



Coweta County Board of Commissioners

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

Work Session

Minutes

Shannon Zerangue
Fran Collins
770.254.2601

February 12, 2026

9:00 AM

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
Alphonso Smith	District 5 - Vice Chairman	Present
Jeff Fisher	District 1	Present
Bob Blackburn	District 3	Present
John Reidelbach	District 4	Present
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	Absent
Fran Collins	Deputy County Clerk	Present

The Honorable Board of Commissioners of Coweta County, Georgia met in Work Session on Thursday, February 12, 2026.

Meeting Called to Order

Chairman McKenzie called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman McKenzie led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Invocation

Invocation was given by Commissioner Smith.

Regular Session

1. Discussion Regarding the New County Government Complex

Administrator Fouts presented a brief history regarding the Administration building located at 22 East Broad Street, Newnan, beginning with its opening in 1939 as the "Coweta County Office Building." In 1992, the "Annex" located at 37 Perry Street, Newnan was completed. In 2023, the Shenandoah facility was opened, which began discussions regarding the future of the Administration building. Later in 2023, two (2) parcels on Turkey Creek Road totaling 23± acres were purchased by the County for the future site of a new Administration building. In April 2025, the Development Authority and the County entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the redevelopment of the property at 22 East Broad Street, then the Development Authority approved a Sale and Purchase Agreement with Caldwell Development Investments, LLC (CDI). In November 2025, the closing of the 22 East Broad Street property was completed, and the Authority executed a three-year Lease Agreement with CDI.

In response to a question from Commissioner Reidelbach, Administrator Fouts explained that there is an option to extend the Lease Agreement with CDI for an additional two (2) years.

Mr. Paul Gresham, Managing Principal at Jefferson Browne Architecture, presented a brief introduction about his firm, highlighting some of their local case studies, including the Hitachi Global Headquarters in Newnan and the SMC³ office in Peachtree City. He explained that examples of those projects can be found on Jefferson's website, www.jeffersonarchitects.com. He further explained that Jefferson Architecture is a mid-sized firm that has approximately twenty (20) employees with a combination of architecture, professional services, interior design, and specialty construction. Their firm has an average rate in the high 90% of projects that get designed, built, and completed. Their passion is to create spaces that are healthy, reduce stress, and increase the productivity of the people that work in them by increasing access to natural light and different design elements. They are currently active in projects in thirty states around the country.

In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Gresham explained that part of their design elements for the SMC³ building included a large highlighted lobby with natural lighting and airflow into interior spaces. For the new County Government Center, the design features would be tailored to meet the Board's goals and needs. Currently, they have performed organizational assessments with representatives from Administration, Assessor's Office, the Commission Chambers, Community and Human Resources, Community Development, Environmental Health (State), Facilities Management, Finance, Information Technology, and Parks and Recreation to define their needs for each department. The needs assessment totals 86,980 square feet, with a cost of \$355-\$485/square foot for the main

building and \$175–\$205/square foot for the Facilities Management building. The total building cost estimate (not including security systems, AV systems, and efficiency upgrades) totals \$30.2 million–\$38.7 million, partial site development totals \$3 million–\$5 million, bringing the approximate total project cost range between \$33 million to \$43 million.

Administrator Fouts explained that Mr. Gresham updated the draft construction cost document with current market bids based on the projected square footage. He further explained that there are other revisions that need to be made and also pointed out that the offices labeled as "Executive Office" in the document are not unique. Those offices are similar to the ones in the newer Public Works building and the Shenandoah facility, comparable to a Department Director's office. In addition to a normal desk, those offices include space for a small round table and chairs.

In response to questions from the Board, Administrator Fouts explained that there is an opportunity to realize some cost savings by utilizing County forces to perform site development. However, staffing resources could be limited based on the timing of several other County projects.

In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Gresham estimated that every County department used 10-year growth projections for staffing. Upon completion, approximately 20%-25% of the new building would be vacant for future expansion, would not be fitted with furniture, and could use modular wall construction for flexibility in the future. An estimated cost for AV (audiovisual) technology in the Commission Chambers could range from \$0.5–\$1 million depending on needs.

