



Coweta County Board of Commissioners

22 East Broad Street
Newnan, GA 30263
www.coweta.ga.us

Called Meeting/Work Session

Minutes

**Shannon Zerangue
Fran Collins
770.254.2601**

May 6, 2025

3:00 PM

**Commission Chambers
37 Perry Street
Newnan, GA 30263**

Coweta County Board of Commissioners

Roll Call/Call to Order

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Bill McKenzie	District 2 - Chairman	Present
John Reidelbach	District 4 - Vice Chairman	Present
Jeff Fisher	District 1	Present
Bob Blackburn	District 3	Present
Alphonso Smith	District 5	Absent
Michael Fouts	County Administrator	Present
Kelly Mickle	Assistant County Administrator	Present
Sandy Wisenbaker	Assistant County Administrator	Present
Tod Handley	Public Works Administrator	Present
Nathan Lee	County Attorney	Present
Shannon Zerangue	County Clerk	Present

The Honorable Board of Commissioners of Coweta County, Georgia met in Called Meeting/Work Session on Tuesday, May 6, 2025.

Meeting Called to Order

Chairman McKenzie called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman McKenzie led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Invocation

Invocation was given by Chairman McKenzie.

Regular Session

1. Discuss Amendments to the Employee Handbook

Administrator Fouts explained that the County transitioned from the former Personnel Management System to the Coweta County Employee Handbook when the Board adopted it in 2018 (see August 21, 2018, minutes). He further explained that staff has been systematically reviewing the Handbook to determine if any amendments are necessary. Staff has prepared proposed amendments to Sections 100 through 1200 for discussion. He noted that Community and Human Resources staff was also in attendance to address any questions from the Board.

Assistant Administrator Wisenbaker explained that many of the edits to the Handbook are to correct any typos, grammatical errors, and formatting inconsistencies. She noted that staff has also incorporated the County's "Mission and Values" statement into the Handbook in the Introduction Section (201). She highlighted the following substantive proposed amendments to Sections 100 through 1200 of the Handbook:

- Addition of a Tuition Assistance Program - reimbursement of \$2,000 per fiscal year (tuition and mandatory fees), contingent upon funding availability, approval/support from the Department Director, and based upon established eligibility criteria
- Update to the Annual Leave accrual rate - provides for faster accrual for employees that have been employed for 0-5 years, including firefighters working 24-hour shifts
- Addition of a requirement to be employed five years or more to receive annual leave accrued payout upon separation
- Implementation of a Sick Leave Buy-back Policy - employees will be able to sell back accrued sick leave based upon funding availability, certain criteria, and established eligibility

During her presentation, Assistant Administrator Wisenbaker along with Administrator Fouts, Assistant Administrator Mickle, and Community and Human Resources Director Patricia Palmer fielded questions from Chairman McKenzie and Commissioner Reidelbach regarding the proposed Tuition Assistance Program, accrual of annual leave based on tenure, "banked leave", the Sick Leave Buy-back Policy, funding/budgeting, potential transition to a "paid time off" (PTO) policy, the performance evaluation process, the performance evaluation rating scale, and use of the NeoGov software that has improved the performance evaluation process.

In conclusion, Administrator Fouts explained that the proposed Handbook amendments

(Sections 100-1200) have been provided to the Department Directors and Elected Officials, and will be presented to the County's Leave Committee for discussion and input prior to the recommended amendments being presented to the Board for adoption at a future meeting. Additional Sections of the Handbook are also under review for potential amendments at a later date.

2. Discuss Backyard Chickens

Administrator Fouts explained that staff has received several requests from citizens inquiring about raising their own "backyard" chickens. Currently, County ordinances prohibit "backyard" chickens for citizens who reside on smaller lots because those residents/property owners cannot meet the setback requirements. Staff is seeking direction from the Board regarding a potential amendment to the *Zoning Ordinance* that would allow "backyard" chickens on these smaller lots. Should the Board choose to consider amending the *Zoning and Development Ordinance* to address this issue, a Public Hearing will be required.

Community Development Director Jon Amason explained that the issue staff is facing with some requests from residents to raise "backyard" chickens is that smaller lot sizes cannot meet the County's setback requirements. Staff has also received complaints from neighbors regarding citizens who have been raising their own "backyard" chickens on smaller lots. He asked if the Board would be interested in considering an ordinance amendment that would grant some concessions for these types of lots.

In response to a question from Chairman McKenzie, Mr. Amason explained that Code Enforcement staff has not issued any citations associated with "backyard" chickens, but has worked with citizens to help them understand the County's ordinances and setback requirements.

