

**HEARD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION**  
**May 19, 2025 – 5:00 P.M.**

The Heard County Board of Commissioners held a work session on May 19, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. in the Commission Chamber of the Heard County Administration Building. In attendance at the meeting were Chairman Tracy McCormick, District 1 Commissioner Curtis Mock, District 2 Commissioner James Perry, District 3 Commissioner Iris Harris, District 4 Commissioner Larry Hammond, District 5 Commissioner David Walls and Finance Director, Felicia Adams.

Chairman McCormick opened the work session by addressing a potential future Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) initiative. He presented a proposal to allocate 3.33% of TSPLOST revenues to each of the three cities: Franklin, Centralhatchee, and Ephesus, should the tax be approved by voters.

In addition to the proposed distribution, the Chairman addressed the costs currently borne by the county for maintaining roads within municipal limits, underscoring the fiscal implications and the importance of intergovernmental cooperation. The proposal led to discussion between the Board and the attending mayors: Kevin Hayes of Franklin, Barbie Crockett of Centralhatchee, and Denny Rogers of Ephesus, regarding the potential distribution and use of TSPLOST funds. District Attorney Sarah Japour, now serving the West Georgia Judicial Circuit, introduced herself to the Board and offered to answer any questions. She noted that her FY 2026 budget request is budget-neutral, as she is still evaluating office needs.

Ms. Japour discussed the high cost of file storage and her efforts to secure local space. She reported that she is currently handling most Heard County cases personally, visiting at least weekly. Since taking office, her team has closed 184 cases, with 205 cases currently open. She remains in regular contact with the jail, probation department, and public defenders to manage

cases and reduce the jail population efficiently. She affirmed that her staff remains unchanged and welcomed follow-up from any Commissioner.

Kathy Bennett, representing the Old Jail Museum, provided an update on the facility and staffing. She noted that while the museum building is county-owned and she is a county employee, the museum's contents are owned by the Historical Society. The museum, one of three functional historic buildings in the county, underwent major restoration before reopening to the public in October. Since then, approximately 500 visitors have toured the museum during its current two-day weekly schedule. Ms. Bennett expressed her passion for the museum and its role as a community asset, highlighting services such as genealogy research. She explained that the museum currently operates with two part-time employees. She proposed expanding museum hours. Additionally, she requested the option to rotate one weekday shift to a Saturday (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.) once per month to accommodate public demand and increase accessibility. Ms. Bennett assured that Saturday hours would not significantly increase costs due to shorter shifts. Board members discussed the proposal, including rotating Saturdays and managing schedules. Greg Harris, Public Works Director, reported that the budget has remained steady for several years, emphasizing careful spending and reallocating funds as needed. He discussed equipment issues, including ongoing transmission problems with a John Deere tractor and frustrations with warranty claims, suggesting they may consider Kubota tractors in the future for cost savings, especially smaller, more efficient models with cabs for operator comfort. Mr. Harris also mentioned challenges with a troublesome John Deere sidearm mower, noting design flaws and slow repair responses. Leasing equipment was discussed as a potential cost-saving strategy, and the idea of contracting out mowing was considered, though concerns about damage and reliability remain. He updated the board on grant funding totaling around \$1.2 million for road

projects and the cost-effectiveness of road striping. Mr. Harris shared plans to better utilize road millings for shoulder repairs to save money and improve road conditions. Equipment procurement and maintenance strategies were reviewed, including frustrations with lowboy trailers purchased previously. Safety concerns were raised about trucks following tractors too closely during mowing operations, with Mr. Harris committing to address this through staff training and safety meetings. Overall, Mr. Harris highlighted the challenges of balancing budget constraints, equipment upkeep, workforce capacity, and safety while maintaining county roads efficiently.

Finance Director Felicia Adams explained that because the millage rate was rolled back the previous year, maintaining the current budget would require drawing from the county's fund balance, which currently stands at approximately \$10 million. The Board may want to consider increasing the millage rate to help offset the resulting deficit and reduce reliance on reserve funds.

The work session ended after the budget was concluded.

End time 7:02 p.m.

Katrina Billingsley

County Clerk

Date 06/17/25

Taney McCombs

Chairman