Administrator Fouts explained that the Justice Center was built and opened in 2006, and was projected to be a 20-year building with 3-4 shell courtrooms. As of 2022, all the shelled space has been finished in the main building with only one unfinished courtroom remaining in the Juvenile Justice building. Both the Public Works and Shenandoah facilities were built and completely finished with room for future staffing. When working on the schematic design, the new Government center will be fine-tuned, working with the Directors to determine their projected growth while remaining cost effective.

In response to questions from the Board, Administrator Fouts explained that the projected timeline begins with creation of a schematic design in February-March 2026, creation of construction documents in April-May 2026, issuance of bonds in the second or third quarter of 2026, permitting in June-August 2026, and site and building construction in September 2026-June 2028. When closer to completion of construction documents, an RFP will be issued for the construction bids, then bonds will be issued.

Assistant Administrator Mickle explained that staff has worked with the underwriter on a draft timeline. The Board could approve an Authorization to Proceed at their February

17th meeting and obtain an Authorization to Proceed from the Public Facilities Authority (PFA) at their meeting scheduled on March 31st. In April, staff would begin pulling the bond documents together and begin working on the Official Preliminary Statement, even though there is not a firm number yet. Tentatively, in May, the Board and the PFA will approve the bond resolution and final documents, and bonds will be issued in June-July 2026. At this point, everything is fluid. An estimate was generated on a \$40 million bond approximately a year ago and the debt service was about \$3 million. It could potentially range from \$3-\$3.5 million based on the final terms and interest rates at the time.

In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Gresham explained that although they have not designed a government building like this, their philosophy is to look at the needs and design based on those needs. They use their experience from designing surgery centers, churches, auditoriums, and office buildings. In the end, it is a space that needs to be inspiring, meet functionality, and be cost-effective. Their goal is to serve the needs of the Board, the department, and to build a space that functions well for the customers.

It was the consensus of the Board for staff to continue working with Jefferson Browne Architecture on the design and construction of the new Coweta County Government Center, to instruct staff to work with the underwriter Stifel, Nicolaus & Company, bond counsel (Murray Barners Finister, LLP) and counsel (Glover & Davis, PA) on issuance of bonds to fund the project and to bring the Notice to Proceed to the Board and Public Facilities Authority (PFA) at their next respective meetings.

2. Discussion Regarding Animal Services

Administrator Fouts explained that architect Joe Gardner with Gardner, Spencer, Smith, Tench and Jarbeau (GSST&J), and Ms. Heather Lewis, with Animal Arts Design Studios, would be joining the meeting remotely. He presented a brief history regarding Animal Services, including the opening of the main building in 2000, and an expansion project in 2012 from donations from the Holland Ware Foundation. The buildings house a total of 130± kennels, a surgical unit, and provide service for intakes and adoptions. Because of human and animal population growth in the county, there is a need for more resources, including staffing and facilities. Currently, Animal Services staff includes a shelter coordinator, two administrative assistants, an animal services supervisor, seven animal services officers, six offenders from the prison and a contract veterinarian. He explained that in 2023, the Board approved the 2025-2030 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) projects that included a Level 2 Animal Adoption Center. At the time, the projected cost was \$3.8 million. In 2024, a few animal service facilities were toured, including those in Douglas County, Atlanta, and Clayton County, and staff engaged with architect Joe Gardner to begin programming and conceptual design for an Animal Adoption Center in Coweta. SPLOST collections began in 2025, and an open house, community survey, and Work Session were held. In May 2025, the Board approved the purchase of 45± acres along Newnan Crossing Bypass for construction of an Animal Adoption Center and a passive park. In August 2025, the Board voted to engage with

Animal Arts Design Studios to collaborate with Mr. Gardner on the project. Since August, staff has held meetings with Facilities Management, both architects, and the Animal Services committee to discuss the Animal Adoption Center.

