



# LEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

T. PAGE THARP GOVERNMENTAL BUILDING

102 STARKSVILLE AVENUE NORTH, LEESBURG, GEORGIA 31763

Thursday, May 1, 2025 AT 3:30 PM

T. PAGE THARP BUILDING

KINCHAFOONEE ROOM

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

MEETING MINUTES

BUDGET WORKSHOP

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## 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

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The Budget Committee of the Lee County Board of Commissioners met in a Budget Workshop on Thursday, May 1, 2025. The meeting was held in the Kinchafoonee Room of the Lee County T. Page Tharp Governmental Building in Leesburg, Georgia. Those present were Budget Committee Chairman Chris Guarnieri and Vice-Chairman Luke Singletary. Staff in attendance were County Manager Christi Dockery and County Clerk Kaitlyn Good. Also present were Co-Assistant County Manager/Finance Director Heather Jones and Co-Assistant County Manager/ Chief Building Official Joey Davenport. Budget Committee Chairman Guarnieri called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

### 2. NEW BUSINESS

#### A) Review of the FY2025-2026 Board of Commissioners budget.

Co-Assistant County Manager/Finance Director Heather Jones stated that this year's proposed budget is pretty much the same as the budget last year, with just a few changes. Namely, there is a 2.8% COLA proposed. There is also an increase in the Salary and Retirement line, mostly due to the enactment of the salary study in 2024. There is not a lot of capital this year and there were not many budget requests received from departments and most requests were provided within the proposed budget.

County Manager Christi Dockery added that one position had been added for the Tax Assessor's Office, when that department had asked for two positions.

#### B) Discussion of the proposed Elections and Registration departmental budget.

Director of Elections and Registration Veronica Johnson and Elections Board Chairman Mike Sabot were present and spoke on behalf of the Elections and Registration department. Ms. Johnson stated that she had a few line items she would like to discuss. The first item is "Supplies". The requested amount for the FY2025-2026 budget year is \$50,000.00; however, only \$33,250.00 has been approved, the same amount as FY2024-2025. Ms. Johnson stated that they are anticipating an increase in turnout for the coming elections and a higher turnout equates to more expenses. Average turnout is approximately 70%. This line item includes consumables such as watermarked security paper and memory cards. These are new costs that have not been requirements in the past. Being that these costs are mandated, the charges will be imminent.

Ms. Johnson added that third-party groups have also become a problem. Commissioner Singletary asked why a year of state elections costs more than that of a presidential election, to which Ms.

Johnson and Mr. Sabot explained that there would be a higher turnout and possibly several runoffs. Commissioner Singletary suggested setting the budget as it is during a presidential election year, with budget amendments to have costs come from the BOC budget, if necessary. Ms. Johnson added that the presidential primary typically does not have a high turnout. The key expense is ballot printing; due to the Elections and Registration Office being required to have 10% paper ballots available and the probable primaries for the upcoming state and local election season.

Commissioner Guarnieri emphasized the difference in what was proposed and what was requested, asking for what they anticipate spending that difference on. Mr. Guarnieri also asked about a few miscellaneous expenses in the current year's budget, stating that the budget is for needs and not wants. Ms. Johnson replied stating that some expenses were made for voter outreach and others to boost morale among staff, adding that employee retention is very important as it provides a sense of stability and security for not only fellow employees, but the public as well. Maintaining staff with that institutional knowledge is invaluable. Commissioner Guarnieri suggested setting the budget at \$32,500.00, with budget amendments to have costs come from the BOC budget, if necessary. Ms. Johnson stated that she would be fine with submitting budget amendments should the need arise; however, she voiced frustration at the lack of feedback or communication during the budget process.

The next line item to be discussed was "Professional Services". Ms. Johnson and Mr. Sabot began the discussion by stating that Lee County is one of 17 counties in Georgia named in a class-action lawsuit. The Board of Elections has contracted with a law firm that also represents several of the other counties listed and are splitting legal fees. So far, over \$8,000.00 has been paid in legal fees. This line item is inclusive of an amount to hopefully cover any future legal fees regarding this case; however, there is no perceived timeline. Commissioner Singletary added that he would prefer any legal fees to come out of the BOC budget.

C) Discussion of the proposed Tax Commissioner's Office departmental budget.

Tax Commissioner Wendy David and Director of Elections and Registration Veronica Johnson jointly requested a vehicle, stating it could be shared between the two departments as the current vehicle is unsafe. The vehicle could be split between the two departments' budgets. The vehicle would need to be an SUV or van to be able to carry election supplies. Co-Assistant County Manager Heather Jones added that the vehicle her department staff uses is also unsafe and suggested the three departments share the vehicle. Ms. David and Ms. Johnson agreed to that arrangement and to communicate with each other regarding vehicle need and usage. Ms. Jones added that this cost would come from the General Fund as it is not defined as a need on the SPLOST ballot. Commissioner Singletary voiced support, suggesting staff contact the Sheriff's Office to see if they could provide one of their SUVs in exchange for the purchase of a new patrol vehicle. The two existing departmental vehicles will be declared surplus and sold on GovDeals.

Ms. David stated that she had nothing further to discuss in terms of her departmental budget.

3. **PUBLIC FORUM**

No citizens took part in the Public Forum.

With no comments or questions, the Public Forum was closed.

4. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35PM.

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CHAIRMAN

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