

**REGULAR SESSION MEETING
BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2025
6:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman, Jimmy Parker, called the regular session meeting of the Berrien County Board of Commissioners to order on Tuesday, December 2, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. Members of the Board of Commissioners present were Commissioners Pixie Harrod, Ronnie Gaskins and Kylon Fort. Commissioner John Nugent was absent.

Invocation: Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins

Pledge: Commissioner Pixie Harrod

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to approve the November 4, 2025 Regular Session Minutes, the November 12, 2025 9:00 a.m. Special Called Meeting for Public Hearing Tax Increase Minutes and the November 12, 2025 4:00 p.m. Special Called Meeting for Public Hearing Tax Increase, seconded by Commissioner Kylon Fort. The motion carried unanimously.

INVITED GUEST:

Tammy Owens – Did not show up.

Charlie Gray – Recreation Department – Charlie Gray said he was there representing the parents of the Recreation Department asked that Jessie McMillan speak instead of him. Jessie stated he is the Chairman of the Recreation Authority Board. He stated that there are some upgrades they would like seen at the facility. They would like a new recreation concession and bathrooms He stated that he felt there would be community support for an additional sales tax. Joe Barkman stated that the drainage issue is being resolved and in the process of finishing it up. He stated that as a community we need to take care of the facility. Clean up the trash behind yourself. We are painting the bathrooms and the building. Fields 1, 2, 3, 5 & 6 needs backstop and fence repairs. We did one field this year. He thanked the board and said they have supported him and the recreation department and he appreciates that. He also stated that he spoke with Jaclyn Ford and she will be requesting \$50,000.00 when they go into session. Joe said he has talked with the City of Nashville about tying in sewer. Septic lines would have to go up to the collaborative building, and we would have to pump it. He also spoke about tournaments and explained that the only funds we receive from a tournament are rental of the fields and concessions. He said that there is more grant funding available for cities to receive than there are for counties. Commissioner Gaskins said we need to check with Seven Rivers to see if they have any grants that would help with this.

Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to move into public hearing at 6:14 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Kylon Fort. The motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING –

Rezoning from AU to GB – Linsay McKuhn – Withdrew her rezoning request.

Special Exception – NexTower Development Group II, LLC & Carla Jones – Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins stated he was abstaining from discussion and vote due to the property is his nieces.

Gary Hunter from NexTower spoke in favor of the tower. He said it is an 80x80 leased area from the landowner. It meets all the setbacks.

Sandy Mizell, E-911 Director/EMA Director – stated that 911 cannot get calls a lot of times from that area. Calls break up when they do go through. From an emergency standpoint, coverage is needed in that area.

Nicole Robinette spoke against the tower. She is against the placement of the tower and asked the board if they are familiar with the 1996 Telecommunications Act. She asked if we have all the proper reports stating that the existing towers are not sufficient. Commissioner Harrod asked for more clarification. Gary Hunter distributed maps showing there is no frequency in the area. It will not negatively impact existing tower service. Mrs. Robinette stated FCC encourages use of existing towers. Mariana Sansidra made the comment to Commissioner Gaskins and said you want this in your backyard, I'm sure you are getting something out of this. Commissioner Fort stated we are not putting up with this, that is an opinion and not a fact.

Mike Baker – Seen the advertisement in Berrien Press. As a farmer, how far off before we use satellites, will these towers be obsolete? He has concerns about crop-dusters hitting them. Commissioner Gaskins stated that he spoke with a couple pilots, and they stated they have them on the radar and they are not concerned about the towers.

The question was asked how the property location came about? Was the property owner searching for a company or the company searching for a location. Gary Hunter confirmed that they searched for the property location and contacted them. He stated that once the tower is up, other carriers will reach out and want to join on that tower. Commissioner Harrod asked if it was feasible to raise the tower? Mr. Hunter stated if you go up higher, you are farther away from those needing the service. 265 ft tower is high but if you go higher on an existing tower, you will not have better service.

Keith Luke – Stated we need the coverage, but he does not want it in his back yard. He is concerned about the negative impacts. Commissioner Harrod stated he has had towers close to him for 25 years and it has never caused any problems. Mr. Hunter stated property value impact is not affected. He quoted 47-USC Section 332c. County Attorney stated that general federal telecommunications Act does mean the county commission. We, as a county, have certain perimeters if we deny the request. We must document with substantial evidence as to why its denied.

Chairman Parker asked how many was against the tower. There were six and one for the tower.

Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to move out of public hearing and into regular session at 6:52 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Kylon Fort. The motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. REZONING FROM AU TO GB – LINDSAY MCKUHN – Applicant withdrew the request. No action taken.

