# WORKSHOP
# PIKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

The Pike County Board of Commissioners held a Workshop on Friday, May 8, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. at the Pike County EMA/Storage Facility, 132 Twin Oaks Road, Williamson, GA 30292. Chairman Briar Johnson convened the meeting and Commissioners Tim Daniel, Tim Guy, Ken Pullin and James Jenkins attended. County Attorney/County Manager Rob Morton and County Clerk Angela Blount were also present. (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1(e)(2)).

1. **CALL TO ORDER .....Chairman Briar Johnson**
2. **SILENT INVOCATION…….Chairman Briar Johnson**
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE……Chairman Briar Johnson**
4. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA - (O.C.G A. § 50-14-1 (e) (1))**

   **Motion/second by Commissioners Daniel/Guy to approve the agenda, motion carried 5-0.**
5. **NEW BUSINESS**

   a. Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Budget

   County Manager Rob Morton stated that the proposed budget remains a work in progress and that the documentation provided at the Board of Commissioners meeting on April 28, 2026, does not reflect more recent discussions. The Finance Administrator has been absent due to health reasons and was unable to attend the Budget Workshop. CM Morton noted that he serves as the designated Budget Officer and that administrative staff work collaboratively to ensure continuity within the finance function.

   CM Morton presented an on-screen budget information guide, emphasizing that it was provided for demonstrative purposes only. Once finalized, the guide will be made available to the public. The proposed budget is based on maintaining the current millage rate of 8.94. Any millage rollback would require additional expenditure reductions.

   Cost-of-living adjustments for general county employees are not included in the proposed budget. CM. Morton reported that a pending compensation study conducted by the University of Georgia indicates a recommended income adjustment of approximately 5–6 percent. Commissioner Pullin requested an analysis of the cost associated with a 1 percent pay increase for general county employees, noting that beginning with a 1 percent figure would simplify evaluation should the Board wish to consider a higher increase. Commissioner Pullin asked how many employees are in the county. CM Morton replied all together around 180.

   Increases for Constitutional Officers' departments are included in the proposed budget as requested. CM Morton explained that these officers retain oversight of their employees, while the county administers payroll and benefits, and that the Board is required to fund such requests when a demonstrated need exists.

   The proposed budget includes a projected 15 percent increase in employee insurance premiums, pending a final proposal. The contingency fund has been reduced from $100,000 to $50,000 to offset service cost pressures. CM Morton reported a significant reduction in revenue attributable to the absence of a large asset sale. General property tax revenue is estimated at $10.2 million, down from the previous year's budgeted $10.6 million, as collections continue to trend lower. Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) revenue is projected at $2.3 million.

   The tax digest has not yet been finalized; however, residential property assessments are projected to increase by 6.23 percent. CM Morton noted that the tax digest has more than doubled over the past 15 years.

   Senate Bill 33 signed into law by Governor Kemp on May 11, 2026, known as the Homeownership Opportunity and Market Equalization (HOME) Act of 2026, restricts annual homestead property assessment increases to the rate of inflation, beginning in 2027. It mandates a statewide base-year homestead exemption, eliminates local government opt-out options, and creates a 1% Local Homestead Option Sales Tax (LHOST) for property tax relief. As a result, the county must evaluate the Local Homestead Option Sales Tax (LHOST) as a potential mechanism to offset reduced property tax revenue. A determination is required as to whether local legislation should be pursued to place the LHOST on the November ballot.

   Senate Bill 566 revises the format of property assessment notices by removing the estimated tax and rollback rate. The state-issued form has not yet been released, which may delay the May 15 mailing deadline and impact the overall tax digest process. The current millage rate of 8.94 represents last year's rollback rate. Comparative analysis shows Pike County's rate is moderate when compared to neighboring counties, falling between Spalding County (15.256) and Coweta County (5.937).

   Commissioner Pullin inquired about staffing continuity within the finance department, suggesting consideration of a backup position or cross-training with expanded system access to mitigate future absences. CM Morton reiterated that existing administrative staff operate as a coordinated team under his budgetary oversight.