Assistant Administrator Wisenbaker explained that the "Doggy Day Out" program has been successful, supported by the community, and multiple adoptions have resulted from the program. The purpose of the ad hoc Animal Advisory Committee was to provide recommendations and advice to Administration regarding various animal-related topics including the Animal Adoption Center, animal-related programming, community education and outreach, and ordinances and regulations. Staff has received great support from committee members at their regular meetings since March 2025. The committee has reviewed the conceptual floor plan and community survey feedback, identified two (2) primary issues and concerns, including the number of animals entering the shelter and their length of stay. The committee also identified the need to focus on a clear vision for Animal Services, to incorporate/integrate partnerships for collective efforts with non-profits, for-profits, and community volunteers, and to provide educational outreach opportunities within the community.

Administrator Fouts spoke briefly regarding the future vision for Animal Services, including creation of a stand-alone Animal Services Department. Staff proposes to hire an Animal Services Director this summer (Fiscal Year 2026), budget for an Adoption Center Coordinator next year (Fiscal Year 2027), explore other operational changes, and construct the Animal Adoption Center.

In response to questions from the Board, Administrator Fouts explained that the Animal Shelter will remain under the direct supervision of Warden Jeff Rogers until further options are explored. Staff believes there needs to be a designated Animal Services Director to lead the effort going forward.

In response to questions from the Board, Warden Rogers explained that a certified Correctional Officer has to accompany the offenders at the Animal Shelter. He fully supports utilizing offender labor and Correctional Officers.

Chairman McKenzie explained that there are prison details that operate with a certified Correctional Officer supervising them (Public Works). Technically, those officers are still the Warden's responsibility. Certified Correctional Officers are also considered peace officers and can be eligible for the State's Peace Officers Annuity and Benefit Fund (POAB). If they are placed under the direction of a "civilian" (such as an Animal Services Director), they will be considered a Code Enforcement officer and no longer be eligible for the State POAB. However, once an officer has made the decision to impound an animal, and it is taken to the shelter, that animal would then be under the control of the Animal Services Director. Inmates also provide an invaluable service keeping kennels clean and caring for the animals.

Warden Rogers explained that he is excited about the potential to have a Director to help with the global vision for Animal Services. There are many nuances to both Certified Correctional Officers and Code Enforcement Officers that will need to be discussed in the future. Once an animal is under the care and custody of Coweta County, decisions regarding its care and custody, including medical and food, would fall under the Animal Services Director. Enforcement and impoundment of animals falls under the officers. He expressed that he is a big supporter of offenders helping with Animal Services because it is therapeutic for both offenders and animals. In addition, the prison has expanded its on-the-job training and offenders receive credits for animal care.

Administrator Fouts explained that the vision for Animal Services includes the exploration of operational changes, but numerous details need to be considered. The primary focus is to get the new Animal Adoption Center open and running. The County already has a successful inmate/Corrections Officer organizational model with Public Works. Road Maintenance Division Director Ryan Phillips currently coordinates the use of inmate labor under the supervision of a Correctional Officer with the Warden. The Warden is the ultimate decision maker if it involves offenders. Because this project is multiphased, staff is aware that there are still many details to work out. The first step is to create a separate standalone Animal Services Department which reports to Administration. The change is not a reflection on current staff, it is intended to increase their resources. They have done an incredible job managing Animal Services on limited resources. There are programs like "Doggy Day Out" that have garnered interest from the community, but current staff does not have enough time to focus on adoption programs.

Administrator Fouts provided a brief site overview of the Animal Adoption Center project, highlighting the two (2) parcels totaling 45± acres. He explained that the property is located behind Fire Rescue Headquarters and will include a passive park, trails and other amenities on the lower portion of the property.

