



**LEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

T. PAGE THARP GOVERNMENTAL BUILDING

102 STARKSVILLE AVENUE NORTH, LEESBURG, GEORGIA 31763

Tuesday, February 25, 2025 AT 6:00 PM

T. PAGE THARP BUILDING  
OPAL CANNON AUDITORIUM

[WWW.LEE.GA.US](http://WWW.LEE.GA.US)

MEETING MINUTES

Voting Session

**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Luke Singletary, Chairman District 2  
Chris Guarnieri, Vice-Chairman District 4  
Dennis Roland, Commissioner District 1  
Billy Mathis, Commissioner District 3  
George Walls, Commissioner District 5

**COUNTY STAFF**

Christi Dockery, County Manager  
Kaitlyn Good, County Clerk  
Jimmy Skipper, County Attorney

The Lee County Board of Commissioners met in a voting session on Tuesday, February 25, 2025. The meeting was held in the Opal Cannon Auditorium of the Lee County T. Page Tharp Governmental Building in Leesburg, Georgia. Those present were Chairman Luke Singletary, Vice-Chairman Chris Guarnieri, Commissioner Dennis Roland, Commissioner Billy Mathis, and Commissioner George Walls. Staff in attendance were County Manager Christi Dockery and County Attorney Jimmy Skipper. County Clerk Kaitlyn Good Was absent. The meeting was also streamed on Facebook Live. Chairman Singletary called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **INVOCATION**

Ken Bevell, Sherwood Baptist Church, led the invocation.

3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A) Consideration to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2025 Special Called Meeting of the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2025 Special Called Meeting of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Mathis seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

B) Consideration to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2025 Board of Commissioners meeting.

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2025 Board of Commissioners meeting. Commissioner Mathis seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

5. **CONSENT AGENDA**

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

A) Recognition of County employee's years of service.

Chairman Luke Singletary recognized the following employees for their years of service:

5 years: Justin Alford - Firefighter / EMTA

5 years: Thomas Stroud - Sheriff's Office

15 years: Jacquelyn Norman - Magistrate Chief Deputy Clerk

7. **PUBLIC HEARING**

8. **DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS**

- A) **Planning, Zoning & Engineering** - Consideration to approve (Z25-003) Pinewood Solar application requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Jimmy C Smith. The subject property consists of 23.28 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at 237 E Lumpkin Road, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 035076, in Land Lot 242 of the Third Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***

Chairman Singletary stated items A through G pertain to the same variance application. Commissioner Mathis asked if they currently have a contract to sell their power. Melissa Stroder, NextEra Energy, stated that at this time she is requesting not to discuss the commercial contracts, but they have not signed any contracts for this project yet. Commissioner Mathis asked when they first discussed transmitting this power, did they ever discuss underground lines. Ms. Stroder stated that she was not on this project at the time, so she does not recall any discussion of that. Commissioner Mathis stated he recalled there being discussion about not being able to see these lines, but now there are poles that everyone will be able to see. He asked how tall the poles were going to be. Ms. Stroder stated that right now they are between 100 feet and a maximum of 175 feet, but the average is 135 feet based on current designs. Commissioner Mathis said that the last time an extension was granted, the Board stated that they would not do it again. He clarified that the poles wouldn't be built for another year or so. Commissioner Mathis suggested the variants either be denied or tabled until they know that the project is going to move ahead, since they don't have a contract for their power yet. Ms. Stroder stated that at this time, they have an approved conditional use permit with a deadline in May. They believe that they need to go ahead and move forward with applying for the land disturbance permit and begin the construction of the project. She stated that the year or so construction timeline is where it fits into their overall timeline and has nothing to do with the contract. Commissioner Mathis stated that if they knew that they would move ahead with the project and had a contract to sell the power, then it would be a different story. He said that he would like to motion to deny the variance and if they can come back with a contract, there is time for them to apply for another variance and build the poles.

Chairman Singletary asked if they needed this variance for their land disturbance application. Mr. Jonathan Wells, Attorney for NextEra Energy, said that it is frowned upon to separate the project, such as getting a land disturbance permit for one part of the project, then getting a land disturbance permit for another part of the project. State law encourages you to get the permit all in one, which means you would need the conditional use permit on all the poles. Ms. Stroder said that getting a land disturbance permit is a significant investment. If there is any doubt that part of the project doesn't have the land rights that is needed, then it questions their ability to make the investment that is needed to take the next step. She stated that this is a key part of the project that was included in the original conditional use permit. Commissioner Mathis stated that the poles were not in the initial part of the project; if he remembered correctly, they had planned to transmit power another way originally. Ms. Stroder stated that the initial conditional use permit had a transmission lines with the description that the poles would not be over 100 feet, this variance is because they now know that some of the poles will be over 100 feet. Amanda Nava-Estill, Assistant Planning Director,

