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| Banks County Established 1858 Seal | **Banks County Board of Commissioners Called Meeting / Work Session** |
| Courthouse Annex Boardroom | 150 Hudson Ridge | Homer, GA 30547 |
| Tuesday, July 29, 2025 at 1:30 PM |
| **Minutes** |

**1.** **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Griffith called the meeting to order.

**PRESENT**

Chairman Taylor Griffith

Vice-Chairman Danny Maxwell

Commissioner Chris Ausburn

Commissioner Bo Garrison

**STAFF**

County Clerk Erin Decker

Deputy County Clerk Julie Wofford

Planning and Zoning Official Keri Fincannon

Planning and Zoning Clerk Nikki Irvin

Planning Commission Board Member Scott Wheatley

Planning Commission Board Member James O’Kelley

Planning Commission Board Member Jody Parks

Planning Commission Board Member Adam Swinehart

Planning Commission Board Member Jason Hensley

Fire Chief Steve Nichols

Battalion Chief Scottie Mathis

Human Resources Arlene Ivey

**2.** **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Griffith stated the agenda needed to be amended as follows:

Add: 7E. Travel Expenses Fire/EMS.

Motion to approve the agenda as amended

Motion made by Chairman Griffith, Seconded by Vice Chairman Maxwell.
Voting Yea: Chairman Griffith, Vice Chairman Maxwell, Commissioner Ausburn, Commissioner Garrison

Vote: 4:0

All yea votes and the motion passed.

**3.** **PREVIOUS BUSINESS ACTION**

**a. Planning Commission: Amend Permit Fees**

Planning & Zoning Director Kerri Fincannon spoke concerning the proposed amendment of permit fees.

Ms. Fincannon stated the format of fees had been revised in the proposal. Currently residential fees started with a base amount then added 10¢ per added square feet.  The proposal would have groups of square footage with the same base price.

Chairman Griffith asked if this amendment was adding permit fees that were not currently being charged?

Ms. Fincannon stated yes.

Commissioner Garrison asked which fees were new?

Ms. Fincannon stated some of the new fees were Residential Solar, Permit Renewal, and Cell Towers.

Vice Chairman Maxwell asked which fees would be increased with the new proposal?

Ms. Fincannon stated the fees in the proposal were more standardized. Most increases would be found in large size commercial builds. There would not be increases for agriculture and a very small increase for sub-contractors.

Chairman Griffith stated this would get Banks County more in line with surrounding counties.

Chairman Griffith asked Ms. Fincannon to do a public notice for the fees for the August 12th meeting.

**b.** **Planning Commission: Noise Ordinance**

Planning Commission Member Scott Wheatley expressed concerns for a need for the noise ordinance but having to police the ordinance would be difficult.

Chairman Griffith stated they needed to find a way to exempt certain functions from the noise ordinance.

Commissioner Ausburn said there needed to be possible time limits on the noise ordinance.

Planning Commission Member Jody Parks said we needed to concentrate on the problems that the citizens have had in the past. There needed to be exemptions for schools, commercial, recreation department, agriculture, and churches.

Chairman Griffith said the intent of the noise ordinance was for electronically amplified noise.

Planning Commission Member Jason Hensley stated it was unfair to punish rural areas for choices that a few citizens made.

Commissioner Ausburn said the proposal was too much government.

Mr. Wheatley said 5 things needed to be addressed:

* Exemptions
* Hours
* Zoning
* Special Event Permits
* Enforcement

Commissioner Garrison brought up that the proposal would tie the hands of citizens that own large acreage.

Mr. Hensley stated his opinion was it was too much government.

***Jennifer Poole- 137 Pebble Creek Ln, Alto*** - Brought up her concerns with the necessity of a noise ordinance. She spoke on the negative impact of how noises were affecting her family.  She stated that all other surrounding counties had noise ordinances that were plainly measured audible noises by feet rather than a decibel reader.

Commissioner Ausburn said this was a civil dispute and needed to go through the court system.

Chairman Griffith requested to put together an ordinance, pass around ideas and have a public hearing.

