

HEARD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION
December 16, 2025 – 5:00 P.M.

The Heard County Board of Commissioners held a work session on December 16, 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, and District 5 Commissioner David Walls.

At the meeting, participants discussed the potential impacts of data centers on the community, focusing on power, water usage, and local regulations. It was noted that Georgia Power has a stipulated agreement with the Public Service Commission to keep electricity affordable through at least 2028 and that costs associated with supplying power to data centers would be borne by the developers, not the general public. Any proposed data center would require Georgia Power studies funded upfront by the developer, along with additional infrastructure payments if approved. Concerns about water usage were addressed, with skepticism expressed toward media claims of extremely high daily water consumption, and emphasis placed on newer “fully encapsulated” or gel-encapsulated data center designs that use little to no water, are more energy-efficient, quieter, and extend equipment lifespan. Members discussed the importance of drafting ordinances to guide future data center development, potentially limiting approval to low-water, modern facilities, and ensuring the county has oversight over size, location, and utility demands. Overall, the consensus was that data centers are likely to come eventually, and the county should proactively establish regulations to protect public resources while also leveraging potential tax revenue to offset growing demands on schools, public safety, and other services.

During the meeting, the group discussed concerns raised by the Planning and Zoning Department regarding a permit request for an accessory structure described as a “pool house,” which staff believe

closely resembles a second full residence. The proposed structure includes a bathroom, office, family room, gun safe, and other residential features, is estimated at \$320,000, and is planned despite the absence of an existing pool. Members expressed concern that approving such a permit would set a precedent for allowing multiple dwellings on a single parcel, contrary to current zoning rules, and could undermine past decisions where similar requests were denied. There was general agreement that the structure appears to be a second house rather than a true pool house, and that approval should be withheld unless revised plans clearly reflect a legitimate accessory use. The discussion then expanded to broader ordinance and administrative issues, including the lack of size limits for accessory structures, the need to update permit packets and inspection checklists, and recurring problems with mud, erosion, and road damage caused by construction traffic. Members agreed that requirements such as gravel driveways prior to first inspection, erosion and sediment control, contractor licensing and insurance, and clear inspection standards should be added to permit packets and enforced consistently. Overall, the consensus was that ordinances, applications, and checklists need to be updated promptly to provide clarity, protect county roads and staff, and ensure fair and enforceable permitting practices as development activity increases.

The discussion also covered housing-related concerns, including recurring questions about tiny homes, mother-in-law suites, minimum square footage requirements, and whether single-wide manufactured homes should be reconsidered under strict standards. It was suggested that allowing certain affordable housing options—while maintaining clear requirements for foundations, age, size, and design—could better serve residents in a county facing economic challenges. Additionally, members raised concerns about approvals lacking expiration timelines and the absence of a formal tracking system for permits and inspections, which has led to projects proceeding without oversight for extended periods. The group agreed on the need for a more reliable tracking system, ideally electronic, to monitor permits, inspections, and project status, and discussed interim solutions such as

Excel spreadsheets or shared digital documents until a full software system can be implemented.

Overall, the consensus emphasized proactive ordinance reform, better administrative tracking, and modernized processes to improve consistency, accountability, and service to the public.

The work session ended with no official action being taken.

End time 5:53 p.m.

Katrina Billingsley

County Clerk

Date 01/20/26



Tracy McCormick

Chairman