B. NEXTOWER DEVELOPMENT GROUP II, LLC - Administration received a request from the Planning Commission. NexTower Development Group II, LLC along with Carla Jones is requesting a special exception to construct and use a 265-ft self-support tower and telecommunications facility. The Planning Commission held the required public hearings and is recommending approval. Commissioner Kylon Fort made a motion to table the item until next month, seconded by Commissioner Pixie Harrod. The motion carried unanimously.

C. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – UGA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION – Administration received a request from Patrick Willis to execute the updated Memorandum of Understanding. It was last executed in February 2020 and there are no changes to this one. Commissioner Kylon Fort made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins. The motion carried unanimously.

D. LAND LEASES – AIRPORT - Administration received a request from the Berrien County Airport Authority to approve the land leases for Air Castle LLC (Ken Morrison), Brian Griffin, Howard Ray Construction and Chaparral Boats, Inc. These are 15-year leases with a one-time upfront payment of \$3,000.00. Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins. The motion carried unanimously.

E. BEER, WINE, LIQUOR & CATERING LICENSE APPLICATIONS – 2026 - Administration sent out applications for the 2026 Beer, Wine, Liquor & Catering License Renewals. Applications received were from:

Familia Vineyards (d/b/a Horse Creek Winery)
The Whiskey Barrel
Walker Drive Inn / Walker Packaging
Bob Liquor King

Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins made a motion to approve after advertisement run in the paper, seconded by Commissioner Kylon Fort.

F. EQUIPMENT ACQUISITION – EBFD – Administration received a request from Marc Mathis to purchase a Ranch Hand Bumper, winch and steps for EBFD's new truck. Three quotes were received with the lowest quote from D&S Wheels & Deals for \$3,374.00. Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins. The motion carried unanimously.

G. BOARD APPOINTMENTS – RECREATION – Administration received a request from Joe Barkman and the approval of the following appointments from the Recreation Board:

<u>Appointment</u>	<u>Term Expiration</u>
Jessie McMillan	December 31, 2030
Sam Duggan	December 31, 2030
Colby Bradford	December 31, 2030

Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to approve the appointments are presented, seconded by Commissioner Kylon Fort. The motion carried unanimously.

H. CANCER INSURANCE RENEWAL – FIREFIGHTERS - Administration received the renewal quote on the firefighter cancer policy from Houston and Associates. The renewal premium is \$13,680.00. The cost is \$144.00 per person, which is the same as last year. There are 10 additional firefighters this year resulting in an increase of \$1,440.00. In the past we pay the premium and then invoice the cities 50% of the cost of the departments which are city/county. Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Kylon Fort. The motion carried unanimously.

I. CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT & CHANGE ORDER – NLFD - Administration is requesting the board approve the Contract with R & T Construction. This is the contract to build New Lois Fire Department. Total contract amount is \$114,099.88. Administration is also requesting approval of the Change Order which removes the Performance Bond and Payment Bond from the Contract Documents. Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to approve the contract as presented, seconded by Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins. The motion carried unanimously.

J. 2025 LRA LMIG CONTRACT CHANGE ORDER – Administration is requesting the board approve the Contract Change Order adding Mt. Pleasant Church Road and Popular Springs Church Road. The Change Order is an increase of \$287,392.00. Commissioner Kylon Fort made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Pixie Harrod. The motion carried unanimously.

K. 2026 LMIG GRANT APPLICATION - Administration is requesting approval to submit the 2026 LMIG Grant Application. We will receive grant funding in the amount of \$985,951.20 and there will be a 10% match of \$98,595.12 for a total project cost of \$1,084,546.32. The board discussed in the November meeting to submit N. Coffee Road on this project. County Administrator said that we can resurface approximately three more miles along with N. Coffee Road or we can do some striping. With the thermoplastic paint with raised pavement markers we are looking at approximately 46 miles or with the high build paint approximately 61 miles. The board discussed doing 61 miles of striping. They will evaluate the roads and make a decision next month. Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to table this item until next month, seconded by Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins. The motion carried unanimously.

L. COLLECTION COMPANY CHANGE & EMS SOAP, LLC

SUBSCRIPTION – EMS - Administration received a request from Gerald Sumner to change collection companies for EMS billings. We currently use Credit Bureau Associates of Tifton, which charges a 25% commission on recovered funds. For FY 2024-2025, we sent \$560,795.18 to them for collections. Of that amount they collected only \$3,162.02, resulting in a 0.56% collection rate.

Life Line Collections, owned by EMS-MC, our new billing company, is offering a more favorable structure: 20% commission on collections, the ability to pull back accounts when insurance or other payment sources are identified, in which case we would only pay a 5.3% commission to EMS-MC.

