



LUMPKIN COUNTY

Board of Commissioners

Retreat Agenda

Lumpkin County Library
56 Mechanicsville Road, Dahlonega, GA 30533

January 10, 2025
8:30 AM

- **WELCOME & OPENING COMMENTS**

- **FINANCIAL UPDATE**

1. Financial Update (*Abby Branan*)

- **HEALTH INSURANCE UPDATE**

2. Health Insurance Update (*Alicia Davis, Robb Fowler*)

- **PINETREE RECREATION CENTER UPDATE**

3. Hours of Operation (*Rebecca Mincey*)

- **PLANNING UPDATE**

4. Department Update and Land Use & Dev Discussion (*Rebecca Mincey*)

- **CAPITAL PROJECTS**

5. Animal Shelter (*Ashley Peck*)
6. Recycling (*Ashley Peck*)
7. Transfer Station (*Ashley Peck*)
8. Airport (*Ashley Peck*)
9. Blackburn Park (*Ashley Peck*)
10. Rock House Road Property Conceptual Plan (*Rebecca Mincey*)
11. Synthetic Turf (*Rebecca Mincey*)

- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

12. Development Authority Presentation (*Robb Nichols*)

- **WATER & SEWERAGE UPDATE**

13. Water & Sewerage Update (*LCWSA Director Sean Phipps*)

- **SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY & COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

14. SDS & Comp Plan (*Alan Ours*)

- **REVIEW OF 2024 GOALS**

15. Review of 2024 Goals (*BOC & Alan Ours*)

- **ADJOURNMENT**



LUMPKIN COUNTY Board of Commissioners

**BOC Retreat Minutes
Lumpkin County Library
56 Mechanicsville Road, Dahlonega, GA 30533**

**January 10, 2025
8:30 AM**

WELCOME & OPENING COMMENTS

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM. Present were Chairman Chris Dockery and Commissioners Tucker Greene, Bobby Mayfield, Rhett Stringer (arrived 8:50 am), and Jeff Moran.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

1. Financial Update (*Abby Branan*)

- Ms. Branan went over the 2026 SPLOST 2025 workplan, the 2020 SPLOST 2025 workplan, and the 2023 TSPLOST 2025 workplan.
- Chairman Dockery said we need to include the Town Creek Church Road project. Part of that also involves acquiring dirt for improvements to the 60/400 intersection.
- Commissioner Stringer was skeptical of the bush hog pricing and said we need to do more research before we approve that. We do not want to make the same mistake as we have in previous years.

HEALTH INSURANCE UPDATE

2. Health Insurance Update (*Alicia Davis, Robb Fowler*)

- Medical claims over the past few months have increased. Some of it is due to medical inflation, and we have had sicker employees for whatever reason.
- We have had 7 high claimants on the 50% spec report and 4 claims that have exceeded the individual stop loss deductible of \$75,000.
- Specialty drug program utilization is also up, which is at zero cost to employees. Doctors seem to be prescribing more specialty medicines like biologics.
- We may see an increase to our stop-loss insurance. The IRS is going to raise the deductible of the base plan to \$3,300, which we cannot control.
- Self-insurance is a long-term strategy that will have good years and bad years. It has been 7 years since employees have had to absorb a premium increase.
- Chairman Dockery said we need to speak to surrounding counties to see if this is just an outlier year, or if everyone's claims have gone up. Commissioner Stringer was especially interested in how Hall County and the City of Gainesville were doing.

PINETREE RECREATION CENTER UPDATE

3. Hours of Operation (*Rebecca Mincey*)

- Rebecca Mincey gave a detailed presentation showing the usage, labor costs, and revenue last year. She said staff would like to have more special events, and the lifeguards would like to have some training days when the facility is closed.
- The Chairman said we should consider opening the facility as early as possible in May to maximize our visitation. We can start selling season passes early and offer them at a discount to incentivize people to buy them. The lifeguards could do their training after-hours rather than completely closing the pool and park.
- The biggest topic has been shade. Ms. Mincey showed pictures of several different umbrella and shade structures that could be added around the outside, including picnic tables with umbrellas.
- Chairman Dockery liked the idea of adding picnic tables with umbrellas. Staff is also researching how to add more shade to the cabanas based on citizen feedback.

PLANNING UPDATE

4. Department Update and Land Use & Dev Discussion (*Rebecca Mincey*)

- There was extensive discussion over the design guidelines of the 400 Gateway Corridor and how they are affected by the Code. Commissioner Moran asked how can we make sure we do not end up looking like Dawsonville.
- Ms. Mincey said the design guidelines book is not necessarily above and beyond the Code; it is a visual reference of what the rules state.
- There was discussion over vegetative buffer/landscape strip requirements and whether that should be altered. The Board would like the 30-foot rule to be clarified.
- The Commissioners discussed interconnectivity between parcels via sidewalks and internal roads. Commissioner Moran said he would like for that to be tightened up. A "sidewalk to nowhere" will lead somewhere eventually. If we do not make developers put in sidewalks when they are first building, how can we go back and require them to do so later?
- Commissioner Mayfield said we want the developers to build connecting roads. GDOT may start to limit curb cuts. Those roads would only become County roads if they go through the normal process.
- The planning review process was discussed and how it could be optimized.
- They discussed subdivision classes and greenspace subdivisions. It is important to ensure that the greenspace in subdivisions is included in taxation.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

