioner Howell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Ryan Roberts - Assistant Fire Chief/EMA Director - Georgia Trauma Commission Grant

Ryan Roberts, Assistant Fire Chief/EMA Director, advised that the County has been awarded the Georgia Trauma Commission Grant. He stated that the grant does not require a match and is a 100% equipment grant. Assistant Chief Roberts advised that the grant provided fifty (50) "Stop the Bleed" kits, which he plans to place in all non-emergency services County vehicles. He also noted that the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Department will be supplying Mylar blankets to be placed in the vehicles.

Commissioner Howell made a motion to approve as presented. Commissioner Moseley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Chairman Lewis - Change Order #5 - Powersville Road Repairs - Railroad Damage

Chairman Lewis stated that the train derailment that occurred last year on Powersville Road caused significant damage to the roadway. He advised that repairs are being made to three (3) sections of Powersville Road at railroad crossings. Chairman Lewis stated that he met with Triple Point Engineering (TPE) and Reeves Construction to assess the damage, and their recommendation was to replace the three (3) affected sections of roadway rather than patch them.

He further advised that Reeves Construction, with whom the County is already under contract, submitted a change order in the amount of $95,000.00 to address the repairs. The County will proceed with the repairs in anticipation of reimbursement from Norfolk Southern Railroad. The project will be *funded through the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) account, with reimbursement funds to be transferred back into the SPLOST account upon receipt.*

Vice-Chairwoman Hill made a motion to approve the change order from Reeves Construction for repairs to Powersville Road in the amount of $95,000.00, to be paid from SPLOST funds in anticipation of reimbursement from Norfolk Southern Railroad and transferred back into the SPLOST account once received. Commissioner Howell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Janet Smith - Finance Director - Budget Amendment - Vacation Payout

Janet Smith, Finance Director, presented a Budget Amendment in the amount of $55,858.00, transferring funds from contingency into another contingency line item. She advised that the Budget Amendment is necessary to pay out accrued vacation time resulting from the recent change to the PTO policy.

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve the Budget Amendment as presented. Commissioner Moseley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

IX. Executive Session:

Commissioner Moseley made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:08 p.m. Commissioner Yoder seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

1. Property Acquisition/Real Estate #1

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve the Resolution for the purchasing of an easement for the installation of wells and to monitor the wells by agreement. Commissioner Moseley seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Property Acquisition/Real Estate #2

Commissioner Yoder made a motion to approve the Resolution for the roadway improvement project as presented. Vice-Chairwoman Hill seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Attorney/Client Privilege

No action taken.

4. Board Reappointment (1) - Planning & Zoning Board

The Board unanimously reappointed Wilburn R. Hilton, Jr. to serve on the Planning & Zoning Board for an additional one (1) year term.

5. Personnel Matter #1

No action taken.

6. Personnel Matter #2

No action taken.

X. Adjourn:

Vice-Chairwoman Hill made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:07 p.m. Commissioner Moseley seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
Commissioner Howell made a motion to adjourn at 8:09 p.m. Commissioner Moseley seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.