stated that they did have a pre-development meeting regarding their land development permit. Commissioner Mathis stated that he would like to see that this project is going to move forward before they approve any of it. Commissioner Guarnieri asked the reason they are raising the height of the poles. Ms. Stroduer stated that there are two main reasons for raising the height. Firstly, they are trying to take the land into consideration and the irrigation pivots. The landowners have requested to raise the height to be able to continue to farm the land without disrupting the pivots. Secondly, they are crossing a habitat where there are five to six mussel species, and they are coordinating with the Department of Natural Resources for best practices to not impact those habitats. Ms. Stroduer said that when they realized that they had a final design that did not match the original conditional use, that is when they came to the Board for a variance. Chairman Singletary stated that this does not change the application. They have a conditional use permit through May and as long as they submit their land development permit by May, then they can build this project. County Attorney Jimmy Skipper clarified that this is a conditional use application, and not a variance that has been stated several times. Ms. Nava-Estill stated that they went through each of the conditional use criteria and felt that each request met the criteria. Mr. Skipper read section 70-89 in the ordinance. He stated that there are five to six things that they have to show that they met or don't apply to this project. Commissioner Roland stated that these poles will be on private property.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to deny (Z25-003) through (Z25-009) Pinewood Solar applications requesting conditional uses. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**.

The **MOTION** failed with Commissioner Guarnieri, Commissioner Roland, and Chairman Singletary voting nay.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to approve (Z25-003) through (Z25-009) Pinewood Solar applications requesting conditional uses. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** passed with Chairman Singletary voting yea; Commissioner Mathis and Commissioner Walls voting nay.

- B) **Planning, Zoning & Engineering** - Consideration to approve (Z25-004) Pinewood Solar, LLC application requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Griffith Farms, LLC. The subject property consists of 73.71 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at the intersection of Lumpkin Road E and Smithville Road N, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 035079, in Land Lot 244 of the Second Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***
- C) **Planning, Zoning & Engineering** - Consideration to approve (Z25-005) Pinewood Solar, LLC application requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is R & S Farms, Inc. The subject property consists of 130.97 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at Lumpkin Road West, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 035100, in Land Lot 244 of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***
- D) **Planning, Zoning & Engineering** - Consideration to approve (Z25-006) Pinewood Solar, LLC application requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Michigan Homes. The subject property consists of 202.5 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at U.S. HWY 19 N, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 035113, in Land Lot 245 and 246 of the Thirteenth Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***

- E) **Planning, Zoning & Engineering** - Consideration to approve (Z25-007) Pinewood Solar, LLC application requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Wingate WD & Mary E & Cross Creek Plantations, LLC. The subject property consists of 2,000 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located between State Route 195 and Old Leslie Road, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 044002, in Land Lots 145,10,176,11,43,44,21,12,20S1/2 of 22 of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***
- F) **Planning, Zoning & Engineering** - Consideration to approve (Z25-008) Pinewood Solar, LLC application requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Wingate WD & Mary E & Cross Creek Plantations, LLC. The subject property consists of 689 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at 1305 State HWY 195, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 045001, in Land Lots 145,175, and 208 of the Third Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***
- G) **Planning, Zoning & Engineering** - Consideration to approve (Z25-009) Pinewood Solar, LLC application requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Griffith Farms, LLC. The subject property consists of 317.48 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at 608 State HWY 195, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 046001, in Land Lot 016 of the Second Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***

9. **CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS & GOVERNMENTAL BOARDS/AUTHORITIES**

10. **COUNTY MANAGER’S MATTERS**

- A) Update on County projects.

County Manager Christi Dockery discussed the following updates to County projects: (1) the equipment for the Smithville tower is expected to be installed by mid-March; (2) the E-911 Center renovation project has been completed; and (3) staff is currently working to acquire the right-of-way for Coston Road.

Commissioner Mathis asked about the R-2 study. Ms. Dockery stated that they expect to have it by next week and a public hearing will be held regarding this on March 11. A complete project should be done in the next month or two.

- B) Consideration to award the bid for the 2025 CDBG Grant Writing Services.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that the CDBG grant is due on April 4th. A committee reviewed all the proposals and recommended Sunbelt Consulting for this project.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to award the bid for the 2025 CDBG Grant Writing Services to Sunbelt Consulting. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Roland voting yea.