Mr. Joe Gardner, Principal Architect with Gardner Spencer Smith Tench & Jarbeau, expressed appreciation to the Board for the opportunity to be of service on this important project for Coweta County. He introduced Ms. Heather Lewis, Principal Architect, and Ms. Amy Sanchez, Associate/Senior Architect with Animal Arts Design Studios from Boulder, Colorado. He explained that Ms. Lewis and Ms. Sanchez have designed a number of facilities similar to the Animal Adoption Center, notably the Arthur Blank Atlanta Humane Society Building and the Fulton County Animal Shelter.

Ms. Lewis explained that the first step in validating the preliminary design was to conduct capacity studies of the demographics and animal data over time. The capacity studies resulted in the need for at least thirty (30) kennels in the design to support the animal adoption program. The current Animal Shelter is overcrowded and not conducive to speedy outcomes for adoptions. A more people-friendly center will help with adoptions. In

addition, the number of cat spaces was reviewed and there is adequate capacity in the design. However, cats are not the driver of the square footage that is needed. Other goals for the new proposed center include a long lifespan, low maintenance (industrial finishes because of the water inside/out), fiscal responsibility, and best practices for both cat and dog enclosures. For the dog enclosures, well-known best practices include a double compartment for the long-term health and well-being of the dogs by reducing fear, anxiety and stress. She briefly reviewed two (2) floor plan designs, including the initial concept designed by Mr. Gardner, and the recommended linear-shaped alternative option that is more efficient and saves approximately 2,000 square feet, which helps with budgetary constraints and ease of roofing the building. Animal Arts has been involved in projects around the United States, and unfortunately, animal shelter/adoption centers are very expensive because so many industrial grade finishes are needed. The industry average, post-pandemic, is approximately \$750-\$800 per square foot; based on the current design, the proposed plan is approximately \$667 per square foot. The grand total includes budget line items for roads, grading, drainage, etc., and project contingencies totaling approximately \$10 million.

In response to questions from the Board, Administrator Fouts explained that there are thirty-two (32) double compartment kennels proposed in the recommended floor plan, the current Animal Services facility would remain as the intake location, and the new facility would be the Adoption Center. There is an ordinance regarding euthanasia when the capacity reaches 90%. For the last 2-1/2 years, staff has not had to euthanize any healthy animals, and the facility is considered a no-kill shelter. However, Animal Services staff can attest to the fact that every day, month, and year it gets harder and harder to manage the growing animal population. There is no adequate property to expand the Animal Shelter at the Selt Road location. The property for the new center has high visibility for the public. Although staff does an exceptional job trying to manage both the animals that are coming in and going out, often times the community waits until that euthanasia list is published to take any action. In addition, he explained that animals at the Shelter that are ready for adoption are posted on social media.

Administrator Fouts further explained that approximately three (3) years ago, staff spoke with the City of Newnan about the Shelter situation, and they were supportive of placing the Adoption Center as a Level 2 SPLOST project. The cost estimate used normal construction costs, which led to a budget of \$3.7 million. To help reduce the projected budget deficit, Public Works staff can potentially perform the site work, as well as enter into a partnership with the Department of Corrections to utilize their mobile construction crew, which would cut down costs to approximately \$6.8 million. The approximately \$3 million in addition to the \$3.7 million in SPLOST could be garnered from future year's capital budget and could be split over two (2) fiscal years. There are no additional Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funds available. As the only Animal Shelter in the county, the County does have Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) with the municipalities that can be reviewed to assist with operating the new Adoption Center.

Assistant Administrator Mickle explained that another option is to look at Certificates of Participation (COPs) through the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG), which are similar to bonds. The annual debt service would depend on interest rates and the term chosen.

Administrator Fouts explained that the Public Facilities Authority (PFA) could issue a bond, but it depends on the cost of issuance for such a small project. It is much simpler to go through COPs for a project of this size. If COPs are issued, the property gets deeded to ACCG, then it gets deeded back to the County when the debt service has been repaid.

It was the consensus of the Board to instruct staff to further investigate funding options for the Animal Adoption Center, to establish a standalone Animal Services Department, and to add an Animal Services Director position.