Planning Commission Member Adam Swinehart said no ordinance would satisfy 100% of the residence of Banks County.

**4.** **RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES**

None

**5.** **CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS**

**a.** **Windstream Fiber Connection**

Chairman Griffith stated we currently had 50 MB and 100 MB Windstream DSL. The new Windstream Fiber Connection would have 1 GB (1,000 MB). A fiber connection would run to the Annex and Courthouse and would be shared between the buildings. The price would be in the $1,600 range per month.

Chairman Griffith stated the new fiber connection would increase security and performance. However, during the transition period, it may cost a little more until all the government buildings were connected.

Commissioner Ausburn asked why we did not just a run the fiber to the individual buildings?

Windstream responded it would be possible but it would just cost more per month to add each individual building.

Chairman Griffith stated the process should take approximately 12 months.

Commissioner Garrison asked how long the price would be good for? Windstream responded 3 years.

Chairman Griffith would like to set up a meeting with Thomas Smallwood (TKS) and the Commissioners to explain the terminology and process.

Chairman Griffith stated he would like to see a rate lock in place.

**b. E911: Neatoware Agreement**

Fire Chief Nichols stated this was an annual contract with Neatoware that provided cyber-security. They have used the company for the past 3 years. The county attorney had already reviewed the agreement.

Motion to approve Neatoware IT Agreement for E911.

Motion made by Vice Chairman Maxwell, Seconded by Commissioner Ausburn.
Voting Yea: Chairman Griffith, Vice Chairman Maxwell, Commissioner Ausburn, Commissioner Garrison

Vote: 4:0

All yea votes and the motion passed.

***(Copy of Agreement filed in Attachment to Minute Book 11-2)***

**c. Public Utilities: Homer Water Purchase Agreement**

Chairman Griffith stated the county attorney was reviewing the agreement now. They would then present the Commissioners with a draft, send it to the City of Homer to approve and then the county would take final action.

Commissioner Garrison asked if there was a cap on how much water Homer could purchase? Chairman Griffith stated it was 3 million gallons per month. For anything over those gallons there would be an additional fee.

Commissioner Garrison was concerned with the growth of the Town of Homer and the city officials were not addressing the concerns with the water.

Commissioner Ausburn said there needed to be a meeting between the commissioners and city officials along with the Public Utilities Director Chad Wilbanks to discuss the water issues.

**d. Public Utilities: Franklin County Purchase Agreement**

Chairman Griffith said the agreement referred to the Cedar Ridge Subdivision that was almost 100% in Franklin County. Former Public Utilities Director had mentioned that Banks County would provide the water for this subdivision. The county attorney said it was not a binding contract. The location was not in our coverage delivery area.  Franklin County had signed an Intergovernmental Agreement and that would allow Banks County to supply the subdivision with water. However, currently the county did not have the resources to supply water.

***Shawn Watson, 770 Jefferson Blvd Jefferson***. The owner of SGW Properties which owned the Cedar Ridge Subdivision stated he had invested over $1,000,000 in the subdivision. Mr. Watson stated he had no idea that the use of water for the subdivision was in question until the current Public Utilities Director Chad Wilbanks mentioned it in an email on June 28, 2025.

Mr. Watson stated that Franklin County did not have water lines close to this subdivision. He had prior written commitments from the former Public Utilities Director Horace Gee and stated it should not be retracted. He stated personnel representing the county led him to believe that was all he needed was the letter. The letter from Horace Gee carried enough authority for the state health department and Franklin County to issue permits for the subdivision.  He said when the letter was sent it was copied to the planning and zoning department. Mr. Watson said that he understood the county was dealing with water issues but hoped the commissioners would honor the letter from Horace Gee.

Commissioner Garrison asked how many houses were currently in the subdivision? Mr. Watson responded none had been built but they were currently waiting to complete paving of the road to the subdivision.

Chairman Griffith left the meeting at 2:39 pm.

Commissioner Ausburn said the Commissioners would discuss this issue.