5. Animal Shelter (*Ashley Peck*)

6. Recycling (*Ashley Peck*)

7. Transfer Station (*Ashley Peck*)

8. Airport (*Ashley Peck*)

9. Blackburn Park (*Ashley Peck*)

10. Rock House Road Property Conceptual Plan (*Rebecca Mincey*)

- Commissioner Moran gave a brief update on the activities of the Native American Advisory Committee. They would like to construct some authentic replicas and usable structures along with educational signage along the trail.

11. Synthetic Turf (*Rebecca Mincey*)

- Commissioner Greene talked about the advantages and attraction power of synthetic turf fields. He estimates 31 weekends of tournaments per year. With the rentals, fees, and concessions combined, the 10-year estimate is \$2,170,000 in revenue. Tournament directors prefer synthetic turf fields.
- Chairman Dockery said he wants to see projected expenditures, not just revenues. The fields exist to serve the citizens of Lumpkin County. If we increase the use of the park and all associated costs to facilitate these tournament directors, what have we gained? Are we preventing our own teams from using fields because of travel ball teams? Commissioner Greene said our teams don't use fields on the weekends.
- There was discussion over changing the scope of the turf grant, and Ms. Mincey showed some different options to pursue. Commissioner Mayfield said it is difficult to choose when we do not know if the state will even let us change the scope. It is also possible to abandon the turf resurfacing idea and identify a different capital project.
- Chairman Dockery said it seems like the Cloverleaf is the priority. We could try to reassign the whole grant to the Cloverleaf, or do a combination approach. We want the grant to go as far as it can go, but we do have some SPLOST money as a safety net. He is still wary of putting turf on the multipurpose field because of its proximity to the creek.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

12. Development Authority Presentation (*Robb Nichols*)

- Robb Nichols discussed the Development Authority's mission and how it is affected by Lumpkin County's Comprehensive Plan.
- One of the needs for the Development Authority is a guaranteed source of funding, such as a dedicated mill set aside for development or a special tax district along the Gateway Corridor. Chairman Dockery said it isn't uncommon for communities to dedicate a mill to economic development. That might be a way we can bridge the gap of the floating homestead tax exemption.

- Chairman Dockery emphasized the importance of maintaining relationships with our existing employers such as Koyo (JTEKT). Commercial development is also important, and it is possible the Development Authority could do public-private partnerships when helping businesses acquire space. Workforce development is next in importance, and the Chairman said workforce housing is the lowest priority. The government does not need to compete with housing developers; the demand will drive the development.
- Commissioner Mayfield said the special tax allocation got his attention. He asked how long it would last and if it would have to be re-approved by the voters. Mr. Nichols said they typically have a set duration. For example, Gainesville had one for 20 years to revitalize their downtown. It can be a useful tool to help businesses' tax money pay for the infrastructure where they are located.

WATER & SEWERAGE UPDATE

13. Water & Sewerage Update (*LCWSA Director Sean Phipps*)

- Sean Phipps discussed the Cane Branch Wastewater Treatment Plant progress, LCWSA system improvements, sewer capacity monitoring, and streambank restoration at Yahoola Creek Park.
- Mr. Phipps said the LCWSA has developed a database to track capacity allocations and usage. Auditing our usage allows us to free up unused capacity so our plants are not limited.
- He showed the existing 2024 capacity allocations and how those will be affected by the new developments like Publix, NGHS Lumpkin, and the Publix adjacent stores. New allocations will be coming for Tractor Supply, Dunkin Donuts, Satellite Industries, and possibly more, including phase 1 of the Antler Ridge residential development.
- When the new plant is complete, the sewer flow from the Gateway Corridor will be diverted to the new plant, freeing up capacity at the Red Oak Flats plant. Mr. Phipps discussed all-purpose capacity and limited-access capacity, which is only available to non-residential projects/users. Per our ordinance, the Cane Branch plant capacity is segregated to the first 60% as all-purpose and the remaining 40% as limited access. Residential developments take up far more capacity than commercial.
- As for streambank restoration at Yahoola Creek Park, Mr. Phipps said this will involve multiple stakeholders, including the BOC, Park & Rec, and the public. He will meet with Commissioner Stringer to determine how to move forward. 2020 SPLOST funding could be used to start improvements as early as a year from now. Chairman Dockery said we must do our due diligence to determine the best company is chosen to do the restoration work.

SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY & COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

14. SDS & Comp Plan (*Alan Ours*)

This item was not discussed.

REVIEW OF 2024 GOALS

15. Review of 2024 Goals (*BOC & Alan Ours*)
This item was not discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:03 PM.