EMS SOAP LLC – Annual cost is \$2,000.00 with a 12 month contract term. This covers two ambulances with 20 personnel. The cost collections last year at this time was \$317,580.00 and since July 1st this year we have reached \$400,162.00.

Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to approve the change in collections as presented based upon attorney review of contract, seconded by Commissioner Kylon Fort. The motion carried unanimously.

M. PANIC ALARMS – ADMINISTRATION BLDG. - Administration received a

request from Sheriff Paulk to add some panic alarms in offices at the Administration Building. The cost of the alarms are \$12,730.00 plus \$1,542.70 for installation for a total cost of \$14,272.70. Time Out Systems, Inc. will be doing the work. Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Pixie Harrod. The motion carried unanimously.

N. RATIFICATION ITEMS - Administration is requesting ratification on the

following items:

L&T, Inc. – Airport	\$2,871.08
Garrett – Metal Detector – Admin Bldg.	\$4,308.66
Cook County Welding – Road	\$2,710.46
Sutten System Sales – Road	\$3,780.00
Yancey – Road	\$1,085.20
Tire Store – Jail	\$1,724.00

Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to ratify the items presented, seconded by Commissioner Kylon Fort. The motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND DEPARTMENTS:

James Watson - EBFD – asked the board about approve a subscription-based service for EBFD that will come across your phone. The board took the information and said they will review it and discuss next month.

COMMISSIONERS ITEMS:

Ronnie Gaskins –

- Stated he sits on the ACCG Workers' Compensation Board and there will be a rate reduction of 11.3% with a 3.2% refund.

Pixie Harrod –

- Said it was time for donations for Toys for Tots. This is a \$50.00 personal donation.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR COMMENTS:

Brenda Ferrell –

- GA Department of Revenue released the Application for Hurricane Helene Disaster Area Timber Grant. I have filled this application out and will be submitting it.
- There was approximately 130 feet of paving near the Tift County Line by Paradise Public Fishing that was not completed. Tift County had a paving job and paved up to the county line. However this left the 130 feet section not resurfaced in Berrien County. Reames gave a quote of \$12,995.90. County Administrator stated there are funds to cover this in TSPLOST. Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Kylon Fort. The motion carried unanimously.
- Pipe Request – Winsupply \$8,178.00. Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins. The motion carried unanimously.
- Windstream – Broadband Grant Attestation – County Administrator explained that RMS is the company that attests for Windstream that the work has been completed. They have made an attestation and is asking the board for their approval of the attestation. Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Kylon Fort. The motion carried unanimously.
- Hazard Mitigation Grant – We are asking for permission to submit the grant application. There is a local match of \$5,824.05 that will be split with the cities. This actual update is not due for five years but they are securing funding now. Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Pixie Harrod. The motion carried unanimously.
- CDBG – The regional commission is requesting we have a public hearing on December 16, 2025 to get community input on projects. Commissioner Pixie Harrod made a motion to approve Heather Lane and High Point, seconded by Commissioner Ronnie Gaskins. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

James Watson – Stated he went through the EMT class that Berrien County held. Stated he guessed since the county attorney wasn't presented he would wait on an answer. He also stated that on behalf of the fire departments, they would like to know if Marc Mathis is the Fire Chief or has Gerald Sumner been appointed the Chief. The board explained that Marc is the Head Fire Chief for Berrien County. He does, however, report to Gerald. They thanked the board for the clarification.

Emily Beeman – asked if there were any updates on the Kincaid Farm issue. County Attorney, Jennifer Herzog, gave an update on what the county is doing on this matter. Commissioner Gaskins stated that EPD is still actively working the situation and has deemed it at solid waste and

they are supposed to stop spreading it. Ms. Sandra Moore spoke and said that it is horrible, and she will not stop with this. \Coby Bradford asked about a fine for every day until it is cleaned up. County Attorney asked if anyone would be willing to give a statement, please leave their name and contact information with Code Enforcement or County Administrator, Brenda Ferrell.

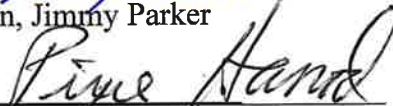
Skeeter Parker – stated he has worked hard to bring the paper back. He can't help that people don't read it.

ADJOURN


With no other business to come before the Board, Commissioner Pixie Harrod made the motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Commissioner Kylon Fort. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.



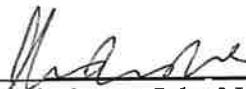
Chairman, Jimmy Parker




Commissioner, Pixie Harrod



Commissioner, Kylon Fort



Commissioner, John Nugent



Commissioner, Ronnie Gaskins

ATTEST: 

County Clerk