**e. Roads: KCI Technologies**

KCI sent in a request for additional funds in the amount of $19,140. This request included 170 hours of construction oversight and project inspection. Also 30 hours of project management.

Motion to approve additional funds in the amount of $19,140.

Motion made by Commissioner Ausburn, Seconded by Commissioner Garrison.
Voting Yea: Vice Chairman Maxwell, Commissioner Ausburn, Commissioner Garrison

Vote: 3:0

All yea votes and the motion passed.

**f. Hotel/Motel Funds: Explore Georgia Agreement**

Explore Georgia Agreement Proposal.

Vice Chairman Maxwell stated this company would do advertising for the county.

Commissioner Ausburn stated that Explore Georgia would promote trade/tourism/commerce for Banks County and it would be paid for by the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund.

Motion to accept the proposal from Explore Georgia.

Motion made by Commissioner Ausburn, Seconded by Commissioner Garrison.
Voting Yea: Vice Chairman Maxwell, Commissioner Ausburn, Commissioner Garrison

Vote: 3:0

All yea votes and the motion passed.

**6.** **BOARDS & AUTHORITIES**

**a. Board of Elections: Member Appointment - Rita Pickens - 4-year term**

Motion to send the selection list to the judge for approval.

Motion made by Commissioner Garrison, Seconded by Commissioner Ausburn.
Voting Yea: Vice Chairman Maxwell, Commissioner Ausburn, Commissioner Garrison

Vote: 3:0

All yea votes and the motion passed.

**7.** **MISCELLANEOUS**

**a. Call for Special Election**

Call for Special Election for November 4th, 2025, to fill the seat of Commissioner Keith Gardiner.

Motion to approve the call for Special Election to fill the seat of Keith Gardiner

Motion made by Commissioner Ausburn, Seconded by Commissioner Garrison.
Voting Yea: Vice Chairman Maxwell, Commissioner Ausburn, Commissioner Garrison

Vote: 3:0

All yea votes and the motion passed.

**b. Grand Jury: Bailiff Pay**

Commissioners stated they had received a request to increase the bailiff pay from $75 to $125 per day and they stated they would discuss this at the next meeting on August 12th, 2025.

**c. Maintenance: Vehicle Purchase**

Commissioners stated they had received 3 vehicle bids for a truck for the Maintenance Department and they stated they would discuss this at the next meeting on August 12th, 2025

**d. Recreation: HVAC**

Commissioners stated this would be discussed at the next meeting on August 12th, 2025

**e. Travel Expenses: Fire/EMS**

Chief Nichols stated the department was considering a new shift plan that was called the 1-3-2-3 plan. This plan was currently being used in Charleston, SC. He felt this plan would benefit the County and Fire/EMS personnel. The mission was to attract Firefighters and EMS personnel to Banks County.

Chief Nichols stated he was requesting $2,000 for travel expenses in order to visit Charleston and see the ins and outs of the plan. The travel would include expenses for Arlene Ivey, Scottie Mathis, April Turner, and Susan Jordan and would include 2 days to Charleston SC to view a fire department that was currently using the program.

Motion to approve the travel expenses in the amount of $2,000 to see the 1-3-2-3 plan for Fire/EMS.

Motion made by Commissioner Ausburn, Seconded by Commissioner Garrison.
Voting Yea: Vice Chairman Maxwell, Commissioner Ausburn, Commissioner Garrison

Vote: 3:0

All yea votes and the motion passed.

**8.** **Public Comment**

**Barbara Lindorme – 980 Bennett Rd,** **Homer -** Asked why we could not get more water from the EDP?

Public Utilities Director Chad Wilbanks discussed the process of increasing water permit limits with the EPD.

Commissioner Ausburn stated that we were only allowed 1 million gallons of water per day from the EPD.

**9.** **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None

**10.** **ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:02 pm.

Motion made by Commissioner Ausburn, Seconded by Commissioner Garrison.
Voting Yea: Vice Chairman Maxwell, Commissioner Ausburn, Commissioner Garrison

Vote: 3:0

All yea votes and the motion passed.

 Chairman

Deputy County Clerk