



June 5, 2025

Commissioners' Meeting

6:45PM

Chairperson Kenneth Petty officially commenced the Board of Commissioners meeting on June 5th, 2025, at 6:45 PM, followed by the invocation and the pledge of allegiance.

Announcements and Reports:

Board of Elections Update

Patrick Dupree, Chairperson of the Board of Elections, provided a brief update on the most recent board meeting. provided an update on the upcoming election. Early voting ends on the 13th; the primary is scheduled for Tuesday the 17th; a potential runoff may occur mid-July. Mr. Patrick commended Ms. Church for managing the election process efficiently.

Public Comments

A lengthy and detailed public discussion occurred regarding the potential transfer of the Echols County Water System to the County. Resident David Hambrick initiated a series of questions and expressed several concerns. He inquired whether the County would assume all debts, liabilities, and assets of the Warren Water Authority, specifically referencing a \$71,000 loan. He voiced frustration about what he perceived as a lack of transparency and the absence of a public vote, emphasizing his concern that the burden of any financial obligations could fall unfairly on taxpayers. David also questioned whether the rumored \$10 million in system upgrades would be financed through grants, county-issued bonds, or matched funding, and he sought clarity on who would ultimately be responsible for repayment. Additionally, he asked whether residents currently served by the system would have the option to opt out and install private wells, and he raised further questions about water quality, long-term maintenance, operating costs, and whether the system would be run in-house or through a contracted service provider.

In response, commissioners and staff explained that the water system, if acquired, would operate as an enterprise fund. This structure ensures that no general taxpayer dollars could be used to support system operations. They emphasized that all financial responsibility would lie solely with users of the system unless a special tax district was created, which would require resident approval. The board noted that the Water Authority was created by a 1972 act of the Georgia Legislature and can only be legally dissolved or transferred through legislative action. The County Attorney is currently preparing a resolution for presentation to the state. Commissioners also discussed the potential for funding through grants and loans, such as those available from GEFA and the USDA, clarifying that any infrastructure improvements would be phased in over time based on need and affordability. Concern was also expressed that, should the water board dissolve without County intervention, many residents may not be able to drill



private wells due to insufficient lot sizes and required setbacks. The board stressed that the County is not seeking to profit from this venture and that, if outside contractors or operators are used, all roles would be subject to public bidding.

Further public comment addressed additional concerns. Some questioned the fairness of asking water system users to fund upgrades to facilities that also serve county assets like the courthouse, health department, and library. Others discussed the rising costs and diminishing reliability of private well systems, particularly given the proximity of septic tanks and potential for contamination. Citizens highlighted the aging infrastructure, the need to replace water lines, install odor treatment systems, and improve water quality. While the \$10 million upgrade estimate was confirmed as a long-term projection, officials clarified that improvements would proceed in manageable phases. Suggestions were made regarding staffing, including the potential hiring of a part-time operator or the use of current public works personnel. Lastly, there was discussion about formal avenues for residents to express their support or opposition, such as petitions or referendums; however, the commissioners reiterated that legislative processes would govern any action taken.

Work Shop Adjournment

At 7:00 PM, Chairperson Kenneth Petty called for a motion to adjourn the Echols Board of Commissioners workshop. Commissioner Bobby Walker proposed the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Justin Staten. to dissolve the Board and transfer responsibilities to the Board of Commissioners.

Formal Meeting

At 7:00 PM, Chairperson Kenneth Petty officially commenced the meeting on May 1, 2025.

Approval of Agenda

Chairperson Kenneth Petty called for a motion to approve the agenda for the board meeting scheduled on June 5th, 2025. Commissioner Bobby Walker proposed the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Stanley Corbett. The motion was approved with a unanimous vote of 4-0.

Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Kenneth Petty called for a motion to approve the minutes from the board meeting held on May 1st, 2025. Commissioner Bobby Walker proposed the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Justin Staten. The motion was approved with a unanimous vote of 4-0.



Dissolution of Statenville Cemetery Board

Chairperson Kenneth Petty called for a motion to approve the resolution dissolving the Cemetery Board and transferring responsibilities to the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Justin Staten proposed the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Bobby Walker. The motion was approved with a unanimous vote of 4-0.

Update to Cemetery Ordinance

Chairperson Kenneth Petty called for a motion to update the cemetery ordinance. Commissioner Justin Staten proposed the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Stanley Corbett. The motion was approved with a unanimous vote of 4-0.

Comprehensive Plan Approval

Chairperson Kenneth Petty called for a motion to approve the Comprehensive Plan and allow SGRC to submit the plan to the Department of Community Affairs. Commissioner Stanley Corbett proposed the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Bobby Walker. The motion was approved with a unanimous vote of 4-0.

Fireworks Expenditure

Chairperson Kenneth Petty called for a Motion to approve the spending of \$4,000 for fireworks at the 4th of July. Commissioner Justin Staten proposed the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Stanley Corbett. The motion was approved with a unanimous vote of 4-0.

Old Business

Additional discussions resumed around the water system, including operating costs, user rates, grant eligibility, and fairness of continued service. Commissioners spoke about using grants to assist in future upgrade projects, mitigating possible burdens to tax payers. Several attendees reiterated concern that the system does not become a burden on those outside the service area. Commissioners reiterated commitment to due diligence and public engagement.

Residents also brought forward the need for greater enforcement of property maintenance, ordinance violations, and roadside nuisance structures. Some residents are not happy regarding code enforcement; however, commissioners are looking to hire a code enforcement officer soon.



There was no executive session.

At 7:45 PM, Chairperson Kenneth Petty called for a motion to adjourn the Board of Commissioners meeting. Commissioner Bobby Walker proposed the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Stanley Corbett. The motion was approved with a unanimous vote of 4-0.

Attendees: Chairman Kenneth Petty, Bobby Walker, Commissioner Justin Staten, Commissioner Stanley Corbett, County Clerk Shona Carter, County Manager Alan Levesque, Deputy Courson, Judge Carl Rodgers, Patrick DuPree, Randy Carter, David Hambrick, Victoria Staten, Brean Castleberry, Buddy Vann, Katie Vann, Chuck Jones, Jainie Jones, Jeff Patterson, and others whose names are illegible.