   Commissioner Pullin inquired about the property that the Public Facilities Authority sold for the county for around $200,000, will those funds be transferred to the Board of Commissioners. CM Morton stated that the Board of Commissioners will have to decide.

   **Departmental Highlights**

- **Fire Department:** The department requested funding for two additional full-time positions, which are not included in the proposed budget. The department currently has 29 part-time paid firefighters and 37 volunteers and seeks to increase paid staff to 30. A separate proposal for 24/7 staffing at the Zebulon and Concord stations, estimated at approximately $289,295 (equivalent to 0.3 mills), is also not included. Approximately one-third of annual calls occur in the Concord area or beyond toward Molena. Call composition is estimated at 30–40 percent EMS, 20–30 percent motor vehicle accidents, and 10–20 percent fire incidents.
- **District Attorney:** The proposed budget includes an increase of approximately $81,000, primarily to fund a full-time Victim Witness Advocate position at an estimated cost of $67,000, inclusive of benefits. The request was submitted by the Interim District Attorney, citing staffing levels below those of comparable counties within the judicial circuit. Commissioner Jenkins inquired if this position can be part-time for Pike County, maybe split between Upson County and Pike County.
- **Tax Assessor's Office:** The regular employee budget is recommended to decrease by $40,000, from $279,000 to $239,000. An appraiser position was left vacant, and those funds were reallocated to an $85,000 contract with Norman & Associates to conduct assessments for subdivisions, municipalities, and rural land, supplementing the firm's existing commercial appraisal contract.
- **Board of Elections:** The group insurance budget increased significantly from $26,000 to a recommended $62,000 over two years, driven by the projected 15 percent insurance increase, the addition of a new employee, and staffing changes, including the reclassification of the Registrar position from part-time to full-time.
- **Public Works:** A proposal was discussed to purchase a new F-450 4x4 crew cab truck for the Public Works Director at an estimated cost of $92,000. The Director's current vehicle would be transferred to the Animal Control Department, whose existing vehicle is in disrepair. A separate request for a dump truck costing approximately $203,000 is not included in the proposed budget.
- **Solid Waste:** The department contract services were increased to cover additional landfill monitoring related to a corrective action plan potentially required by the Environmental Protection Division.
- **Senior Citizen Center:** The proposed budget reflects a $26,000 reduction based on the county's review of actual expenditures for congregate and home-delivered meals, which were lower than the amounts requested by the center.
- **Recreation Authority:** The authority is experiencing a substantial revenue shortfall, requiring an estimated county subsidy of approximately $750,000. The authority's budget includes employee pay increases, unlike the county's proposed budget. Commissioner Pullin suggested implementing higher fees for out-of-county participants and developing a long-term revenue enhancement plan. Commissioner Pullin noted the Recreation Department has a revenue problem and they need a plan for brining in more revenue. The goal is to get them self-sufficient. CM Morton stated that he and Clint, Finance Administrator, will meet with the Recreation Authority to discuss revenues.
- **Planning and Development:** The department's budget increased by $33,000. A request for a part-time code enforcement officer will be addressed by assigning an existing Animal Control employee to perform these duties for approximately 20 hours per week.
- **EMA:** The department has a $6,000 decrease due to grant funding.
- **Agribusiness Authority:** A new agreement requires an annual payment from the authority to the county for the Chestnut Oak facility as part of a 20-year repayment plan. The county will continue to maintain the interior of the Extension Office. The goal is to get them self-sufficient.
- **Expenditure Tracking:** Audited revenues and expenditures are tracking appropriately, with the objective of ending the fiscal year with a positive fund balance.
- **Security Cameras:** The Information Technology Department proposed a $9,237 upgrade to security cameras at multiple county facilities. While not currently included in the proposed budget, the upgrade was recommended for consideration.

**Discussion only, no motion entertained.**

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion/second by Commissioners Guy/Daniel to adjourn at 2:53 p.m., motion carried 5-0.**

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J. Briar Johnson, Chairman Angela Blount, County Clerk