



**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MAY 22, 2025
CONTINUED SESSION MINUTES**

Chairman Young reconvened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. as continued from the May 13, 2025, regular session and welcomed all in attendance. All Board Members, County Manager Warren Cabe, Deputy Clerk Tammy Keezer, Finance Director Lori Carpenter, and County Attorney Eric Ridenour were present, as were a number of county employees, media, and citizens.

FISCAL YEAR 2025-26 BUDGET WORK SESSION

MACON COUNTY SCHOOLS – Superintendent Josh Lynch said he was presenting three budget perspectives: maintain current operations, top priorities, and expansion. Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Lynch and CFO Alayna Ledford reviewed the three budget perspectives, specifying the request for county funding in each of the categories. Mr. Lynch talked about their capital outlay requests in the amount of \$39,010,269.15, which includes a new East Franklin Elementary School, and Highlands School soccer field design and transition to a synthetic field. Ms. Ledford explained their request for pay increases and funding for the school lunch program. Mr. Cabe clarified what was included in his proposed budget and indicated that he tried to pick out the pieces for sure on the maintain current operations side at a \$400,000 increase over the current year, equaling 17.9 percent of the overall proposed budget. Commissioner Shearl recommended that the board to set a percentage moving forward and stay with that percentage, which would allow the school system to know ahead of time the amount of funding they would be provided. Mr. Cabe said if that was the pleasure of the board, he could prepare his proposed budget in the future off of an established percentage, but it may not be exact until we know the debt service and tax amounts. He suggested taking a very proactive look throughout the year at the school system's budget. Mr. Cabe said he did not prioritize the capital projects for the schools because those were submitted as a list, so funds were allocated, but the Board of Education can determine how to use the funds. After additional discussion regarding the requests, Mr. Cabe indicated that contingency funds could be allocated if the board desires, instead of using fund balance to cover any of the requests he did not include in his proposed budget.

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE – SCC President Dr. Don Tomas used a PowerPoint presentation to explain their budget requests and operational needs. His requests included a three percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), capital requests, deferred maintenance allowance, and replacement of a modular facility. Dr. Tomas provided a handout of N.C.G.S. 115D-32 stating the requirements of the county for budgeting and funding. Mr. Cabe talked about a vacant maintenance position the county will relocate to the Grove Center and said he had gone through the list of needs submitted and allocated funding for some but not all of the items in his proposed budget.

SOLID WASTE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (C.I.P.) – Davenport representative Mitch Brigulio utilized a PowerPoint presentation to explain the C.I.P. He said the FY26 budget request was 2.3 million dollars, of which zero was able to be fit into the proposed budget. Mr. Brigulio indicated there is a list of equipment that is in immediate need of replacement, as well as a list of equipment likely to need replacement in the next two to three-year period. Solid Waste Director Chris Stahl provided a handout showing tonnage growth at five-year averages, showing that waste is growing at three times the rate of what was anticipated. Mr. Cabe said a C.I.P. has never been completed for the landfill, and he felt this was important to establish a good plan moving forward.

OTTO VOLUNTEER FIRE AND RESCUE - Cindy Watts, Chairman of the Otto Volunteer Fire and Rescue Board, stated they were requesting an increase in the millage rate to \$0.0723 to cover overall costs. Mr. Cabe said he had included in his proposed budget a lease payment for space at Otto that is being utilized by EMS. He said if the board approves the proposed but there would not need to be an increase in the millage rate. Ms. Watts agreed.

CULLASAJA GORGE FIRE AND RESCUE – Board Chair Jack Baird said the last time he came before the board, he asked for a half-cent increase. He spoke about what happened with that increase and said they estimated 150,000 dollars to build a substation, and they built the substation without having to borrow any money. Mr. Baird indicated the department has four fire trucks at the main station from ranging from 1994 to 2019, and two of those will go to the new substation. He stated that a fire truck is good for 19 years, and a truck they ordered two years ago costs over 443,000 dollars. Mr. Baird said they are requesting a one-cent increase so they can purchase two trucks. Commissioner Young said we talked about this two years ago and did an increase of 1.63 cents and not a half-cent increase. After a lengthy discussion, no action was taken.

Chairman Young called a five-minute recess at 12:44 p.m. and reconvened at 12:50 p.m.

BURNINGTOWN-IOTLA FIRE AND RESCUE (BIFD) – BIFD Board Vice Chair Bill Duffle and Vice Chief Kenneth McCaskill announced that the Board Chair and Fire Chief resigned after the last Board of Commissioners meeting. Mr. Duffle gave some explanation as to the events that occurred during inspections, landing them on probation, said they have had some leadership challenges, and are on their fourth chief in two years. He indicated that a merger by July 1 does not allow them to meet with the community to discuss options, and their board is asking to continue to operate as they are and work on a resolution. Mr. McCaskill said they have talked with Cowee Volunteer Fire and Rescue, and they are willing to continue to assist, but he does not feel that Cowee needs to respond to every call. After a discussion about various issues, Commissioner Young asked to continue the discussion during the general discussion period.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES – EMS Supervisor Jeremy Cabe stated they asked for a new ambulance in the budget at a cost of 384,000 dollars but are coming today to ask to utilize a portion of that amount for an ambulance remount instead and use the remainder toward hiring two additional full-time positions which will allow them to

operate a truck for an additional four days per week. After a short discussion, Commissioner Shields made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, to add four paramedic positions and add a remount, with the difference coming out of fund balance. The vote was unanimous.

OTHER ITEMS OF DISCUSSION – Commissioner Young said this is a time to give the County Manager and the Finance Director guidance. Board members engaged in discussion about the school system, but no action was taken.

RECESS: With no other business, at 2:30 p.m., upon a motion from Commissioner Breeden, seconded by Commissioner Shields, the board voted unanimously to recess until 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 28, 2025.



Warren Cabe
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board



Josh Young
Board Chair