County Extension Coordinator Stephanie Butcher explained that 4-H members can get up to ten (10) chickens to raise in order to participate in the Poultry Chain Program, which provides a hands-on learning experience. Sometimes the County's setback requirements prohibit youths that live on smaller lots from an opportunity to participate. She feels that an ordinance amendment would give more young people an opportunity to participate in the poultry exercise.

Administrator Fouts explained that a potential ordinance amendment could prohibit roosters (noise), establish the maximum number of chickens allowed, and set the minimum lot size as 1/2 acre. Staff is seeking direction from the Board on whether they wish to consider amending the ordinance.

Following a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Board to instruct staff to proceed with drafting an amendment to the *Coweta County Zoning and Development Ordinance* associated with raising "backyard" chickens for consideration at a future Public Hearing (to

be determined and duly advertised).

3. **Discuss Sign Ordinance**

Administrator Fouts explained that questions have arisen regarding the restriction in the County's *Sign Ordinance* that limits the changing of messages on digital signs to once every twenty-four (24) hours. Staff is seeking feedback from the Board regarding whether they would like to proceed with an amendment to the *Sign Ordinance*. Since Commissioner Smith was unable to attend this Work Session, staff can defer this discussion until a future Work Session if the Board desires.

Chairman McKenzie explained that he feels that limiting digital sign messages to once every 24-hours is too stringent given today's technologically advanced era.

Commissioner Reidelbach expressed his feelings that the safety of motorists should be considered when establishing the timing sequence of digital message changes.

In response to a question from Commissioner Fisher, Administrator Fouts explained that Commissioner Smith has not expressed a desire for a specific amendment, but has indicated a broader need for changes to the current *Sign Ordinance*. Since Commissioner Smith was unable to attend this Work Session, staff will also garner his feedback and be prepared for discussion at a future Work Session.

No further comments were heard regarding the current *Coweta County Sign Ordinance*.

4. **Discuss Data Center Ordinance**

Administrator Fouts explained that several members of the Board have mentioned the possibility of the County adopting a *Data Center Ordinance*. Data Centers are not currently included as a permitted use in the County's *Zoning and Development Ordinance*. Staff is seeking direction from the Board regarding a potential *Data Center Ordinance*.

Chairman McKenzie explained that he feels the Board should consider adoption of an ordinance associated with data centers. He believes more research is necessary in order to protect the County and the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens. The County currently has at least two (2) rezoning applications that have been submitted and are related to the construction of data centers. Until the Board can gather more information about data centers, he suggested a moratorium on any new zoning applications associated with such. Additionally, he feels that data centers should be prohibited in *RC (Rural Conservation)* zoning districts.

In response to a question from Commissioner Blackburn, Commissioner Reidelbach suggested that if the Board is interested in enacting a moratorium that it should be in effect for one hundred eighty (180) days. The Board recently approved a rezoning

application for a data center (see the April 15, 2025 minutes) and has already received two (2) more applications that are currently in the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) process through the State. He asked if a moratorium would affect the applications that have already been submitted and explained that he feels that the ordinance amendment should be a priority because the County has been inundated with rezoning applications for data centers.

Attorney Lee explained that a number of factors would have to be considered before it could be determined if the current rezoning applications qualify for vested development rights. These would have to be considered on a case-by-case basis. He further explained that it is very difficult for staff to administer the County's ordinances when data centers are not included as a permitted use.

Commissioner Reidelbach cited the "*Package Sale of Distilled Spirits Ordinance*" and the "*Solar Energy Systems and Facilities Ordinance*" as two (2) of the most recent examples of ordinances that were adopted by the Board to govern specific subject matters.

Administrator Fouts noted that staff worked with the Board to develop the "*Solar Ordinance*" for over a year. Depending on how stringent the Board wishes the potential ordinance to be will affect how long it takes to develop an ordinance that the Board feels is appropriate for Coweta County.

In response to a question from Chairman McKenzie, Mr. Fouts explained that the Board may vote to terminate the moratorium anytime prior to November 3, 2025.

In response to a question from Commissioner Fisher regarding how to address the rezoning applications that staff has received for two (2) more data centers, Attorney Lee explained that there is no guarantee that the Board will rezone the properties related to the two (2) applications should the Board decide that data centers are not appropriate land uses at those locations.

It was the consensus of the Board to instruct staff to add consideration of a resolution to enact a 180-day moratorium associated with submission of any new rezoning, special use, and/or variance applications associated with data centers to the agenda for the Public Hearing/Regular Meeting Session scheduled for tonight at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Motion to: Adjourn

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting.

RESULT: Passed (4 to 0)

MOVER: Bob Blackburn

SECONDER: John Reidelbach

AYES: Bill McKenzie, John Reidelbach, Jeff Fisher, Bob Blackburn

ABSENT: Alphonso Smith