- C) Consideration to award the bid for the 2025 CDBG Engineering Services.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that the committee reviewed all the proposals and recommended Still Waters Engineering for this project.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to award the bid for the 2025 CDBG Engineering Services to Still Waters Engineering. Commissioner Guarneri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

D) Consideration to award the bid for the DFCS Building Flooring Services.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that a bid was put out to replace the carpet in the DFCS building. There were two contractors that put a bid in with the lowest bidder being Custom Interiors for \$23,900.55.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to award the bid for the DFCS Building Flooring Services to Custom Interiors for \$23,900.55. Commissioner Guarneri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

E) Consideration to approve a fiber service contract with the City of Albany.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that this will be a reliable source of fiber for the tower. \$4,650.00 with a \$500.00 monthly fee, it will take around 90 days to complete. Commissioner Guarneri asked if the price is better than what is being paid now. Ms. Dockery stated that it is, the microwave to replace would be \$545,000.00.

Commissioner Guarneri made the **MOTION** to approve a fiber service contract with the City of Albany for \$4,650.00 with a monthly cost of \$500.00 from SPLOST funds. Commissioner Mathis seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

F) Consideration to approve a construction estimate for the Lee County Courthouse addition.

Chairman Singletary stated that this was for discussion. He said that he has discussed with Judge James Sizemore regarding the next steps for this addition. Mr. Sizemore stated that he has discussed with the architect, phase one has been completed. The next step was to see if the anticipated cost is in SPLOST, which is 4.3 million. Phase two is where the Board would enter another contract with the architect to prepare plans that can be bid on. Mr. Sizemore stated that the architect would prepare the plans, take this project to bid, and supervise the construction through completion. Chairman Singletary clarified that 7.75% of the project cost is the architects' fee. Commissioner Mathis asked what it will cost to get a set of plans to put out for bid. Mr. Sizemore said that the whole cost of what the architect will be doing is 7.75%, the total of what they will pay before it goes out to bid should be broken down in the agreement. Mr. Sizemore asked if they would like him to get the agreement. Chairman Singletary asked for the payment schedule and fee structure. Commissioner Mathis stated for Mr. Sizemore to get a proposal and bring it to the Board.

G) Discussion of the upcoming Lee County Bicentennial.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that Ms. Lisa Davis, Chamber of Commerce Director, has a committee for the upcoming Bicentennial and is recommending hiring the Kinchafoonee Cowboys to perform. They are available on May 31st, and it will be approximately \$10,000.00. This is one of many things that the committee has put together.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to approve the contract with the Kinchafoonee Cowboys for the Lee County Bicentennial. Commissioner Guarneri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

11. **COMMISSIONER'S MATTERS**

A) Discussion of Old Leslie Road.

Commissioner Roland stated that Mr. Paul Clayton has been attending these meetings for many years. He said that he was not a commissioner at the time, but someone made a promise to Mr. Clayton to pave his road. Commissioner Roland stated that there is money in TSPLOST and that there is a joint effort to do Ledo Road, but next year he would like to see about doing a joint effort to do Old Leslie Road. Commissioner Mathis stated that there was previously a paved road that Public Works helped prepare. He asked Public Works Director Mike Sistrunk if that was possible for this road. Mr. Sistrunk said with the crew that he currently has, it may take longer, but it could save some money. Chairman Singletary asked for a rough cost estimate for Public Works to do the prep work. Mr. Sistrunk stated that he would get that estimate and bring it to the Board.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to proceed with getting a cost estimate for the paving of Old Leslie Road. Commissioner Mathis seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

12. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

13. **COUNTY ATTORNEY'S MATTERS**

A) Consideration to approve a Opioid Antagonist Administration Training and Administration Policy.

County Attorney Jimmy Skipper stated that this is regarding having Narcan in all county buildings and a policy in place. Finance Director Heather Jones stated that there has to be a policy in place that states that any county buildings that have open meetings must have Narcan in the facility. Employees have to be trained on how to use the Narcan, watch three training videos, and sign off on the policy. Ms. Jones stated that this is a required policy.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to approve an Opioid Antagonist Administration Training and Administration Policy. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**.

The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

14. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

15. **PUBLIC FORUM**

Sam Johnson - Discussed the right-of-way on Old Leslie Road. Mr. Johnson discussed concerns regarding the Pinewood Solar poles and solar panels.

Lee Purvis - Discussed concerns regarding Pinewood Solar. Mr. Purvis asked if these are the type of people that the County wants to have business with. Chairman Singletary clarified that the County does not have business with them, the landowners do.

With no further comments or questions from the public, staff or the Board. The Public Forum was closed.

16. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

A) The next meeting of the Lee County Board of Commissioners will be March 11, 2025.

17. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:38PM.

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CHAIRMAN

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
COUNTY CLERK