3. Discussion Regarding the Code Enforcement Ordinance

Commissioner Reidelbach explained that he would like for Coweta County Code Enforcement officers who see obvious ordinance violations while they are out doing their daily work to be able to enforce obvious ordinance violations instead of waiting for a citizen to report them.

Administrator Fouts explained that the issue is a policy decision adopted by the Board (see July 20, 2017 minutes). Anonymous reports of violations have been tried in the past, but if a citation goes to court there needs to be a witness. If officers pick on certain areas of the County and do not apply them evenly, there may be a challenge. Also, some violations are located along the state right-of-way and the County's Code Enforcement Officers would then need to coordinate with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

Code Enforcement Supervisor Tim Shelnett explained that if a code violation occurs on private property located off a state right-of-way, then it is the County's Code Enforcement staff to address.

Chairman McKenzie read the following from the *Coweta County Code of Ordinances*: "*Duty of the Code Enforcement Officer, if the code enforcement officer has a reason to believe that a violation as described and declared in sections (a) or (b) exists, the owner of the offending property shall be notified and requested to cause the condition to be remediated. The notice shall be presented by both a physical posting on the property in the name of the property owner and by certified mail or personal delivery to the owner or owners as their names and addresses are shown on the tax records of the county. Notice shall be deemed complete and sufficient when so physically posted and personally delivered or mailed.*" (see Chapter 42. Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions, Article I, Section 42-6). He also stated that if it is selective enforcement, then the judicial officer would have to declare that Coweta County Code Enforcement officers enforcing the

ordinance as unconstitutional. He feels it should not take five (5) people to complain before any action is taken.

Code Enforcement Supervisor Shelnutt explained that the Board changed the Code Enforcement policy to require staff to obtain a name and phone number of a complainant (see July 20, 2017 minutes). That is the policy they are following at this time, and they can't break the policy, unless the Board changes it.

Commissioner Reidelbach explained that he understands why people do not want to disclose their names when complaining about their neighbors, because nowadays, people get nasty and want to retaliate.

Administrator Fouts expressed concerns regarding the staffing resources that would be required to enforce any obvious violations contained in the *Code of Ordinances*.

Commissioner Reidelbach explained that his intent isn't for officers to drive all over the county looking for violations, it was just if they see an obvious one, they should be able to stop and address it.

Administrator Fouts explained that the Board would be surprised at the increase in workload that would occur if they decided to change the policy.

In response to a question from Commissioner Fisher, Administrator Fouts explained that in 2016 an individual made a complaint against a business for an illegal sign. Code Enforcement responded and someone from the business showed up at the front door of the person that complained. The person that made the complaint felt threatened and was upset that her information had been released. However, the County is subject to the Open Records Act, and must release the complainant's information if it is requested. The Board at the time then voted to change the policy so that Code Enforcement could respond to anonymous complaints. After approximately a year, there were a great number of complaints that were reported anonymously, and neighborly disputes began to occur. Staff then requested that the Board rethink the policy. As a result, the Board voted to change the policy back to being complaint-based.

Commissioner Fisher explained that he doesn't want to go back to something they have tried before.

Administrator Fouts explained that in general, most signs in subdivisions (directional signs placed by developers) are illegal and do not meet the ordinance. If the Board chooses to change the policy, there will be a lot of illegal signs reported and the Board would likely be contacted by the builders and developers.

In response to a question from Commissioner Reidelbach, Code Enforcement Supervisor

Shelnutt explained that unsafe structure violations require five (5) residents of unincorporated Coweta County to file a complaint, and in the past year, four (4) unsafe houses were demolished. He also explained that if the Commissioners receive several calls regarding a "hotspot", they can notify Code Enforcement, and they will go out to review.

Commissioner Blackburn explained that he believes that the policy currently in place works well.

Executive Session - In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 50-14-2

There were no issues to be discussed in Executive Session.

Adjournment

Motion to: Adjourn

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting.

RESULT: Passed (UNANIMOUS)

MOVER: Bob Blackburn

SECONDER: Alphonso Smith

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